

3 Mental Health Live: An Ethnographic Study of the Mental Health of Twitch Streamers during COVID

Kelli N. Dunlap, Marie Shanley, and Jocelyn Wagner

Introduction

From the earliest days of JenniCam (Taylor 2018) to current Twitch channels, streamers (i.e., live web broadcasters) have used their broadcasting platforms to connect socially with others and share personal mental health experiences. However, the mental well-being of streamers themselves has been a recent topic of discussion. In the late 2010s, games journalism began to feature articles about the stressors of being a streamer. These articles largely consisted of interviews with famous streamers who shared their personal experiences of intense stress and burnout due to the demands of the job (Grayson 2019; Alexander 2018; Howley 2017; Reynolds 2019).

Scholars have likewise examined streamer mental health through a variety of lenses, including the affective (emotional) labor involved in live streaming (Ruberg and Cullen 2020; Senft 2008; Taylor 2018; Woodcock and Johnson 2019); the affordances of being a streamer with chronic health issues, including mental illness (Johnson 2019); and the impact of micro-celebrity and influencers discussing their own mental health on streams (LaMastra et al. 2020; Taylor 2018).

Streamer Stressors and Mental Health

Despite recognition of significant mental health stressors on streamers, the vast majority of research has focused on viewers (Taylor 2018). Given the parasocial relationships between streamers and their audiences, however, viewer-centered research can clarify the unique stressors faced by streamers. For example, Twitch, the most popular live streaming platform in North America, is frequently used by viewers to find emotional support and social connection online. Community and belongingness are core motivations

for Twitch viewers, and the engagement between a streamer and the community plays a larger role in stream viewership than content being broadcast (de Wit, van der Kraan, and Theeuwes 2020).

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, Twitch communities have provided an essential social service by keeping people connected. Increases in depression, anxiety, loneliness, and reduced social support are common adverse mental health impacts experienced during COVID-19 (Asmundson and Taylor 2020; Courtet et al. 2020; Reger, Stanley, and Joiner 2020). However, social bonding through collective gatherings has been shown to provide protective psychological effects in times of tragedy and crisis (Hawdon and Ryan 2011; Paez et al. 2015; Rennung and Goritz 2015). Because of the labor of streamers, Twitch communities continue to be able to provide opportunities for bonding, group gathering, processing of shared pain and emotion, and social support, despite social distancing and lockdown procedures. Ultimately, the stability and effectiveness of online streaming communities as psychologically protective and supportive environments depend on the well-being of the streamer. To understand why, even before COVID, Twitch streaming communities frequently served as places for peer mental health support, one must understand the current state of mental health services.

Mental Health in the US

Before COVID-19, 7.7 million (16 percent) American children and 47 million (19 percent) American adults met criteria for at least one mental illness (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2019; Whitney and Peterson 2019), and the majority did not receive therapeutic intervention (National Alliance on Mental Illness 2019). On average, only 43 percent of those who meet criteria for a psychological disorder obtain treatment (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2019).

In August 2020, after five months of social distancing and lockdown, anxiety and depression—the two most common types of mental illness (National Alliance on Mental Illness 2019)—were three and four times higher, respectively, compared to the same time period during the previous year (Czeisler et al. 2020). Between January 2020 and September 2020, the number of people seeking help for anxiety rose 634 percent, and the number seeking support for depression rose 873 percent (Nguyen et al. 2020).

Not only were more people experiencing mental illness symptoms, they were experiencing greater symptom severity (Mental Health America

2021; Nguyen et al. 2020). Suicidality was also at an all-time high; 37 percent reported having suicidal thoughts almost every day, with the highest rates reported by LGBTQ+ youth (Mental Health America 2021). The shortage of mental health providers pre-COVID was already problematic, with only about 25 percent of people who requested services receiving them (America's Mental Health Rankings 2020). Although the shift from primarily in person to nearly 100 percent telemedicine has reduced geographical and proximity barriers to treatment,¹ there were not nearly enough providers to meet the pre-COVID need for services, much less the massive increase in demand since March 2020.

Given the general shortage of mental health professionals, the significant systemic barriers to treatment (e.g., cost, insurance, location, and stigma; Andrade et al. 2014), and the predictable yet still alarming spike in requests for mental health services (Panchal et al. 2021), it is not surprising that people have sought nontraditional resources, like streamers and streaming communities, for mental health support.

