Current Debates
In Digital Media

Undergraduate Students Final Papers

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INTRODUCTION

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At the end of the course CMS 701 Current Debates in Media, students were asked to submit a 15 pages dissertation on the current debate of their choice. They had to discuss this debate by using the thesis/antithesis/synthesis method and by referring to class materials or other reliable sources. Each paper had to include a clear thesis statement, supporting evidence, original ideas, counter-arguments, and examples that illustrate their point of view.

The quality and the diversity of the papers were very impressive. The passion of the students for their topic was palpable and their knowledge on social networks, e-sports, copyright infringment and hacktivism was remarkable. The texts published in this virtual booklet all received the highest grade and very good comments. They provide interesting insights on current issues with social media and digital technologies.

Enjoy!

Chapter 1

YouTube's Participatory Culture: Online Communities, Social Engagement, and the Value of Curiosity

By an MIT student

The Advent of YouTube

The rapidly increasing availability of technology has allowed online communities to grow and evolve in parallel with traditional media outlets. The innovation of YouTube, a video sharing website established in 2005, offered new mechanisms for sharing and discussing amateur media, thus allowing a specific kind of participatory culture to develop. At the website's inception, there was little-to-no divide between the content creators and the audiences that engaged with video content. Even now, when that divide is more pronounced, YouTube continues to be shaped by its users. Its role as a social network and entertainment hub on the Internet depends entirely upon the people who upload videos, whether they are casual users, professional vloggers (video bloggers), YouTube partners, traditional media companies branching out into new media, or commercial multi-channel networks.

YouTube continues to thrive because of a growing, widespread desire to create and watch online video. But is YouTube a media that empowers content creators and fosters the formation of Internet communities? Does YouTube allow marginalized voices to reach audiences better than traditional media outlets, and does it encourage experimentation with the video medium? Or is this idea of an open platform for media sharing and archiving another utopian fantasy for the Internet; does 'new media' ultimately have the same problems as 'old media' because of users' inherent social biases and the fact that YouTube is ultimately a corporation, one that is susceptible to commercialization and the effects of capitalism?

This essay will argue that YouTube remains an active space for individuals to engage in online communities and participatory culture, despite criticisms from traditional media outlets and the sometimes-mixed motivations of participants. YouTube has a great amount of complexity and diversity in its contemporary uses, from cell-phone cat videos to artistic films and casual vlogs to semi-professional news shows, and, as such, YouTube cannot be judged by any one type of online video. This discussion will focus on the impact of vlogging personalities and personal YouTube channels on online communities, in addition to the evolution of educational media on this platform.

Video Blogging and Fan Communities

YouTube concurrently developed as a video sharing website and a social media website, so many users feel a sense of community with fellow YouTubers and their audience, interacting through video uploads, comments, and vlogs. By vlogging, anyone has the ability to speak to an

online community through the safety of their computer while using gestures, vocal inflections, and other characteristics of offline communication to express themselves (Proulx 2011: 6). Ideally, YouTube provides a platform where what Hall might consider "subordinate classes" can express their ideologies despite the dominant hegemonic codes of society (1977). Female vloggers can talk about sexism, people of color can discuss systemic racism, queer and transgender users can share their personal experiences – and every individual can choose how to present themselves online, whether they make carefully scripted content, emotional rants, or some combination of entertaining and thoughtful videos.

Once a content creator uploads a video, whether it's a silly song or a serious discussion of current events, they may promote their video and engage with viewers in the comments. YouTube has grown since the 2005-to-2010 era in which most of online community knew each other, conversed, and filled the roles of both content creators and fans. Many consistent users still do connect with one another; the platform has just become so massive that it is impossible for one content creator to personally interact with everyone else anymore. However, this increase in YouTube participants has largely been a positive change. More people involved in online video leads to a greater diversity of voices on YouTube and has also allowed fan communities, generally measured through 'subscribers' to channels, to develop around content creators. These fandoms, consisting of spectators and other creators alike, form because they identify with the vlogger's opinions or find their videos entertaining. These fans then have the power to connect with one another to talk about the video in the comments or on other forums – many YouTube channels also have Reddit threads, for example – and widen the content creator's audience by sharing their videos. The ideal consumer of YouTube videos is an engaged fan, not a passive consumer (Jenkins 2013: 357), because participants socialize based upon their affinities and interactions with one another. This is different from some social media sites that form communities based on common pasts or offline connections. While many individuals do use YouTube casually, it is more interesting to look at the people who use the website as a social network in addition to entertainment or education.

