



**Department of Theatre, Film, Television and Interactive Media Ethics  
Committee**

*ASMR: Sound interventions  
for mental health and wellbeing in adolescents*

## Project background

### What is the purpose of the project?

With the increasing access to the internet worldwide, social media networks and web-based applications are transforming education systems, health care delivery, activism and collective behaviour. Millions of users have reported through comments on virtual platforms, finding audio-visual content that elicits the emotional and psychological response popularly known as Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR), useful to significantly decrease levels of anxiety, depression, insomnia and even chronic pain (Barratt and Davis 2015).

Due to the novelty of the term ASMR – coined in 2010 by a virtual forum user Jennifer Allen – there is still scarce scientific evidence and research about this phenomenon. Different sound formats are found in ASMRim (i.e. mono, stereo, binaural), which is a variable to consider when analysing this type of media and its effect on ASMRim user experience. The purpose of this doctoral research project is to explore if these sound formats found in Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) inducing media are relevant for ASMR intensity and prevalence (i.e. commonness, frequency) and what their potential mental health and wellbeing benefits are in adolescents.

This research is being conducted by Claudia Nader Jaime ([cnj504@york.ac.uk](mailto:cnj504@york.ac.uk)), who is a PhD candidate at the Department of Theatre, Film, Television and Interactive Media at the University of York. This survey is part of the doctoral project which is being supervised by Dr Mariana Lopez ([mariana.lopez@york.ac.uk](mailto:mariana.lopez@york.ac.uk)).

The work that is being performed for this doctoral project is being conducted according to restrictions that have been subject to approval by the TFTI Ethics committee. The Chair of the TFTI Ethics committee can be contacted on [TFTI-ethics@york.ac.uk](mailto:TFTI-ethics@york.ac.uk).

For the first stage of this project's methodology, we are interested in exploring what the common sound formats used in YouTube-based ASMR-inducing media (ASMRim) are, including audio recording and rendering techniques utilised for the production of these videos as well as the ASMRim artists' (ASMRtists) academic,

professional, ethnic and personal wellbeing experiences. Participation in this project will involve filling in an online Google Forms survey. In this survey participants will be asked about their recording and rendering techniques for a specific video on their public YouTube channel. We will also ask on their motivations to produce ASMR-inducing media and their experience using ASMR for your own and others' wellbeing. In addition, we will analyse the content of these videos and will collect the user comments which will be anonymised and processed through text analysis involving profiling to find potential links between user experience and a given sound format. For more on profiling and data protection visit <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/individual-rights/rights-related-to-automated-decision-making-including-profiling/>

Please note that, complying with the approved Ethics requirements of this work, we might explore sensitive topics that could be potentially upsetting or distressing. If you have any concerns about the topics that may be covered in the research study, please raise these concerns with the researcher.

Participation in this project is voluntary. If participants wish, we will provide them with access to future reports and publications which will contain any potential results from this research. If they would like to receive access to these, they can indicate as such on the consent form before taking part in the survey.

## Why have people been invited to take part?

People have been invited to take part in this study because they own a YouTube channel for which they produce ASMR-inducing media and they expressed previously by email that they would be interested in taking part in this research.

## Do people have to take part?

No, participation is optional. If people decide to take part, they will be given a copy of this information sheet for their records and will be asked to complete a participant consent form. If participants change their mind at any point during the research activity, either while or after completing the survey, they will be able to withdraw their participation without having to provide a reason. Should they wish their participation to be removed from this project's records at any point, they are asked to please send a written or oral request to the researcher to [cnj504@york.ac.uk](mailto:cnj504@york.ac.uk) within 60 calendar days after submitting their survey responses. Then, their survey responses will be deleted as soon as possible, and they will receive a confirmation email when this has been done. Note that if participants request to withdraw their information and their data has been already processed through analysis and/or any research results have been published in any format (i.e. articles, conferences), we will delete the survey responses and video from our storage. However, the processed data contained in the analysis and results will not be possible to remove.

## On what basis will I process collected data?

Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the University has to identify a legal basis for processing [personal data](#) and, where appropriate, an additional condition for processing [special category data](#).

### **PERSONAL DATA**

In the survey mentioned before we will be collecting YouTube usernames, YouTube channel names and email address, which are needed to be able to link people's video with their survey responses or should they wish to withdraw their participation, as well as to provide them with access to the research paper upon the project's completion or should the researcher have any questions related to people's responses on the survey or the content of their video. Data regarding participants' academic and professional background will be collected to explore potential skills and interests in relation to ASMRim production.

In line with our charter which states that we advance learning and knowledge by teaching and research, the University processes personal data for research purposes under Article 6 (1) (e) of the GDPR:

- *Processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest*

### **SPECIAL CATEGORY DATA**

In this study, the special category data we will be collecting includes personal mental health and wellbeing experiences in relation to ASMR and ASMRim because our research aims to evaluate potential health benefits of both ASMRim production and consumption.

Demographic data including ethnic group and country of residence will also be collected as this research intends to explore the feasibility of ASMR-inducing media as a potential formal strategy for mental health and wellbeing promotion in different world regions and cultures.

