So Far Away, Yet So Close

A Study on How Intimacy Is Attempted to Be Produced in
Girlfriend Roleplay ASMR Videos on YouTube

Authors: Dalia Abdallah & Madlén Engström
Supervisor: Cecilia Strand
Sammanfattning


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Abstract

This study examines how ASMRtists, people that create ASMR videos, attempt to create intimacy in their videos on YouTube. ASMR stands for Audio Sensory Meridian Response and is a tingling sensation within the body that can be triggered by various stimuli, such as visuals and sounds. This study processes girlfriend roleplay ASMR, which is when female ASMRtists roleplay being the viewer's girlfriend. ASMR and girlfriend roleplay ASMR are relatively new phenomena which have emerged through digitalization and its reconstruction of the concept of intimacy. It has yet to be scientifically researched and this study contributes to the research gap. Through conducting semiotic video analyzes, this study explores how the ASMRtists attempt to produce intimacy in their girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos. The result landed in that the ASMRtists attempt to produce intimacy in various creative ways that override the screen. It is likely that the ASMRtists attempt to generate both an emotional and physical connection to the viewer through combining elements from real-life relationships and different ASMR triggers. Through making use of theories of dramaturgy, the male gaze and gender displays, the study has analyzed the material and uncovered norms and structures in society that the ASMRtists arguably rely on. The number of people that consumes these videos shows that there is a demand for new ways of creating intimacy. The development of digitalization will most likely continue to open up new forms of digital intimacy which makes it an exciting topic to conduct further research on.

Keywords: intimacy, digital intimacy, ASMR, girlfriend roleplay ASMR, ASMRtists
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1. Introduction

"Let's all experience something together" is the first line in the commercial for Michelob Ultra's beer, starring actress and singer Zoë Kravitz. The commercial was aired during the 2019's Super Bowl commercial break and shows the actress on a tropical island whispering slowly into two microphones and tapping a beer bottle with her slender fingers. She pours the beer which creates a fizzing sound that is enhanced by the microphones (Merlo Siculo 2019). This sound can commonly be recognized as the phenomenon Audio Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) (McDonell-Parry 2019, Tiffany 2019).

ASMR can be described as a tingling feeling in the body that can be activated through different sounds and visuals. ASMR has in the past five years become an Internet sensation that generated over 1 million results on YouTube in March 2014 when searching for ASMR. In November 2015, that number had increased to approximately 2.5 million results. This shows that ASMR has high relevance in today's society and will most likely grow in the future (Sadowski 2016).

ASMR has transcended into the mainstream media through commercials, celebrity interviews and documentaries. In 2017, IKEA produced a commercial featuring a woman caressing and stroking furniture, creating ASMR sounds (IKEA USA 2017). W Magazine has for the past few years conducted ASMR celebrity interviews with for example rapper Cardi B, actor Jake Gyllenhaal and reality-star Paris Hilton, where the celebrity whispers into the microphones, creating ASMR (W Magazine 2017, W Magazine 2018a, W Magazine 2018b). In November 2019, the Swedish national public television broadcaster, Sveriges Television, published a 30 minutes long documentary covering the phenomenon (Sveriges Television 2019a). Also, the Swedish Language Council, which is responsible for advancing and cultivating the Swedish language, introduced a new word into the Swedish vocabulary in 2019: ASMR (Sveriges Television 2019b).

Despite ASMR's exposure in the mass media, it is still a fairly new scientifically researched topic. An even more unexplored topic is the subcategory of roleplay ASMR which is when people, called ASMRtists by the community (ten Harmsen van der Beek 2019), record themselves roleplaying different situations such as being a hairdresser or a dentist. This study, however, sheds light upon girlfriend roleplay ASMR, where women record themselves roleplaying a girlfriend to the viewer. This study focuses on females due to them being the majority of ASMRtists creating videos on YouTube and hence forming form the most
representative group of people for this phenomenon.

Girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos illustrate a type of digital intimacy, intimacy conveyed through the Internet. However, intimacy has a multitude of subjective definitions and is personally experienced, which makes the topic fairly challenging to study. This study is nonetheless aware of the fluidness of the concept and the difficulties that might be encountered when researching the topic.

The point of departure of this study is that girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos open new ways of being connected and intimate with people. The standpoint of this study is that the videos do not necessarily replace traditional intimacy, it rather constitutes a different outlook on intimacy. It is, therefore, crucial to explore and highlight new forms of intimacy as society progresses into a more digitized landscape. As previously mentioned, there is a lack of scientific research on the topic of girlfriend roleplay ASMR and through conducting video analyzes of these videos, this study contributes to the research gap within the fields of ASMR and digital intimacy.

1.1 Purpose and Research Question

Through the phenomenon of girlfriend roleplay ASMR, this study aims to examine how ASMRtists attempt to create intimacy through their videos. The research question is the following: How do ASMRtists attempt to produce intimacy in girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos on YouTube? The research question will be answered through the following subquestions:

- How do ASMRtists use their setting and props to attempt to create intimacy?
- How do ASMRtists use storylines and happenings to attempt to create intimacy?
- How do ASMRtists use emotive words and phrases to attempt to create intimacy?
- How do ASMRtists use their position and body language to attempt to create intimacy?
- How do ASMRtists use their appearance and clothing to attempt to create intimacy?

1.2 Delimitations

This study will limit its selection of videos to videos only containing female ASMRtists due to them composing the majority of those who create ASMR videos (Sadowski 2018). Furthermore, there are various forms of ASMR videos, however, this study only focuses on ASMR videos that are based on the interplay between the ASMRtist and the viewer, i.e.
girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos. This means that other forms of ASMR videos that do not contain girlfriend roleplay ASMR will be excluded.

Moreover, the study is delimited through only focusing on people that have recorded videos of themselves and published them on YouTube and no other forms of digital girlfriends, such as interactive holograms. Due to the lack of time and resources, the study will only pay attention to the producers of the videos, i.e. the ASMRtists, and not the viewer's reception of the video. Also, the study will limit itself to only using ASMR girlfriend roleplay videos that contain an everyday life activity, such as sleeping or waking up and hence exclude videos with scenarios that are not considered everyday life activities. Lastly, the study delimits itself regarding adult content. YouTube informs the users that they must be over the age of 18 to access videos including adult content. This study does not include these types of videos due to accessibility purposes as well as these video’s lack of relevance for this study.

1.3 Disposition

The study will be presented in the following order. Firstly, a background will be given on the topics of digital society, traditional intimacy, digital intimacy, ASMR and girlfriend roleplay ASMR. The next section presents the previous research conducted within the fields of digital intimacy and ASMR. Then, the methodology employed in the study will be introduced. The operationalization of the study, selection requirements, selection process, as well as the selected material, will be described and presented. Furthermore, research dilemmas and a methodological reflection will be given. In the following section, the theories utilized in this study will be presented. Furthermore, the result along with an analysis of the results will be given. Lastly, a discussion of the result and the analysis will be presented.
2. Background

In the following sections, background information that lays the foundation of the girlfriend roleplay ASMR phenomenon will be presented. The information regards the topics of digital society, traditional intimacy, digital intimacy, ASMR and girlfriend roleplay ASMR.

2.1 Digital Society

We live in a digital age where almost every aspect of life and society has a digital element to it. Most people have a smartphone, most people take part in social networks, most people are connected and most people consume some form of media in their everyday life. In today’s world, it is difficult to completely discard the processes of digitalization that permeates almost every aspect of the world (Lindgren 2017). Digital society is, according to Lindgren, the result of when media meets society. By digital society, Lindgren points to the society being affected by digital networks, communication tools and online platforms. For example, different applications and online platforms, such as YouTube, have emerged and enabled new ways of communicating with others.

The technology and digitalization are rapidly developing and hence constantly changing structures in society. Digitalization has penetrated our lives, our culture and our relationships. The Internet, for instance, shapes and structures the society in undeniable ways. New phenomena arises and old phenomena change. These new phenomena, ASMR included, reorganizes people’s way of thinking and behaving. The trend of increased single households in society leads to a shift in people’s needs where people make use of the digital space, such as chatting online, instead of physically meeting (Lindgren 2017). This could result in people choosing digital options instead of physical presence which in turn can give rise to new ways of relationship building and dating online. Digitalization has therefore made its mark on the concept of intimacy and relationships.

The tendency of people seeking new ways to interact through the screen shows no signs of stagnating, rather it is increasing. Due to the digitalization presence and continued subsistence, it is of high importance to research in fields affected by digitalization in order to comprehend the current state of society and the digital landscape that surrounds us.
2.2 Traditional Intimacy

The meaning and the experience of intimacy are highly subjective and hence at the risk of being contradictory, which is something one needs to take into account when explaining and defining intimacy. Intimacy is personally experienced and therefore has a multitude of meanings and functions. It encompasses a vast spectrum of feelings, interactions and practices and can be found in relationships between people as well as between people and things (Sadowski 2016). Intimacy has traditionally been described as privacy, closeness and familiarity (David & Cembre 2016). According to Sadowski (2016), the concept of intimacy is usually associated with sex and sexuality. However, intimacy, in general, describes close relations with someone or something. It requires certain knowledge and access to someone or something and is dependent on mutuality. Further, it requires a two-way connection.

