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Trans* Streamers on Twitch.tv: The Intersections of Gender and Digital Labor

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science
at Virginia Commonwealth University

By

R. L. Lawson, BA, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2019

Major Director: Gina Marie Longo, Assistant Professor, VCU Sociology

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Abstract

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Twitch.tv is a live entertainment platform where individuals live stream events, including playing video games, playing board and tabletop games, creating art, and more. Twitch has a diverse base of streamers, but Twitch has just begun. The most common approach has focused on cisgender, heterosexual white men in the cases where it has been studied. Though these streamers should be studied in sociology, this focus leaves out the experiences of both cis women and Trans* streamers. This research proposal tries to situate the relationship of Trans* streamers with both the platform and their audience, seeing if these relationships affect their ability to earn income and status in a precarious digital workplace. This study will incorporate a primarily qualitative approach, interviewing cisgender, Transgender, and non-binary streamers about their experiences.

1. Introduction

As a concept and as a focus of sociological inquiry, Twitch is relatively new. Twitch.tv launched in 2011, a video game-focused spinoff of the earlier Justin.tv, a live-streaming platform based around streaming daily life or 'lifestreaming .'Twitch exploded in popularity in 2014 following the collaborative event *Twitch Plays Pokémon,* an event where viewers could input commands in the chat, collectively controlling the gameplay. Later that year, Amazon purchased Twitch for $970 million (Zac 2020). Twitch has become a popular platform for live streaming, particularly video game live streaming. However, despite the popularity of Twitch.tv as a form of digital media, it has rarely been researched within a sociological context. A search within the Ebscohost SocINDEX for the phrase Twitch.Tv returns only eight results (, Dargonaki 2018, American Sociological Association 2019, Johnson 2019, Johnson and Woodcock July 2019, Johnson and Woodcock March 2019, Spilker, Ask, Hansen 2020, Ehret and Čiklovan 2020, Teodora 2022).

For many people, live streaming is more than a hobby; but is a growing profession where many individuals make a livelihood. However, this labor is more complex than playing video games all day. It also incorporates emotional work and labor, along with aspects of gender. (Taylor 2018, Ruberg, Cullen, and Brewster 2019, and Freeman and Wohn 2020.) Much of the sociological research surrounding Twitch focuses on general experiences that highlight mainly men. The sociological research on women discusses women via their relationship to the Twitch user policy (Ruberg et al. 2019). We know relatively little about the positions of Trans* and non-binary streamers on the platform. Considering the precariousness of Trans* and (particularly) non-binary individuals within physically situated economies, this precariousness

may also be reflected for Trans* and non-binary streamers within digital labor, which can place a premium on appearance and presentation[1].

This study used in-depth interviews from three groups: Trans* and gender non-conforming streamers and their cisgender counterparts, to investigate how gender identity influences how streamers navigate their interactions with their audiences. In other words, how do Twitch streamers' gender identity and performance affect their interactions with the audience, and to what extent this creates digital labor inequalities? I argue that Trans* and non-binary individuals face higher difficulties making a living through Twitch. Trans* and non-binary streamers view their relationships between themselves and the twitch viewing audience differently than cis streamers even though cis, Trans*, and non-binary streamers interact with their audiences similarly. anticipate

2. **Literature Review**

2.1 Gaming and Gender

Twitch, as an industry, is situated within the gaming culture. However, gaming and the culture surrounding is still firmly entrenched within a gender binary. The idea of video games, gaming culture, game development, and the identity of the gamer itself are all compared and seen as aligned with masculinity (Shaw 2011, Todd 2015, Zolides 2015, Paaßen, Morgenroth, Stratomeyer 2016, Cote 2017, Dargonaki 2018). This is not new to the subculture but has been part of an intensifying 'culture war' (Todd 2015, 65). Gamergate, the exemplification of this 'war,' is an online social movement that engages in cyberbullying directed mainly at journalists and scholars within the gaming industry (Todd 2015, Cote 2017). One of the most controversial examples of Gamergate was the harassment of Zoe Quinn. An independent game developer was

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[1] Note: the majority of this study will use Trans* instead of just saying trans and non-binary. Trans* is intended to be inclusive of non-conforming identities alongside other gender identities, like gender queer and agender.

accused of sleeping with a gamer journalist in return for a positive game review (Todd 2015, 64, Cote 2017, 138).

Though false, this and many other incidents laid bare the worst of the gender relations and expectations within the gaming subculture. Harassment is rampant within gaming culture, with women, ethnic minorities, and the LBGT community being most likely to be victims of this gaming-related harassment (Cote 2017, 137). Harassment occurs both from within and outside the gaming industry, encouraged through game design and advertising has developed a culture of hyper-masculinity. This aggressive form of masculinity has influenced gaming culture, exacerbating underlying masculine associations and leading to women being seen as outsiders (Zolides 2015, Cotes 2017). Gender presentation in gaming spaces is often questioned due to these cultural and institutional factors, with femininity being physically and conceptually marginalized within gaming spaces. Gaming culture marginalized femininity, with male identities often seen as the default, making women less likely to use voice chat (Paaßen et al. 2016). An institutionalized focus on objectification and misogyny (Huyles 2007, 24) has led to the questioning of female legitimacy within gaming (Cote 2016) and even the harassment of female professional gamers by their peers and coaches, like Miranda Pakozdi (Cote 2017, 138). Further, there is a tendency for gaming to be heteronormative and, at worst homophobic (Shaw 2011, 36). Formal clothing by male players is often avoided due to a connotation of femininity (Zolides 2015, 46), indicating that this policing of gender in gaming cuts both ways.

The relationship between gender is more than presentation but delves into individual identity. A gamer can be defined as an individual who plays video games regularly (Shaw 2011, 29). Men are more likely than women to see an overlap between their gender identity and gamer identity, leading to a social identification with the gamer identity (Paaßen et al. 2016, 11).

Gaming and the identity of gamer are still defined as male despite growing gender parity, with women still marked as outsiders (Cote 2017, 139). These outsider statuses often lead women with few options. The typical 'male' rhetorical approaches of logic and aggression are not afforded to women in online spaces and are often seen as illegitimate when used by women (Cote 2017, 144). Instead, women must approach gaming with different strategies, including assuming more dominant stances (Zolides 2015, 45, Cote 2017, 207) and avoiding playing with strangers (Cote 2017).

However, there are reasons individuals of all genders are drawn to video games. For some, it is a safe avenue to explore gender identity and as a way to cope with distress (Arcoleus et all 2017, 22). Women's involvement in video game violence allows them to show their mechanical proficiency within the gaming sphere. There are positive aspects of gaming that should be kept in mind., such as building community and its ability to allow for an exploration of identity (Freeman and Wohn, 2020). These aspects of gaming are also reflected within Twitch and would allow us to better understand the relationship between gender on Twitch, with many individuals turning to video games for self-expression and gender exploration.

