“We Just Had to Stan” – A Qualitative Analysis of Fan Communities on Twitter

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Abstract

The field of fan studies has analyzed various aspects of fan communities—fandoms, in short—both pre- and post-Internet, yet have failed to provide adequate discourse on Generation Z's envelopment into the world of digitized Stan Twitter communities. Stan Twitter or "stan"—colloquially referring to obsessive fans—is a unique online arena where stans form connections with not only themselves but, in many cases, also the fan object—the celebrity or influencer which the stan idolizes. This qualitative analysis aimed to elucidate the role of Stan Twitter communities in facilitating individual and collective queer identity formation. More specifically, using interviews of Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community members, I aimed to provide insight into how individuals within this community navigate how to create community, meaning, and connection. The findings of this research highlighted that intentional navigation to these online spaces, queer identity formation, parasocial relationships, community dynamics, and expanding the global concept of fandom are key tenets of the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community. This qualitative analysis reflected that the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community may be used as a lens to understand the importance of queer online communities, particularly for queer youth and young adults.

Keywords: social media, stan, Twitter, queer identity formation, Troye Sivan

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Introduction

I fondly remember the first time I downloaded Twitter. I was attending a Catholic middle school while starting to figure out my sexuality. My parents had put social media protections to prevent me from downloading Tumblr, Instagram, and Snapchat on my iPod Touch. Yet, Twitter remained, untouched, waiting for me to find it in the App Store, and I did. I made my first fan account for One Direction in 2013 and quickly pivoted to YouTubers by 2014. In 2015, I landed on Troye Sivan: a Grammy nominated, queer artist. Eight years later, I still have not fully left. I found solace in this online community of fellow Troye Sivan fans, a comfort I often could not find in my offline life. This Twitter community was where I formed lasting friendships, engaged in online (and eventual offline) discourse with Troye Sivan, and, most importantly, became secure in my identity as a queer person. Where offline interactions failed me, I made up for in a seemingly global network of communication with young fans like me, looking to support someone who made us feel safe and secure, all the while having fun as an adolescent. Now, as a senior at Duke University, I sought to use this personal experience to explore the online Troye Sivan fan community in a case analysis to research and thus come to an academic understanding of how collective identity is formed and fostered in online fan communities, particularly when one’s fan object is a queer public figure.

Twitter, which was renamed X by Elon Musk in July 2023[1], is a social media platform that is privy to both real-time and asynchronous forms of communication. Twitter is a mosaic of personal and professional accounts and hosts a plethora of self-produced content. Posts, or aptly

[1] For the purpose of this research, as Stan Twitter is the attributed term for the distinct online fan communities being discussed, I will be using Twitter as a supplement for X for clarity sake.

named “tweets,” contain 280 characters or less of text and can be expanded by creating threads of tweets. Users can choose their level of visibility on the platform as well; accounts can be set to public or private. Users not only can tweet content, but also reply to, quote tweets, and retweet other content as a form of reproduction.

Stan Twitter—a contemporary name for Twitter-based fan communities based on the rapper Eminem’s 2000 song “Stan”—is a subset of the vast multitude of networked and mediated communities found on this social media platform. There are high volumes of Stan communities found online: every major (or even minor) celebrity and public figure is bound to possess a networked community of “stans" who not only follow the public figure but also remain connected and form relations with one another based on their collectively shared admiration for the fan object—the celebrity. It is largely difficult to encompass and generalize every networked community of fans on Twitter, hence my thesis was constructed through a case study examination of the network structure of the Troye Sivan fan community on Twitter. Through conducting interviews with individuals within this network as well as textual analysis, I sought to analyze how fan communities fuel both collective and individual identity formation with a particular focus on queer identity formation. For the purpose of this research, the terms online fan community, fandom, fans, Stan Twitter, and stans may be used synonymously.

I aimed to focus my research on Troye Sivan stans for three distinct reasons. First, and simply put, it is an area where I have the most experience as an aca-fan: academic and fan. Finding and subsequently understanding the nuances of networked fan communities on Twitter is largely difficult from an outsider’s perspective, so I focused my own experience of being a key member of this space on conducting research and analysis in a clear, concise manner that reflects the current structures of said community. I have been an active member of this Stan Twitter

community, which has allowed me to facilitate my ability to both recruit and speak candidly with individuals who are also a part of this community. Second, Troye Sivan, too, is a unique and popular fan object. He is an Australian-born YouTuber-turned-Pop Artist with a Spotify listening of around 28 million and a Twitter following of 8.6 million. He has been openly out as gay since 2013 and is a pivotal figure for mainstream queer representation. His fanbase is composed of dedicated fans from his stint on YouTube in the 2010s and avid newcomers from his music. Third, identity formation, both singular and collective, has been discussed within a larger academic discourse of digital media and fan studies; however, I hope to elucidate in my research the complexities in play when idolizing, or "stanning," a queer public figure.

Stan Twitter communities are large and powerful—fans from global communities find themselves connected based on one singularity, yet find multiple dynamic ways to mobilize, build rapport, and explore the individuality of those within these networked systems on Twitter. This basis thus makes Stan Twitter spaces unique social contexts to explore and conceptualize to develop knowledge about online connectivity and engagement and how Twitter communities of the sort shape the identity of some of its most dedicated users.

Literature Review

Twitter and Stan Twitter

There has been a plethora of scholarly insights into both Twitter as a social media platform as well as a medium used for online fan communities. To begin, one must come to understand the functionalities of Twitter and how this platform can thus be utilized for, and by, online fan communities.

Twitter, as a social media platform, possesses a variety of features keenly built for mass communication. Namely, personalized discourse and authorship are fostered on this platform through the use of crafting tweets, quoting someone else's tweets, and mentioning an account through replies or direct "@'ing", as well as offering the options to direct message an account (or several), and to like and/or retweet other users' tweets (van Haperen, Uitermark, and Nicholls 2023; Julien 2019). Twitter further possesses a "Trending Topics" section where users can see trending hashtags or generalized discourse topics (Highfield, Harrington, and Bruns 2013; Recuero, Amaral, and Monteiro 2012). The structure of Twitter itself is highly customizable: users can opt to remain public or private (van Haperen et al. 2023), as well as determine who they follow as well as who follows them (Julien 2019). Twitter's timeline contains a feature where a user can opt to see algorithmic, tailored content per their engagement as well as a timeline that is distinct to who the user has opted to follow (Julien 2019). Twitter users possess the unique skillset that digital media is built for curation and communication (Julien 2019). Twitter not only allows users to personally dictate whose content they want to interact with, but also the timeline of when, which can both occur in real-time as well as asynchronously. Yet, these tenets are not precisely foolproof. The concept of quote tweeting and retweeting content

allows for new users to appear on someone else's timeline, as long as there is a mutual following between the user and the person redistributing said content. As Julien (2019) explains:

> Retweeting brings…content to a new network of users: whoever follows the user who just engaged in a "retweet." This is one way that content spreads on Twitter; users retweet content, sharing it across weak ties and potentially spreading it to new networks of actors (P. 57).

All of this is to be said in order to begin to grasp why fans have taken to social media platforms like Twitter for everyday interactions. A key insight of Twitter in relation to digitized communication is that it allows for a globalized connection that does not necessarily have to be in real-time (Lindstam 2021). The allowance of 280 characters of Twitter empowers users to become authors of their own tweets (Lindstam 2021): where production of any piece of content is digitized and fed to communities all across the Twittersphere. Online fan communities on Twitter occur as a subset of millions of fostered online networks proliferate through the participatory Twitter model. The interactive platform of Twitter particularly aligns itself with the concept of participatory fandoms[2] as such used to be "organized around the margins of the internet, accessible through decentralized text-based forums like group-sharing note files and bulletin boards" (Reinhard 2020:2), much like how Twitter's structure is organized. Further, online fan communities are founded on the basis of communication and collaboration—"without them, there are only fans, not groups" (Recuero et al. 2012:4). It is Twitter where contemporary fandoms can find a space to enact mass collaboration (Lindstam 2021), pointedly captured in how K-pop fans used fan-created videos of their idols to prevent a police tip line thread on Twitter from being successful during the *Black Lives Matter* movement (Lindstam 2021). Twitter is also a hub for celebrities, therefore providing online fans and their communities an

[2] Fandom, jargon for fan community, is a collective or subculture of fans surrounding a particular aspect of popular culture, such as a TV show, sports team, artist, or celebrity.

avenue to build parasocial[3] relationships with notable public figures through vying for attention and "notices" from their chosen fan object (Recuero et al. 2012; Bore and Hickman 2013; Lindstam 2021). Twitter ultimately provides a platform where fans can access and build networks of other fan accounts to connect and interact through a collective likening to their designed fan object.

The research on online fan communities and fandom as a whole is robust. As Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington elucidate, "fandom matters because it matters to those who are fans." (2017:1). However, even as the study of online fan communities, particularly with online fandoms and fan communities on Twitter, continues to be published, many fail to focus or distinguish these communities. The origins of Stan Twitter date back to the early 2010s, when the concept of stan culture—"stan" being coined as a result of Eminem's 2000 song "Stan" which details an obsessed stalker—met Twitter as celebrities migrated to the platform (Reinhard 2020; Roos 2020). Pop culture media picked up on this facet of Twitter, especially as fan objects—the celebrities—began to acknowledge or even provide names for their followers to call themselves by, such as "Directioners" for obsessive One Direction fans (Reinhard 2020).

In general, stans of various Stan Twitter communities often exhibit mobbish behavior and unrelenting loyalty to their fan object (Lindstam 2021; Roos 2020). Further, they mutually balance establishing both direct and indirect relationships with their celebrity of choice while maintaining close-knit ties with other members of their Stan Twitter community. Stans, primarily Gen-Z [4] users on Twitter, have transcended what it means to be in an online fan community; while early contemporary fandoms migrated to digital media from previous offline interactions

[3] Parasocial relationships are cemented in celebrity and pop culture as one-sided relationships in which one person, typically the stan, puts in time, effort, and money towards a fan object without any recognition from the fan object.
[4] Generation Z is composed of individuals born between 1997 and 2012.

(Reinhard 2020; Gray et al. 2017), stans, stan culture, and Stan Twitter as a collective were birthed entirely online. Thus, stans have keen insights into not only being characterized by being outwardly obsessive towards their fan objects (Roos 2020), but also by holding the ability to affect global movements and conversation through tactfully understanding social media networks unlike any other online, or offline, fan community (Lindstam 2021). Further, both fans and consumers have been previously distinguished in the realm of fan studies (Harrington and Bielby 2017), yet literature has failed to identify stans in the same manner. Stans may need to be differentiated from as well as compared to ordinary fans in order to fully grasp how online fan communities come to fruition on Twitter and the role they play in shaping Gen-Z youth. It is a common understanding that the concept of fandom has been ever-evolving since its contemporary origin in the 1960s (Gray et al. 2017; Haenfler n.d.), so the lack of research pertaining to Stan Twitter as a digitized evolution of fandom and online fan communities must be addressed to provide more color on studying fandom because of its influence in youth culture.