2.3 Digital Intimacy

Due to the digitalization process currently present in society, intimacy has transcended into the digital landscape. Sadowski (2016) states that digital intimacy is a form of remediated intimacy. Intimacy has spread into the online sphere and has therefore transformed and restructured how it is performed and narrated. As a result of digitalization, people are now able to reach out to a mass audience through the Internet. This opens up for new ways of forming relationships and staying connected with people all around the world (Lindgren 2017). The aspect of immediacy in communication is an apparent element in digital intimacy and opens up for staying connected regardless of time and space. One must not physically meet to establish relationships and to be close and intimate with people. For example, dating apps, such as Tinder, open up new channels to meet people, form relationships and establish intimacy (David & Cembre 2016)

The digitalization ability to reach out to a mass audience has enabled channels of one-way communication. The one-way communication can assign the communication elements of non-mutuality since it lacks the interactive aspect of communication. Moreover, one-sidedness enables the lack of having access to someone or something. These elements distinguish digital intimacy from traditional intimacy. Further, due to the immediate aspect of digital intimacy, one can question if it generates as deep and personal relationships as the traditional kind. Moreover, another aspect is if digital intimacy could disrupt the traditional kind (David & Cembre 2016).
Digital intimacy could be interpreted as a phenomenon where digital platforms create a co-presence. This can be found in parasocial relationships, which are defined as "pseudo-intimate relationship between the audience and media personalities" (Lim & Kim 2011 p. 767). This describes relationships that are developed by the audience towards media personalities that they most likely only have seen through the screen. Over time, the audience can develop a bond with the media personality that can mirror social interactions in real life (Rasmussen 2015, Hartmann 2016).

These types of parasocial relationships can also arise in girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos. The viewers can feel personally addressed by the ASMRtist even though the ASMRtists is addressing and talking to a mass audience. However, due to the structure of girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos, the viewer can experience the encounter as mutual, even though it is most likely not. This can give the viewer an illusion of mutual awareness (Rasmussen 2015, Hartmann 2016). Moreover, there is the distinction of traditional intimacy requiring knowledge and access about the other, whereas, in the example of girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos, the ASMRtist most probably does not have any knowledge of nor access to the viewer (Rasmussen 2015).

2.4 ASMR

ASMR stands for Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response and could be defined as a pleasant feeling or experience characterized by a tingling sensation caused by various audio and visual stimuli. The feeling of ASMR might be triggered by soft sounds, whispering and expressions of care, interest and affection (Andersen 2014, Poerio 2016, Sadowski 2016). In the ASMR community, this is commonly called "ASMR triggers" and is usually accompanied by a sense of calmness and relaxation (Poerio et al 2018). This can give relief from anxiety, panic attacks, insomnia and clinical depression (Bjelić 2016, Poerio et al 2018, Ahuja & Ahuja 2019).

Bjelić (2016) claims that ASMR relies on the social practice of already existing needs of feeling loved, cared for and thought of. These needs have been attempted to find in digital technology through digital intimacy. ASMR is then just another layer, or another example, of something that is already happening in the field of digital intimacy. People have always sought certain needs on the Internet and through digital intimacy. ASMR hence constitutes a new form of attempting to fulfilling those needs online.

The concept of ASMR was coined in 2010 (Bjelić 2016, del campo & Kehle
2016, Iossifidis 2017) and since the last decade, there has been an online community dedicated and committed to create and exchange videos that pursuit the feeling of ASMR (Andersen 2015). The ASMR community today mainly centers on the social media platform YouTube (Andersen 2015, Gallagher 2019) and the creators of ASMR are called ASMRtist (Poerio et al 2018). By the name, one could argue that the creation of ASMR is perceived as a form of artistry. It requires talent, engagement and dedication to pursue good-quality ASMR. This artistry is rewarded with loyal viewers and fans that support the ASMRtist (Andersen 2015, Gallagher 2019). Some examples of popular ASMR videos are simulations of massages, haircuts and medical examinations (Poerio et al 2018). In these videos the ASMRtists plays a role, such as a masseuse or a hairdresser, and performs the procedure as if they are performing it on the viewer. In the videos, the camera stands for the face of the person being taken care of which could equate to the viewer of the video.

As a phenomenon, ASMR positions itself in several contexts and situations; it shows people's intimate relationships with networked devices, the rise and formation of online communities, collective identities and alternative ways of relationships and relationship building. These different contexts show the importance of the meaning of ASMR in society (Gallagher 2019).

Sadowski (2016) states that there is a high degree of diversity within the ASMRtistry. However, the group of ASMRtists who create the majority of the videos and are the most appreciated tend to be white, young, good-looking, English-speaking and able-bodied women. These women also tend to be the ones receiving media attention the most.

2.4.1 Girlfriend Roleplay ASMR

When researching for girlfriend roleplay ASMR, the study encountered a lack of scientific research on the phenomenon. There is some scientific research conducted on the topic of ASMR, but not specifically on girlfriend roleplay ASMR. However, various websites and news articles cover some parts of the uninvestigated topic. Social media and news pages rapidly pick up new trends and phenomena, in contrary to scientific research and, therefore, information regarding girlfriend roleplay ASMR in this study is mainly gathered from news pages and websites.

New York Times states that girlfriend (and boyfriend roleplay) videos have been on YouTube for five years at least and is a growing genre within ASMR (Wylde 2019). Nugent (2018) also writes that there is an increasing trend of girlfriend (and boyfriend)
roleplay ASMR videos. Emma Jensen (2018) writes in an article published in November 2018 that a new type of video has emerged on YouTube. In these videos, women speak to their "boyfriend", which in these cases is roleplayed as the viewer of the videos. The videos commonly feature whispering or speaking softly to please the viewer. According to Sadowski (2016), girlfriend roleplay ASMR falls into the ASMR category of "romantic intimacy" where ASMRtists treat the viewer as an intimate partner. In these videos, the ASMRtists aim to uplift the viewer by showing care, love and attention.

Highsnobiety (2018) writes that relationship roleplay ASMR videos primarily focuses on the positive aspects of a relationship, where the relationship is equivalent to a companionship. Common elements are the implications of kissing and playing with one's hair. But, there is another side of these roleplay ASMR videos, where the ASMRtist can roleplay an overly attached or jealous partner for example. There are also videos where the ASMRtists roleplays kidnapping their partner.
3. Previous Research

There has been some research conducted in the field of digital intimacy. Some of the topics that have been explored are online dating, online relationship building and parasocial relationships. In this chapter, a presentation of the previous research regarding ASMR conducted in the fields of digital intimacy, medicine and gender will be given.

3.1 The Field of Digital Intimacy

*Sex, Intimacy and the Internet* (Schnarch 1997) investigates the field of cyber dating and its relation to cyber intimacy. Schnarch argues that "cyber dating" is more inclined to preserve and perpetuate other-validated intimacy dependence rather than self-validated intimacy. The article reflects on the potential benefits of the Internet regarding what teachers, counselors and therapists might think is crucial when encouraging and facilitating intimate relationships. Further, the chapter *Brave New World of Digital Intimacy in The Best Technology Writing 2009* (Thompson 2009) uses the example of social media, Facebook, in particular, to show the growth of "ambient intimacy" concerning people's relationships. Through discussing people's use of social media and how it shapes people's relationships the author shows that the field of digital intimacy is changing and expanding.

*Romance in Cyberspace: Understanding Online Attraction* by Cooper and Sportolari (1997) speaks on electronic relating and how the phenomenon of electronic relation can contribute to positive interpersonal connections. Through an optimistic approach, the article discusses the structure of online relationships and argues that they facilitate warm interpersonal connections, including healthy romantic relationships. Moreover, Rasmussen (2018) studies parasocial interactions and parasocial relationships in the digital age. Through an examination of relationship-building concerning YouTube celebrities, Rasmussen argues that parasocial relationships are developing between YouTube celebrities and viewers.

3.2 The Field of Medicine

Barrat & Davis discusses ASMR in their research article *Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR): a flow-like mental state* (2015) through a medical angle. The study aims to firstly describe the sensations of ASMR and secondly to examine how these sensations may ease symptoms of chronic pain and depression. This study shows that there are medical and biological effects of ASMR which could answer to why it is so important and widespread.
Furthermore, *The Restless Compendium: Interdisciplinary Investigations of Rest and Its Opposites* (Bennett 2016) contains two chapters dealing with the phenomenon of ASMR. The chapter "Could Insomnia Be Relieved with a YouTube Video? The relaxation and Calm of ASMR" (Poerio 2016) has a self-explanatory title. The chapter "Relief from a Certain Kind of Personhood in ASMR Role-Play Videos" seeks to answer the question if ASMR, through its strive for a dreamy and sleepy passivity, could be seen as an active research practice. The chapter further questions if ASMR can problematize, or change, how we see upon activity and passivity in regard to rest and its opposites.

Also outgoing from a medical approach, del Campo and Kehle (2016) presents two phenomena, ASMR and frisson, which involve human functioning that tend to go unnoticed or misunderstood by the scientific community. They explore the notions of the phenomena and argue that it can be an instance of therapeutic help in promoting mental health and wellbeing. They mean that ASMR could be used as a tool to encourage happiness in people which can be induced or enhanced through mindfulness.

Fredborg, Clark and Smith (2017) have conducted a quantitative study on common personality traits associated with ASMR. The study examined 290 individuals who are able to experience the feeling of ASMR and "290 matched controls completed with The Big Five Personality Inventory". The study concluded that people who were able to experience the feeling of ASMR scored higher on the traits of openness-to-experience and neuroticism. Further, they scored significantly lower on traits of conscientiousness, agreeableness and extraversion in comparison to matched controls, proving that certain personality traits can be associated with the feeling of ASMR.

### 3.3 The Field of Gender

On the gender side of the spectrum, Waldron (2016) has conducted video analyzes in her article "This FEELS SO REAL! Sense and sexuality in ASMR videos" by one particular ASMRtist to explore how media and its infrastructure produce the embodiment of sexuality through mediated intimacy. Waldron argues that the consumption of ASMR is a form of sexual practice. Bjelić (2016) explores in her short article *Digital, Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* the phenomenon of ASMR and its patterns that can be found as well as the problematic of the phenomenon.