Although most widely-known channels outside of the YouTube community are so-called YouTube 'celebrities,' people who generally have millions of subscribers, there are many smaller content creators with hundreds or a few thousand subscribers who also consistently foster a strong fan community. For example, channels like NerdyAndQuirky and TheThirdPew are both created by high school students who also make online videos. They are well spoken, have small fanbases with whom they interact regularly, and make videos on topical events but also dabble in comedy and entertainment. These users are examples of smaller vloggers who started YouTube as a hobby and did not expect any sort of fame, yet they have created videos that have sparked conversation and resonated with some audiences. As both ethnic minorities and legal minors, both of them are less likely to have their voices heard in normal society or traditional media platforms. But YouTube allowed people in the online community to find and connect with them based solely on the quality of their content and ideas.

Participatory Culture Can Lead to Civic Engagement

While lesser-known YouTubers generally have more intimate fan communities, some YouTube 'celebrities' have massive fan communities that can be mobilized to affect society outside of the online space. People turn to Internet communities to create new social norms because they are dissatisfied with mainstream norms, or they use the Internet as a platform to raise awareness and communicate with people who also care about particular issues (Kahn and Keller 2004: 93). Kahn and Kellner argue that online communities can have an effect not just on group members, but also the larger society They note that Internet campaigns are often grassroots movements that work to challenge the status quo. And one such example of a community that began with YouTube and now contributes to positive global impact is Nerdfighteria, started by John and Hank Green.

This community began with fans of a project entitled Brotherhood 2.0, in which John and Hank Green publicly vlogged to each other every day on YouTube for one year, starting January 1st, 2007. Their channel, Vlogbrothers, eventually gained a fan following, whose name arose after John saw the game *Aero Fighters* in the airport and misread the title as "Nerd Fighters." In a video called "How to be a Nerdfighter: A Vlogbrothers FAQ" (Green 2009), John defined a Nerdfighter as "a person who, instead of being made out of, like, bones and skin and tissue is made entirely of awesome," clarifying that this community, called Nerdfighteria, is "clearly pro-nerd." Hank then described Nerdfighteria as a community of people who "get together and try to do awesome things and have a good time and fight against World Suck… which is, like, the amount of suck in the world." Because the community has low barriers of entry – anyone who watches Vlogbrothers videos is implicitly invited to join – Nerdfighteria continues to expand to a global fan base whose members actively participate in projects that benefit both U.S. charity organizations and international causes, evolving from a passive audience to a group of independent creators and activists.

Fandoms like Nerdfighteria demonstrate how an emphasis on participatory culture in online community can encourage people to engage in important offline issues and think critically, especially the younger audiences who are still developing visions of how they fit into and can impact the world. Perhaps the most significant instance of Nerdfighteria aiding charitable organizations is the annual Project for Awesome, created by the Vlogbrothers in 2007. Every December, all YouTube community members—even people who have never created content before—are invited to create a video about any charity they think is important, explaining why the non-profit organization deserves support. During the Project for Awesome, John and Hank host a 48-hour live stream to help promote the videos and raise money through video views, individual donations, and purchases of 'perks' such as calendars, handwritten notes, and artwork donated by various YouTubers. After the live stream ends, there is an open poll where anyone can vote on which charitable organizations receive a portion of the total money raised. The impact on communities that receive support from these charities is just as important as the development of the activist mindset in Nerdfighters. Nerdfighteria encourages every individual, no matter how young, to participate in matters of political and civic significance by voicing their opinions on which causes they believe are currently most important to society.

These interactions shows how Nerdfighters are not only involved in participatory culture, but also participatory politics, or "interactive, peer-base acts through which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern" (Kligler-Vilenchik 2013: 36). And because of this real-world engagement, Nerdfighters are no longer just a passive audience to the Vlogbrothers, and "can instead be conceptualized as a 'public'" (Jenkins 2013). This network of fans not only enjoys the range of content that John and Hank Green produce, but also encourages its members to actively think about, produce, and circulate media content. In this sense, YouTube not only empowers content creators to spread messages, but the participatory culture that permeates the site helps build communities of young people who are beginning to enter roles as politically and intellectually engaged citizens.

Along these lines, YouTube also enables content creators to experiment with the medium of online video, which led to the creation of educational YouTube channels that engage a community of curious people online and promote learning through entertainment. As Jenkins writes in *The Future of Fandom*, "we have to face the reality that in an age where differences proliferate, where old gatekeepers wither, there may no longer be a 'normal' way of consuming media" (2013: 361), and therefore it is possible for educational YouTube channels like Crash Course, Veritasium, Vsauce, Minute Physics, The Brain Scoop, Smarter Every Day, or Sexplanations to exist and thrive online. Even an entertainment piece like *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* shows how remixing classical literature can be done intelligently, as the series maintains the integrity of the story and themes within Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The medium of online video is now allowing people, both young and old, to keep learning outside of traditional classroom settings and combine education with entertainment in experimental ways.