How Stan Twitter Serves as a Platform for Individual and Collective Identity Formation

When analyzing and interpreting various aspects of Twitter, especially Stan Twitter, when assessing its role in community engagement and mobilization on a larger scale, it is crucial to understand that these actions are based in the ideology of individual and collective identity formation. Firstly, various social media platforms enable a dynamic formation and management of identity membership both on an individualized and group level (Kidd and McIntosh 2016; Watts, Dodds, and Newman 2002; McCloud 2003). Prior research has highlighted that "fandom participation is an agent of socialization and identity development" (Seate et al. 2020:380). There are a plethora of descriptions for individual identity formation, but the key, generalizable

definition is that individual identity formation is inherently flexible and can be formed, and reformed, based on "environment, context, and expectations from the counterpart" (Cinoğlu and Arıkan 2012:1116), but may also be personally distinctive and affirmative. Collective identity formation, though sometimes tied with individual identity formation, relies on the basis that "its essence resides in a shared sense of 'one-ness' or 'we-ness' anchored in real or imagined shared attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity and in relation or contrast to one or more actual or imagined sets of 'others.'" (Snow and Corrigall-Brown 2015:175). Thus, as being a member of a Stan Twitter community can be an illustration of one's identity (Lindstam 2021), it is important to consider how identity formation on all fronts lends itself to collective mobilization and group cohesion of members.

Moreover, to understand the full breadth and potential for analyzing Stan Twitter communities on the platform, one must begin to conceptualize Stan Twitter within the larger conversation surrounding social media in relation to the capabilities of information technologies and social movements, such as feminism, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and secularism (Langman 2022). The ideological shift in social media and information technologies reflects growing youth movements adopting a rather bottom-up approach through the use of the Internet (Langman 2022). As Langman has justly pointed out, "contemporary social movements have been able to use the Internet in general and the proliferation of a vast number of 'virtual public spheres' to inform, or misinform, to organize, and to mobilize social movements" (2022:920). Stan Twitter often employs these tactics, albeit in informal practices. The manner in which Stan Twitter has adapted to globalized discourse has allowed these communities to not only reflect the stereotypical online fanbases that remain loyal to their chosen fan object but further allows them to engage in conversation on a wide variety of personal and political topics. As contemporary

online movements reflect intersections of present values and future aims (Langman 2022), Stan Twitter frequently finds its structure being framed as a conglomeration of online culture. As mentioned prior, Stan Twitter communities were some of the most powerful voices concerning the *Black Lives Matter* movement (Lindstam 2021), which aided in generating not only virality—internet spread—but also some of the largest protests that the United States has seen (Langman 2022). It is crucial to note how the consolidation of stans and Stan Twitter communities reflect the continuous shaping of generations due to external factors (Langman 2022), now predominantly captured through online mediums and social media networks in an increasingly digitized age.

Further, Stan Twitter communities have already learned to utilize various mechanisms that have begun to cross boundaries with contemporary movements, such as social bots—algorithmic-driven accounts that work to manipulate online media consumption. Social bots are widely used to sway public opinion and drive particular behaviors of various groups and communities online (Reinhard 2020). As noted on various social media and networking platforms, notably Twitter, social bots can be used in ways that drive political conflict, but their origins remain grounded in the online Stan Twitter communities as a method to bring visibility to musicians and public figures alike (Reinhard 2020). As Reinhard elucidates, social bots aid in the "production of cultural discourse that manages audience perception" by increasing "the visibility of information" (2020:2). As online fan communities commercialized and faced higher forms of visibility (Reinhard 2020), admittedly noted in the newer framing of highly visible fanbases as part of the collective Stan Twitter community, they began to face the deployment of social bots that encouraged competition between fandoms in gaining the most outreach and attention for various fan objects (Reinhard 2020). The mob and crowd-based psyche that began to shape Stan

Twitter has since been deployed in various online contexts to mobilize offline work (Reinhard 2020) through the contemporary social movements we see today. Now, Twitter, reflective of the blending of current online movements with the structuring and use of Stan Twitter communities, is a key technology both in fandom as well as in the general population online. Particularly with media events, Twitter provides a platform for natural and synchronous commentary of various users, often instigated not just through social bots but also in the proliferation of hashtags that allow for visibility and recirculation (Highfield et al. 2013).

The mechanisms previously mentioned further link the structure of Stan Twitter to doubly influencing and being influenced by digitized movements in the adaptation of swarm and grassroots models, which further aids in understanding the importance of identifying Stan Twitter as a unique aspect of online communities due to its strategic influence. A grassroots model approach involves bottom-up communication and mobilization under the context of being geographically grounded (van Haperen et al. 2023). Swarm models, however, coordinate asynchronously and autonomously without heavy reliance on a specified group (van Haperen et al. 2023). Stan Twitter adapts variations of both of these models through not possessing offline proximity or a centralized figure while simultaneously sharing an interest of the fan object and navigating networks and communication through such. As Stan Twitter functions as a forum not just for mass communication but also for cancel culture—a crux of the collective fan community that originated from Black Twitter calling out or "canceling" controversial users (Roos 2)—it increasingly reflects growing contemporary movement communities that prove to be hubs for both supporters and avid counter movements (van Haperen et al. 2023). Stan Twitter has incorporated both the swarm and grassroots models in building a legitimized space where stans interact and engage in community like never before. Stan Twitter thus is an uncommon space

where community is forged through both autonomous action and collective mobilization, remaining not strongly loyal to any particular member other than the fan object themselves, which permits both strong waves of defense when there is a fan-related version of a countermovement against a fan object while further remaining unafraid to ostracize or criticize a member of their own community despite a shared goal. Stan Twitter consequently reflects a newly minted structure of flattened hierarchies (Kidd and McIntosh 2016) in which no one stan is leading a charge, yet hundreds upon thousands of users may opt-in to collective discourse at a moment's notice, reflecting innovative tactics that connection, and action, occur through shared ideas instead of physical proximity (Hill, Canniford, and Millward 2018). Stan Twitter as a subculture of online fan communities possesses a distinctive process of switching on communications (Hill et al. 2018) with individual stan accounts as a way to garner support for a fan object, react to so-called "haters," and overall enact daily functions of community engagement and dissemination of information online, reticent from studying this community as unique to both fan studies and the discourse of social media platforms as a whole.

In the context of how Stan Twitter communities leverage collective mobilization, which is built on the foundations of individual and collective identity formation, there is still little known about Stan Twitter itself within academic discourse. While some literature has identified Stan Twitter as a distinct online community, it has largely misaligned the concept of stan with fanatic.[5] This suggests that there is a substantial gap in understanding Stan Twitter as a concept. Moreover, there is more to be analyzed about Stan Twitter's role in identity formation, particularly concerning online queer identity formation.

[5] Though stan and fanatic both describe those who possess high levels of devotion or passion towards an object of admiration, stan is meant to delineate those within a digital medium who are particularly obsessed with aspects of popular culture. Fanatic is often used in broader contexts, concerning areas such as religion, philosophy, and politics.

History of Queer Online Communities

Although limited in both breadth and depth, there have been chronicled timelines of queer online communities since the very creation of the Internet.[6] Prior literature concludes that the Internet "is uniquely suited for the exploration and expression of queer identity" (Allen-Young 2019:10). Thus, to place the presence of Stan Twitter as a potential avenue to explore queer identity formation on both an individual and collective basis, it is necessary to understand the roots of queer online communities in order to provide further background on how these platforms, and members of such, evolved parallel to the increased technological capacities of the Internet and, in turn, social media.

Queer online spaces have historically been safe spaces for connection and engagement with other members of the queer community. Though academic archival and discourse on "cyberqueer" spaces have not been fully documented due to the lack of data (Chaplin 2014:456), the origins of a predominantly queer platform may be placed in the early 80s with the creation of the newsgroup soc.motss and the Minitel, a predation of the Internet. Soc.motss, established in 1983, was the first newsgroup that specifically was built for queer people (O'Riordan 2005). The Minitel, developed in 1977 and made public in France in 1982, became the foremost "website and email service for lesbians" (Chaplin 2014:452). Particularly with the Minitel, lesbians used this medium in relation to proper representation, identity formation, and community creation (Chaplin 2014). Bolstering the ethos of modern-day social media, these platforms further enabled instantaneous communication and establishments of identity that remained "untethered to specific locations, organizations, embodiment, or proximity" (Chaplin 2014:452).

[6] It is important to note that these queer spaces existed prior to the Internet as well, particularly through the proliferation of zines, which were small booklets used by the queer community for connection and communication.

However, with the rapid growth of the Internet in the 80s, spaces like Usenet—a computer-enabled discussion forum—provided a space that allowed for the proliferation of groups that represented various identities within the LGBTQ+ community that were not digitally enabled in platforms like the Minitel and soc.motss that failed to include intersectionality and separatism (McTavish 2020). Along with the rise of Usenet's queer audience, multiple queer-centered Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs), publicly available platforms that allowed for the posting of "plain text messages" (Chaplin 2014:453), reflected that queers were one of the primary demographics to utilize digital communication to foster community, particularly for queer youth (Chaplin 2014; McTavish 2020). Furthermore, the Internet, or dot.com, boom of the 90s and early 2000s led to a variety of sites like PlanetOut, Gay.com, LiveJournal, and OpenDiary, all of which allowed seamless, and community-focused, forums to be built to connect those separated by various external factors like physical location, familial environment, and culture (McTavish 2020; Allen-Young 2019). Each platform possessed its own affinity-related identity; for example, PlanetOut managed chat rooms and boards with a focus on generating revenue, whereas Gay.com focused more on its user base rather than on bottom lines (McTavish 2020). Even so, the merging of these two platforms brought together 3.5 million queer users via the Internet (McTavish 2020). In this Internet boom decade, members of these sites "reported being out and feeling safe to talk about who they really were, often for the first time in their lives" (McTavish 2020:167). As "identity is articulated through representation" (Cover 2019:129), these sites became a foundation where the Internet supplants a lack of a safe physical space with a virtual realm where queer identity could be safely explored and supported (Allen-Young 2019).