Iossifidi (2016) discusses the "reassuring female voice" and gendered practices in ASMR through exemplifying ASMRtist Claire Tolan in her article. Iossifidi discusses the widespread usage of feminized notions in the ASMR community and argues that Tolan
playfully investigates and questions gendered practices of care and devotion in the ASMR community. Further, Sadowski’s (2016) dissertation *Digital Intimacies: Doing Digital Media differently* analyzes the concept of digital intimacy and how digital media and intimacy are becoming more intertwined through the perspective of feminist cultural studies. Sadowski examines three aspects of digital intimacy; online hate and harassment, women-centered coding initiatives and the subculture of ASMR. The study argues that ASMR, in combination with the other two aspects, can counteract gender-based inequalities within digital cultures and platforms. Further, Sadowski argues that digital intimate strategies can also be used to contribute to digital contemporary feminist politics.

Lastly, *Now You've Got The Shiveries: Affect, Intimacy and the ASMR whisper community* by Andersen (2015) examines how whispering works on the viewer. Outgoing from an approach of sonic associations from the field of private domestic care and space as well as the aspect of distance that comes with the intimacy mediated through YouTube, Andersen means that the distance troubles the ASMR community's way of pursuing pleasure. Therefore, Andersen is interested in investigating how ASMR videos produce pleasure through an intimacy that is distanced and that relies on heteronormativity and normative gender roles.

### 3.4 The Contribution of This Study

The study presented in this paper positions itself within the field of digital intimacy with a focus on girlfriend roleplay ASMR. Due to the development of new technology and media, the field of digital intimacy is in constant change which allows and encourages new research within the field. The study leans on the previous research regarding the background of the topics of ASMR and digital intimacy and has helped contextualizing this study. The study contributes to the field of ASMR, which has unexplored aspects since it is a highly recent topic of research. Girlfriend roleplay ASMR is one of the unexplored aspects and therefore this study contributes to filling the research gap. Despite finding general research conducted on the phenomenon of ASMR, there is no research conducted on the interplay between the ASMRtist and the viewer. Moreover, the previous research conducted on ASMR tends to focus on the reception of the phenomenon, rather than the creators of the phenomenon. This study, however, focuses on the creating aspect of the videos, which is another aspect that distinguishes this study from the previous research.
4. Methodology and Material

In the following chapter, there will be a presentation of the methodology and material of the study. Firstly, a research design along with the research tradition this study positions itself in, will be presented. The method employed in this study, which is semiotic video analysis, will thereafter be presented, followed by the selection requirements and selection process. Moreover, the chosen material will be introduced as well as a discussion of the research validity, reliability and research dilemmas. Lastly, a methodological reflection regarding the challenges and difficulties encountered with the method employed will be presented.

4.1 Research Design

This study aims to examine how ASMRtist attempt to create intimacy through girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos, which is arguably an unexplored territory within the field. The research design of the study will, therefore, be explorative, since it attempts to explore an uninvestigated topic. Explorative studies are suitable for little research areas (Malterud 2014) such as girlfriend roleplay ASMR, as it is a subculture yet to be discovered by scientific researchers. The study will derive from an abductive approach, meaning that the inference does not follow a logical order. Rather, the theory and the material are simultaneously developed and therefore intersected (Sohlberg & Sohlberg 2019). The use of an abductive approach arguably results in a more dynamic and creative process open for new perspectives.

4.2 Research Tradition

This study takes off in hermeneutics, which is a research tradition outgoing from interpretations and the search for meaning in a material. Hermeneutics problematizes the concept of truth and argues that there is no absolute truth, it is highly subjective and personally interpreted. The research tradition points to the difficulties in living in a society without interpretation since it is incorporated in our daily lives. People continuously encounter various impressions that are constantly interpreted in relation to their understandings of the world. Hermeneutics sees the possibilities of subjective knowledge and opens for nuanced meanings (Zimmermann 2015, Sohlberg & Sohlberg 2019).

The research tradition of hermeneutics is suitable for this study considering the study will interpret and analyze videos. Pictures are highly interpretative and motion pictures
add another layer of interpretation. Hence, leaning on the tradition of hermeneutics enables the researcher to decipher material on a deeper level and acknowledges subjective understandings.

4.3 Semiotic Analysis

Semiotics is the study of signs and explains how meaning is created and reproduced in society. It is mostly used in the field of picture- and text analysis, however, it can also apply to video analysis as it concerns motion pictures. The material can be analyzed thoroughly and on deeper levels with the notions of denotation and connotation. Denotation is the first level of analysis, which is the setting and the literal meaning of the picture. This level deals with what can be seen in the picture and how the picture is composed. Only the surface of the picture is described. This is important to note in order to grasp the overall foundation of the picture (Hansen & Machin 2019).

The second level of analysis is connotation which is the symbolic meaning of the picture. Unlike denotation, connotation focuses on signs and the cultural references in the picture. On this level, the representations and interpretations are in focus. Underlying signs and symbols are unveiled. Connotation enables another layer of analysis where the cultural associations and symbols are connected to its visual representation (Hansen & Machin 2019). This study will rely on semiotic analysis when constructing the tools of analysis for this study.

4.3.1 Video Analysis

One form of semiotic analysis is video analysis. Hansen and Machin (2019) present a model of video analysis which is inspired by semiotic analysis. The model divides the visual representation into four categories: 1) Environment and objects, 2) Participants, 3) Happenings, 4) Modalities. Regarding the environment and objects, one can analyze the setting of the video and how it is situated. Here, the background and objects are in focus. Further, one can trace the participants in the video. How the participants are positioned in relation to the camera as well as their appearance and what their appearance insinuate is of importance. Also, the happenings and actions along with the feelings they invoke are outlined. Lastly, the modalities of the visual representation, for example, natural aspects such as lighting, can be analyzed to see if it has been altered to create a specific aesthetic (Hansen & Machin 2019).

Moreover, the audio and the language is essential to analyze in order to
understand the whole content of the video. The language constitutes a large part of the construction of the videos that will be analyzed in this study. It creates its level of interpretation and the meaning of the video can change in regard to the expressions used and changes in intonation. Through analyzing, for example, emotive words, one can grasp the feelings the participant is trying to convey. Other audio, besides the language, such as music, for example, can create an ambiance in the video which contributes to the interpretation of the video (Hansen & Machin 2019).

To summarize, it is crucial to analyze the visuals and the audio in relation to each other to see how the visuals interact with the audio and if they are compatible or not. An analysis that combines motion pictures and audio enables a deeper understanding of the content of the video and enhances the results of the study. This study took inspiration from Hansen and Machin's model of video analysis when composing the operationalization for this study.

4.4 Operationalization

The purpose of this study is to examine how ASMRtists attempt to create intimacy through girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos. The operationalization of the study was formed Hansen & Machin’s (2019) model explained above in mind. Through conducting video analyzes, the study seeks to answer the research questions through the following subquestions. Each subquestion is followed by several questions posed to the material of this study:

- How do ASMRtists use their setting and props to attempt to create intimacy?
  - What can be seen in the video?
  - In what setting does the video take place and what can the setting imply?
  - What objects and props can be seen, how are they used and what do they and their usage imply?
  - How is the lighting in the video and what does the lighting imply?

- How do ASMRtists use storytelling and happenings to attempt to create intimacy?
  - What story is being told and what does the story imply?
  - What is happening in the video and what do the happenings imply?
  - How is the story connected to the happenings of the video?
- How do ASMRtists use emotive words and phrases to attempt to create intimacy?
  - What emotive words and phrases are used by the ASMRtist and what do the words imply?
  - What feelings does the ASMRtists usage of language evoke and what does it imply?

How do ASMRtists use their position and body language to attempt to create intimacy?
  - How is the ASMRtist positioned in the video and what does her position imply?
  - How does the ASMRtist move around and what does her body language imply?

- How do ASMRtists use their appearance and clothing to attempt to create intimacy?
  - What does the ASMRtist look like and what does it imply?
  - How is the ASMRtist dressed and what does her clothing imply?

4.5 Strategic Selection

The choice of selection of the material for this study will be a strategic selection which means that the material will be chosen with intention. The study aims at choosing material that can answer the research questions and help the study fulfill its purpose, which is examining how ASMRtists attempt to create intimacy in their girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos.

The selection process strives to collect a broad spectrum of videos and achieve as much heterogeneity as possible to increase the width of the knowledge of the phenomenon. The study aims at finding a deep understanding through analyzing a diverse material. The heterogeneity is ensured through finding videos that differentiate from each other in terms of attributes of the ASMRtists, such as age, ethnicity and language (assuming subtitles are provided) as well as the setting and context of the video. Also, the study strives to analyze videos from different periods and videos with many views as well as videos with fewer views. The heterogeneity of the material gives this study a more deep and nuanced result (Ekström & Larsson 2010).

The material of this study requires that the videos must include both audio and visual content and must contain girlfriend roleplay ASMR. The study prioritizes the number of videos over the length of the videos to achieve a wide sense of understanding of the phenomenon. Eight videos will be chosen to be analyzed since it is a reasonable number of videos considering the time frame this study is limited to. Analyzing more than eight videos
can increase the risk of saturation of the content and to avoid the risk, the first ten minutes of each video will be analyzed, despite the length of the video.

But, one needs to take into consideration that if the video is much longer than ten minutes, the first ten minutes of the video risks being incoherent in terms of the content of the video. To exemplify, the ASMRtist might at the beginning of the video present what she is about to do in the video. But, due to this study only including the first ten minutes, some of the happenings that are presented by the ASMRtist will be left out. Another aspect that needs to be taken into consideration is that the ASMRtist attempt to create intimacy could happen successively. Therefore, there is a risk of the study not capturing the attempted intimacy. This study, however, will handle these risks through choosing videos that are not much longer than ten minutes and bearing in mind that the video might be incoherent.

