

In today's world dominated by overstimulation, haste, and the pressure of productivity, more and more people experience fatigue, sensory overload, and a growing need for soothing. In response to stress, instability, and emotional exhaustion, many individuals—especially women—turn to self-care practices that promise calm, relaxation, and a sense of control over the body and emotions. This project explores the cultural forms of *soothing* as an affect present in wellness practices, analyzing how it has been constructed and mediated by female media figures and digital aesthetics of care.

The project focuses on four key case studies: Gloria Swanson—silent film star who advocated for healthy living, detox, and spiritual purity; Jane Fonda—1980s fitness icon known for her workout VHS tapes and media presence; Gwyneth Paltrow—creator of the Goop brand offering luxury wellness products and lifestyle rituals of calm; and the contemporary ASMR culture—online videos using whispers, gentle sounds, and aesthetics of tenderness to evoke relaxation and digital intimacy.

While *soothing* is usually regarded as an individual emotional state, this project treats it as a cultural phenomenon—produced through media, images, sounds, wellness products, and narratives. It examines how the affect of *soothing* has shifted over time—from bodily practices in the postwar era, through domestic fitness rituals, to today's digital experiences of calmness on platforms such as YouTube.

The research involves analysis of archival materials, visual and audiovisual content, wellness products and their aesthetics, as well as media strategies involved in affect production. The project applies tools from cultural, media, and affect studies.

This research offers an original contribution to the study of wellness culture, emotion history, and the mediatization of care. It aims to understand how culture and media construct infrastructures of calm—both past and present—and how this affects representations of femininity, aging, the body, and emotional labor.