2.2 Digital Labor and Gender

Twitch also needs to be situated within its labor has undergone several radical shifts in the past twenty years. Our lives have become more digital. This shift has also coincided with a fracturing of the economy, where more and more work is precarious and compartmentalized. Much of modern labor is characterized by its precarious nature. Compared to traditional employment, precarious work can be defined by job insecurity. It includes part-time work, temp jobs, self-employment, contract work, and online work (Gerber 2021, 208). Online work is often another type of precarious labor. It is quickly becoming one of the most prominent types of

precarious work, with 90% percent of new jobs being non-traditional and often online (Borazilay 2019, 183). Further, around 45 million Americans offer various goods and services through platform work (Barizalay 2019). Risk has become tied into the modern labor market, with risk internalized as subjective and positive (Neff 2012, 3-4, Kane and Jasserard 2019, 485) and shifted onto the workers instead of businesses (Neff 2012, 8)

The gig economy, platform economy, and sharing economy are among the many names of the modern online digital economy. The gig economy is dominated by five major platforms, which include Google, Apple, Facebook, Microsoft, and Amazon (Zysman 2020, 57). It should be noted that these companies are often not seeking workers themselves but instead are intermediaries (Zysman 2020, 56, Gerber 2021, 207). Though this work is more accessible across age, educational level, and class spectrums, it still has adverse effects, especially for those whose digital labor makes up most of their income. There are issues of work/life balance (Warren 2021, 526) and also planning around an unsteady income stream (Sutherland, Jarrahi, Dunn, Nelson 2020, 458). Workers often have to engage with multiple sources of work outside of traditional work in order to make income (Kane and Jasserand 2019, 486). This labor, combined with work/life balance, can lead to the blurring of boundaries between life and labor, leading to presence bleed (Duffy 2017, 29, Kohransch and Weber 2020, 18). It is also an extremely competitive workforce, with a large pool of workers having to compete, bid style, for a small number of jobs (Barizalay 2019, 193), leading to a pressured need to be always available for work.

The gig economy is also heavily gendered. Like most occupations, digital labor has its own gender beliefs. Much like traditional work, digital labor tends to encourage ideas of power, strength, and rationality gendered as male (Kohransch and Weber 2020, 13-16). Despite this,

much digital labor takes a more feminine form of labor, based more on affect, relationships, and emotion (Duffy 2017). Though the issues inherent to the digital economy affect everyone, women are more likely to face difficulties. Often women are more likely to make more income through precarious online than their male counterparts, often due to unpaid labor concerns (Vyas 2021, 381). Women are more likely than men to make 50% or even 100% of their income via platform work (Gerber 2021, 16). Women are also more likely to be excluded from gig work than their male counterparts. This is an intersectional issue as well, with women, particularly Black women facing more issues being successful at making income through online gig work (Vyas 2021, 43-44).

Though digital labor is supposed to be egalitarian, intentional and unintentional biases lead to discrimination. Women are less likely to receive positive reviews and will request lower pay than men in many cases (Barzilay 2019, 185). Often sex stereotypes still prevail within gig work scenarios, with many jobs left up to the client's discretion and satisfaction, leaving worker's chances up to customer bias (Kohransch and Weber 2020, 22). Further, the platforms that host this digital labor, like all websites, are built around algorithms. Algorithms carry the biases of the data and developers used in their creation. These algorithms are seen by their developers as egalitarian but can actually exacerbate discrimination by focusing on reputations (garnered through reviews) (Kohransch and Weber 2020, 22), and can lead to gender discrimination and even racial profiling in a supposedly egalitarian workspace (Vyas 2021, 44). However, digital workers are not well protected against gender discrimination and racist practices due to their work classification. Often, these workers are seen not as employees but legally more as entrepreneurs or self-employed individuals, meaning that legal protections such

as Title VII only apply across some platforms as they would for traditional labor (Barzilay 2019, 196).

On the other side of streaming, there is the rise of the 'prosumer' and 'participatory' labor. The prosumer is an individual who assists in production as part of an economic system that puts a premium on participation (Pybus 2013). This participatory labor is generally not seen as labor but is broadly used in digital marketing. Social scientists have studied this *participatory* digital labor. The prosumer, constantly inundated by advertising, are engaged in participation in such a way that helps develop branding and engagement. Interacting digitally also allows advertisers closer access, allowing more access to the prosumer (Pybus 2013, 148).

Further study should research the relationship between streamers and digital workers. Much digital work is commodified, with workers' labor further segmented into a fragmented microwork. Building networks and developing an online profile are essential for online gig workers to find good work (Sutherland et al., 2020). In the same way, Twitch streamers often must find a way to balance a creative drive versus a profitable, audience-pleasing presentation, a relationship that may be affected by factors like class, gender, and sexuality.

2.3: Labor in the Digital Gig Economy and Twitch

Twitch live streaming is a continuation of labor following the development of Web 3.0 with the rise of social media, emphasizing entrepreneurship (Marwick 2013, Taylor 2018). Though Male live streamers primarily dominate Twitch.tv, much of the occupation of live streaming follows the 'feminized' labor, where the work is feminized and often based more on flexibility, creativity, and affect. (Duffy 2017).

Modern labor practices are multifaceted and often classified along gendered lines. Entrepreneurial labor is a combination of time, energy, human capital, and other resources,

expressing entrepreneurial ideals through non-entrepreneurs (Neff 2013, 16). Considering the overall precarity of traditional labor, digital labor is increasingly seen as a fulfilling and profitable venture. Digital labor is first defined as "Any productive human activity involving digital technologies as 'the valorization of the digital work of creating social media content' (Chandler and Munday, 2016). However, precarity is not limited to just traditional labor. According to Precarity Lab, "Chained up is more than complicity; it means noticing the wounds inflicted by false promises of idealized counterculture, technological progress, and digital intervention (2019)."

Though playing video games live on stream and chatting with an audience may sound like easy income, streaming as an occupation is more complex. The streaming hours can be exceedingly long, especially if a streamer works full-time (Johnson 2019). Along with long hours, Johnson and Woodcock discussed the behind-the-scenes work necessary for a successful twitch stream. This work includes preparing for the stream, answering emails, creating contacts, and networking (T.L. Taylor 2018, Johnson and Woodcock 2019, 344). In some cases, the inspiration and justification for the long, unpaid labor toward becoming successful are similar to the aspirational labor described in a study of online fashion bloggers (Duffy 2017). Through Duffy's study of online fashion bloggers, she studies the relationship between the bloggers, their audience, and the fashion brands that employ them as advertisers and influencers. Many of these bloggers have to juggle an often-fraught relationship with fashion companies while also trying to appear authentic to fans (Duffy 2017), showing a balancing act between the creator, audience, and, for the lack of a term, an employer.