4.6 YouTube as Search Engine

YouTube will stand as the study's search engine since it is the primary source of ASMR videos (Andersen 2015, Gallagher, 2019). As a digital platform, YouTube has a membership function where one can create an account to personalize one's searches and viewing. One can also subscribe to other accounts, like and comment on videos when being a member. Subscribing means following other accounts and keeping updated with their uploads. The personalization relies on algorithms and previous searches. Therefore, it is crucial to use the platform with a guest account and not a login when searching for videos for this study. However, it appeared that YouTube still personalized guest accounts based on their previous searches and viewing. Unfortunately, that was a factor the study could not depart from. As a result, the searches were still affected by previous surfing which lead to a need for a more comprehensive and broad selection process.

4.7 Selection Process

The selection process went as following. Searches were made on YouTube on the 25th of November 2019 with the initial keywords "girlfriend roleplay ASMR". The searches were made with standard filtering, meaning the search result was based on relevance, which the study concludes is the match between the keywords and the title, description and tags in combination with the popularity (views) of the video. Based on the initial searches, videos were skimmed through to see if they were suitable for this study. Through the recommendation function, which is YouTube's recommended videos based on the video one
is currently viewing, further videos were briefly checked. Through these initial searches and its recommendations, a few videos were selected as potential candidates to serve as material for this study.

The first searches showed an apparent overrepresentation of white, young, pretty, English-speaking and able-bodied women in girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos on YouTube. This illustrates and strengthens Sadowski’s argument of white pretty women being overrepresented in the ASMR community. The videos with this kind of ASMRtists have the most views and hence were chosen by YouTube as the most relevant and arguably most popular videos. Due to this, the study had to target its searches to establish the heterogeneity of the material. Searched were made with the keywords "black girlfriend roleplay ASMR" and "asian girlfriend roleplay ASMR". Through these searches, black and Asian ASMRtists were found. But, the study found that these videos did not appear as often when not specifying their ethnicity in the search. Some of them had fewer views and subscribers than the videos found on the first search. The study included these videos since it adds to the heterogeneity of the material regarding the ethnicity of the ASMRtists as well as the level of popularity of the ASMRtist and/or the video. The same procedure was made with the videos found with the targeted ethnicity search results. The videos were skimmed through and some of them were selected as potential candidates. The recommendation function also served as a tool to ensure the goal of heterogeneity of this study.

Through the findings of the intended searches, the study continued with searches which targeted the attributes of the ASMRtist. Searches were made with the keywords "old girlfriend roleplay ASMR", which did not affect the age of the ASMRtist. Only the title which included the word "old" appeared, however, the word was necessarily not an indication of the age of the ASMRtist. Furthermore, searches with the keywords "androgynous girlfriend roleplay ASMR" were made, but no suitable videos were found. These searches resulted in videos containing for example pictures only or audio-only, which does not fulfill the requirements of the material for this study. The study also searched for videos with ASMRtists that spoke another language than English. However, the videos that appeared did not include subtitles and could not be selected because of the language barrier. Moreover, searches with the words "big ASMR girlfriend roleplay videos" and "plus-size girlfriend roleplay videos" did not result in any eligible videos for this study.

To ensure the heterogeneity of the setting and context of the videos, once potential videos were found, the study checked the ASMRtists profile page to see if there were any other girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos with other contexts. For example, the study
found that one common theme was "sleepy/go to bed" girlfriend roleplay ASMR. However, when looking for videos by specific ASMRtists, other settings and contexts were found. Through this, more potential videos for the study were selected.

In conclusion, the selection process landed in eight videos that will be analyzed in this study. The videos were downloaded for storage and reference purposes and will be presented in the next chapter.

4.7.1 Material

In the following table, the videos that will serve as the material in this study is be presented in no particular order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User Name</th>
<th>Subscribers</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Uploaded</th>
<th>Views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Batala’s ASMR</td>
<td>289 000</td>
<td>ASMR Girlfriend Personal Attention Kisses, Feeding You Etc. Roleplay</td>
<td>August 6th 2017</td>
<td>3 641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASMRbliss</td>
<td>Not showing</td>
<td>Relaxes You after a LONGG day ASMR roleplay</td>
<td>April 18th 2019</td>
<td>530 004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BellaTrixie ASMR</td>
<td>5 060</td>
<td>asmr girlfriend pampers your skin &amp; playing mario kart</td>
<td>April 5th 2019</td>
<td>13 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>donna kitch (reupload from Gwen Gwiz ASMR)</td>
<td>Not showing (Gwen Gwiz: 453 000)</td>
<td>ASMR Girlfriend Roleplay</td>
<td>April 12th 2017</td>
<td>550 286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NeiNei Tingles</td>
<td>21 300</td>
<td>ASMR</td>
<td>Girlfriend Relieves Your Stress ~ Personal Attention, Head Massage, Closeup Kisses</td>
<td>April 11th 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KimmyKASMR</td>
<td>20 100</td>
<td>ASMR: Caring &amp; Relaxing Girlfriend Roleplay!&quot;</td>
<td>March 7th 2016</td>
<td>13 286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabella ASMR</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>ASMR DOCTOR GIRLFRIEND TAKES CARE OF YOU</td>
<td>November 20th 2019</td>
<td>6 246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Calm ASMR</td>
<td>288 000</td>
<td>ASMR Sweet Personal Attention</td>
<td>February 14th 2019</td>
<td>181 084</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
4.8 Validity and Reliability

Validity refers to the extent to which the method measures what it is intended to measure. It points to the quality of the operationalization, which is how well the indicators and tools of measurements suit the purpose and the chosen theories. Achieving high validity relies on the researcher's knowledge of the theories used. The more complex theories, the more difficult it is to achieve high validity (Hjerm et al 2014). However, one can reach high validity through a thorough reading of the theories used which most likely leads to a reasonable and suitable operationalization.

Reliability points to the quality of the measurements and the consistency of the measurement or method employed. High reliability means that the study will have similar results regardless of who conducts the study (Hjerm et al 2014). Due to this study taking off in the traditions of hermeneutics, a tradition that allows and encourages interpretation, achieving high reliability in the sense explained above, is unattainable. However, this study can achieve high credibility, meaning that the study is conducted truthfully, consistently and with high levels of transparency. This is achieved through detailed information on the course of action and a comprehensive operationalization.

4.9 Research Dilemmas

When conducting research there are some dilemmas that one has to take into account and highlight in order to raise awareness of the rules and difficulties that might delimit or hamper the study. One common research dilemma that can be found in this study is the issue of anonymity of the ASMRtists. Since the material of this study constitutes of videos published on YouTube, the study must be transparent with the videos that have been chosen and hence publish the material (Sohlberg & Sohlberg 2019). The videos are available for everyone and there are no requirements of logins or sign-ups to take part in the material. Therefore, there are no ethical barriers that are being crossed when collecting and publishing the material. But, this study emphasizes that the videos have not been produced for research purposes and that the ASMRtists are unaware of this study using their videos to conduct research.

Another research dilemma that is of high relevance is the risk of representing the material in a faulty and misleading way. Concerning the study deals with people, it is crucial to not distort the ASMRtists and their image. Again, one needs to bear in mind that the videos have not been produced to be analyzed by researchers. By informing this, the study aims to
protect the ASMRtists from any hostile comments. However, the study cannot ensure the ASMRtists protection since one cannot control the reception of this study. Since this study is based on interpretation, it automatically increases the risk of subjecting the ASMRtist in a bad light. This is further something that one needs to take into consideration and be careful with. This study deals with this through being open-minded and impartial to the videos and not misrepresenting the ASMRtists and their videos.

Moreover, the issue of research influence is central when conducting research that includes interpretation. The interpretations might be colored by the researchers' backgrounds and frames of references. However, this is a common research dilemma that is difficult to combat (Sohlberg & Sohlberg 2019). As long as one is transparent with the method employed and its strengths and weaknesses, the readers of this study should be aware of the possible deficiencies of the study.

4.10 Methodological Reflection

One challenge that is common when interpreting pictures, let alone motion pictures, is the struggle of maintaining objective. As mentioned above, this study handled the challenge by maintaining open-minded and impartial to the phenomenon. In addition, researching a fluid concept such as intimacy complicates the process of interpreting. Intimacy is a subjective and personal experience and can, therefore, be difficult to interpret universally. The analysis will always be colored by the researchers' understandings and frames of references to some degree. However, due to this study leaning on the tradition of hermeneutics, the interpretation of the material is needed. But, through making sure that this is conveyed in this study, the readers should be aware of the study's element of interpretation and any deficiencies that might come with it.

Moreover, this study initially encountered difficulties in achieving heterogeneity in the material. When collecting material, there was a realization regarding the overrepresentation of the creators of girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos. Since this study strived to find as diverse ASMRtists and videos as possible, the study had to take on means to ensure the heterogenization. These means were mainly targeting the searches through using key words. This was successful to some degree but not fully as the study wished. Furthermore, when searching for information on girlfriend roleplay ASMR, the study encountered several websites that were colored by the writer's own opinions and thoughts about the phenomenon. To ensure the objectivity of the study, these sorts of sources were not used.
5. Theory

In the following paragraphs, the theories that will be used to answer the research question "How do ASMRtists attempt to produce intimacy in girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos on YouTube?" will be presented. The theories are the theory of dramaturgy, the theory of gender displays and the theory of the male gaze. Firstly, an overview of the theories and their relevance for this study will be presented, followed by a thorough presentation of each theory.