Streaming, Mental Health, and COVID

As discussed previously, the intersection of mental health and streaming has generally existed since the mid-1990s and “officially” recognized by the creation of a searchable “mental health” tag on Twitch in 2018 (Robertson 2018). Prior to tags, Twitch had a “community” feature to help users find like-minded streamers, one of which was Cast Together, a group of more than twenty Twitch streamers who were open and willing to talk about their own mental health experiences (Speedy 2017). These are just a few examples of the ways in which, prior to the pandemic, Twitch and its community were attempting to accommodate the use of the platform as a place for mental health support.

In April 2019, Twitch reported 4.2 million active streamers on the platform and 889 million hours of content viewed that month (TwitchTracker 2021). In April 2020, the numbers skyrocketed to 7.2 million active streamers and 1.8 billion hours watched. This massive increase in engagement on Twitch is attributed to the majority of the US population being under stay-at-home orders and other lockdown measures, such as the cancellation of professional sporting events (Koeze and Popper 2020).

In this chapter, we explore how this spike in viewership has affected streamer well-being. Do more people at home spending more hours viewing

lead to rising numbers in streamers' chats, and does that translate into financial stability? Or does the economic impact of the pandemic lead to less financial security by decreasing the ability of viewers to donate, subscribe, or otherwise monetarily support streamers? Has an increase in the number of streamers driven up perceived (or actual) competition? Has the potential for self-imposed pressure to stream more often or for longer hours intensified? What effects do the increased frequency of emotionally charged in-chat conversations or the deaths of community members have on streamers? Do they feel a greater responsibility for the mental health and well-being of community members? It is these crucial questions that we will seek to address in the coming pages.

Studying Streamers' Mental Health

To answer the questions posed here, we decided that the best approach would be to ask streamers about their experiences directly. The goal of the study was twofold. First, we wanted to understand if streamers were experiencing an increase in mental health–related content in their streams and chats and, if so, how this increase affected streamers' mental well-being. Second, we wanted to create a list of recommendations for improving support of streamers' mental health in ways that are both accessible and easy to understand by the larger streaming community.

We began by recruiting participants via Discord and Twitter, by asking them to complete a brief survey. Sixty-two Twitch streamers completed the initial screen for inclusion in the study. Because we were interested in understanding the effects of the pandemic on streaming experiences, we required participants to be active currently, as well as prior to the emergence of COVID. Of the fifty-two streamers who met those criteria, twenty-three responded to direct contact from researchers, and ultimately nineteen completed interviews between September 18 and October 15, 2020. See table 3.1 for a demographic breakdown of the streamers who participated in the study.

Using Zoom, itself a live streaming platform, we conducted a series of semi-structured interviews, which were then transcribed, anonymized, and assigned an alpha-numeric label (e.g., K4 or M1) to maintain participants' confidentiality. By employing a qualitative methodology, we systematically attempted to gain insight into the rich and complex experiences affecting

Table 3.1
Participant demographics

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

streamers' mental wellness. Four major themes emerged from our analysis, and we explore each of them in depth in the coming sections.

Streamers Serve as Frontline Mental Health Responders

Viewers routinely seek out streamers and community spaces where they feel a sense of connection, belongingness, and psychological safety, and pandemic restrictions have only intensified the need for these kinds of community connections.

Throughout the interviews, streamers noted an increase in their Twitch chats and private Discord channels regarding this kind of community engagement. They reported seeing more real-life content coming up in chats, and many noted increases in sharing personal struggles, such as emotional difficulties or financial troubles. Despite frequently voicing the sentiment “I’m not your therapist,” many streamers disclosed that they felt responsible for maintaining the health and well-being of viewers in their streams. K3 described it as follows: “A lot of people use you as a tool to help them deal with whatever they’re going through, just by watching. You don’t have to be a therapist to have empathy . . . or remind somebody that

they're not alone." Similarly, many streamers expressed feeling the obligation to be "on" and available for the needs of the community at all times. J3 summarized: "You're leading a community, you're leading people, and so you have this responsibility to help them to be around for them," and J2 put it even more succinctly: "I'm here for my community, we're gonna get through this together."

Compared to pre-COVID, streamers shared that the frequency of crisis events—ones that prompt the streamer or the moderation team to connect viewers to professional services—increased during quarantine.