With the formation of contemporary social media and networking platforms like Facebook–-founded in 2006—and Tumblr—created in 2007—there was, once again, a shift for queer audiences on the Internet. Facebook, namely, was able to be used for its ability to digitally archive queer material within the communities present on the platform (Cover 2019). With the use of Tumblr, social media and networking were core aspects of "internet queer theory and intersectional discourse" (Allen-Young 2019:16). These social media platforms further allowed for self-identification in users' bios and in hashtags to provide access to other queer communities, allowing for a "representation of the 'authentic self'" even when users could opt to remain anonymous (Allen-Young 2019:17). And with the death of Tumblr in the following decade, other social media platforms like Twitter have become hubs for queer people. In particular, Twitter has become a space for the generation of "unique queer communities among both the ex-Tumblr users and younger LGBTQ+ people" (Allen-Young 2019:17). Twitter has served as a space where collective labor to form and maintain virtual safe spaces for various online queer communities has become largely pervasive (Pym, Byron, and Albury 2021). For instance, transgender women have used Twitter to build a network of advocacy by tweeting their respective experiences with the hashtag #GirlsLikeUs (Pym et al. 2021).

Furthermore, Twitter became an intersection for ex-Tumblr users and Generation Z queer youth concerning fan culture. At the crux was a subset of the One Direction fandom known simply as Larries: dedicated fans who utilized Real Person Fiction (RPF) to promote a fictitious relationship between One Direction members Harry Styles and Louis Tomlinson (McCann and Southerton 2021). These fans reflected that "as digital platforms have come to play a significant role in everyday life, fandom participation has also shifted from a niche subculture to a mainstream activity for many young people" (McCann and Southerton 2021:144). The

breadth of Larries reflects the notion that "much of the existing conversation on queer fandom has focused on male characters [or people] who are…coded as gay" (Day and Pennell 2020:169); however, Larries highlighted the shift of online queer spaces to be more encompassing of mostly young and queer Generation Z women. Not only were Larries built on an emotional collective of in-depth research and theorizing of Harry Styles and Louis Tomlinsons' relationship, but these fans also further negotiated their own identities within these networks (McCann and Southerton 2021). Thus, it can be argued that the birthplace of stans and Stan Twitter was built off of the backs of Larries—a hyper-focused, communal space for young Gen-Z fans.

When considering how the concept of Stan Twitter fits into a greater dialogue of queer online communities and the Internet as a whole, it is crucial to consider the timeline of queer online history. As Stan Twitter consists of mostly Gen-Z users, these communities are reflective of the fact that Generation Z was the "first generation to grow up with full access to social media" (Dhoest and Van Ouytsel 2022:675). The fostering of queer spaces with Stan Twitter communities is not unique: it is, instead, entirely encompassing of queer formations in the early stages of the Internet, and even so far as to reflect pre-internet fandoms in terms of values of communication and belonging (McCann and Southerton 2021). What has yet to be understood and analyzed; however, is understanding Stan Twitter culture and community beyond surface-level analyses of heterosexual desire and masculinity, at least with the contextualization of "fangirl hysteria [being] theorized in terms of boybands representing unthreatening masculinity as the object of desire" (McCann and Southerton 2021:152).

The "queer potential of fan practices" (McCann and Southerton 2021:144), and the impact on how stanning a queer public figure may facilitate safe, virtual communities where celebrations of queerness are not just individualized, but rather reflective of a communal queer

space, is in need of further investigation beyond the stereotypically gendered boundaries of the fangirl. Troye Sivan Stan Twitter ultimately provides a space to address core sociological questions about identity formation and queer culture, as it displays practices of queer fans in a space where their identity is formed, maintained, and reflected, both in the fan object and the community itself as a contemporary product paralleled with the development of online queer communities as a whole.

Stan Twitter and Queer Identity Formation

Stan Twitter as a collective emphasizes Twitter's capability to facilitate and shape both individual and collective identity formation. Identity can be largely understood to be reflexive of humans' ability to possess self-consciousness and thus reflect as individual persons while simultaneously existing and interacting as members of larger collectives and groups (Langman 2022). A person's identity is continuously (re)constructed based on particular contexts, from geopolitics to friend groups (Langman 2022). Additionally, individual identity formation is a continual process of self-attributions of particular characteristics or descriptors that remain distinct (Snow and Corrigall-Brown 2015). When discussing individual identity formation, three main theories are typically placed at the forefront as pointedly described by Cinoğlu and Arıkan (2012):

> Social identity theory where the founders see the group membership as the driving force for identity formation…, identity theory, in which the roles that are assigned to individuals are deemed as the major source for energy to identity formation[, and personal identity theory] theory talks about the importance of personal values in explaining the identity and identity formation process (P. 1114).

Though distinct, individual identity formation and the concept of self may be affected by group membership and oftentimes go hand-in-hand with collective identity formation. Collective identity formation may be assessed through a lens that emphasizes the importance of oneness

within group membership and how shared experiences may be bolstered through the continual interactions between social actors (Snow and Corrigall-Brown 2015). Social identities are pervasive within the realm of collective identity formation in which role-based identities are ascribed to others to provide contextualization for various social groups or communities (Snow and Corrigall-Brown 2015). When assessing socialization and the subsequent role of social identities, individual identity and group membership coincide in establishing relationships across network ties within a group, or across several (Watts et al. 2002).

Both forms of identity formation aid in explaining the salience of queer identity formation within an online environment. Engagement with social media may provide individuals with a newly established method for exploring queer identities and gaining language to cement lived experiences within a larger societal context of gender and sexual identity (Miller 2017). Historically, collective identity formation has existed for queer people through the creation of community, which now remains exceptionally pervasive through the ability to establish strong communities without geographic boundaries or in-person interactions (Pym et al. 2021; Allen-Young 2019). Many queer people online are digital natives—those who grew up in the age of social media (Bates, Hobman, and Bell 2020; Miller 2017). In contemporary periods, the internet is "uniquely suited for the exploration and expression of queer identity" (Allen-Young 2019:10); social media thus provides a keen avenue for queer youth to build relationships, source information, and develop their own identities with newly formed knowledge (Miller 2017). In terms of queer identity formation, social media provides a safe avenue for queer youth to explore their identities and rehearse tasks like coming out—a key aspect of identity development (Zheng 2023)—and building self-acceptance before having to do so in the physical world (Miller 2017).

The use of social media further contributes to the continuous negotiations of identity as users navigate established dialogues and experiences of others within these networked spaces (Miller 2017). A key aspect of queer identity formation online is the accessibility of social support—"the emotional, informational, and instrumental help that people perceive from human interactions" (Gordon, Whitfield, Mammadli, and Escobar-Viera 2023:2). Queer young adults may find it easier to seek social support online, especially on platforms like Twitter where they can retain a level of anonymity and separation from family in a secure environment (Gordon et al. 2023). Notably for queer youth and young adults, "exclusion and discrimination are most likely to occur within the geographies of the 'local'" (Hanckel and Morris 2014:872). Consequently, many queer people utilize social media to renegotiate queerness in safe spaces where queer exploration is an aspect of communities where those with shared interests establish relationships from shared interests and/or experiences (Hanckel and Morris 2014). Further, the anonymity provided by the ever-expansiveness of social media platforms allows queer users to "continually project self-expression, self-edit, reshuffle, revise, and reorganize aspects of the self, which provide new opportunity to learn from and influence a more diverse audience of others" (Bates et al. 2020:55). Thus, queer identity formation remains uniquely situated within online contexts provided by the use of social media.

With a queer-focused perspective on Stan Twitter, these online communities reflect the rapid consumption of popular culture as an aspect of identity formation (Vázquez-Rodríguez, García-Ramos, and Zurian 2021). Subsequently, the alignment to specific fan objects fosters not only a group identity through being a stan for a particular figure but also a niche community of individualized fans tied by the group membership, or alignment, to the person (or people) they stan (Reinhard 2020). In particular, it may be that queer fans, especially when idolizing or

stanning a queer fan object, may engrain their own sexual identity into their group membership which, in turn, builds authenticity of self within a larger group context (Reinhard 2020). Additionally, Stan Twitter is a highly emotional space, as many of these members have grown up with or established strong ties to the fan object, fostering an emotional attachment to both the fan object as well as to their own identity as a stan (Duncombe 2019). The fan object can further enable community engagement and collective identity formation through audience reach, instilling a feeling of intimacy via social media (Reinhard 2020). Twitter is particularly unique when considering identity formation, as the speed and scale of communication on the platform may continuously blur the lines between online and offline social lives as stans not only discuss personal aspects of their offline lives online, but also foster community engagement by bringing relationships established online into their own offline words through mediums like stan meetups, concerts, and other events (Duncombe 2019).

In general, through witnessing how other stans in one's specific community tweet and interact with one another and with the fan object (Woods and Ludvigsen 2022), one can aptly establish meaning to themselves and their place within their own Stan Twitter community. Even if stans of a specific community do not know much about other stans within that space, an imagined community may be formed through a shared identity of group membership (Shenton 2020). Poignantly so, stans have a particular knack for establishing connections and building relationships with others in the same Stan Twitter community (Recuero et al. 2012; Roos 2020; Jenkins et al. 2019). The terminology of "we" within the Stan Twitter vernacular further bolsters community through the formation of a collective identity (Lee et al. 2020; Shenton 2020). Collective and individualized identity formation simultaneously establish their bounds within Stan Twitter through this communal aspect: ascriptions of being a stan is an identity within itself,

but through being a part of a larger collective, community engagement complements the reinforcement of such identity online (Lindstam 2021; Roos 2020).

These various aspects of identity formation within digitized spaces clarify the importance of considering Stan Twitter communities as an essential avenue for processing how stans, specifically queer stans, navigate identity formation individually as well as in tandem with other members of the Stan Twitter community and perhaps the fan object themselves. Understanding queer identity formation in relation to predominantly queer fandoms has largely been neglected, and the concept of Stan Twitter as a crux of such has been largely underused as well. However, as prior research has highlighted, both queer young adults and members of online fan communities tend to be a part of Generation Z, a unique generation in the sense of being entirely adept at the use of social media as tools for communication and connection. Accordingly, utilizing the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community as a perceptive lens into understanding how this demographic of stans navigate queerness in a digitized and mostly anonymized, yet open and safe space for stanning a queer figure may lend itself to providing broader implications for gaining insight into how contemporary queer identity formation both manifests as an "individual quality" as well as "something directed outward" towards "the celebration of the queerness of others rather than oneself" (McCann and Southerton 2021:154). This focus of research on a primarily queer Stan Twitter community not only places Stan Twitter as a crucial subculture within fan studies, but also provides access into viewing the intersectionalities of being a stan, queer, and Gen-Z within an entirely digitized space. Hence, unique aspects about these communities and the solidarity that comes with having a queer fan object may reveal how Stan Twitter communities can provide a haven for queer identity formation.