5.1 Overview of Theories

This study will utilize the theory of dramaturgy by Goffman (1956), the theory of the male gaze by Laura Mulvey (1992) as well as the theory of gender displays by Goffman (1979). Dramaturgy theory explains people's interactions through theatrical performances. Goffman means that people behave in specific ways in public contrary to how they would behave in private. Goffman's theory of dramaturgy is relevant to this study and serves as a tool to grasp the phenomenon of how ASMRtists attempt to create intimacy in their girlfriend roleplay videos. What is commonly perceived as private is in the videos arguably presented as an act to attempt to produce intimacy.

The theory of the male gaze by Mulvey (1992) discusses how women in film are being sexually objectified by men. The male gaze positions itself within two gazes; the male protagonist and the spectator. Women are assigned characteristics influenced by eroticism and pleasure and behave accordingly to please the man, both intentionally and unwittingly. The theory of the male gaze is suitable considering the study focuses on motion pictures containing women. The study can utilize the theory to explain how the ASMRtists represents herself in the eyes of the male gaze in order to attempt to generate intimacy.

Goffman’s theory of gender displays, which is not affiliated with his theory of dramaturgy, points to how gender is portrayed in advertisements. Goffman (1976) claims that women and men are portrayed differently since women are portrayed as inferior to the man. Women’s subordinance can be seen in, for example, the way they are positioned and dressed. Goffman highlights aspects of pictures and motion pictures that produce and strengthens current gender roles in society. Gender displays help understanding why the ASMRtist might act and behave a certain way to attempt to create intimacy. Goffman (1976) claims that intimacy involves gender displays. Hence, using gender displays can help uncover how intimacy is attempted to be produced in the girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos.
The theory of dramaturgy and the theory of the male gaze will serve as primary theories, whereas the theory of gender displays will serve as supplementary theory. Dramaturgy theory enables a discussion of how the ASMRtist can display a private part of herself and attempt to produce intimacy in an arena that is not generally considered private, such as public videos on the Internet. The male gaze contributes to a gendered dimension to the phenomenon, which the theory of dramaturgy lacks. The male gaze emphasizes the structural sexualization of women while the theory of gender displays helps pointing to concrete examples of how women tend to be portrayed in pictures.

5.2 The Theory of Dramaturgy

The theory of dramaturgy derives from the world of theatrics. Goffman (1956) however coined the term and introduced it to the field of sociology. He claims that social interaction in daily lives can be equated with theatrical performances. People manage their lives and actions to express a particular impression to others. Goffman explains this as people's presentation of Self which is a sense of who someone is. People's identity is not stable, it is constantly changing when interacting with others. People perform as if they were acting on a stage and to avoid embarrassing oneself and others, people engage in practices. Different settings demand different practices. Therefore, people alter their behaviors and manners to accommodate the current setting. The aim of the performance is to be accepted by the audience. Once the audience views the actor the way they want to be viewed, the actor is accepted (Goffman 1956).

5.2.1 Frontstage and Backstage

Within the theory of dramaturgy, there are concepts of frontstage and backstage. Goffman (1956) distinguishes between the frontstage and the backstage. The frontstage is where people present themselves to others. The actor is in constant awareness of being observed. Therefore, the person controls their manners, feelings, body language along with their appearance and clothing in order to act according to expected norms in the society. If one does not act accordingly, one faces the risks of being stigmatized.

In contrary to the frontstage, backstage is a region where the person drops all their acting roles and can be themselves. They no longer must please and impress others. In this stage, their traits can come forward without being afraid of being judged. Characteristics and beliefs that are suppressed in the front stage can appear in the backstage. People can
behave more freely and feel comfortable being their natural self. Being backstage is associated with being at home or surrounded by one’s closest friends and family. Private rituals, such as brushing one’s teeth or changing clothes, take place backstage. Actions in the backstage do not aim to please others, but oneself.

5.3 The Male Gaze

Laura Mulvey has through a psychoanalysis approach researched film studies and cinematic narratives. In her research *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1992) Mulvey discusses the male gaze imminently. In the following paragraphs, the theory of the male gaze will be presented and discussed.

5.3.1 The Sexualization of Women

The theory of the male gaze claims that women are constantly portrayed and represented in ways that put them on display for others to observe and enjoy. Women are depicted as sexual objects that aim to fulfill male desire. They are styled and dressed with a strong erotic and visual influence leading to the connotation of to-be-looked-at-ness (Mulvey 1992). Mulvey states that film functions as reproducers of norms in society. In movies and motion pictures, one can easier trace and decipher these norms. Despite these norms not being intrinsic to movies, the structures of the society become clearer in video format. Mulvey means that sexual differences between males and females organize visual pleasure. The male gaze points to the distinction between the active/male and passive/female. The active male forms and creates the narrative and the passive female disrupts the narrative with her erotic contemplation. The male carries the story forward while the female plays a spectacle in his story. The woman has not a significant meaning within herself, she only exists to bring out feelings and emotions from the male. The male, however, is disinclined to the gaze. He cannot be sexually objectified alike women by the ruling patriarchal ideology. The male represents power, he controls the narrative and the fantasy. His narrative is complete and represented as a powerful ideal ego (Mulvey 1992).

There are two layers of the male gaze. The woman is seen as an erotic object by her male protagonist while simultaneously being seen as an erotic object by the spectator through the screen. The woman is through these two lenses gazed upon on both sides of the screen. The two gazes emerge by the spectator's identification with the male protagonist. Therefore, the gazes do not disrupt the narrative, rather, they are accurately combined. The
male protagonist holds control over the narrative, the events and the erotic look which gives both the male protagonist and the spectator a feeling of almightiness. The male gaze discusses a gaze that exists regardless of time and space. It is present with or without a male counterpart since it is deeply rooted and manifested in society (Mulvey 1992).

Mulvey gives examples of movies where the male gaze can be identified. One of the examples regards a glamorous, isolated and sexualized showgirl. When the woman falls in love with the male protagonist, she becomes his property. Suddenly, her eroticism is only subjected to him. Her previous characteristics, such as being a glamorous showgirl, lose importance. She is now only defined through the male. The spectator can, through identification with the male protagonist, possess the woman as well. The woman is thus owned and controlled by all male gazes (Mulvey 1992).

5.3.2 Internalized Male Gaze

Mulvey also states that the female gaze is as important as the male gaze. This means that females view themselves through the male gaze, they look at themselves through the perspective of a man. This can be seen as an internalized male gaze for women. Their behaviors are altered and determined through the eyes of men, subconsciously or not. This is possible due to the ruling social order where the man is seen as the norm. Hence, his glaze is the hegemonic gaze. The male gaze serves as a demonstration of unequal power between the male and the female. It fosters gender inequality and maintains patriarchal structures in society. Mulvey means that a female who accepts the sexual objectification of the male gaze conform to social structures that favor men. This could be seen as reinforcing the hegemonic male gaze (Mulvey 1992, Sassatelli 2011).

5.4 Gender Displays

The concept of gender displays was coined by Goffman in his book Gender Advertisements (1976) and refers to conventional portrayals of gender. Goffman means that gender displays are profoundly used in advertisements to establish gender roles and their relation to each other. Although girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos lack a male counterpart, the gender displays in the videos remain relevant because the ASMRtist puts herself in relation to an imaginative male counterpart, the viewer.

Gender displays are manifestations of constructed gender behaviors in society and not necessarily depictions of gender behaviors rooted in biology. In his study, Goffman
presents several common features and patterns of how women are portrayed. The ones that are relevant for this study and that will be presented in the following segments are the aspects of the feminine touch, lying down and infantilization (Goffman 1976).

5.4.1 The Feminine Touch

The feminine touch points to the movement and touching of a female's hands. For example, in advertisements, women's hands tend to smoothly trace the outlines of objects and softly caressing them. Her touch is so delicate that it is almost not touching the objects. The feminine touch can also be found in self-touching. Women are portrayed as touching themselves which signifies that her body is delicate and precious. Touching her chest and her mouth can, therefore, be interpreted as sexually inviting and makes the women sexually available (Goffman 1976).

5.4.2 Lying Down

Goffman (1976) further states that women are frequently portrayed in a lying position which is classically seen as a ritual of subordination. Someone who is depicted as standing tall is portrayed as superior and proud, while someone who is depicted as lying down is portrayed as inferior and vulnerable, Goffman claims. The bed or floor, for example, is associated with being less clean and less pure. Further, lying down on the floor, on a sofa or a bed can indicate sexual availability. This is also a pattern that Goffman found when analyzing advertisements (Goffman 1976).

5.4.3 Infantilization

Another frequent element noted by Goffman (1976) is the infantilization of grown women. Women are often depicted similar to children in terms of clothes and posing. Goffman claims that there is a blurred line between womanhood and childhood, which enables women to be pictured with the same clothes and doing the same activities as children. Further on, there is a tendency that women are portrayed as being playful, which is connotated by them having their finger in their mouth for example. This is strongly associated with children's characteristics, which indirectly assigns women characteristics found in children, such as confusion, distraction and playfulness.
6. Result

The purpose of this study is to find how ASMRtists attempt to create intimacy through girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos. The research question is "How do ASMRtists attempt to produce intimacy in girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos on YouTube?". In the following sections, the result of the study will be presented in different segments.