This increase in frequency and intensity reported by streamers mirrors the experience of mental health professionals during COVID. The demand for mental health services increased 52 percent since the start of the pandemic (National Council for Behavioral Health 2020) and, much like streamers, therapists have been struggling to meet the demand. In addition, like therapists, streamers are holding space for an ongoing trauma that they themselves are experiencing in real time (Madani 2020). Comments made by streamers were often uncomfortably similar to comments made by mental health professionals speaking to the experience of being a therapist during COVID.

Streamers Are Struggling to Find Balance

Difficulty finding balance between the demands of streaming and the demands of offline life is not new for streamers (Alexander 2018; Stokel-Walker 2018; Wiltshire 2019). However, COVID poses additional and unique challenges. Most of the streamers interviewed commented on the need to find balance between their own mental wellness and the wellness of their community. The differentiation between the needs of the self and the needs of the community created tension, especially in those who expressed feeling responsible for maintaining the health and well-being of their community. Several streamers mentioned feeling that they had to mask their own mental health struggles to appear strong for their communities. M1 vividly described the experience: "Oh God, it feels like there's a lot of pressure to not be a human being and just be an entertainer. I feel like any time I have any sort of an emotional reaction on the stream, I'm just supposed to hide it because all my viewers need a distraction, and I'm supposed to be that distraction." This sentiment of needing to be "always on" and present a cheery front was directly stated by 53 percent of participants. Several

streamers stated that they had taken time off or streamed less as a way to manage their mental health.

Streamers Are Unsupported and Unprepared to Address Mental Health

Whether or not a streamer intends to address mental health issues on their stream, viewers use stream chats to meet their educational, social, and psychological needs. Streamers are frequently a touchpoint for persons managing a mental health issue, from feeling disconnected or lonely to struggling with symptoms of mental illness. Streamers expressed feeling ill-equipped to handle the increased frequency and intensity of mental health topics and concerns occurring in their streams, chats, and communities. Even streamers whose content focused on mental health and who identified as mental health advocates described feeling a sense of unease and self-doubt and a strong desire for guidance. In addition to frustration, streamers reported feeling overwhelmed and unsupported in terms of mental health resources, and all the interviewees expressed a desire for more mental health education, information, and resources.

Streamers and Their Communities Are Resilient

Social gatherings facilitate bonding and enhance cohesion and social identity—a coming-together effect that provides mutual support during times of crisis (Rennung and Goritz 2015). Collective gatherings, especially public ones, during or following a tragedy amplify solidarity within a community by providing a venue for socially acceptable outpouring of emotion, acknowledging that the tragedy is a collective grief rather than an individual loss, and reminding community members that they are not alone in their grief (Doka 2003). Each stream is a public-facing collective gathering for members of a community and contains the ingredients required for fostering solidarity during difficult times. Some streamers viewed their role in the pandemic as one of providing distraction and entertainment, and yet their streams and chat still allowed viewers the opportunity to feel connected, bonded, and not isolated in their sadness or grief. There is also evidence to suggest that maintaining regular activities, such as a regularly scheduled stream, is helpful. “While one may find it difficult to continue with mundane everyday activities, these activities bring people together, promote solidarity, and enhance recovery” (Hawdon and Ryan 2011, 138).

In addition to the comfort and normalcy of scheduled streams, larger-scale events such as fundraising marathons or live streamed memorials reinforce traditional rituals for coping with grief and loss; “ritual reaffirms community” (Doka 2003, 180). Rituals for processing grief help individual pain be processed as a collective experience and grow into a sense of solidarity, pride, hope, and resolve—the foundations of resilience and recovery (Hawdon and Ryan 2011). During the interviews, J5 shared a particularly striking example of this principle in action. In mid-2020, one of J5’s moderators died by suicide:

We put a memorial service together for her . . . we literally held it in Animal Crossing. We were just running around on Animal Crossing on an island, having a memorial service because I think that closure is really important and grieving and all that, and with COVID and stuff like we can’t go to funerals and it’s not like we were all close enough with her family . . . it would have felt intrusive to ask for an invite to the Zoom funeral and stuff like that, so we just did our own thing.

It’s clear that streamers have noticed an influx in the frequency and intensity of psychological distress in their communities and have largely used their roles as community leaders to provide space for social connection and mutual support. Overall, these themes align with previous research on resilience and coping during times of crisis, despite taking place entirely in digital spaces. However, the role of community leader comes with a cost. In taking care of their communities, streamers often feel emotionally taxed or overwhelmed and lack adequate support and resources for themselves. Recommendations for improving mental health support in the streaming community are addressed next.