In similar ways to fashion bloggers (Duffy 2017), attracting advertisers and sponsors is one of the integral ways of earning income on Twitch. There are several types of monetization

utilized by twitch streamers (Woodcock and Johnson 2019), including sponsorship, subscription, donating, and advertisement. Subscription is a recurring monthly payment, with Twitch and the streamer receiving part of this monthly revenue (Woodcock and Johnson 2019, 4). The second form, donating and cheering, are not donations in the charitable sense but much more like taxable freelance pay (Woodcock and Johnson 2019). New twitch streamers commonly use this before having a higher platform or reaching 'affiliate status' who share PayPal links and other services (Woodcock and Johnson 2019, 4-5). Twitch has recently institutionalized donations as 'bits,' their platform currency. Purchasing bits allows users to 'cheer' their favorite streamers, transferring those bits to the streamer. These bits typically have an exchange rate of one dollar for every 100 bits. (Woodcock and Johnson 2019, 5). Advertising, a more traditional style of monetization, is also seen in digital media. Twitch uses two different types of advertising; ads developed in conjunction with advertisers and the more conventional inserted videos (Woodcock and Johnson 2019, 5). The fourth type of monetization, sponsorship, is when a game developer or publisher pays the streamer to play the game on stream (Woodcock and Johnson 2019). Twitch exists as part of the internet as a digital institution, one that actively shapes and influences interactions between individuals on multiple levels (Longo 2023, 623). Twitch, with its detailed terms of services, rules between streamers and their audiences, and its regulation as a platform, influences and restricts interactions between streamers, the platform, and viewers.

2.4.: Gender, Class, and Race on Twitch.tv

There has been significant research into race and gender in the digital economy (Shade 2014; Duffy and Pruncneiwska 2017; Fuchs 2018; and Sutherland et al. 2020). However, there has been significantly less research on Twitch regarding race and gender. Furthermore, what little research featuring race has focused on white men (Johnson and Woodcock 2019), with some

notable exceptions.[2]. Digital economy research regarding gender tends to take a heteronormative viewpoint, focusing on teleworking mothers and fathers (Shade 2014). Much like traditional labor, labor in the digital gig economy is not equal; people of color, low-income individuals, and individuals with no college education who work digitally rely on it as basic income rather than a surplus income. In a traditional labor market tied to credential inflation, digital gig work allows less credentialled workers to earn a living. Furthermore, research into disabled twitch streamers found that those with chronic health conditions, both mental and physical, were able to make a living while also managing their chronic health conditions (Johnson 2019). Furthermore, some disabled workers see digital labor as self-fulfilling, voluntary, and not profit-driven (Yu, Goggin, Fisher, and Li 2019, 468).

Further, there have been studies into how gender is approached and policed by Twitch and Twitch users. Not surprisingly, the policing of gender has been chiefly applied negatively toward women and marginalized streamers like people of color and the LGBTQ community. There has long been discourse around the 'titty streamer' concept, a term derisively directed at female streamers who present themselves too sexually (Ruberg, Cullen, and Brewster, 2019). This phrase first entered Twitch discourse around 2013 and targeted individuals who supposedly over-emphasize their breasts and body, with less focus on video game playing (Ruberg et al. 2019, 472). This phrase is often used in conjunction with 'cam girl'. Outside of Twitch, cam girl refers to women that perform sexual activities in front of a webcam for an audience and typically relate to the adult film industry (Ruberg et al. 2019, 473). In the case of Twitch, this phrase is used to devalue the labor that the streamers have to do, such as playing video games, managing lighting, and audio-visual equipment, instead of reducing these female streamers to their bodies

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[2] Chan, Brian, and Kishonna Gray, 2020, "Microstreaming, Microcelebrity, and Marginalized Masculinity: Pathways to Visibility and Self-Definition for Black Men in Gaming," *Women's Studies in Communication*, 43(4):354-362.

(Ruberg et al. 2019, 273). Both phrases are used to question the legitimacy of these streamers by male streamers and by other female streamers. This body policing relates to anxiety within Twitch regarding the broader issues of live streaming legitimacy and how this may affect livelihoods all. At the same time, there is a double standard where men are praised for their income on Twitch while women making income on Twitch can be labeled illegitimate by appearance (Ruberg et al. 2019, 275). Twitch's further regulation of female streamers' appearances (Ruberg 2020) highlights this.

Studies such as Freeman and Wohn (2020) are beginning to focus on the presentation of gender and sexuality in Twitch live streaming. Though this study is drawn more from Informatics and Computing, this study falls in line with sociological analysis, highlighting the relationship between the audience and the streamer and the presentation of gender and sexuality. Though the bulk of the interviewees from the study are cisgender, the study elucidates how queer streamers, in general, may view their place on the platform. For example, one Trans* interviewee sees streaming as a way to garner a broader Trans* community and allow the interviewee to navigate their Trans*ition (Freeman and Wohn 2020, 807-808). Further, this study found that some live streamers use live streaming on Twitch for both activism and empowerment regarding their gender and sexual identities (Freeman and Wohn 2020, 809). Harassment continues to be an issue within live streaming, with women, queer people, and people of color bearing its brunt, reflecting a broader internet trend of a fixation on gender and appearance on internet spectatorship (Taylor 2018, 221). This harassment may not just be personal but can also be performed on a general level, and managing this harassment is part of community management. There are physical and mental tactics streamers have to deal with to cultivate a safe environment, including moderation teams, not using a live stream camera, or 'toughening up, but there is still

the strain of harassment that can drive away would-be streamers (Taylor 2018, 221-222). Within a Computer Supported Cooperative Work study, there is a focus on the streaming of gender and sexuality of streamers. Though this is not a strictly sociological article, it highlights several key aspects of understanding the motivation for streamers. Freeman and Wohn found that female and LGBTQ streamers were more likely to deemphasize an audience focus and focus more on self-expression (2020).

Further, these streamers would put much more work into outfits and costuming and would have a more significant focus on lighting and camera management (Guo and Wohn 2020, 816). However, they did have to deal with audience expectations not always matching up with the aspirations of the streamer. This study, though limited, is a good indicator of how to approach sociological research regarding the platform.