Special category data is processed under Article 9 (2) (j):

- *Processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research purposes or statistical purposes*

Research activities will only be undertaken where ethical approval has been obtained, where there is a clear public interest and where appropriate safeguards have been put in place to protect data.

In line with ethical expectations and in order to comply with common law duty of confidentiality, we will seek your consent to participate where appropriate. This

consent will not, however, be our legal basis for processing your data under the GDPR.

## How will I use participants' data?

Data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this notice.

## Will I share participants' data with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties?

With the research team including research supervisor, thesis advisory panel and thesis examiners. Special category data found in your survey responses, excluding your channel name and video content, will be removed from the thesis version that will be submitted to the University's open access repository ([White Rose E-Theses Online \(WReO\)](#))

Personal data strictly limited to YouTube channel names and specified video content where participants might be identified by their physical aspect may be used publicly in research reports, publications and conferences unless they opt out of this or until they request to withdraw their participation from this project. Participants will be able to opt not to have their channel name and video featured in publications in the consent form following the participant information sheet previous to taking part in the survey. Special category data of survey participants will be pseudonymised for any research report, publication or conference.

## How will I keep participants' data secure?

The University will put in place appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect participants' personal data and/or special category data. For the purposes of this project we will store data using secure University services provided by Google and the University Filestore. Data will be gathered and processed through the University's virtual private network (VPN) *Pulse Secure*.

Information will be treated confidentially and shared on a need-to-know basis only. The University is committed to the principle of data protection by design and default and will collect the minimum amount of data necessary for the project. In addition, the data will be anonymised or pseudonymised wherever possible and will be stored digitally in the University's cloud storage solution.

Access to participants' data might be relevant in future research. After this thesis project has been approved, special category data will be pseudonymised prior to storing it in a different secure tool so that the researcher has access to their data from outside the UK using the university's private virtual network. In the case of not being registered as a member of the University of York at that time, which would result in not being able to access the University cloud and the Pulse Secure PVN or current virtual private network by that time, an alternative secure storage tool will previously discussed and authorised by the Data Protection officers of the

University of York prior to moving the data to a different location, either physical or electronic.

### Will I transfer participants' data internationally?

Possibly. The University's cloud storage solution is provided by Google which means that data can be located at any of Google's globally spread data centres. The University has data protection complaint arrangements in place with this provider. For further information see, <https://www.york.ac.uk/it-services/google/policy/privacy/>.

### Will participants be identified in any outputs?

Yes. Participation in this stage of the project's methodology is non-anonymous and therefore people will be identified in the following outputs:

Reports, publications and conferences that might contain participants' YouTube username, channel name and/or media.

### How long will I keep keep participants' data?

Data will be retained in line with legal requirements or where there is a business need. Data can be retained up to 10 years after last required access and be subject to review for retention extension prior to its destruction. Retention timeframes will be determined in line with the University's Records Retention Schedule

( <https://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/information-services/information-policy/index/research-data-management-policy/#tab-3> )

### What rights do participants have in relation to their data?

Under the GDPR, participants have a general right of access to their data, a right to rectification, erasure, restriction, objection or portability. They also have a right to withdrawal. Please note, not all rights apply where data is processed purely for research purposes. For further information see, <https://www.york.ac.uk/records-management/general-dataprotectionregulation/individualsrights/>.

### Questions or concerns

If participants have any questions about this information sheet or concerns about how their data is being processed, please contact the TFTI Ethics Chair ([TFTI-ethics@york.ac.uk](mailto:TFTI-ethics@york.ac.uk)) in the first instance. If participants are still dissatisfied, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer [dataprotection@york.ac.uk](mailto:dataprotection@york.ac.uk).

If people have any questions about the project itself, please contact the researcher Claudia Nader Jaime to [cnj504@york.ac.uk](mailto:cnj504@york.ac.uk) or the project supervisor Dr Mariana Lopez to [mariana.lopez@york.ac.uk](mailto:mariana.lopez@york.ac.uk)

## Cyber violence victim support

Since participants' YouTube username, channel name and videos might be shared through research reports, publications and/or conferences, they might be contacted through their publicly available contact details on YouTube. This implies a low risk of cyber violence including bullying, harassment or/and discrimination derived from this project. However, since participants' information is already publicly available on YouTube prior to any participation in this research, they are already vulnerable to this inherent risk by producing and sharing content and consuming media on online platforms.

If you or anyone you know are a victim of cyber violence, please reach for support in the following resources.

Bullying UK for community advice and support:

Helpline: (+44) 0808 800 2222

Email: [askus@familylives.org.uk](mailto:askus@familylives.org.uk)

<https://www.bullying.co.uk/cyberbullying/what-to-do-if-you-re-being-bullied-on-a-social-network/>

UK Metropolitan Police support:

Helpline (UK): 101

Helpline for emergencies: 999

<https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/har/harassment-on-social-media/>

## Right to complain

If participants' are unhappy with the way in which the University has handled their personal data, they have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office. For information on reporting a concern to the Information Commissioner's Office, see [www.ico.org.uk/concerns](http://www.ico.org.uk/concerns).