Implications for Improving Streamer Mental Health

We asked all our participants what mental health resources they used most frequently while streaming or in their streaming communities, and what resources they wished were available. From their rich responses, we identified three key categories of requests for resources, which we elucidate in the next sections, along with our recommendations and reflections.

Make Sharing and Connecting to Resources Easier for Everyone

Streamers largely do their own legwork to put together resources for their community and educating themselves about mental health. One major

obstacle in accessing and sharing resources was a perceived lack of those resources. While the resources they require, such as mental health tip sheets and therapist directories, already exist, they are not present in spaces where streamers know to look. For example, the TwitchCares document, which is hosted by Twitch and provides dozens of links to mental health information and resources, was largely unknown to the streamers. As M1 stated, “I had no idea that the TwitchCare page existed; I kind of wish that maybe that was more visible.”

Similarly, coordination between smaller, game- and streaming-specific organizations and large mental health entities to create and promote content relevant to streamers on a national platform would likely have a positive impact on the well-being of live stream communities. Finally, by improving the visibility of TwitchCares and rolling out related mental health features (e.g., platformwide chat commands that refer to reliable mental health resources), Twitch itself could ease much of the friction for accessing these important services.

Provide Alternatives to Hotlines and Links

As K3 eloquently stated, “Everybody’s kind of tired of just being sent to a website or to a phone line.” There is a strong desire for more personal and warm handoffs between streamers and viewers; streamers want to know that their viewers and community members are being taken care of. While referral to emergency hotlines is the correct course of action when someone is in crisis, most incidents that streamers reported involved viewers who were in need of supportive, long-term services, and for whom a crisis hotline was not appropriate.

As addressed in the introduction of this chapter, the US mental health marketplace is excessively complicated and largely inaccessible. Changing the mental health system is not within the purview of Twitch or streamers, but it is what streamers are reacting to when they express frustration at not being able to connect viewers to services. Nonetheless, there are still opportunities for improvement. Platforms like Twitch could establish partnerships with local, state-level mental health organizations, especially those that provide free or reduced-cost services. Similarly, they might expand and amplify less-known mental health resources, such as warmlines and peer-support organizations. Finally, Twitch could take a more proactive approach by emailing each streamer upon signup (or upon reaching the level of

Affiliate or Partner) with a list of mental health partner organizations where they can find additional support.

Offer More Psychoeducation, Training, and Professional Support

Most streamers requested training on mental health streaming topics such as coping with harassment, parasocial relationships, and setting boundaries. Professionally developed resources should focus on enabling streamers to feel competent and confident, from providing appropriate resources to acting as a mental health advocate. Streamers also expressed significant interest in connecting with mental health advocates and professionals to ask for advice on mental health and streaming issues.

Programs providing didactic training and mental health mentorship for streamers exist, though not without significant limitations. Some programs limit their services to partnered streamers (Kelly 2021), excluding the vast majority of streamers. Other programs keep trainings and resources behind paywalls (Guardians Mental Health, n.d.) or charge for peer support (HealthyGamer, n.d.). While there isn't anything inherently unethical about a business limiting or charging for services, it does create barriers (e.g., financial, status)—largely the same barriers that make accessing mental health care so challenging.

Some streamers have begun to fill in the gap themselves. Most are self-described mental health advocates, individuals who have undergone some level of training or have a background in mental health. Some streamers are licensed mental health professionals and integrate their expertise into their streams. However, if streamers hold advanced degrees or licensure in mental health, use those credentials as part of their streaming brand, and then also engage in providing professional individualized opinions on stream, then the likelihood of misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and risk of harm to viewers is high:

If it even comes across in the media, or in a video session like Dr. Phil that what you're doing is therapy, that's potentially a problem because you're misconstruing or misleading people into thinking that this entertainment situation is actually representative of what mental health professionals do. (Warren, n.d.)

For example, it is ethical for a psychologist on a television show to talk about symptoms of depression and provide general education. However, it is unethical for a psychologist to make recommendations about a person's specific depression, provide a diagnosis, or suggest a specific course of

treatment (e.g., seek cognitive behavioral therapy). The same holds true for mental health professionals on Twitch.

Unfortunately, some streamers openly dispense medical advice on-stream, such as diagnosing their guests or making specific treatment recommendations (Limbong 2021). This is especially dangerous coming from people who present themselves as mental health authorities. Even off the clock, mental health professionals have an ethical obligation to avoid causing harm and to comport themselves in line with ethical guidelines (Haeny 2014).