Methodological Approach

Overview

As previously mentioned, online Stan Twitter communities are vitally important to study to not only elucidate their role in fan studies but also to understand how queer identity is formed and maintained in online communities like these. Drawing on prior research about online stan and fan groups by Roos (2020), Lindstam (2021), and Bore and Hickman (2013), I collected and analyzed qualitative data drawn from online interviews and used textual analysis to highlight tweets that reflect key themes from the interviews. This methodology has been approved by the Institutional Review Board and is listed as IRB Protocol: 2024-0217.

Online Interviews

As Stan Twitter is a predominantly online space with members spanning the globe, I conducted online interviews over Zoom. Zoom transcends geographic distance (Archibald et al. 2019) and allows for real-time conversation that cannot be similarly accessed through different methods, such as email, which is how Bore and Hickman (2013) conducted their interviews of *The West Wing* fans on Twitter. Zoom further allowed for transcription within its framework (Archibald et al. 2019). Zoom aided in building rapport with those I interviewed as it supplemented nonvisual communication like email and further allowed me to communicate and view nonverbal communication (Archibald et al. 2019; Keen, Lomeli-Rodriguez, and Joffe 2022). Though the research on Zoom and its benefits has only been recently relevant due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Keen et al. 2022; Lobe, Morgan, and Hoffman 2020), it was crucial that I used this method to conduct interviews as users I interviewed were geographically distanced and lived in different time zones. Zoom thus allowed for the accessibility and efficiency of

connecting with those I did not have the option to meet in person with and also accommodated busy schedules and obligations (Archibald et al. 2019, Keen et al. 2022).

Further, I provided an informed consent form before every interview that allowed me to record the Zoom meetings, which averaged to be about one hour each, and to safely store them on Zoom, as the platform allowed for encryption of meetings and safe storage of both audio recordings and the transcriptions that Zoom produced for each interview (Archibald et al. 2019, Lobe et al. 2020). I recruited Troye Sivan Stan Twitter users through snowball sampling: starting with one or two users and then proceeding to ask to be introduced to other members of the community (Bore and Hickman 2013). I reached out to these users primarily through Twitter direct messages as that is ingrained within the platform and allowed for seamless communication. These users further met the criteria of being above the age of 18, and on the platform for more than one year (the cutoff being January 2022), a Twitter follower count of more than 1,000, and active users with more than one tweet per day. As Bore and Hickman (2013) suggest, this snowball recruitment may be less intrusive and aid in gaining participants for this research.

These interviews, with a small snowball sampling size and specific reach, were both targeted and semi-constructed. Semi-constructed interviews allowed me to come up with a preset list of questions but permitted room for interviewees to discuss their thoughts and experiences that I was not aware of or familiar with. Targeted interviews worked well with this research as the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community is narrow and specific. Targeted interviews allowed for a more comprehensive view of the makeup and functionality of niche communities (Quinn 2008), which aided in getting a more pointed outlook on this community that people outside of it would not have as in-depth knowledge of. In total, I interviewed ten participants with interview

durations ranging from thirty minutes to two hours. With snowball sampling, I acquired a 90.9% response rate.

Strategic Tweet Selection

As an aca-fan in the Troye Sivan Twitter community, I also aimed to use participant observation—the act of observing daily interactions among members of this community in order to establish a collective understanding of the space—to aid in selecting specific tweets from members of this Twitter space to highlight emergent themes from the interviews as an additional source of qualitative data. As Lindstam elucidates in his paper, certain tweets may be personal in nature–not directly mentioning the fan object with an @ distinction–-or interactive–stans engaging with one another or Troye Sivan himself through quote tweets, direct mentions (@s), or retweets (Lindstam 2021). In using this tweet selection as a complement for the interviews, I was able to understand the intricacies of Stan Twitter with Troye Sivan stans to further contextualize their experiences as members of this community. For this tweet selection, I did not reply or like the tweets I chose to highlight.

Further touching on how tweets were selected and codified, I aimed to modify Lindstam's approach and considered tweets based on timeliness, language, and the user's follower count and overall activity (Lindstam 2021). I examined tweets written in the English language for accessibility reasons and over a time period of being tweeted around a year ago or less—tweets were from January 2022 onward. Furthermore, I did not consider group stan accounts: accounts run by more than one person, such as @UpdatedTS, an admin-run updates page for Troye Sivan. Group stan accounts are predominantly used to function as updating accounts for the fan object, meaning that there is little room for personal interaction. I looked to

utilize tweets from users that were not relatively new to the space by only acquiring tweets from those with over 1,000 followers: an accrued following typically indicates that a specific stan has been around for more than a year (the selected sample for this research being accounts made before January 2022). Activity is mentioned as a criterion as stan users should be largely active within the community, averaging at least one tweet per day. Tweets used for strategic tweet selection were captured in the form of text with no attributable features like a username or profile picture. It is also important to note that private Stan Twitter users were not considered for this research, as I did not want to infringe on their distinction to protect their tweets and thus refrained from using these accounts for interviews or tweet selection.

Analysis

For my analysis of qualitative data, I recorded my interviews over Zoom and utilized Zoom's transcription feature to produce written documents of all interviewee responses. I then printed out all of the transcriptions and manually coded each interview, looking at each individually and collectively to highlight all emergent themes. This process of coding took approximately one week to complete. Using the five emergent themes I pulled from the interviews as well as the guidelines I placed for tweet selection, I then spent two days pulling tweets that complemented each of the five themes. This strategic tweet selection was ultimately used as a complement for interview responses: a way to highlight key themes that were presented throughout the interviews in the form of tweets. It is provided as an Appendix at the end of this research.

Ethical Considerations

As always, there were a plethora of ethical considerations to be made especially in a controversially studied space like Twitter. As tweets are considered to be the property of Twitter once they are posted, I followed the steps of Bore and Hickman (2013) in not asking for the consent of the users observed during participant observation but asked for consent if a user's tweet was selected for my Appendix. It is also important to note that, even though public tweets may be accessible by anyone online, by placing them in this research, considering how they may be pulled from their original context was factored into my analysis. Additionally, I did not want to put anyone's full personal information on display. Stans are already largely anonymized– users tend to only go by their first name and have a username related to the fan object. In that case, I still referred to interviewees by pseudonyms to protect their identities. If a tweet was included in this thesis via a direct quote or photo, I took the necessary steps to remove their username and other identifying information. Any demographically related questions asked to get a sense of someone's background in the interviews remained voluntary so participants could opt to answer or not. Moreover, as Twitter possesses its own form of etiquette, I aimed to conduct myself in a manner that is respectful to the Stan Twitter community in reaching out and being transparent about the role that textual analysis or interviews will play in aiding my research.

Discussion

Over the course of two weeks, I interviewed ten people from the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community. I began with selecting one of my followers and snowball sampled from there by asking each interviewee for two names and users of people who they thought would be a good fit for this research. Most of the interviewees were in their early twenties, with the outliers being 19 and 26. Further, six interviewees were from the United States, two from England, one from Canada, and one from Germany. Eight of the ten interviewees identified as female, with one being a transgender male and the other identifying as demifemale, meaning that they are between female and nonbinary. Eight of the ten interviewees identified as White, with the remaining individuals identifying as Biracial (Asian American and White) and South Asian. When discussing sexuality at points throughout the interviews, three individuals identified as queer, five as bisexual, and two as pansexual. It should be noted that four of the interviewees also had visible Troye Sivan merch in the background of their interview locations, and three showed up to the interview wearing Troye Sivan memorabilia. One of the interviewees even had no idea that they were wearing Troye Sivan merch until partway through the interview.

Throughout the course of these interviews, five major themes emerged: (1) active navigation to online spaces that fostered community, (2) identity and identity formation particularly with a focus on queer identity, (3) the idea of parasocial relationships with Troye Sivan, (4) community dynamics, and (5) expanding the concept of global fandoms. When discussing each theme at hand, I will be referring to each interviewee using Troye Sivan song titles as pseudonyms. In Appendix C, I also included tweets from Troye Sivan Twitter members that further highlighted these themes as a way to complement the topics that these interviewees discussed about Twitter.

Active Navigation to Online Spaces

A majority of the interviewees mentioned pointed and deliberate seeking out of online spaces where they could openly share their interests, one of which being Troye Sivan. Many interviewees responded that they wanted to find a space separate from their real-life communities where they felt alienated or that their friends did not share their interests. Further, actively searching for these online fan communities helped interviewees like Ease and Blue escape bullying that was happening in their personal lives. To use a quote that captures the common sentiment from each interviewee, Honey mentioned that the reasoning behind starting her Stan Twitter account was as follows:

> I was getting more and more into the whole like fandom thing. I was really interested in Troye and his life, and I wanted to find people that I can connect with about that topic…And so I was stalking people without actually having a Twitter account. And then I was like, well, I do really want to connect with these people, and I want to post my own opinions. So, I decided to make my own account to talk about the things that I love and not be judged for it like in the real world sometimes.

The desire to foster an online space to discuss a shared interest of the fan object, Troye Sivan, with others is largely reflective of the literature surrounding why queer online communities exist. For example, Blue mentioned that a reason for joining this online Stan Twitter community was partially due to their hometown, "I think also just like growing up in this area, there were no queer people. So … it gave me like the space to like, be myself." Being able to find a community to discuss an openly queer figure as well as find fellow queer people that are similar in age may aid in building strong ties that perhaps do not exist in oftentimes geographically bounded hometowns. Additionally, many interviewees commented that when searching for this space online, they found that the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community was comprised of accepting, like-minded individuals that shared the same values and were present for the same reasons as them. Interviewees like Silly, Blue, and Bloom further stated that in the

active search for this space, and through their participation in it, they were able to come to terms with and express their sexuality within a largely accepting forum.

The purposeful navigation for these online spaces may reflect that Generation Z users, particularly within the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community, made a conscious decision to use the resources that the Internet and social media bring forth to find, build, and maintain communities where members are encouraged to be themselves and to share their interests with those who are there for similar, if not the same reasons. Stan Twitter spaces have thus allowed those who may not find comfort in their own daily lives to experience such in an online forum—one that is not bound by geographic location but instead allows members to be comprised any location, so long as access to Twitter exists. The deliberate search for these spaces from the interviewees, and I conjecture Troye Sivan Twitter at large, may mean that there is more at stake for these users as well to maintain a strong and connected community.