3. Current Study and Statement of the Problem

This thesis builds on existing research on the broader field of digital labor and attempts to contribute to a growing sociological analysis of Twitch. This research contributes to the sociological study of the digital gig economy and gender while also studying a community, in this case, Trans* and non-binary streamers, who are often marginalized within Twitch and are rarely a focus of study in sociology. Twitch is extremely popular as an entertainment platform, with millions of users following their interests and building an audience. However, as much as we understand the complexities of live streaming as an occupation, we know much less about the gendered dynamics of streaming, especially regarding marginalized identities like non-binary and Trans* streamers.   Twitch has also become part of the digital economy, where streamers can make what they consider a fulfilling livelihood. However, much like online fashion bloggers (Duffy 2017), this working relationship is precarious. As a subsidiary of Amazon, Twitch

generated an estimated 1.54 billion dollars, 300 million of which came from advertising (Iqbal 2020). A relationship with advertisers is critical to the streamers and the platform, allowing for higher profit. While some streamers can make millions of dollars a year, this is not the case for the vast majority of 3.8 million streamers and 41,100 partners (Iqbal 2020). This research explores how streamers make a living while navigating within and around Twitch's rules and regulations while maintaining positive relationships with advertisers, sponsors, Twitch, and their audience. I argue that gender makes these relationships more precarious, particularly for Trans*- and non-binary streamers. This study examines how gender non-binary and Trans* streamers navigate audience relationships compared to their cis-gender counterparts. By centering Trans*- and gender non-binary voices, this research contributes to the literature on digital gig economies, gaming, and gender. With millions of unique streamers just on Twitch, there is merit in studying the gender experiences of live streamers and Twitch's growing role in the digital economy.

4. Case Study: Twitch

4.1: The Twitch Fanbase

Some may see Twitch as a shiny piece of disposable new media, but Twitch is rapidly becoming a more significant part of the digital economy and, for many individuals, either part of their livelihood or an important source of income (Johnson and Woodcock 2019a Taylor 2018). Further, Twitch is owned by Amazon and generates substantial income for the company, with Twitching making 2.3 billion dollars in 2020, with 750 million dollars of that revenue coming from advertising on the platform (I. Much of the existing literature covers the twitch streams of white male streamers (Johnson and Woodcock 2019 and Johnson 2019), with gaps regarding race and gender. Available literature may show how the Twitch audience may be 'prosumers', but the research also shows why audiences are drawn to Twitch instead of traditional television. In

countries like Norway, where it is common in the top ten most visited websites (Spilker, Ask, and Hansen 2020), and South Korea, where video game live streams have enjoyed public prominence since the late 2000s (Wulf, Schneider, and Beckert 2020). With such a broad interest in Twitch streaming as entertainment, a greater understanding of audience engagement should be applied to this research, as the audience makes up a third of the streaming equation, along with the streamer themselves and Twitch as a platform. As it is a very social medium, social scientists have started to study this trend. 'Para-social' interactions were first developed in psychology to study viewer engagement and are defined as "long-term involvement with media characters comparable to some kind of friendship (Wulf et al. 2020, 332)." Further research developed two specific kinds of para-social relationships, the 'virtual friendship' and the 'respectful interest.'

Virtual friendship is an intimate relationship or friendship (Wulf et al., 2020). 'Like an old friend' is a common phrase to denote this relationship. Respectful interest is more complex and is a relationship based on viewers' impressions through media exposure (Wulf et al. 2020, 332). Twitch also contains many elements of social community, including membership, influence, need fulfillment, and emotional connection (Wulf et al. 2020, 333). Another study focused on the social motivations of twitch streaming, studying the motivators of twitch engagement. The four aspects of live stream engagement include emotional connectedness, watching, subscribing, and donating (Hilvert-Bruce, Neill, Sjöblom, Hamari 2018). They also found that those emotionally attached to twitch streamers, those audience members were more likely to both view streams and provide financial contributions to streams (Hilvert-Bruce et al., 2020, 63).

4.2: Authenticity, Branding, and the Self

Live streaming is a relatively new career in the digital economy. However, for many, it is an alternative career for those who may have difficulties in a rapidly changing and precarious

workplace. Live streaming on Twitch places a premium on the emotion and performance of the live streamers. Live streaming as a career requires multiple types of labor on the part of the streamer, including affective labor and possibly aspirational labor. More than the digital freelance work of Upwork (Sutherland et al 2020) or online fashion and culture workers (Duffy 2017; Duffy and Pruchniewska 2017). A Twitch streamer's labor is based on the ability to communicate audibly and visibly with their audience, through chat and audibly through streaming, often reading out chat comments, thanking fans, and rewarding them for subscribing or 'cheering' (Johnson and Woodcock 2019). As seen with discussions of gender and sexuality, women and queer streamers may have to take different approaches from their straight, cis, and male counterparts.

Many are drawn to these digital content creators due to said creators' perceived "authenticity" (Marwick 2013, Duffy 2017). For Marwick, authenticity is less about personal information individuals release and more about being consistent in self-presentation (Marwick 2013, 120). For Duffy, authenticity is more complex, with Duffy's authenticity focusing on the struggle of digital content creators to balance authentic content with the demands of their audience (Duffy 2018, 54). Duffy argues that appeals to authenticity have long been part of American popular culture and advertising (2018, 103). In the case of digital fashion bloggers, audiences and business partners expect an authentic approach, leading to the bloggers having to find a balance between being relatable but not 'selling out.'

With Twitch, there are certain normative expectations of streamers. In this case, impression management (Goffman 1959), emotion work (Hochschild 1979), and performativity (Butler 2007) play a crucial role. When streaming, streamers are expected to be constantly 'on'.

There is an importance placed on the role of streaming 'in character'. This character work can range from mild to intense (Johnson and Woodcock 2019).

Gender performativity, both emphasized and deemphasized, is prominent through preliminary research (Dargonaki 2018). Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity was developed initially in 1990 in her theoretical text *Gender Trouble*. Differing from gender performance and the way individuals present their gender, gender performativity is regulatory and normative. Specifically, gender performativity regulates 'gestures' and 'acts' in a manner meant to contain gender within the frame of heterosexual reproductivity (Butler 2009, 185-186). However heteronormative traditional media may be, new digital media, with its more individualized output, may allow for greater freedom outside traditional heteronormative boundaries. However, the user base of Twitch still skews heavily male at 65 percent (Iqbal 2020), with data drawn from the Global Web Index. For some streamers, there may be normative roles that they are expected to portray regarding their gender and emotions that audiences may either be drawn to or repudiate, depending on streamer and audience expectations.