Given the complexity of these concerns, platforms should collaborate with reputable, nonprofit mental health organizations, as well as experts in curriculum development, to create openly accessible webinars, trainings, and educational content that strengthen streamers' skills and competencies in mental health. Likewise, they should coordinate with recognized and accredited mental health services that specialize in peer support to develop peer-counseling programs. Twitch would be well advised to partner with recognized and accredited peer-support providers to embed access to these programs within the platform itself using in-chat commands. Similarly, the site should avoid partnering with or promoting streamers who attempt to provide therapy, therapeutic services, or medical advice on-stream. Accredited mental health organizations ought to develop initiatives with the purpose of reaching out to the streamer community and provide evidence-based education and training on mental health basics and peer support.

Conclusion

Prior to the pandemic, the mental health impact on streamers was frequently categorized as "stressed," "burned out," and "exhausted." However, the spike in engagement on Twitch following the pandemic underscored the urgency of exploring the ways in which increasing demands from viewership affect streamers' mental health. While streamers had publicly reported more engagement in their streams, especially in-chat discussion of significant real-life issues faced by their community, including financial, social, and emotional stressors, this study has brought deeper understanding of the impact of the pandemic on their mental well-being.

Twitch streamers experience a wide range of stressors that are occurring with greater frequency and intensity compared to pre-COVID times. Stressors include financial instability, loss of income opportunities, the deaths

of community members, perceived increases in demands on their time and emotional resources, more emotionally charged community interactions, and a sense of needing to “be there” or “put on a strong face,” often at the expense of their own well-being. Streamers are frequently finding themselves in situations like that of mental health first responders: directing people in crisis to appropriate resources, facilitating discussions about emotionally heavy topics, and providing social support to members of their community. Unfortunately, many streamers do not have the training or knowledge to effectively manage these situations and feel overwhelmed, anxious, and unprepared. Streamers feel isolated in their roles as leaders and responsible for the health of their communities, despite lacking their own support systems.

There is a serious and significant disconnect between the mental health resources that currently exist and streamers’ awareness of these resources. Improved communication and promotion of existing resources, whether via outreach campaigns or through Twitch directly, are clearly needed. This study emphasizes the need for improved education, communication, and support around mental health and mental illness.

Streamers collect and distribute mental health resources and information, while simultaneously acting as frontline social support for their communities. Their individual efforts make a difference, but it shouldn’t be on them alone. Mental health organizations and streaming platforms must work together to lighten the emotional and mental load. Despite the general availability of mental health information and education, the awareness and accessibility of resources that are relevant to streamers and are viewed as trustworthy and accessible by streamers are severely limited. Investing in the well-being of streamers and their communities at the professional level—from streaming platforms to mental health organizations—presents a significant opportunity to circumvent traditional obstacles to care and positively affect mental health on a massive scale.

Note

1. One of the most significant barriers to treatment is accessibility. A total of 77 percent of counties in the US have a shortage of mental health providers. Rural areas are particularly underserved, as 65 percent of nonmetropolitan counties do not have a single psychiatrist and 47 percent do not have a licensed psychologist (America’s Mental Health Rankings 2020).