This community was also established based on a shared liking for Troye Sivan as a fan object, yet it has served as a strong foundation for members' own self-discovery. All but one interviewee mentioned first making a Stan Twitter account in 2013-15, a period where these interviewees were in middle or the start of high school. The interviewees all mentioned that they grew up with the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community and that it helped them strengthen their own queer identity, friendships with others in this space, and even so far as to solidify their career path, such as Rush aiming to go into the music business because of what she had learned from this space. Many interviewees stated that they see the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community, as a result of actively searching for it, as a key facet of their own identity. Plum specifically mentions that "when [she] joined Troye Twitter, it still feels like a part of like, [her] identity kind

of grew with that." Perhaps it was Troye Sivan's role as a queer figure intertwined with younger stans actively searching for a space that was accepting of their own identities that led to such a strong navigation towards both Troye Sivan as a fan object as well as to communion with other fans. To lose out on this Stan Twitter community may have meant learning about oneself later in life, or not at all, let alone failing to develop such a safe space separate from their own "real" lives. Thus, finding this community on Twitter may be deemed crucial for these members, and for the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community at large.

[Queer] Identity Formation

The theme of identity formation, particularly with queer identity, finds itself bolstered in all interviewee responses when discussing what the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community means to them. Many interviewees detailed how important Troye Sivan was as a queer figure and how Stan Twitter, specifically Troye Sivan Stan Twitter, served as a community where they could openly navigate their own queer identities in a compassionate space. Many interviewees' sentiments were that Troye Sivan, and his respective Stan Twitter community are intertwined in terms of identity formation. For this theme, I will be focusing on a subset of experiences shared throughout these interviews to solidify how strong of a tenet identity formation is.

Firstly, Bloom, a woman who identifies as a lesbian, heavily reflected on how important Troye Sivan's openness about his sexuality was for solidifying hers online. To Bloom, her sexuality is a key part of who she is as a person. She had prior experience in other Twitter fandoms where she felt out of place due to them being very hetero-centric spaces. As she was figuring out her own sexuality, she noted that not only did Troye Sivan's music make her feel better, but also being surrounded by members of this community who were also vocal about their

respective sexualities made her "less horrified of the whole thing." In fact, Bloom shares the following about her coming out story:

> And, literally, the first time I met Troye, he was like, the first person that I ever said out loud to that I'm gay. And like, because I had come out to people. But, I couldn't say it out loud. And I kind of avoided the whole topic altogether. And I just didn't like talking about it. But when I met him and I was able to tell him and talk to him about it. I felt just so much better. And he was just so sweet about it. And that also just made me feel more connected to him and I just wanted to be in that space more because coming to terms with my sexuality was so difficult. And it's crazy to think about because I'm so open about it now, but it was so hard to get here.

Bloom also considers both Troye Sivan and her time on Stan Twitter to be a part of her identity. During our interview, she expressed that she has tattoos of Troye Sivan's handwriting and how it serves as a reminder of how she discovered who she is. Further, she shares that his music "has made [her] just understand [herself] better and enjoy life more." When specifically talking about the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community, she notes how the impact it has had on her was from all the members being keen on "building queer spaces" and how this community remains "a place where people can discover [queer-friendly spaces]." She highlighted that when Troye Sivan dropped songs like "HEAVEN," a song about reconciling religion with being queer, the entire community would come together to discuss how they related to Troye Sivan's lyrics and message in their own lives. Bloom further added that Troye Sivan Stan Twitter, as a subset of Stan Twitter at large, "adds in people [who are] discovering more about themselves." In short, Bloom felt as though she would have ever felt comfortable with her sexuality if she "hadn't been on Troye Stan Twitter or even gotten to interact with [Troye Sivan]." Even with smaller things like developing her confidence and ability to talk to people, Bloom credits a lot of her own identity development to Troye Sivan and, at large, this Stan Twitter community.

Likewise, Stud, who identifies as a pansexual demifemale and is from London, shares similar sentiment sentiments as Bloom and many other interviewees. Touching on Troye Sivan's

music, Stud shared how Troye Sivan was one of the first artists who she felt completely got how she was feeling and what she was going through. When she joined initially joined Troye Sivan Stan Twitter at 15, she was inspired by listening to Troye Sivan's album "Blue Neighbourhood" and his themes on sexuality and mental health and determined that the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community were "the people [she needs] to reach out to because these people will also understand and get Troye." Further, Stud conceptualized that she believes "being LGBT and finding Troye was like finding a lifeline…it has just been really important because that's how you meet so many people or how you find comfort in yourself." Thus, Troye Sivan and this Stan Twitter community has been a compassionate space for Stud to not only feel comfortable about her identity as a queer person, but to also find similar people whose experiences she can not only relate to on a personal level, but whose experiences also tie back to Troye Sivan.

Lastly, many other interviewees reflected the experiences that Bloom and Stud aptly described in their interviews. Wild, a queer woman from North Carolina, emphasized how Troye Sivan Stan Twitter was a space where she could build friendships and connect not only with Troye Sivan, but also fellow queer stans; it was ultimately a combination of the two that brought her "to a place of acceptance." Similarly, Silly, a pansexual woman from Pennsylvania, shared that even though Troye Sivan spurred her journey with her own sexuality and solidifying her awareness of her mental health struggles, she believes that "being a part of [the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter] community helped [her] learn a lot about [her]self and accept [her]self." Even largely speaking, interviewees like Rush, a bisexual woman from Sheltenham, England, solidifying her identity through Troye Sivan and this community was as simple as shaping her humor, her music taste, and her career path into the music business, all of which she accredits to Troye Sivan and the Stan Twitter community.

As prior literature on online queer communities conclude, the Internet can foster compassionate spaces where queer people, especially queer youth, feel comfortable discovering themselves in communion with others regardless of geographic location. As a result of these interviews, I believe that the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community, and perhaps Stan Twitter at large, may fit into this chronicled timeline of the Internet being used as a haven for identity formation, both on the singular and collective level. As Honey puts it, "I think so many of us are queer people. It's just so nice to have someone to look up to and have someone be so loud and be so cool."

Parasocial Relationships

Many of these themes are intersectional based on the heavy emphasis on queerness in an online community, but a caveat of such, particularly within Stan Twitter spaces, is the idea of parasocial relationships. Troye Sivan Stan Twitter as a hub for developing these parasocial relations is a convoluted topic, as Troye Sivan was once incredibly active on this platform and consistently engaged with his stans via replying to or liking their tweets, following them, even going as far as to DM a few stans from time to time. I, as a member of this community, have been a recipient of this, as Troye Sivan and I had multiple interactions over this platform which led to him recognizing me at one of his concerts in 2018. Throughout the interviews I conducted, a few interviewees explicitly pointed out their own establishments of parasocial relationships with Troye Sivan due to Twitter, but most of the language from the remaining interviewees was implicit. Parasocialism helps to elucidate how Troye Sivan and the Stan Twitter community surrounding him have such strong, emotional ties to other stans and to Troye Sivan himself, particularly as a queer fan object.

Three interviewees explicitly mentioned understanding what a parasocial relationship was in relation to Troye Sivan: Wild, Heaven, and Blue. When talking about the meaning Troye Sivan has had on her life, Wild shares that she "loved him as a person for obviously, what he showed because [she] feel[s] like Troye Sivan and Troye are two different people like you have to kind of separate it because there is that parasocial relationship." As I asked Wild to define what she meant by this delineation, she highlighted the following:

> [Celebrities are], you know, they're not just a robot transplant celebrity, or whatever it is, like, he's always been very human to me. So, I've always appreciated that side of him. But some people forget that a lot of times in the realm of Twitter, or just any fandom. But I feel like people really forget that and get really personal and really weird. So, I've always been like, okay, people need to back off now. It's like, let's not make assumptions about someone's real life. Because they are a person. They're human, just like you and me.

Wild aptly went into intricate detail how some stans would be too personal with their fan objects, ranging from former One Direction member Harry Styles to Troye Sivan himself. Wild further detailed, that at least to her personally, if she were to be famous, she would keep certain aspects of her life separate from her public persona, which is what she suspects Troye Sivan does as well. Similarly, Blue struck this realm of self-awareness, expressing that they have moved on from a level of hyper-fixation with Troye Sivan and Troye Stan Twitter because of research he has done on stan culture and parasocial relationships. However, they still hold a profound appreciation for what this space has provided him, but he tends to hold less weight on having interactions with Troye Sivan in the present.

On the contrary, Heaven expressed more negative sentiments regarding Troye Sivan Stan Twitter and Troye Sivan's own involvement in perpetuating parasocial relationships in this community. She spoke heavily on the days that Troye Sivan was active and consistently engaging with his stans, noting that it perpetuated a sense that every waking moment was spent

thinking about getting a notice—an interaction like a reply, like, or quote tweet—from Troye Sivan. Heaven emphasized that it was a very "anxiety-driven" mindset that many stans possessed because of the need to establish a relationship with Troye Sivan. Further, Heaven shared that she believed Troye Sivan expressed favoritism in who he chose to interact with, which perpetuated a toxic environment at times within the Stan Twitter community. Ultimately, she stated that Troye Sivan took it too far, and that if he wasn't "a celebrity and [she] wasn't a fan: that's a friendship, which in [her] head gave [her] a superiority complex and gave [him] power over [her}."

Many other interviewees also shared instances of having a parasocial relationship with Troye Sivan; however, these instances were implicit in nature, meaning that the interviewees may have had no idea that they were expressing certain parasocial ideals. When describing how she felt connected with Troye Sivan, Rush expressed: "I think as a person we are similar. I don't know him. I feel like I don't know. I don't want to say I'm with similar people because I don't actually know him, but I feel like I don't know." Silly, Honey, Stud, Plum, and Blue all also expressed ideals of wanting to be friends with Troye Sivan, particularly after getting noticed by him. Silly, when discussing a time that Troye Sivan told her to post a cover of her singing an acapella cover of one of his songs, mentioned: "that joy just from being noticed and just kind of being recognized like, oh, this person changed my life. And now they also know that they know that I support them. Really amazing feeling." This quote holistically represents the sentiment these interviewees expressed when discussing interactions with Troye Sivan or their connections with him: all mentioned how these interactions showed that her cared about his stans, that he was genuine and real, and that they left them feeling happy, even to the point of crying.

This idea of parasocialism and the creation of such strong emotional ties with a fan object due to online interactions are largely pervasive within the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community. Many of these interactions touched on queer themes, and on a larger scale, personal thoughts and reactions to Troye Sivan's music and content. Though appearing relatively harmless, as Wild and Heaven expressed, it can lead to a blurring of boundaries between stan and fan object and the creation of inequal power dynamics. What can be portrayed as a key part of what makes the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community strong and close-knit, especially in relation to Troye Sivan, may also be a source of contention and strife within the community.