5. Methods

5.1. Sampling and Case Selection

This research is a comparative study to develop this field of study further. To this end, I interview Trans* and cis streamers about their experiences on the platform, whether these streamers view Twitch as a current or possible occupation, and explore how these streamers may have to perform to develop an audience. Further, these interviews examine how Trans* streamers operate as digital laborers on Twitch by seeing how they garner new followers, gain subscribers, and earn bits and points on the platform. How do they maximize these while still staying

'authentic,' and how do their tactics differ from their cis counterparts? What kind of communities do these different live streamers attempt to develop? To this end, I use non-probability sampling, looking for interviewees within five categories. These include cis male, cis female, Trans* male, Trans* female, and non-binary. Seven interviews were conducted, containing interviews for the different categories, though one interviewee was gender queer rather than non-binary. I choose these categories for simplicity's sake, with these gender identities being common, allowing variety without making the interview collection process too complex. I do realize this does possibly leave out gender identities like genderqueer[3], genderfluid[4] or otherwise, gender non-conforming[5]. As much as I would like to include more diverse gender identities, I realize that I am somewhat limited as this is a thesis and not a dissertation or an academic article. In future studies, I will include these individuals. Using open-coding of the Trans*cripts via Nvivo, I, first, focus on the differing articulations of gender identity and labor within Twitch between the different interviews. Thereafter, I draw on the axial coding process, using concepts of gender, gender identity, and gender performativity to analyze how interviewees speak on their experiences on Twitch, connecting interpersonal relations, labor, and certain aspects of the digital institution of Twitch.

I recruited interviewees using an interest survey posted on the subreddits r/twitch and r/twitchstartup. Twenty-eight responded in all with 12 individuals agreeing to be interviewed. However, seven ultimately sat for the interview. These interviews were conducted via Zoom. I use pseudonyms prior to recording to protect the interviewee's privacy. The interviews

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[3] Genderqueer can be defined as an individual who does not express their gender identity within the gender binary, some who identify as genderqueer may not identify as male or female. (HRC Foundation)

[4] Someone who is genderfluid will not have a fixed gender identity. Those who identify as genderfluid may have an unfixed gender identity (University of Nebraska Omaha)

[5] Gender non-conforming is an umbrella term that incorporates individuals who do not conform to traditional ideas of gender expression or whose gender identity does not fit into gendered categories (HRC Foundation).

generally lasted between 60 to 90 minutes. The interview questions pertained to their streaming habits, their relationships and interactions with their audience, their experiences with technology, and gender identity and performance. Of the respondents, two are cis men, two are cis women, one is a Trans* woman, one is a Trans* man, and one is genderqueer. Four of my interviewees are white, one identifies as Latino, one as Latino and Japanese, and another as Scotch-Irish and North American Indian. All the interviewees have gaming as a central element of their channel. None of the streamers stream as a full-time occupation, but several B (a genderqueer streamer from Brazil with 350 followers), Mark (a cis man in the United States with 55 followers), and Mabel (a cis woman in the United States with around 90 followers) have some interest in streaming as an occupation. Many of them work in other digital labor positions, such as in video production or design like Junes (a cis man with 75 followers) B, and Rory (a Trans* man in the United Kingdom with approximately 180 followers) work long hours in a management position like Mabel, worked multiple positions like Sarah (a cis woman in her 30s with 800 followers), work in low paid labor like Mark (a cis man in his twenties with 55 followers), or attend college like Kat (a Trans* woman in the United States with around 100 followers).

I argue that the gender and gender identity of the streamer will affect the interactions a streamer has with an audience and with the Twitch platform. More specifically, gender affects the relationship between the streamer and the audience. The less conforming a streamer may be to traditional gender norms(as in closer to cisgender ideas of gender), the more negative the relationship between the audience and the streamer will be.

6. **Findings**

6.1. Gender, Interpersonal Interactions, and Twitch.tv

Gender, like in any other digital space, plays an influential role on Twitch.tv. Ideas of gender identity and gender performativity are just as salient on Twitch and are complicated when consideration is placed toward the experiences of Trans* streamers, populations often out of focus within digital spaces. For Trans* streamers, live streaming can serve as a form of community building and self-expression, even when faced with harassment on the platform. Cis streamers on the platform did not put much thought into their gender identities but found themselves being subtly pressured by forces of gender performativity, either internally or externally.

Building an audience as a Trans* streamer is rewarding but is also fraught with harassment and vitriol from random strangers. Harassment is not limited to one's own stream but can also occur when a streamer is in the role of the viewer. For example, Kat, a Trans* woman, mentioned being harassed for her identity via a joke, where both the streamer she was viewing and the community members of the streamer did nothing to police that behavior, and she mentions that most of the harassment comes from outside of her Twitch community, either through random viewers or through other social media platforms like Twitter stating,

"The Twitch community, by and large, it's been a couple instances where, it wasn't in my community. I was watching somebody else and it came up and It's like somebody decided to make a particularly off color joke in response to my identifying myself. Streamer did nothing about it. Community did nothing about it. So I just left that channel, kind of like cut ties because, I mean, I've been around the Twitch community since, what, 2017? Yeah, Twitch, by and large, is the. One of the more welcoming communities like online communities, I've run into, the other ones, it is usually other other social spaces that are tied to because, you know, social media for a Twitch channel, it's all integrated. So it's typically other non community members that in my experience, have been kind of a negative force.

B[6], a genderqueer streamer from Brazil with around 350 followers, also found themselves harassed, particularly early on before he worked as a V-Tuber[7], Moreso from Brazilian viewers whom he described as being hostile towards queer streamers. Shifting to English streaming, using a V-tuber persona, and shifting the games she plays has mitigated the harassment, but has not ended it, with individuals occasionally coming into her chat through game tags and making fun of her English, demonstrating different, contrasting hegemonic structures, one that polices gender and sexuality, and another that polices ethnicity. However, tailoring his channel more and more has allowed B to create a community that is more focused and communal.

The idea of building a community that was safe for other Trans* people was a repeated theme. Rory, in particular, described how close he is to his audience, stating, " I love hearing what they've been up to and the achievements in their lives. I mean, not long ago, one of my followers told me that they'd gotten a date for their top surgery, and I almost cried out of joy for them." Being able to support viewers through times of transition in life and in their gender is something important for Rory, Kat, and B. The methods of support, some of which are external to the platform itself, allowed streamers to challenge the gendered structure established by Twitch. Despite being faced with harassment, community building was important to the Trans* streamers. Trans* streamers were more interested in building themselves communities, whilst cis streamers articulated their relationship to their audience in a different way. For example, Junes while fostering a community is still important to him, described his stream as a bar, which is, to a degree, less community-building focused and more an informal gathering. Sarah, a cis

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[6] Note: B is referred to by both he and she pronouns because that is how he identified.
[7] A V-tuber is a streamer who uses a virtual avatar instead of a camera to create content.

woman in her early 30s, kept her audience at an arm's-length state, taking care to police and drive her community in specific ways.