References

- Alexander, J. 2018. "YouTubers, Twitch Streamers Are Opening Up about Serious Burnout, Personal Struggles." *Polygon*. Available at <https://polygon.com/2018/1/18/16899532/youtube-twitch-burnout-h3h3-pewdiepie-lirik>.
- America's Mental Health Rankings. 2020. "Public Health Impact: Mental Health Providers."
- Andrade, L. H., J. Alonso, Z. Mneimneh, J. E. Wells, A. Al-Hamzawi, G. Borges, et al. 2014. "Barriers to Mental Health Treatment: Results from the WHO World Mental Health Surveys." *Psychological Medicine* 44 (6): 1303–1317.
- Asmundson, G., and S. Taylor. 2020. "How Health Anxiety Influences Responses to Viral Outbreaks Like COVID-19: What All Decision-Makers, Health Authorities, and Health Care Professionals Need to Know." *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 71.
- Courtet, P., E. Olie, C. Debieu, and G. Vaiva. 2020. "Keep Socially (but Not Physically) Connected and Carry On: Preventing Suicide in the Age of COVID-19." *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 81.
- Czeisler, Mark É., Rashon I. Lane Ma, Emiko Petrosky, Joshua F. Wiley, Aleta Christensen, Rashid Njai, et al. 2020. "Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation during the COVID-19 Pandemic—United States, June 20–30, 20." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 69 (32): 1049–1057. Available at <https://cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/pdfs/mm6932a1-H.pdf>.
- de Wit, J., A. van der Kraan, and J. Theeuwes. 2020. "Live Streams on Twitch Help Viewers Cope with Difficult Periods in Life." *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11.
- Doka, K. 2003. "Memorialization, Ritual, and Public Tragedy." In *Coping with Tragedy*, edited by M. Lattanzi-Licht and K. Doka, 179–189.
- Grayson, N. 2019. "Facing Burnout, Stress, and Health Issues, Top Twitch Streamers Are Taking Extended Breaks." *Kotaku*. Available at <https://kotaku.com/facing-burnout-stress-and-health-issues-top-twitch-s-1839305834>.
- Guardians Mental Health. n.d. "Streamer Mental Health Kit." Available at <https://guardiansmh.org/streamer-mental-health-kit>.
- Haeny, A. M. 2014. "Ethical Considerations for Psychologists Taking a Public Stance on Controversial Issues: The Balance between Personal and Professional Life." *Ethics and Behavior* 24 (4): 265–278.
- Hawdon, J., and J. Ryan. 2011. "Social Relations That Generate and Sustain Solidarity after a Mass Tragedy." *Social Forces* 89 (4): 1363–1384.
- HealthyGamer. n.d. "HealthyGamer Coaching Platform." Available at <https://coaching.healthygamer.gg>.

Howley, D. 2017. "What It Takes to Play Video Games for a Living: Insane Hours and Extreme Stress." *Yahoo Finance*. Available at <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/takes-play-video-games-living-insane-hours-tons-stress-175515017.html>.

Johnson, Mark R. 2019. "Inclusion and Exclusion in the Digital Economy: Disability and Mental Health as a Live Streamer on Twitch.Tv." *Information, Communication & Society* 22 (4): 506–520.

Kelly, R. 2021. "No Title." <https://twitter.com/DrRKelly/status/1351775863927427074>.

Koeze, Ella, and Nathaniel Popper. 2020, April 7. "The Virus Changed the Way We Internet." *New York Times*. <https://nytimes.com/interactive/2020/04/07/technology/coronavirus-internetuse.html>.

LaMastra, N., J. Uttarapong, R. Gandhi, and C. Cook. 2020. "How a Live Streamer's Choice in Played Game Affects Mental Health Conversations." *CHI Play '20*.

Limbong, A. 2021. "To Help Gamers on Twitch, Dr. K Balances Mental Health Advice with Medical Ethics." *NPR*. <https://npr.org/2021/01/13/956315576/psychiatrist-criticized-for-addressing-mental-health-issues-on-twitch>.

Madani, D. 2020. "Therapists Are under Strain in COVID-19 Era, Counseling Clients on Trauma They're Also Experiencing Themselves." *NBC News*. <https://nbcnews.com/news/us-news/therapists-are-under-strain-covid-era-counseling-clients-trauma-they-n1230956>.

Mental Health America. 2021. "COVID 19 and Mental Health: A Growing Crisis."

National Alliance on Mental Illness. 2019. "Mental Illness by the Numbers."

National Council for Behavioral Health. 2020. "Demand for Mental Health and Addiction Services Increasing as COVID-19 Pandemic Continues to Threaten Availability of Treatment Options." Available at <https://thenationalcouncil.org/press-releases/demand-for-mental-health-and-addiction-services-increasing-as-covid-19-pandemic-continues-to-threaten-availability-of-treatment-options>.

Nguyen, M., M. Hellebuyck, M. Halpern, M. Reinert, and D. Fritze. 2020. "Lessons Learned from Online Depression Screening." Mental Health America. [https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/Lessons Learned From Online Depression Screening_0.pdf](https://mhanational.org/sites/default/files/Lessons%20Learned%20From%20Online%20Depression%20Screening_0.pdf).

Paez, D., B. Rime, N. Basabe, A. Wlodarczyk, and L. Zumeta. 2015. "Psychosocial Effects of Perceived Emotional Synchrony in Collective Gatherings." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 108 (5): 711–729.