Community Dynamics

Another theme that presented itself in each interview was the discussion surrounding community dynamics within the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community. Interviewees explained that this Stan Twitter space is largely unique due to the types of people it hosts within the confines of stanning Troye Sivan. As Rush emphasized: "most of us have been there since the start, so I think that's sort of a special connection that other fandoms probably don't have." Troye Sivan started posting to YouTube in 2012, and by 2014, his fan community on Twitter began to flourish. Most interviewees stated that they joined the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community in 2014-2016 and have remained largely active even a decade later. A majority of the members, as some interviewees noted, are considered to be veterans of this space, and within that, many have formed a tight-knit community with those who have been a part of Troye Sivan Stan Twitter for relatively the same amount of time. Wild, who joined in 2014, shared: "now that I'm a little bit older, and I've been on it for a decade. You know, I can look back on it. And then that's where I get the sense of community [with the idea that] we can relate to a lot of the things that we experienced over the years."

The Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community has undergone a lot of changes over the years as a reflection of Troye Sivan's transition from YouTube to music and his subsequent project releases. These transitions have been portrayed in how the interviewees discussed the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter space in both a positive and negative light. Firstly, a consistent aspect of maintaining the community has been through conducting fan events. Rush expressed having firsthand knowledge of what the motivation is behind organizing fan events: from group album listening sessions to song rankings. Rush is a current administrator of @UpdatedTS, a Troye Sivan updates account. On such, she organizes fan activities surrounding album releases and other mainstream Troye Sivan content. When discussing why she runs this account and puts events together, Rush highlighted: "I host fan events or things like that for fans because, for me, I do want to keep his community alive because it's something that I experienced. And it's something that I feel like other people should keep experiencing." Blue also spoke to the fan events that occurred in this space and how it allowed stans from across this community to come together and celebrate and interact in a positive manner.

On a larger scale, this community also was largely synergistic through album releases and Troye Sivan going on tour. When reflecting on when Troye Sivan went on tour for his album "Bloom" in 2018, Honey expressed: "It was like people from all over the world that we're excited for the Bloom tour. And just daily would talk about stuff that was going on or share that they bought the CD or whatever." Further, many interviewees discussed how great album releases were for the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community in terms of bringing people together. Specifically, Bloom reflected:

> But I remember, specifically when 'Bloom' came out, we were all really active and I remember waiting up with everyone. And messaging everyone and freaking out as we'd be

> listening to each song in order. It was just so fun. And I feel like that stuff really brings people together because it's just the collective excitement.

Some interviewees mentioned how they were in group chats for these instances, or that they would FaceTime their friends that they made on Troye Sivan Stan Twitter to discuss the album, or anything major that Troye Sivan was doing, such as being nominated for a Grammy. A lot of the core friendships that were built on Troye Sivan Stan Twitter remained within the online space, but also expanded beyond the platform to others like iMessage or Instagram. Bloom conjectured that the reason for maintaining these multi-year friendships from this community is "based on the fact that it's a queer space that has people then feel comfortable to build stronger connections because they're finding people who have similar interests, but also get their personal experiences." Interviewees like Wild and Heaven mentioned that they maintain the key friendships from this community on other platforms since older stans tend to leave Twitter as they grow and pursue other life paths. Yet the common consensus from all interviewees is that, regardless on some stans leaving and newer, younger stans being ushered in, Troye Sivan Stan Twitter remains a community that feels safe, comfortable, and almost like a family.

However, not everything about the fostering of these community dynamics was largely positively and reflected on fondly. As Plum quipped at one point in her interview, "there's definitely a limit to how many positive interactions you have without having some negative ones." As close-knit as Troye Sivan Stan Twitter was, which was largely due to being a queer-friendly space and fostering a space to freely discuss Troye Sivan, it also acted like a dysfunctional family unit at points. All interviewees mentioned Troye Sivan Stan Twitter drama as a drawback to their times in the community. Many interviewees discussed how some stans were quite mean to each other, going as far as to publicly share private tweets other stans made on their "rant accounts"—private Twitter accounts meant for close friends from the Troye Sivan

Stan Twitter community. There was also a sense of a social hierarchy, in which stans who were on the platform for longer or who got interacted with more by Troye Sivan felt a level of superiority over others. Bloom and Blue both mentioned in their interviews how some stans would be very nice about people getting noticed by Troye Sivan, while others would be mean, passive-aggressive, or overall negative. Cancelling other users for miscommunication also ran rampant at points on Troye Sivan Stan Twitter. Silly and Rush both mentioned that Twitter forced them to mature at a relatively young age due to Stan Twitter drama. Silly went on to describe: "let's say you're 15 years old and you say something stupid, you're forced to grow up quickly because a lot of people are judging you. And automatically, it feels like your world is crashing down… and you don't want to be that person that's left behind in a community." A common source of anxiety for many interviewees was the fear of being ousted by the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community for saying one wrong thing online—Heaven herself endured this fate for tweeting a reaction to Troye Sivan's EP "In A Dream," which ended in her leaving Troye Sivan Stan Twitter altogether.

Many of these negative community dynamics are largely reflective of the literature surrounding the Swarm and Grassroots models of online mobilization. As I emphasized earlier in the literature review, stans remain largely loyal to Troye Sivan as a fan object yet can go after other members at a moment's notice due to the combination of autonomous action with collective mobilization regardless of geographic connection (van Haperen et al. 2023). Though exhibiting strong levels of connection and comradery at crucial points in the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community, there remained a level of toxicity whenever Stan Twitter drama was incited by a member of the community or an incident at large. The inner workings of the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community may thus reflect the shift of digital fan communities in redefining not

only what it means to be a fan, but also how being a stan affects the workings of online fan communities both within Twitter and at large.

Expanding the Concept of Global Fandom

A key part of the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community is how it is a microcosm of how Stan Twitter spaces at large can facilitate connections beyond geographic boundaries. Stans from around the world find ways to facilitate community online, but many are also able to transcend these digital spaces to create this community in their own, personal lives. All interviewees spoke to the power and joy of meeting up with fellow stans in person. Most interviewees mentioned that concerts and album signings are a great way to meet other stans that they know from Twitter, and some went as far as to travel for the sole purpose of meeting an online friend they made from this Stan Twitter community. However, Stan Twitter has also brought stans together who live in close proximity but had no idea prior to becoming friends online.

In relation to concerts, all interviewees expressed that having concerts as a catalyst for forming and maintaining friendships has been vital. Stans will travel from all over the world to meet up with friends that they made online. Plum described how she believes that concerts "really help… to meet in a controlled environment that you guys are sharing the same love for something. There's very few friends on Twitter, I can think of that I didn't at one point go to the same concert with." One of Plum's best friends became such through going to concerts together: Plum's friend is from the U.K. but went to a Troye Sivan concert in Boston, where they met. Since then, both Plum and her friend have hosted each other for shows in the U.K. and in the U.S. and have even gone out of their way to see each other beyond going to concerts. Plum attests to the power of concerts for facilitating these global friendships and now hosts friends from around the U.S., Europe, and Australia. Similarly, Wild and Honey expressed how they

have flown around the world to go to concerts with their friends from Troye Sivan Stan Twitter, and how doing so has only strengthened these friendships both online and offline.

Outside the realm of concerts, many interviewees also emphasized that Troye Sivan Stan Twitter has facilitated strong friendships that do not necessarily need an event or catalyst to see each other. Stud, namely, described how through building friendships through group chats and private conversations, her close Troye Stan Twitter friends have "traveled from different countries to see [her], and some of them just live near [her] now. And [they] go to see drag shows or like to go to movies together or to events. And if Troye does anything in London, [they] all meet up together." Similarly, Blue realized that a friend they had from home was also on Stan Twitter, and they have gone on to go to Pride together and hang out outside of Twitter. Blue emphasized: "it has been really important for me to know that I have someone in this area that I live that also cares about the same things that I care about." Rush has also had a Stan Twitter friend since 2018, and due to where her university is located, now lives 10 minutes away from this friend. Rush went on to describe how "it's surreal meeting with people in person when you spoke to them online for so long" because "it feels like you've known them for your whole life." Interviewees like Rush also noted that even when meeting up with fellow stans for the first time in person, there was no level of awkwardness as they already knew each other from Stan Twitter.

All interviewees have facilitated strong friendships that transcend geographic location. From flying to Poland to attend a concert together to living in the same town, interviewees expressed that these friendships have only blossomed from the ability to meet in person. Though initial in person interactions were dealt with a little bit of hesitancy due to Internet safety, all interviewees also expressed that since they already knew so much about these stans' personal

lives from Twitter, meeting in person was seamless. The Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community, and Stan Twitter at large, may be redefining what the concept of a global fandom means. Prior literature has called into question if a global fandom can truly exist (Harrington and Bielby 2017), while other work have distinguished offline and online spaces as separate realms in connection to understanding fan culture (Woods and Ludvigsen 2022). However, in analyzing how these interviewees described what it meant to see online friends in person, the idea of a global fandom may be more complex than previously analyzed. These stans have intentionally built and maintained strong friendships regardless of distance, and they have gone to lengths to facilitate offline interactions with those they meant online. Further, these online and offline friendships remain engrained on Twitter: just because stans meet up in person, that friendship does not leave Twitter. Similarly, interviewees mentioned that they still maintain strong friendships with fellow Troye Sivan stans that they have yet to meet in an offline context. The Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community itself encourages global discourse; there are stans present from all over the world and the medium of Twitter encourages global exchange regardless of language or geographic barriers. Not every stan within the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community speaks English, yet there remains a very strong and intertwined sense of connection amongst stans. One interviewee, Silly, even emphasized that she loves how global the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community is as it allows her to learn more about other stans' cultures. The power of Stan Twitter may be that it is redefining what a global fandom can be: that it does exist, that stans are aware of this globality, and that stans are encouraged to engage and forge global connections and friendships both online and offline. The Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community may thus act as a hub of sorts, allowing people to bring online interactions offline and vice versa

with this central space in mind. Ultimately, being on Stan Twitter is a vital way to experience a truly global fandom and to establish core friendships regardless of distance.

Strengths and Limitations

As always, there are benefits and drawbacks to using a qualitative approach for research as well as internal biases.