Ultimately, gender impacts the interpersonal relationships among streamers and their audiences. More particularly, gender identity and performativity intervenes in the interpersonal relationships between Trans* streamers and their audiences and cis streamers and theirs. For Trans* and genderqueer streamers, their gender identity made them more visible to the audience, which had its positive and negative consequences. They had to negotiate gendered harassment, Trans*phobia, and mistreatment at the hands of unmoderated audience members. However, they also drew on their gender identities to cultivate a community of support for other Trans* streamers and viewers. For the cis women in the study, they employ their own gender identity and performance to safeguard themselves against sexual harassment from cis men. However, they did not draw on their gender identity to gather community to them in the way that Trans* streamers do. The cis men of the study gave very little thought to their gender as they interact in the space. They did not face the challenges of their cis, Trans*, and non-binary counterparts. As we shall see, this indicates a male and cis-privilege, but also alludes to the nature of Twitch as a gendered space that upholds the gender binary and hegemonic masculinity.

6.2 Gendered Labor on Twitch: The Gamification of Gender

Interacting with audiences is a driving force in the subtle forms of gender performativity. Financial success may be tied to similar ideas of hegemonic masculinity and femininity on the platform, as well as financial status outside of the platform. Considering the nature of Twitch as a unique entertainment platform, performance is a crucial part, but gender performativity takes a different tact. In the case of gender performance and performativity, these can be gamified. Gamification is the application of game systems into different non video game scenarios or

domains (Woodcock and Johnson 2018). Gamification is not value free, but is tied more and more into economic and social contexts especially with digital spaces. Mabel, a cis woman in the United States, for example, mentions that as one of her channel point rewards, she will stretch, which, among other things, allows viewers to see below her neckline. Similarly, Sara, mentioned previously, uses filters to give her makeup during streams, giving their audience power over channel points to manipulate the makeup filters to a comical effect.

While both Sarah and Mabel theme their channels in less traditional ways regarding femininity, one with a gothic tomboy aesthetic and the other with a mad scientist aesthetic, their channels gamify elements that highlight traditional elements of femininity in the broader socio-cultural sense. Sarah, by far the most successful streamer of these interviewees, was also the closest to traditional standards of beauty (i.e., young, thin, white) and was also financially secure outside of the platform, working in a pharmaceutical position alongside contracted work. Compared to the other streamers, she considered the platform a hobby, keeping much more distance between her and viewers than other streamers while also having 800 followers. With a strong financial stability outside of Twitch, a larger viewership, and being traditionally attractive, Sarah is able to maintain a strong viewership even with a non-traditional, mad scientist style of presentation on her channel. However, this is a topic that merits further research.

Mark and B, a Latino cis man and a genderqueer Brazilian, respectively, were the two streamers most interested in pursuing Twitch as a career; they were also faced with economic precarity, reflecting broader digital labor trends where low-income individuals and people of color are more likely to turn to digital work for their primary source of income (Shade 2014). There are aspects of labor on Twitch that should be interrogated more deeply.

Thus, gender performativity is an important component of gamification and generating rewards. It is carefully crafted and plays a role in digital labor and income-generation. Yet, those who are able to conform to "traditional" gender performativity through their audience interactions are more likely to reap the rewards. This is not to say that gender performativity that does not fit neatly into what is constructed as "traditional" cannot be rewarded, but streamers understand that they risk losing income or rewards if they push the limits too far. Thus, gender performativity must be thoughtfully cultivated and is not automatic. How much one can vary their non-traditional gender performativity depends on the degree of privilege they have at different intersections of their identity, including their socio-economic status. Interviewees who do not need the income from Twitch, for example, have more flexibility when crafting their performance, while those who have less income feel more constraints.

6.3. Gender in a Digital Institution: Hegemonic Constraints

Though Twitch is a strongly cisnormative space, where the streamers mostly strongly aligned with the hegemonic masculinity/femininity are most likely to have greater success. Multiple streamers made statements attesting to success is based on ideas of hegemonic views of masculinity and femininity, reflecting broader understandings of the internet as a digital institution that structures social interaction. Though all the cis streamers did not find their own gender identity to have any influence on their streaming, gender still influenced the way they thought about and interacted with the platform. For example, one of the streamers I interviewed, Mabel, stated, "Intentionally, no, so unintentionally, I think the fact that I'm a female attracts more viewers. And I think it's usually just the men who pop in and talk to a female, or maybe just kind of watch a female." Sarah says something similar, saying, " I think maybe new viewers coming in tend to have a more positive initial impression of me than they maybe would if I were

a dude. But that's probably about it. I haven't really." This indicates that female streamers, if they aren't written off as a "titty streamer" (Ruberg et al, 2019), may be seen by some (male) viewers as more of novelty, or seen as more worth a watch compared to a male streamer who plays similar games. It should be noted that Mabel plays shooters, horror games, and older platformers, while Sarah plays more adventure style games. For example, several streamers believe that men do better on Twitch because men appear to be more competitive and skilled and that there are assumptions about female streamers playing "cozy games" (games focused more on affect, crafting, and building over combat) instead of competitive games, reflecting the broader gamer identity that privileges aggressive masculinity over other forms of "feminine" gaming (Shaw 2011, Dargonaki 2018). Junes, a cis man who plays primarily "cozy" games, believes that the cozy gamer category tends to have more queer streamers, more so than first-person shooters, which is often aligned with masculinity. Streaming in this category for Junes has had its drawbacks, describing an incident where a random viewer came into his stream to call him a homophobic slur, leading to Junes timing them out for the channel[8]. In addition, due to Junes' less masculine channel focus, an outside viewer targeted him for his perceived sexuality. Although Junes is a heterosexual cis man, he was targeted for his channel is focused on a more feminine style of game, reflecting the marginalized status of femininity within video game culture (Paaßen et al. 2016) as well as hostility within the video game subculture towards LGBT identity, real or imagined (Cote 2017, 137).

Tags like "Trans*" and "safe space," established on Twitch with good intentions, can also target Trans* streamers. Rory knows that putting those tags on his streamer profile makes him more open to harassment (having received Trans*phobic harassment in the past), but he

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[8] Timing out is a moderation option, where similar to a time out punishment, temporarily removes a viewer for an amount of time.

mentioned that he is yet to be hate raided. Despite these issues, there are systems to mitigate these issues. The most prominent type of mitigation is moderation, either through the streamer or moderation, either through A.I. or another individual on stream. Though auto-moderation was helpful for all the streamers involved, some found it would backfire. For example, Junes described a time when his audience was sharing Pokémon Go codes, which are a random assortment of numbers. One individual could not share their code because it contains the number 1488, which was flagged because of those numbers also being an antisemitic dog whistle (ADL 2020). B mentioned that as a queer streamer, he and his chat talk frankly about issues of sexuality and gender throughout streamers. However, this triggers the auto-moderation for audio and chat, censoring the discussion. Even though the auto-moderation is meant to protect streamers and viewers from harassment, it can affect censoring those it has meant to protect.