6.1 Setting and Props

The result of this study found that there was a clear pattern of the settings of the videos in which all of them took place inside. Some of them seem to have taken place in a studio, for example, Creative Calm ASMR's video. However, in these videos, the backgrounds were still altered in a way to create a cozy aesthetic. Isabella ASMR had a green screen in the background portraying a bedroom that is similar to a cabin lodge. Assumingly, the background is intended to create a warm and homey feeling, even though it is clear that it is altered. Batala's ASMR had a multicolored sheet hanging in the background of her video, giving the feeling of a closed-off area. The rest of the videos were seemingly at home, in a bedroom. This location implies that the ASMRtist and the imagined boyfriend are cohabiting, which is arguably an attempt to increase the sense of closeness and intimacy. In general, all the videos were shot in a closed-off space with no insight. The videos taking place at home had a background that was most likely altered to create a certain aesthetic that can be perceived as warm and cozy, but, also natural. This includes the lighting since the videos had natural room lighting whereas others had professional studio lighting, such as GwenGwiz and Creative Calm ASMR.

Overall, there was arguably a pervading homey feeling throughout most of the videos with personal decorations and belongings in the background. The lighting might have been altered to create a yellow light, which can give a warm feeling of the video. It also reflected on the ASMRtists' face and body, making her radiate a feeling of warmth. Yellow lighting is inviting in contrast to piercing white lighting which is often associated with a sterile environment. Furthermore, the lighting also gave a feeling of the time that the video was situated in, which was either bed- or night time, for example in ASMRbliss' and NeiNei Tingles' videos. In some cases, the videos were set in the morning time, for example, GwenGwiz and BellaTrixie ASMR's videos.

Most of the videos were set in an environment that can be perceived as private.
and personal. Home is usually associated with an enclosed area only available for one's close friends and family. The fact that most of the videos took place in this enclosed area, it can be perceived as an invitation for the viewer to take part in the ASMRtists' personal space. Further, another layer that adds to the sense of being in the ASMRtists' personal space, is that some of the videos took place in the bedroom or on a bed. Both ASMRbliss, KimmyKASMR and GwenGwiz were all lying down on a bed in their videos. KimmyKASMR and GwenGwiz even slept in some parts of their videos. GwenGwiz even opened her cover in the video to invite her imagined boyfriend to lay down next to her, which can make the viewer feel like they are lying beside her.

Props that were being used in the videos were various. Two ASMRtists included a red plastic rose, in which one of them was a gift from the ASMRtist to the imagined boyfriend. Giving the imagined boyfriend something, for example, a gift or a service, was a common feature within the girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos. The gifts and services were both used to trigger the ASMR tingles as well as to show affection to the imagined boyfriend. For instance, KimmyKASMR fed her imagined boyfriend blueberries. Feeding one's significant other can be seen as flirty, romantic and affectional.

Other props that were used were things that you could find at home, such as a tweezer, a makeup brush and lotion. These were all used for pampering purposes. BellaTrixie ASMR tweezed her imagined boyfriend's eyebrows and Creative Calm ASMR used the makeup brush to brush her imagined boyfriend's face. Lotion was frequently used by the ASMRtists as a tool to give their imagined boyfriend massages. The sounds of rubbing hands and lotion created a sound that could trigger the ASMR feeling. Isabella ASMR included many different props related to doctor roleplay, which helped her imply that she was taking care of her imagined ill boyfriend. In general, the props used in the videos can facilitate as means to imply that there is no physical distance between the ASMRtists and the viewer.

**6.2 Storyline and Happenings**

A pervading storyline that almost all the videos leaned on was the storyline of the imagined boyfriend coming back home from a rough day at work, while the ASMRtist had been at home, waiting for him. The imagined boyfriend has worked hard and is tense, therefore, the ASMRtist, who cares for him, wants to relax and destress her imagined boyfriend in various ways. This is done through pampering him in forms of giving him massages, personal attention, gifts, doing skincare, feeding him or saying that she is going to cook for him.
KimmyKASMR implied in her video that her boyfriend was the provider of the family and that he needed to take care of her. She also mentioned that once she wins the lottery, she would become his sugar mama and he would no longer need to work a day in his life. But until then, he needed to take care of her. However, in terms of domestic work, she was seemingly in charge of it. She implied that she did the cooking and grocery shopping. KimmyKASMR also frequently asked her imagined boyfriend when he was going to buy her a puppy dog throughout the video. One storyline that stood out was Isabella ASMR's video. The context of her video was that her imagined boyfriend was ill and she had left work to go home and take care of him.

Some of the ASMRtists discussed personal and sensitive topics in their videos. For example, GwenGwiz ASMR spoke about anxiety and eating disorders, KimmyKASMR spoke about weight loss and BellaTrixie ASMR brought up family visiting. Discussing topics such as these imply that the ASMRtist and her imagined boyfriend are comfortable with each other. The topics were also brought up naturally, implying that they have opened up for each other before and that they have been in a relationship for a long time. The personal topics had nothing or little to do with the happenings of the video, they were rather used as a tool to imply that the ASMRtist and her imagined boyfriend have a relationship outside of this specific video and context. Also, most of the ASMRtists implied that after the video, they were going to bed together or she is going to put him to sleep.

All of the ASMRtists, except Creative Calm ASMR, included kissing in their videos. They either kissed the camera, which is a commonly used technique within the ASMR community that can give the viewer a sense of being kissed, or they just made kissing motions and sounds. Some of the ASMRtists, such as GwenGwiz ASMR and ASMRbliss had sessions in their videos where they kissed repeatedly. It was also common for the ASMRtists to kiss after giving personal affirmations, such as "I love you". This common feature was also found in, for example, Batala's ASMR's video.

Massages were a frequent pattern that was used by Batala's ASMR, NeiNei Tingles and KimmyKASMR in their videos. Also, Creative Calm ASMR mentioned that she is going to give her boyfriend a massage. The massages were hand massages, scalp massages and shoulder massages. Different kinds of lotions and oils were used to give the massages and to intensify the sounds of skin rubbing on skin. In some of the videos, the hands of the ASMRtists were not visible while giving the massages, because they were positioned under the frame of the screen.

Hand motions were a common feature in almost all the videos and can be seen
as a technique by the ASMRtists to make the viewer feel touched and caressed by them. For example, BellaTrixie ASMR used hand motions in her video to imply that she is applying a facial mask on her imagined boyfriend. The hand movements in the videos were slow, smooth and gentle. Many of the ASMRtists touched the props and themselves in a similar way.

6.3 Emotive Words and Phrases

There was frequent use of emotive words in the videos, especially words associated with love, affection and close relationships. Some of the ASMRtists, for example, ASMRbliss, NeiNei Tingles and Batala's ASMR repeated emotive words such as 'love' and 'relax'. However, it can be seen as a part of the whispering ASMR experience. It does not necessarily mean that the ASMRtists emphasize that they love their imagined boyfriend, it is rather a common technique used in ASMR videos to attain the ASMR tingles.

The most frequent phrases were "I'm proud of you" and "I love you". In general, many affective, powerful and committed phrases were used, in style with "I'll do anything for you", "You're everything to me" and "I appreciate you". Some of the ASMRtists included longer sessions with personal affirmation, where these phrases were being said like a meditative ritual. Others incorporated the emotive phrases in the story when expressing physical affection, such as kissing after saying something affectionate to strengthen its meaning.

Furthermore, another interesting aspect found was that when implying that the boyfriend has complimented her, BellaTrixie ASMR answered by saying "Yeah, it is a new shirt, thanks for noticing" and "I have been using a new skin product, thanks for noticing" (BellaTrixie ASMR 2019). This could imply that she has been waiting for her imagined boyfriend to notice her and that she is happy when he validates her. Isabella ASMR, who takes care of her imagined ill boyfriend in her video, used phrases implying that there is a need for her to take care of her boyfriend. When it is implied that she is exaggerating his illness, she countered it with "I am your girlfriend, it is my job to take care of you" (Isabella ASMR 2019).

6.4 Position and Body Language

All the ASMRtists were either sitting or lying down in bed. The ones sitting down were positioned in the center of the video and the same angle as the viewer, whereas the ones lying down were positioned slightly to the side of the camera. Overall, the ASMRtists were
positioned near the camera and in most of the videos, only the upper half of their body was visible. The close proximity of the ASMRtists and the camera could be a technique to evoke a sense of closeness between them and the viewer.

In the videos of the ASMRtists sitting down, the focus of the video was directed towards their faces, compared to when the ASMRtists were lying down, the focus was on other body parts. To exemplify, ASMRbliss was lying down in a curved position in her video, only showing half of her face, which directed the focus on the skin of her leg. Moreover, GwenGwiz was lying sideways in her video in a position that enhanced her chest, arguably stealing the focus of the video. NeiNei Tingles, which was sitting down on a bed in her video, changed her position to be able to give the boyfriend a scalp massage. The new position put her shoulders and chest area on display, covering most parts of the screen, which could give the viewer a feeling of physically being very close to her.

The body language of the ASMRtists was throughout the videos slow, delicate and smooth, which gave a sense of them almost moving in slow motion. A common feature was carefully caressing the props, the camera and themselves in an arguably unnatural way. Caressing the camera could imply that she is caressing the viewer. As mentioned above, caressing the viewer in the form of hand motions were the most prominent aspect within the videos since the ASMRtists most likely aim to establish a physical connection with the viewer.

However, the study found some contradicting aspects regarding the implications of their body language. Even though the storylines and happenings of the videos put emphasis on caretaking and nurturing aspects, which can be associated with mom-like behavior, the body language of the ASMRtists implied otherwise. Behaviors such as cute posing, giggling and being playful, almost childlike, were apparent in many of the videos. The childlike behavior was mixed with mom-like behavior, which could jeopardize the storyline and make it unrealistic and incompatible.