Moreover, YouTube allows biologists and physicists, historians and literary experts to create content without having to conform to a traditional media network's editorial power. These users can create educational videos on topics that interest them or instigate curiosity in their audience, without being forced to cater their content to a specific demographic. Decisions about selecting topics and scripting presentations of complex ideas are left completely up to the creator, rather than being filtered through the lens of what advertisers and media executives think would be most appropriate for their networks. And because of the participatory culture surrounding YouTube videos, people can gather across geographical and cultural differences to watch, discuss, and learn together. Oftentimes these communities even work together to close-caption these educational videos in more languages to increase accessibility. This idea of spreading free, open, and high-quality information to anyone who has Internet access is a step towards the utopian fantasy of the capabilities of new media; as more educational content is being produced and archived, individuals have a greater ability to learn what interests them at any time. Although educational online video is currently a new technology, time will reveal whether digital learning becomes a new standard for education or if the technology will face problems in the future due to the massive quantity of archived – and perhaps eventually outdated – educational video that was produced during the present day.

The Tension between 'Old' and 'New' Media

Despite the optimism surrounding YouTube content creators and the engaged online communities that form as a result of the platform, YouTube is ultimately a media company with flaws. Therefore, one must address the criticisms of YouTube's platform and content in order to draw better conclusions about the website's net positive or negative impact on Internet communities, the spread of information, and the empowerment of content creators and fans alike.

Because YouTube and online video is a form of 'new media' and despite the fact that it is becoming part of mainstream culture, there is still a divide between YouTube as a platform and the traditional media outlets that dominate the mass market. As Hall writes, "quantitatively and qualitatively, in twentieth-century advanced capitalism, the media have established a decisive and fundamental leadership in the cultural sphere," meaning that legacy media has a greater influence on what cultural channels are considered most 'acceptable' for people to watch – despite the actual reliability of these mass media outlets (1977: 340). By existing on the Internet, a relatively new and open means of communication, and gaining in popularity, YouTube poses a threat to traditional news sources by drawing a younger and generally more skeptical audience.

In response, legacy media is desperately trying to understand and evaluate online media in order to figure out how it works. Traditional news coverage has depicted YouTube as an unprecedented expansion of grassroots creativity, but it has also devalued YouTube as a platform for superfluous prank videos and unintelligent content. This love/hate relationship towards online video fluctuates depending on how the YouTube content fits in with their regular programming – if a documented act of kindness or an insightful vlog becomes popular overnight, a traditional news outlet likely feels the pressure to report on the phenomena or else miss out on a current news event. However, traditional media companies appear to maintain a certain level of disdain for online media because they want to keep their current audience and continue circulating their own messages, rather than losing even more viewership to the resource-abundant online world. In addition, established media is trying to anticipate a formula for producing creative content in order to capture the 'young audience' that has grown up being more skeptical of mass media (Lotz 2013). The advertising industry provides many examples of this, from companies like Taco Bell maintaining Snapchat accounts to Denny's Tumblr posts that incorporate recent memes. But, ultimately, "the contemporary focus on the 'viral' nature of circulation expresses media companies' and brands' utter terror of the unknown cultural processes now influencing all aspects of the media and entertainment industries" (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013: 291). This obsession with online media by traditional media seems to stem from a fear of becoming irrelevant.

The corporations' fear may also extend to a general disdain for 'millenials,' criticizing a generation of people for establishing different media standards for online video and content creation. For example, in an opinion piece about the current state of YouTube, Andrew Baron writes "you will begin to see that the Millennial YouTuber style is to use the jump-cut to such

an extreme in natural conversation, it has become a crutch, and that it does not ultimately work in conjunction with the extreme use of attempting to appear naturally bright, down-to-earth, conversational, real and unproduced" (2014). This article is criticizing the lie of inauthenticity in much of online video and how only millenials are 'inexperienced' enough to think that this type of content is 'good' content.