Harassment occurs between interactions on the platform, between individuals in chat, an individual towards the streamer, and sometimes a streamer towards an individual. In the last case, this is the experience of Streamers like Kat (a Trans* woman in her early 30s) described above. In Kat's case, she received jokes about her gender identity from another audience member, which received inaction from the streamer she was viewing, leaving her uncomfortable. Sarah relayed her explanation describing a similar situation where an individual in a stream chat she was viewing was using slurs targeting those with mental disabilities stating,

"Um, I've heard people using the R-word slur to describe other streamers' actions in a game and was disappointed When the streamer did not take any moderation actions toward that person. It was kind of an adversarial relationship where the one viewer was like they had all these badges for being the hype train leader, top bits donator, so they throw a lot of money at the streamer. So maybe that's why the streamer felt like they needed to put up with this shitty behavior or something."

This behavior takes the idea of the prosumer, an individual part of an economic system focused on participation, and flips it around (Pybus 2013). While prosumers are typically a focus of

digital marketers, prosumers in Twitch are those who, by participating more heavily on a stream, can hold power economically over a streamer through donations, bits, and subscriptions.

Though harassment on this platform is not strictly gendered, it does have a marked tendency to target gender and sexual identities, like the Trans*phobic harassment experienced by B, Kat, and Rory and the harassment Junes received regarding his (perceived) sexuality. B also described harassment based on his accent and that other streamers, especially eastern European streamers, described that harassment as harsher than her own. Harassment is a persistent issue in live streaming, with women and queer streamers often receiving the most harassment. Though during this research, neither Mabel nor Sarah described any significant harassment targeting them due to their gender. Harassment may differ based on the size of an individual's stream, but through this research, Trans* streamers seem targeted for harassment.

Despite the harassment Trans* streamers face, they all found their stream as a chance to develop a safe community for Trans* viewers. For example, Rory, a Trans* man from the U.K., incorporates his identity and Trans* identity within his stream, allowing viewers to share pronouns through an extension, and also uses the tags Trans* and safe space to be more welcoming while also acknowledging that it puts him in a position to get hate raided.[9]. B, the V-Tuber from Brazil, uses the same extension to allow his audience to choose their pronouns, avoiding the "male as default" attitude of Twitch. Though Kat came to her gender identity separate from beginning her streaming career but found it presented her a unique opportunity stating,

"I quickly realized how marginalized specifically the Trans*gender community is not just in the U.S., but worldwide. So I decided to put the tag on. I realized that the color scheme had picked

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[9] A raid is when one streamer sends their audience to another streamer as they end a stream, often friends or collaborators. A hate raid weaponizes this system and often involves bots programmed to spam comments, often involving hate speech (Twitch.tv. n.d. "How to Use Raids." Customer Support. Retrieved April 3, 2023 (https://help.twitch.tv/s/article/how-to-use-raids?language=en_US).

for my stream overlays, and everything was extremely Trans*gender. It's like, I wonder where that came from. This is a common thing, but yeah, anyhow, I decided to be open about it because I know that for years, decades of my life. I just thought there was something wrong with me and that something was broken inside. Once I came to the realization and experienced a clarity of mind that came with accepting and understanding who and what I am, I determined to be very, very public about a process and that identity so that others who may not have acceptance or a positive example of that in their lives and to look and think and be encouraged and not feel alone. So I guess it's my identity as a streamer a little bit."

Through discovering her Trans* identity, Kat decided to develop her stream as an open and proud space for Trans* people. Though her streaming and her Trans*ition coincidentally started around the same time, Kat, like B and Rory, uses their stream to develop a community. However, for streamers like B, who exist within a different context regarding gender identity and geographical location, care must go into crafting communities. Though B is open about being Trans* and raised as a woman, he asked his audience not to correct new viewers out of safety concerns.

Twitch, as a platform, is structured to direct audiences around through tags and raids. Though both features are value-neutral and are meant to find streamers with similar interests and grow audiences, they are easily weaponized. Tagging is one of the built-in mechanisms of communication and networking on Twitch. Through Twitch's tagging system, streamers tag the type of content they produce and the specific identities they hold around themselves. The Twitch system of tagging was developed after the creation of Peer2Peer, which was created by marginalized streamers to find streamers of similar backgrounds and experiences more efficiently. Though the tagging system is very useful for networking, several streamers acknowledged issues with this system. For example, Sarah, an activist for vision impairment in video games, was frustrated by the "blind" tag being overtaken by blind playthroughs, leaving blind and vision-impaired streamers to create a tag to represent their community. Though these

tags were implemented to create a more welcoming and communal space for viewers and streamers alike, it has also been weaponized as a tool of harassment.

In sum, gender is not simply about interpersonal interactions, but is embedded in the very structure of Twitch. As twitch is a part of the larger institution of the Internet, gender is not only policed by those people in the institutional space, but by the institution itself. Coding, auto-moderation, tagging, even the filters are embedded with a particular understanding of gender and identity. Twitch structures gender, cisnormativity, and heteronormativity, which is built right into the code and reifies the traditional gender hierarchy. However, Twitch as an institutional space, it does not do this evenly. As Twitch evolves, so does its programming, coding, and moderation, even though at its core, site builders constructed twitch with their understanding of gender in mind. Part of these changes or the unevenness of structuring gender on the site itself is through the iterative interaction between streamers at the micro level and more macro-level institution space. Streamers can draw on tags, filters, and circumvent moderation that Twitch provides to push back, create more inclusive spaces, and challenge gender norms. Twitch augments its offerings in response albeit slowly and sometimes in disjointed ways.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

Becoming a successful streamer on Twitch.tv is tied strongly to ideas of class and gender. I argued that the closer an individual adheres to normative understandings of gender, the more positive a relationship the individual would have with both the platform and their audience. However, due to automation of most interactions with Twitch, and with most streamers having a core audience, these relationships were generally neutral, though Trans* streamers were markedly faced with harassment compared to their cis counterparts. However, to economically

succeed on Twitch, having prior sources of income makes it easier to succeed on the platform, and reflects prior research that digital spaces and digital labor, where individuals are more likely to have work outside of traditional forms of labor within competitive labor pools (Kane and Jasserand 2019, 486). However, for many streamers, personal success is not measured by monetary success but is defined more interpersonally than economically. For these streamers, live streaming has much more intrinsic than extrinsic value. Though several streamers like Mark, Mabel, and B were interested in streaming as a primary occupation, even the most successful streamer, Sarah, saw streaming as a hobby. However, streaming still has a valuable role in their lives, with community building, expression, or activism being important motivations on the platform, particularly with Trans* streamers, echoing Freeman and Guo (2020). A focus on community and empowerment instead of audience growth has been seen in prior research focusing on women and LGBTQ streamers (Freeman and Wohn 2020). However, this study shows that community building is a key aspect to Trans* streamers in a way that it is not central to the cis women interviewed. This provides more nuance to Freeman and Wohn's (2020) findings. The gendered strategies for coping and combating sexual harassment, sexism, and misogyny differ among cis-women and Trans* and non-binary streamers because they experience those challenges differently.