Panchal, N., R. Kamal, C. Cox, and R. Garfield. 2021. "The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use | KFF." Kaiser Family Foundation. <https://www.kff.org/health-reform/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use>.

- Reger, M., I. Stanley, and T. Joiner. 2020. "Suicide Mortality and Coronavirus Disease 2019—A Perfect Storm?" *JAMA Psychiatry*.
- Rennung, M., and A. S. Goritz. 2015. "Facing Sorrow as a Group Unites. Facing Sorrow in a Group Divides." *PLoS ONE* 10 (9).
- Reynolds, E. 2019. "Twitch Streamers Are Burning Out from Acting as Shrinks to Their Fans." FFWD. Accessed August 14. <https://ffwd.medium.com/twitch-streamers-are-burning-out-from-acting-as-shrinks-to-their-fans-e6c8f3c25801>.
- Robertson, T. 2018. "Introducing Tags and New Categories: New Ways to Discover Streamers on Twitch." Twitch.tv. <https://blog.twitch.tv/en/2018/09/26/introducing-tags-and-new-categories-new-ways-to-discover-streamers-on-twitch-33744ef7b04f>.
- Ruberg, B., and A. Cullen. 2020. "Feeling for an Audience: The Gendered Emotional Labor of Video Game Live Streaming." *Digital Culture and Society* 5 (2): 133–148.
- Senft, T. 2008. *Camgirls: Celebrity and Community in the Age of Social Networks*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Speedy, M. 2017. "Cast Together: Streamers for Mental Health."
- Stokel-Walker, C. 2018, December 19. "Twitch Streamers Are Breaking Their Bodies for Clicks and View." *Wired*. <https://wired.co.uk/article/twitch-streamer-health-breaks-backpain>.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2019. *Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data>.
- Taylor, T. L. 2018. *Watch Me Play: Twitch and the Rise of Game Live Streaming*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- TwitchTracker. 2021. <https://twitchtracker.com/statistics>.
- Warren, C. n.d. "Zur Institute Continuing Education." In *Ethics of Media Interactions for Mental Health Professionals*. Sebastopol, CA: Zur Institute.
- Whitney, D. G., and M. D. Peterson. 2019. "US National and State-Level Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders and Disparities of Mental Health Care Use in Children." *JAMA Pediatrics* 173 (4): 389–391.
- Wiltshire, A. 2019, November. "What Does It Take to Make a Living on Twitch?" *PC Gamer*.
- Woodcock, J., and M. R. Johnson. 2019. "The Affective Labor and Performance of Live Streaming on Twitch.tv." *Television & New Media* 20 (8): 813–823.

This is a section of [doi:10.7551/mitpress/14526.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/14526.001.0001)

Real Life in Real Time

Live Streaming Culture

Edited by: Johanna Brewer, Bo Ruberg, Amanda L. L. Cullen, Christopher J. Persaud

Citation:

Real Life in Real Time: Live Streaming Culture

Edited by: Johanna Brewer, Bo Ruberg, Amanda L. L. Cullen, Christopher J. Persaud

DOI: 10.7551/mitpress/14526.001.0001

ISBN (electronic): 9780262374750

Publisher: The MIT Press

Published: 2023

The open access edition of this book was made possible by generous funding and support from MIT Press Direct to Open



The MIT Press

© 2023 Massachusetts Institute of Technology

This work is subject to a Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND license.

Subject to such license, all rights are reserved.



The MIT Press would like to thank the anonymous peer reviewers who provided comments on drafts of this book. The generous work of academic experts is essential for establishing the authority and quality of our publications. We acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of these otherwise uncredited readers.

This book was set in Stone Serif and Stone Sans by Westchester Publishing Services.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Brewer, Johanna (Johanna Marie), editor. | Ruberg, Bonnie, 1985– editor. | Cullen, Amanda L. L., editor. | Persaud, Christopher J., editor.

Title: Real life in real time : live streaming culture / edited by Johanna Brewer, Bo Ruberg, Amanda L.L. Cullen and Christopher J. Persaud.

Description: Cambridge, Massachusetts : The MIT Press, [2023] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022043004 (print) | LCCN 2022043005 (ebook) | ISBN 9780262545655 (paperback) | ISBN 9780262374767 (epub) | ISBN 9780262374750 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Live streaming—Social aspects. | Social media.

Classification: LCC HM851 .R4322 2023 (print) | LCC HM851 (ebook) | DDC 302.23/1—dc23/eng/20221227

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022043004>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022043005>