To exemplify, KimmyKASMR drew upon several notions in her video that indicated her being a child, such as cute posing when asking for something, making herself smaller body-wise and putting her hands on her chin and looking up to her boyfriend with puppy eyes. Her body language and high-pitched voice in combination with the storyline strengthened the associations of her being childlike. Childlike behavior was found in several of the videos, such as Batala's ASMR and GwenGwiz ASMR. In Batala's ASMR's video, the ASMRtist was seen playing with a teddy bear and giving kisses through the bear. The childlike behavior in the videos could function as a tool for the ASMRtist to pursue intimacy
by implying that she is dependent on her boyfriend. This could generate a feeling within the viewer of being significant and needed.

Furthermore, the ASMRtists tended to keep long steady eye contact with the camera, implying that she is looking into the eyes of the viewer. The ASMRtists presence was seemingly disoriented in a dreamlike notion in the videos, they were just there for their boyfriends. The disorientation left them dependent on their boyfriends, which could imply that she is fragile and in need of protection. The ASMRtists eye contact was also seemingly dreamy and delicate, which can open for the imagination of the viewer to prosper. The eye contact with the viewer arguably could place the viewer in the same imagined room as the ASMRtist.

6.5 Appearance and Clothing

Similarities of the ASMRtists appearance and clothing were found in the videos. A general notion was that many of the ASMRtists showed skin in their videos. A common feature regarding the ASMRtists clothing was an off-shoulder top, which is a strapless top showing the shoulders. Due to the limited space of the angle of the camera, the off-shoulder top depicted the ASMRtists as being naked in the eyes of the viewer. In many cases, the top was mainly invisible for the viewers to see which can further intensify the imaginative aspect of the ASMRtists’ body. To exemplify, GwenGwiz ASMR was wearing a thin low-cut nightgown that exposed her breast. In general, almost all the ASMRtists appeared in clothes that set a sexual tone to the videos.

Most of the ASMRtists wore makeup in their videos, although seemingly natural. Styled hair was also a common feature as well as accessories, such as jewelry. Overall, most of the ASMRtists were styled and wore makeup, even in situations where they implied that they were going to sleep or had just woken up. The only video where the ASMRtists did not wear any makeup, was BellaTrixie ASMR. However, the video was situated in a context where she implied that she pampered her imagined boyfriend by doing skincare. The context of doing skincare would make the video lose reliability if she were to wear makeup.
7. Analysis

In the following section, an analysis of the presented result will be given. The analysis is structured in line with the theories previously presented.

7.1 Theatrical Performances

The settings of the videos are typical private space settings, which Goffman would call backstage. Typical backstage areas are at home or in a homey environment and being in the backstage gives an impression of closeness and intimacy. In the backstage, people are surrounded by people they have close and intimate relationships with. The fact that most of the girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos took place in the ASMRtists home, the ASMRtists have automatically given the viewer access to her backstage. Since backstage is a place where intimacy can be present, the settings of the videos can arguably be seen as an attempt to increase the feeling of intimacy. Furthermore, the fact that most of the videos were recorded in natural lighting and that the ASMRtists utilized props that are typical things to have at home, strengthened the ASMRtists attempt to produce intimacy.

What is supposed to be backstage is through the videos put on display for others to see, making it a frontstage. The backgrounds and settings are however seemingly altered to create a homey aesthetic to fit in line with the typical backstage arena. But, a backstage area is usually a place with a natural and unaltered setting. Therefore, the fact that some of the settings in the videos might have been altered, decreases the sense of a truly natural backstage. Most importantly, the fact that the ASMRtists have recorded these videos and put them on the Internet completely disregards every aspect of it being backstage. However, the ASMRtists have through their videos arguably manipulated the idea and perception of a backstage as an attempt to produce intimacy. The viewer's experience of being a part of the ASMRtists private space could enable a feeling of intimacy and closeness since not everyone usually is allowed to take part in it.

The storylines and happenings of the videos, such as relaxing and unwinding one's partner, pampering and taking care of one's partner are typical backstage behavior. In the backstage, one can be themselves and behave more freely. Doing skincare and giving massages are arguably intimate actions that one would only do when they are comfortable with being themselves and dropping their act. For instance, BellaTrixie ASMR pampered her boyfriend with skincare in her video, which is arguably a private ritual done at home and
backstage. However, her video converts the backstage into a frontstage through sharing an arguably intimate ritual and putting it on display. Furthermore, the element of discussing private topics in the videos is highly personal and arguably only discussed in a safe space, which a backstage could constitute. Going to sleep or waking up are also actions that belong to the backstage since they are usually are done at home. These elements show that the ASMRtists play with the idea of being backstage in their attempt to generate intimacy.

Kissing, which was apparent in almost all of the videos, is arguably an intimate act usually done with one's partner. The technique of kissing after giving, for example, a compliment, also intensified the personal affirmation and could give it more meaning. Kissing could, therefore, be seen as aiming at increasing the intimacy between the ASMRtist and the viewer. Another backstage behavior that was frequent in many of the videos was massaging, which is an act that one usually gives and receives to or from someone who one is close with, unless it is by a masseuse. These frequent elements add to the ASMRtists playing with the idea of a backstage.

In a typical backstage, one drops their so-called act and roles. They do not need to live up to anyone's expectations, in contrast to the front stage, where one is constantly observed by others and hence must behave accordingly. In the girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos, however, the ASMRtists are roleplaying a situation and are therefore acting. In the videos, the ASMRtists arguably live up to the expectations of what a girlfriend should be like. Moreover, Goffman states that backstage actions do not aim to please others, but oneself. However, the aim of the girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos is arguably to please the viewers, which correlates with the frontstage and not the backstage.

One can argue that emotive words and phrases are usually used between close friends and partners, regardless of being backstage or frontstage. But, in the girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos, the viewers, who most likely do not know the ASMRtists, take part in the ASMRtists usage of emotive words and phrases. Additionally, it is the structure of the emotive words and phrases in the videos that emphasizes their meaning, almost like a motivational speech. The language in the videos is most likely a part of a script, which arguably turns the language into a performance.

As mentioned above, some of the ASMRtists included sessions of personal affirmations where emotive words and phrases were frequently used. All this together could create a personal attachment to the ASMRtist through the language and further the emotional connection between the two, which could be another strategy to create intimacy. This type of language arguably belongs to the backstage, which the ASMRtists present for everyone to see,
making it a frontstage.

The ASMRtists styled appearance described above did seemingly not fit into the context of the videos. Although the ASMRtists implied that they were in natural and personal environments, their appearance could imply otherwise. Sleeping with makeup is arguably not natural. Therefore, one could argue that their appearance has consciously been altered, perhaps due to them being aware of being recorded and that the recordings will be observed by people on the Internet. The ASMRtists altering their appearance and clothing could be a step towards taking on the role of a girlfriend. They manage their appearance and clothing and might feel the need to dress up in order to give a specific impression of themselves. The ASMRtists controlling the way they are going to be perceived by others is typical frontstage behavior. The dressing up to take up the role of a girlfriend could be seen as them striving to produce intimacy. This all together arguably show that the ASMRtist are manipulating the stage and portraying it as a backstage, even though it is not.

7.2 In The Eyes of The Male

Arguably, even though the bed can be seen as a natural place where one sleeps and relax, it can also be sexually connotated. The ASMRtists lying down in bed can help the viewer relax as well as let the viewer's imagination take off. The settings of the videos can allude that it is a sexual environment and enable a fantasy or a dream within the viewer, which can be an attempt by the ASMRtists to create intimacy. The constant male gaze, regardless of time and space, creates an internalized male gaze within the ASMRtist. Therefore, one can argue that these types of sexually connoted settings are strategies within girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos to pursue intimacy. Sexual activities in the bed are arguably associated with intimacy and hence the ASMRtists can allude to this association in their pursuit.

Moreover, sleeping, which was included in some of the videos, can be seen as being in a vulnerable position. When the ASMRtists sleeps, the viewer has total access to her and her private space. This arguably generates a feeling of intimacy between the two. The borders of her privacy are completely diminished which implies that she is comfortable showing herself in a vulnerable state. She is available for being exploited. This availability and vulnerability comply with her being an asset for the man. Furthermore, implying that one is going to sleep together, which is arguably an intimate act, could lead to different imaginations for the viewer. Regarding the frequent use of massages, the positioning of the hands in combination with the sounds of skin rubbing skin, could arguably, from a viewer's
point of view, be associated with a sexual act. Due to this association, the massages can be seen as an attempt to generate intimacy, because sexual acts are usually performed between two people that have an intimate relationship.

As in the section about storyline and happenings, the videos were situated in a context where the boyfriend came home from a rough day at work, while the girlfriend, the ASMRtist, had been staying at home. This storyline could imply that the boyfriend is a hardworking man that is the breadwinner of the family. The ASMRtist, however, is at home waiting for her boyfriend to come home. Once he is home, she is there for him and wants to take care of him. This storyline arguably relies on the dichotomy of males being active and females being passive, which the male gaze discusses. In the videos, the male is active through working whereas the female is passive through being at home. The ASMRtist is also passive in the sense that she is there to bring out emotions and feelings from her boyfriend through taking care of him.

The active/passive aspect was evident in KimmyKASMR's video, who made implications that her boyfriend is the provider of the family. It seemed as if she did not have any problems being supported financially by her boyfriend and supporting her boyfriend domestically. Moreover, the storyline of Isabella ASMR's video could imply that it is a woman's job to take care of her family and their partners. The message of nothing else being as important as making sure their family members are okay shows that women tend to be assigned characteristics that benefit the man and the family, such as being nurturing, caring and comforting. Because these characteristics are arguably found in close relationships, relying on them could benefit the ASMRtists in attempting to create intimacy in their videos.