The barriers between the interpersonal, labor, and the technological are often very thin on Twitch with its unique blend of social networking, passion connecting, and video connection sites (Luttrell and Wallace 2021, 6-7). Through the course of this research, there is still much to learn about the social significance of Twitch, not only within experiences discussed here, gender, labor, and digital spaces, but also more in-depth research about harassment on the platform seems like a future avenue, considering the emotional, psychological, and sometimes even

physical effects of harassment on the platform. Though this research follows a more substantive approach, future research regarding Twitch should also incorporate a theoretical focus. Twitch is a very complex platform, one where rules change constantly, popularity ebbs and flows, and millions of hours of content are streaming concurrently. It is a platform used worldwide by millions of people and should have more focus within sociology, like TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook.

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9. Appendix

9. 1 Interview Guide Draft

Basic Demographics

1.   How old are you?

2.   What race do you identify most with?

3.   What gender do you identify most with?

4.   What about sexual orientation?

5.   What class would you consider yourself?

Twitch.tv Streaming

6.   Why do you stream? (Left intentionally vague)

7.   How often do you stream?

8.   When do you generally stream (i.e. what time of day do you stream?)

8.   How long have you been streaming?

9.   How much do you enjoy streaming?

10. Do you do Twitch as an occupation? Yes or no?

    a.   Part-time or Full Time?

11. Do you make any money through Twitch (will likely be asked later on during the interviewing process)?

    a.   If so, how much would you say you make?

    b.   In what way do you make the most income on Twitch? Bits, etc?`

12. What type of media do you stream (such as video games, art, tabletop gaming, chatting, etc.)?

    a.   What type of content does best for views on your channel?

13. Do you try to play the most popular games at the time?

    a.   If yes, why?

        b.   If not, what do you play?

14. Do you theme your channel to any content?

15. Do you have to moderate your channel?

16. Do you moderate yourself, or do you hire moderators?

17. Have you ever been approached by major or minor sponsors?

        a.   If yes, have you worked with them in any capacity?

18. (If offered sponsor deals) What kind of sponsor deals are you offered? Why do you think they approached you?

19. Emotionally, how would you describe how you feel after streaming?

20. Would you consider yourself an entrepreneur?

        a.   Why or why not?

21. Do you consider yourself to be creative? How so?

Audience Interactions

22.   How many subscribers do you have?

23.   How many followers do you have?

24.   How would you describe the attitude of your audience in chat?

25.   What is your relationship with your audience?

        a.   Have you ever felt stressed by your audience?

        b.   Have you ever been proud of your audience?

26.   Do you ever recall when your audience was upset or frustrated with you?

        a.   Do you know why?

27.   How has your audience reacted to you having technical issues?

        a.   Are they supportive?

               i.   If not, how did they react?

28.   Have you ever had rude or aggressive audience members in chat?

        a.   If yes, do you remember anything of what they said?

b. Do you remember why they acted that way?

c. Who was that chat member targeting? You or another chat member?

d. How did this make you feel?

e. Why do you think they behaved this way?

29. Have you ever had very positive audience members in chat?

a. Do you remember anything of what they said?

b. Do you remember why they were so positive?

c. Were they just generally positive or targeting their positivity towards you or someone in chat?

d. How did this make you feel?

e. Why do you think they behaved this way?

Skill Building

30. How did you learn the skills for Twitch streaming beforehand?

a. Were you self-taught?

b. Did you take lessons?

31. Have you had to learn these skills on your own?

32. What software/hardware do you use?

a. Do you use Streamlabs OBS or similar software?

b. Do you own a Stream Desk or similar hardware?

33. How did you pay for all your equipment?

a. Did you have financial help?

34. Is your twitch channel successful?

a. Will it be successful in the future?

b. What would you consider being successful for your channel?

35. Do you talk to other streamers about streaming?

a. If so, what do you talk about?

36. What kind of work do you consider as a backup?

37. How often do you have to deal with technical issues?

38. Does Twitch help with these issues?

39. Can twitch help with these issues, or can these issues only be fixed by you?

Gender

40. Do you consider your gender identity to factor into your streaming?

      a.   Why or why not?

41. Do you ever think about your gender identity when you stream?

42. How about your sexual orientation?

      a.   Why or why not?

43. Have you ever felt Twitch treated you differently because of your gender or sexuality?

44. Have you ever felt your audience has treated you differently because of your gender or sexuality?

45. Do you feel like you must act in a certain way with your gender identity? (Do not use this exact wording)

46. Have you ever got messages from Twitch or an audience member about changing your clothes or appearance?

47. Have you ever received comments where individuals compliment your appearance or clothes?

48. Have you ever received comments where individuals insult or criticize your appearance or clothes?

Authenticity and Streaming

49. Do you see your audience as friends or fans?

      a.   Why is that?

50. Do you consider your streaming persona to be authentic?

      a.   Do you ever feel like you are pressured to be authentic?

51. Do you plan to make live streaming your occupation?

52. Is making money as a streamer important to you?

      a.   Why or why not?

53. Do you feel like you play a character or fictional version of yourself?

      a. If so, why is that?

      b. How does it make you feel?

54. Do you find that the labor behind streaming can be stressful?

      a.   Does it cause feelings of burnout?

55. How many followers do you have?

56. How many subscribers do you have?

57. Have you ever thought about your status as a Twitch streamer?

      a.   Do you feel like you have any status on the platform?

58. What do you do to try and get new fans?

59. What have your interactions (if any) been like regarding Twitch (i.e streamer support staff, etc)?

    a. Would you consider them positive or negative? Why or why not?

9.2 Twitch.tv Research Interest Survey

1. Are you a Twitch streamer?

   a. Yes

   b.   No (answering no ends the survey)

Demographic Information

1. Do you make some or all of your income through Twitch streaming?

2. What gender do you most identify with?

   a. Cis woman

   b. Cis man

   c. Transgender oman

   d. Transgender Man

   e. Non-Binary

3. How many followers do you have?

   a. (Allow the respondent to respond with their amount of followers as a short answer)

4. How long have you been streaming?

   a. Less than six months

   b. Six months to a year

   c.   A year or longer

Are you interested in being interviewed?

If so, leave your professional/business email here (responses will be kept confidential).