I have been a member of the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community since 2014. My time on there has been largely fruitful, and at one point, I was largely recognized as a key presence within this community due to my following and interactions with Troye Sivan. When conducting these interviews, the fact that I have been so engrained in this space as a fellow stan may have aided in allowing interviewees open up more and be able to discuss, in-depth, about positive and negative experiences that they have had within this community. All interviewees were friendly and exhibited open body language throughout the interviews, and at points even would reference experiences that I personally went through as examples of what they were discussing about their own times within this Stan Twitter community. I do believe that all interviewees were candid in their responses as no one shied away from talking about the drawbacks of being in the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community. These interviews produced extremely nuanced and complex responses to my questions about Troye Sivan and Troye Sivan Stan Twitter that I feel would not have been possible to obtain if I had used a different qualitative or quantitative approach to my research.

Yet, I also recognize that, as impartial as I have tried to be throughout the conduction and analyzation of this research, I may possess my own internal biases. I have spent the past decade on Twitter and have had many positive, and negative, experiences online. Though I relied solely

on interview responses and prior literature to analyze my research, there is always the risk of personal opinions and biases influencing how I interpreted these interviews and literature. However, I also see this as a strength, as Stan Twitter spaces can be largely difficult to navigate, let alone understand, without having experience in such as I do. Like the interviewees, I also possess a very nuanced take on the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community and how it has affected my understanding of what it means to be a stan, let alone grow up in this space, so I was not hesitant in highlighting both the positive and negative aspects of Stan Twitter.

Conclusion

Over the course of this research, I have learned that Stan Twitter and stans as a concept have yet to fully be fleshed out in literature surrounding fan studies. Stan Twitter touches on a variety of literature understanding the functionalities of Twitter as a medium for community and identity development, the robust history of online queer communities, and queer identity formation.

When focusing on the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community as a microcosm of Stan Twitter at large, interviews with members of this community presented key themes of intentional navigation to online fan spaces, queer identity formation, parasocial relationships, community dynamics, and expanding the concept of global fandom. All of these were viewed as vital aspects of Stan Twitter and, holistically, what it means to be a stan within the context of Troye Sivan Stan Twitter. Troye Sivan stans possess a deeply emotional connection to Troye Sivan as a fan object, with a particular emphasis on how he, as an artist, facilitated a compassionate space for young, queer, stans to find each other and forge a strong community. Though there were

positives and negatives associated with being a member of this community, interviewees reflected on their time in this space with nostalgia and gratitude.

While much of the literature detailing digital fandom spaces allude to the communal and collective aspects of these communities (Bore and Hickman 2013; Haenfler n.d.; Highfield et al. 2013; Hill et al. 2018; Gray et al. 2017; Lee et al. 2020; Woods and Ludvigsen 2022), they fail to distinguish that everyday fans, even in digital settings, possess their own qualities separate from Stan Twitter communities, and stans at large. Stans possess strong emotional ties to their fan object as well as to one another based on this loyalty. Further, these communities may be strong due to shared identity and how it is shaped through stanning a fan object. While everyday fans may stumble into online fandoms, stans are intentional in their navigation to these spaces as they seek to connect with their fan object and other members of this community both on and offline. Further, the concept of Stan Twitter may aid in disproving Harrington and Bielby's literature on how the idea of global fandoms may be inaccessible and untrue (2017): Troye Sivan Stan Twitter has highlighted that stans from all over the world can converse online as well as come together in in-person settings. Relatedly, Stan Twitter problematizes strict dichotomies between offline and offline connections: it instead blurs boundaries in allowing stans to build strong connections, and friendships, online that bleed over into offline settings. And while Lindstam (2021) and Roos (2020) do name Stan Twitter as their areas of focus, their research only encapsulates a small slice of what Stan Twitter has to offer in providing insight for contemporary media and fandom studies. While there are base similarities of structure and function between digital fandoms and Stan Twitter communities, they cannot be lumped together. Stan Twitter possesses the merit to be distinguished for the unique, emotionally charged, qualities it possesses and how it shapes stans' lives both online and offline.

Ultimately, the research on understanding what Stan Twitter is and what it means to be a stan is largely lacking. The aim of this research was to highlight the merit that Stan Twitter possesses in being identified as a core subculture in contemporary studies surrounding fandom, digital queer communities, and assessing identity formation online. I hope that this qualitative research approach to understanding the role that the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community has played in its members' understandings of identity, connection, and community highlights the further need to establish Stan Twitter and stan as their own concepts, separate and distinct from the ideas of fans and fandom. Understanding what Stan Twitter is and what it means to stans will only grow in the future as digital fan culture begins to be formally recognized in academic discourse, and this research is a step forward in that direction.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

Verification: Just to confirm: 18 or older and can speak English well.

I. Introduction:

   A. Introduce myself, what I do at Duke, year.

   B. Ask for an introduction back

   C. Tell me a little about yourself…..

   D. Icebreaker questions:

      1. Did you listen to Troye Sivan's latest album? Favorite song?

II. Questions:

   A. How long have you been on Twitter?

   B. What was your reasoning behind starting your account?

   C. Can you tell me a bit about what you use your Twitter for?

   D. How were you introduced to Troye Sivan?

   E. What led you to shape your account around Troye Sivan?

   F. How do you define "Stan Twitter"?

   G. How do you define the Troye Sivan ST community?

   H. Can you tell me about any notable experiences you've had with Troye Sivan on Twitter?

      1. How did they make you feel?

   I. Have you made any friendships through this community?

      1. If Yes, how did they come to be/would you be willing to share any experiences you have had doing so?

2. If No, ask the next question.

J. How do you see yourself interacting with other fans on a day-to-day basis through Twitter?

K. Have any of your online interactions with other users led to offline engagements?

    1. If Y, what was your thought process like when meeting with other fans in person?

    2. If N, ask next q.

L. Do you feel as though there is a community within Troye Sivan Stan Twitter, why or why not?

M. How do you use Twitter as a medium to talk about Troye Sivan?

N. Troye Sivan has released 6 music projects since 2014. How many have you been on Twitter for?

O. How do you engage with fellow Troye stans during music releases?

P. What is appealing about Troye Sivan, and his music, to you?

Q. What does it mean for you to "stan" Troye Sivan?

R. What are the things that make you connected with Troye?

    1. How do you identify with him?

S. Has being on Twitter shaped your youth in any tangible way? How would you describe Twitter affecting your growing up, if it has?

T. What has been your favorite experience of being a part of Troye Sivan Stan Twitter?

    1. Least favorite?

U. What advice would you give to someone just starting out on Troye Sivan Stan Twitter?

III. Basic demographics:

A. Age

B. Race

C. Gender

D. Sexuality

E. Level of education

F. Location

IV. Concluding Recommendations:

A. Is there anything else I'm missing or anything else you would have asked or talked about?

B. Can you provide me the names and users of two people who you think I should interview next?

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Consent Form to Participate in Research on Troye Sivan Stan Twitter for Duke University Sociology Thesis

Key Information

Introduction

This research study is conducted by Victoria Kovarik (she/they), a current senior at Duke University studying Sociology and Environmental Sciences & Policy.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to analyze how online fan communities fuel both collective and individual identity formation with a particular focus on queer identity formation. This research is a case analysis of online Troye Sivan Stan Twitter users. All research conducted is to complete a Sociology Undergraduate Thesis.

What will I be asked to do?

If you choose to take part in this study, you will be completing an Interview over Zoom to answer questions about your experience on Twitter and within the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community. Interviews should last one hour.

What are the risks and benefits of this study?

There are no expected risks or benefits to you for participating in this research study.

Confidentiality:

With your permission, I would like to audio record this interview so that I can make an accurate transcript. The file will be deleted as soon as the transcript is completed.

I will keep your contact information apart from your interview responses. I will hold on to your contact information until I have transcribed the interview in case I have additional questions. My field notes will be on my laptop computer which uses whole disk encryption. A unique code number will be assigned to all data I collect from you. All data will be stored in Duke University's secure cloud platform, Duke Box.

When reporting my analysis, I will properly provide you with a pseudonym when describing my interview responses. While I will not use your name, I would like your permission to use your age range, your gender, and your country of residence to describe you.

While I will do my best to keep your identity confidential, due to the nature of Twitter-related research, there is a risk of accidental disclosure, that someone could search for reproduced text on Twitter and find your account or use interview answers as a way to identify you.

While the data we collect from this study may be presented at a thesis symposium or published in a journal, your identity will not be revealed.

The study results and documentation will be retained until May 2024, with audio and recordings being deleted as soon as they are transcribed.

Voluntary nature of participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose not to participate at any point. If you agree to be in the study you may withdraw at any time for any reason.

Whom do I call if I have questions or problems?

For questions about this study, email Victoria Kovarik, Duke University undergraduate, at victoria.kovarik@duke.edu.

For questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Duke Campus Institutional Review Board at campusirb@duke.edu. Please refer to protocol number 2024-0217 if you contact the IRB.

Statement of Consent

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign and date below.

_____ _____

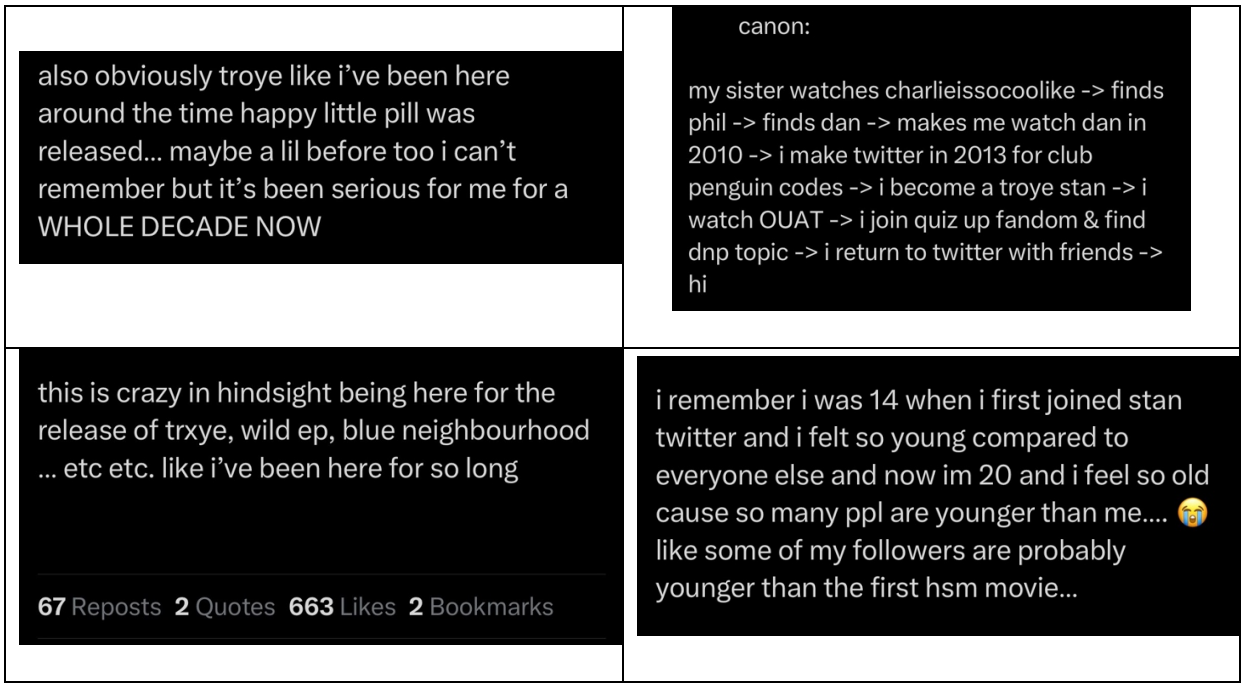
Subject's Printed Name and Signature Date

Appendix C

Textual Analysis Supplements

Using the themes active navigation to online spaces that fostered community, [queer] identity formation, the idea of parasocial relationships with Troye Sivan, community dynamics, and expanding the concept of global fandoms, I highlighted tweets that further encapsulate each theme to serve as a complement to what the interviewees discussed. These tweets can be used as complements to the analysis of each theme within the discussion portion of this thesis. I pasted in the text to not reveal identifying information of each user that posted these tweets. Further requirements are discussed in the Methodology section. Any images provided below are of Troye Sivan and not the Troye Sivan Stan Twitter community.