Another argument within the theory of the male gaze is that women tend to be portrayed in relation to men. In the videos, the ASMRtists addressed and spoke to their imagined boyfriend and gave him gifts and services which can be seen as catering to his desires and needs. The focus is not on the ASMRtists, but rather on what they can do for their boyfriends. The video is arguably constructed in relation to the imagined boyfriend's narrative. The imagined boyfriends are the protagonists of the videos, even if the ASMRtists are the creators of and the only participant in the videos.

Through analyzing the ASMRtists usage of words, this study found that the emotive words were usually focused on the imagined boyfriend and illustrated what the ASMRtist is willing to do for him. Most of what was being said was in relation to his narrative. The ASMRtists questions and phrases, such as "What do you want to do?", "You can decide where you want to be massaged" and "What do you want for dinner?" arguably
show that the ASMRtists only play a spectacle in his story. All this can function as a strategy of focusing on his narrative and desires and could arguably be seen as an attempt for the ASMRtists to show engagement and investment in him and his life. This could arguably constitute means to generate intimacy.

The male gaze was also prominent in the positioning of the ASMRtists that were lying down in their videos. The positions were sexualized due to what the bed and the lying down position signifies sexually. A woman lying down on a bed arguably draws upon the fantasy of the female body and the exploitation of it. She is available for the man to exploit and gain pleasure from. Furthermore, the ASMRtist were arguably styled with influences from eroticism, such as having little clothing, showing skin and wearing makeup in unnatural situations. For example, GwenGwiz's clothing was arguably sexualized due to the low-cut nightgown that put her breast on display.

Overall, the skin that was showing in mostly all of the videos were arguably highly sexualized areas of a woman's body, such as shoulders, thighs and breasts. Not only were the ASMRtists in a sexualized position in their videos, they were also dressed with erotic influences. The ASMRtist most likely included the elements of a bed and showing skin in ways that they imagined males would enjoy and find pleasure in since it alludes to the sexual aspect of intimacy. Through all this, the ASMRtist arguably attempt to evoke a feeling of intimacy in their videos.

7.3 Displaying Gender

The ASMRtists were in the videos often caressing themselves as well as the camera which implied that they were caressing the viewer. The ASMRtist also touched props in the video to evoke the feeling of ASMR and to show affection to the viewer. Their touching, as well as the frequent use of hand motions in the videos, can be interpreted as portraying them being soft and gentle. Their movements were seemingly not natural. They were arguably constructed to insinuate their touch being gentle and precious. This all falls in line with Goffman's concept of the feminine touch. The feminine touch is in itself not a natural way of touching or grabbing something, it is artificially composed and emphasized in order to portray women as smooth and delicate.

The way the ASMRtists caressed themselves, the camera and the props were arguably constructed to generate the ASMR tingles as well as attempt to produce a sense of intimacy. The allusion of a woman's touch being soft and gentle can be seen as being used in
an attempt to enhance the feeling of intimacy between the ASMRtist and the viewer. The attributes of being soft and gentle can also position the ASMRtists as being caring, nurturing and comforting, which shows that she is invested in the relationship and cares for her significant other.

The pattern regarding the positions women tend to be portrayed in can be found in some of the girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos. As Goffman claimed, a bed connotes sexual activities and, therefore, a woman lying down on bed connotes sexual availability. Further, Goffman also stated that the bed is associated with being less clean and less pure. Hence, a woman lying down on a bed is often assigned those attributes. The indication of a woman lying down in bed can consequently connote the woman as being sexually inviting. The ASMRtists can allude to these associations to attempt to create a sense of intimacy since sexual activities are usually performed between two people who have a close relationship.

The concept of infantilization states that there is a blurred line between women's behavior and children's behavior when portraying women. Playfulness, which was a common feature within the girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos, is a characteristic usually assigned to children. The childlike behavior composes examples of how features of infantilization could be found in the videos. The example of Batala's ASMR playing with a plushie in her video, which is arguably a children's toy, illustrates the concept of infantilization. The childlike behavior can arguably be utilized by the ASMRtists to evoke a feeling of dependency on their boyfriends, which can be seen as a way to develop intimacy.
8. Discussion

This study has analyzed girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos to examine how ASMRtists attempt to create intimacy in their videos. Through analyzing eight videos on YouTube, the study has sought to answer the research question "How do ASMRtists attempt to produce intimacy in girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos on YouTube?". The study has through semiotic video analyzes of the material found the following result.

The ASMRtists have through different ways arguably attempted to generate intimacy through their videos. The settings have been utilized as an effort to produce intimacy by taking place in the ASMRtists home or bedroom and the props have been utilized as tools to show affection and to increase the physical connection to the viewer. Through the videos taking place in the ASMRtists home, the storyline has illustrated a cohabiting couple. This can enable an imagination for the viewer of living together with the ASMRtist. All this together could arguably be seen as a strategy to produce intimacy.

A clear pattern found in the videos regarding the storyline was the boyfriend coming home from a tough workday while the ASMRtist was there to relax and unwind him. Through her actions, she pampered and pleased him while vocally affirming him. The ASMRtists near positioning to the camera and inviting body language could be seen as an attempt to enhance the sense of proximity of the ASMRtist and the viewer. Regarding the ASMRtists appearance, there was a common feature of them having a styled appearance. Also, the clothing of the ASMRtists, such as the off-shoulder top, which was invisible in some parts of the videos, could allude to them being partly undressed. The attempt to engage the viewer in the ASMRtist life could arguably be seen as a strategy to strengthen the relationship between the two, which in turn can increase the level of intimacy.

Despite the ASMRtists being limited in their attempt to produce intimacy due to the video format, they have found ways to override these limitations. Through having a storyline that attempts to engage the viewer in the life of the ASMRtists, the viewer can imagine being her boyfriend. Moreover, ASMR triggers produced by the ASMRtist can activate feelings and sensations within the viewer's body that can be equivalent to physical touch.

From a dramaturgical perspective, the girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos can be perceived as theatrical performances. Through displaying such personal environments and actions on a digital platform, the ASMRtists have intentionally constructed a backstage. All of
the elements explained in the result section, which usually composes backstage behaviors and characteristics, transitions the stage into a frontstage. This transition could be seen as a strategy in favor of the ASMRtists’ attempt to produce intimacy. One can argue that due to the internalized male gaze, the construction of the girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos has unwittingly been influenced by the male gaze. The ASMRtists actions and language in the videos arguably aim to pleasing the man. This further shows the dichotomy between the active male and passive female in the videos. Furthermore, the videos were constructed in ways that assign women characteristics that are grounded in her subordinance and inferiority to the man which the theory of gender displays points to. For example, the positioning and the childish behaviors in the videos fall in line with the theory and further show that the women are only there as an asset for the man.

The approach of this study was that girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos constitute a new form of remediated intimacy that is enabled through and spread by digitalization. It is arguably expected and realistic that people engage in new forms of digital intimacy since the digitalization presence permits people’s everyday life. The result and analysis of this study have landed in that the ASMRtists attempt to produce intimacy in their videos by mirroring aspects of a real-life relationship through creative ways that transcend the screen as well as utilizing ASMR triggers. Their mirroring, in combination with ASMR triggers, attempt to combat the lack of physical closeness and hence arguably strive to generate intimacy.

Although, one can question if intimacy in the form of girlfriend roleplay ASMR is even possible in regard to traditional intimacy. The latter requires a two-way connection and mutuality as well as access to someone. These conditions can arguably not be fulfilled in the attempt by the ASMRtists to produce intimacy in their videos since the static format of video does not allow it. Due to the video being a one-way connection, there is a lack of mutuality and accessibility between the parties involved. The videos are arguably rather producing an incomplete traditional intimacy that can only be seen as a potential substitute. The phenomenon of girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos can most likely never challenge traditional intimacy. However, it can compose a new form of intimacy that should not be affiliated and compared with the traditional kind.

Furthermore, in the future, this type of intimacy could even eliminate traditional intimacy if it continues to grow in popularity. This could lead to people engaging in various types of intimacy, including the digital kind, where the requirements of traditional intimacy are completely disregarded. The digital kind might be a fulfilled intimacy in itself where even an one-way connection or an non-mutual intimacy might be considered a complete intimacy.
This scenario is fairly realistic due to the continuing digitalization process of society where people choose digital alternatives instead of physical meetings.

Moreover, another interesting aspect of the result is the exaggerated aspect in the attempt of producing intimacy. The frequent use of massages in the videos, which is arguably not an everyday activity in real-life close relationships, poses an example that illustrates the exaggerated aspect. The exaggeration can lead to glorifying people's perception of intimacy as well as increasing people's expectations of what a relationship should look like. The intimacy that the ASMRtists strive to produce arguably cater to men and reproduces norms in the society of women being submissive and inferior to men. Affectional interactions and gestures performed by the ASMRtists can reproduce structures of women being the givers and the men being the receivers. This can lead to the question if the type of intimacy sought for in girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos can constitute intimacy between two equals or if the videos lead to a model of what a girlfriend should be like. This model would arguably not be equal to the parties involved. This study is open for new forms of narrating and structuring intimacy in a digital landscape, but, stand critical towards the reproduction of norms the video of women being subordinate to the man.

The phenomena of ASMR and girlfriend roleplay ASMR has successively been acknowledged by the mainstream media. However, girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos have not been recognized in the scientific field of research. This study has contributed to the research gap of girlfriend roleplay ASMR videos by examining how ASMRtists attempt to produce intimacy in their videos. Further research on the topic is however encouraged to decrease the research gap. Interesting points of views to conduct research from are examining boyfriend roleplay ASMR videos as well as the reception of the videos through analyzing for example user data and experience. Other aspects could be interviewing ASMRtists to deepen the understandings of the topic.
Reference List


**Reference List of Collected Material**