Theme 1: Active Navigation to Online Spaces



my bedroom when i was like 12😭 stan twitter user in the making

Theme 2: [Queer] Identity Formation

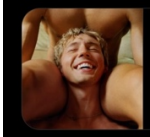
behind every hot girl there's a deep history with troye sivan

3.4K Reposts **903** Quotes

17K Likes **332** Bookmarks

after seeing troye for the first time when i was 15 i came out to myself bc it was the first time i had been around openly queer people that were totally okay with themselves, so yesterday was so fucking special to experience 3 yrs later

he couldn't have released this song at better time for me last year & it still just hits so perfectly. u rlly can't go back, baby!!!!



Can't Go Back, Baby
open.spotify.com

tyler 🤝 connor 🤝 troye
being comforting gay icons before i even knew i was bi

sometimes i remember random memories regarding troye & it's like woah wait it was so serious he kinda raised me. & it's still kinda serious just in a lowkey deep way for me personally

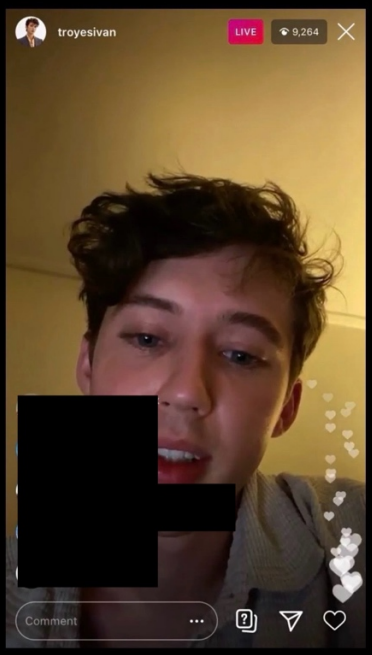
i found troye when i was just figuring out my sexuality, and he was such a comfort and a rock for me. 8 years later he's still such a huge part of my life and i cannot thank him enough for everything he does for us 💙

not to b sappy but being on troye stan twt during pride month brings back so many emotions i am so grateful for this community and to have a place where i can truly be me and i love you all mwah ❤️	a loved one had first introduced to me to troye's music about 6 years ago, as i was struggling deeply with my sexuality. since then, his music and platform have both played major roles in my journey to self-acceptance; they have helped me feel safe, heard, validated, and loved 💗
troye stan twitter oh how i miss you!!! yeah i haven't logged on here since 2019 but troye is still so important to me & the album is fab and made me so nostalgic for my time on stan twt 💞	troye has had such a positive influence on my life. he's been an amazing role model, his music has helped me through so much, i've come to terms with my sexuality, and i met one of my best friends because of him.
you mean to tell me troye wrote a song about being old and queer and still being in love and looking back on your lives? did you mean: the absolute cause of my death?	with this being said, queer/lgbtq+ safe spaces are soo important! twitter has always been one for me since i was a young teen so i'm thankful for it & everyone i'm friends w/ on here. & for people like troye & harry who make me feel v safe & loved in the spaces they've created !
i am so incredibly proud of / thankful for miley cyrus, halsey, troye sivan, connor franta, dan howell, lauren jauregui, hayley kyioko, olly olexander, brendon urie to be openly queer. representation is so important and using their platform as a way to support the lgbt+ means sm	without troye i wouldn't have the life i have. he's led me to some of my best friends in the world, gave me a safe place & helped me be proud. through my hardest times, he was a constant. he saved my life & there'll never be enough words to thank him or express my love for him 🤍

Theme 3: Parasocial Relationships

honestly it really does feel like this fandom and troye are a friends group chat and i love it

it's not even a parasocial relationship neither i know him personally



Troye sivan is family.

the parasocial relationship is parasocialing i just dmed troye on instagram to ask him wtf was going on bc i think he was hacked

omg? y'all are seriously out here flooding man's comments as if you're troye's best friend trying to "defend him" or something? y'all don't know him well enough to do that shit, stay in your irrelevant fan business please and thank you

1 6 43 10K

like let's not do this in the first place- but the root of the issue is the parasocial relationship you all think you're in with troye. it doesn't exist babe, be normal

parasocial for asking people not to bully jacob?? new troye stans are truly demons leave jacob alone that's all we ask lmao 😭 i would hate if it came to troye not wanting to express his feelings towards jacob too

sorry i don't really know what's going on on tl rn and why some people are suddenly mad and at whom but it looks like a parasocial relationship to troye's ex which is just as silly as having one to troye idk🤔

me yesterday out for drinks with melbourne gays and troye comes up into conversation like i had to pretend to be normal like i wasn't involved in that man's business since like 2013

all the troye OGS AND TROYE having that bracelet on yeh we're family

how gay do u gotta be to know troye sivan's parent's names & have met them a few times . i ask myself

me dming troye as if he's a close friend of mine

Parasocial relationships are theeeee most fun until you become a little bit too self aware and then it's just sad

i'll never forget that i was the virtual equivalent of best friends with troye sivan on this dumb app 💔

@troyesivan Follows you

being less involved in stan twitter over the years has made me so clearly see the toxic parasocial relationships that most of them have with who they stan. it's honestly pitiful to watch sometimes😭 being a stan is not equivalent to being friends i promise	yes especially bc we know troye's priority isn't charts and numbers but to make the music he's passionate about and our community. this new tiktok ruled strategy makes us all behave like sheep like wtf #troyesivaniscoming
MY BESTIE TROYE NOT WINNING A GRAMMY IS CRAZY	

Theme 4: Community Dynamics

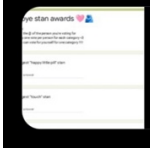
i can't believe i started out as a tiny troye sivan stan account and now i have my huge crazy est family 🥹 insane	I'll never forget that one time I managed to fuck up my entire reputation with the troye Sivan fandom because of one thing
having been on stan twitter as long as i have (literally since 2014) and being apart of a fandom that literally had dedicated dramas days it made me realize too that everything always being fought about is so surface level and won't mean anything in literally a week time	idk if u remember her but one time i followed loads of troye fans and tried to become friends with them and i messaged them a lot and then i got soft blocked by two fans cause they thought i was just using them to get a troye follow😭

RESULTS FOR THE TROYE STAN AWARDS!!!! ❤️❤️❤️❤️

part 3/4: in a dream

troye stan awards ❤️👥

- put the @ of the person you're voting for
- only one vote per person for each category <3
- you can vote for yourself for one category !!!!



troye stan awards ❤️👥
docs.google.com

seeing all the retired troye stan accounts poppin off tonight is fueling my nostalgia

and i are updating my friends on how the troye fandom cancelled both of us and it's so healing how we all are laughing about it

i just want to say, there's been a lot more troye fans coming in, and we welcome all of you ❤️ welcome to troyetwt we're v gay here.

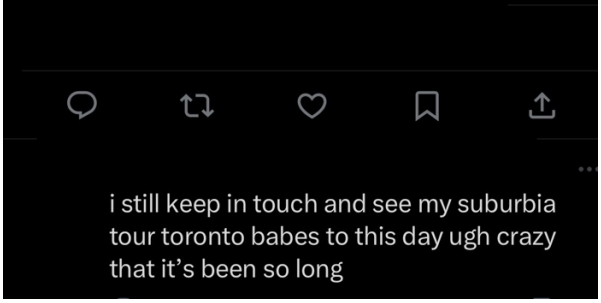
sometimes it's nice to sleep through the unnecessary drama on troye twitter 😚

some of you will never know the constant troye stan twitter drama when we were tracobies....

Oooh I wish I was still invested in stan twt enough to care that someone priv quoted me

It's a sad day to be a troye stan on twitter goodbye to our follows and notices 👈

Theme 5: Expanding the Concept of Global Fandoms

i see again in less than a week who cheered !!!!!!	oomfs i'm trying to get an idea... who else is gonna be at troye's prague & berlin shows this summer 🤭
just had a little cry over looking at my countdowns for troye tour knowing im gonna be spending a week with friends i met through him&this app that ive had for 8-9 years, travelling up and down the country doing a whole tour just like i always wanted to when i was 15🥺	it's crazy to me that random strangers i met on troye sivan stan twitter when i was in the 8th grade are still my friends today like ?????  i still keep in touch and see my suburbia tour toronto babes to this day ugh crazy that it's been so long
hi europe friends!!!!! does anyone wanna host me for a night when troye comes to your city or we can split a hotel for the night ?? serious Q! #replysnap	it's actually crazy that i don't have a single friend that i didn't meet through troye
calling my best friend (who is my best friend because of our shared love of troye) to tell her the news is kinda crazy if you think about it like .	95% of the people i'm friends with today i met through a troye gc 😭
okay we slayed !!! i miss it so much. & bloom tour was soo special like i think my friends & i ran the line for my city? so fun & so cool. & now that we're all pretty much actual adults this tour it's about to be sooo fun	feeling actually super grateful rn for all of the people in my life. like through this lil app & tour & traveling & new experiences in my life & even reconnecting with old friends, i'm surrounded by people who are so supportive of me & want the best for me. 🥲💗