However, this sort of reasoning is again reducing YouTube, a broad community of fans and content creators, to a single type of video, when it actually remains a place with a huge diversity of content. True, some creators hide the 'lie' of the script in their editing, while others improvise and edit very little. But this is no different than the variation of content on any other media platform. Editors make jump cuts in fiction like TV series or movies, and some shows, like reality television, are very heavily produced. Media creators and producers are attempting many things and audiences are responding in many ways, and because online video doesn't have the same structure or industry as television networks, for example, users are encouraged to evolve and iterate and experiment more with their creations. Thus, YouTube videos should not even necessarily be evaluated with the same criteria as traditional media, because the content is oftentimes created for fundamentally different purposes and audiences. The arguable appeal of online video to millenials and other audiences, for that matter, is that YouTube provides a community with diverse content that has far more genres and experiments than one could ever find on network television. And the personal connection one feels with vloggers or filmmakers through interacting with them and their work might help online video feel much more impactful and real than something like reality TV.

A recent example of the conflict between 'old media' and 'new media' is when The White House invited three YouTubers, Hank Green, Bethany Mota, and Glozell Green, to interview Barack Obama. After the event occurred, the legacy media coverage was very skeptical of the event and tried to discredit the YouTube talents, ignoring their thoughtful questions for the President and instead focusing on irrelevant details about their online personas:

> CNN intro'd and outro'd every segment with Glozell in a bathtub full of cereal, as did ABC's morning show… Even new media companies like Vice were dismissive: 'Think of it as a teeny-bopper AMA… The interviewers will be GloZell Green, who's perhaps best known for sitting in a tub full of cereal; a 19-year-old who gives beauty advice named Bethany Mota; and Hank Green, a notorious YouTube ranter whose brother wrote *The Fault in Our Stars*' (Green 2015).

By discrediting YouTubers, mass media outlets might hope to make themselves appear more legitimate to older audiences. Legacy media does not necessarily understand online video or the 'millenial' generation, and older generations may occasionally share that opinion. However, the consequence is that legacy media "accuses young people of being apathetic while actively attempting to remove them from the discussion" (Green 2015). The arguments that traditional media outlets make are merely a continuation of the fact that they are losing relevance and legitimacy, even though they want to remain at the pinnacle of media consumption. Audiences are gravitating towards satiric news shows and online video because they trust the people who are delivering information. And YouTube enables people like Glozell Green and Bethany Mota and Hank Green to cultivate a community and gain that trust by

making honest vlogs and entertaining videos and participating in discussions alongside their fans. Thus, this platform contributes heavily to a shift in media consumption to the Internet because of growing, deep-rooted skepticism in audiences.

The Pervasiveness of Celebrity Culture

The idea of audiences placing their trust in certain content creators ties into a possible criticism of YouTube's celebrity culture and gradual commercialization. While certain spaces on the platform very much encourage community building and creator-audience interaction, some people view YouTube "as literally a way to 'broadcast yourself' into fame and fortune," and actively maintain the growing divide between audience and creator (Burgess and Green 2010: 22). There is a general distaste in some YouTube communities when YouTubers who once made creative or heartfelt videos have transitioned into advertising products or churning out videos with clickbait headlines and very little substance. While these types of YouTubers oftentimes create 'viral' videos that reach a wide audience and appeal to mass consumer culture, some long-time fans or YouTube community members may see them as compromising the creative integrity that gained them fame in the first place.

This concern with YouTubers only desiring fame and being undeserving of their popularity also feeds into the criticism that YouTube is becoming increasingly commercial. The YouTube User-Partner program, in which YouTube "gave partnered creators 55% of the revenue generated by [their] videos," is generally supported; content creators could begin making a full-time living off of YouTube and fans would receive more videos (Green 2015). But additional changes started to affect more, generally smaller, YouTube content creators and their ability to engage fans and support online community formation. Around 2012, YouTube began introducing an algorithm to filter users' subscription feeds and promote famous creators who make more advertising revenue for the company, so fans began missing videos put out by smaller channels. A depression in ad rates and several management decisions led to the creation of YouTube channel conglomerates called Multi-Channel Networks (or MCNs), which "take 20% to 50% of a channel's revenue" and "many of which have now been acquired by legacy media companies… to become extremely important and powerful forces in the world of online video" (Green 2015). So, recently, YouTube has shifted from a community and culture of economically productive creators to introducing a layer of industry that is trying to extract value and monetize talents. This is not necessarily an objectively bad thing for the platform, so much as it is an example of how subcultures are oftentimes reincorporated into the dominant market. The relationship between content creators and audiences is shifting in some cases, so that some people are diversifying their content to other video platforms like Twitch or Vine or Tumblr in order to reestablish these interpersonal connections.

The changing nature of YouTube is a valid concern when it comes to empowering new creators who are not already involved in the industry of online video and YouTube's online communities. It seems more difficult than ever to start creating online video and find an audience, now that the field is considered a legitimate career rather than the social experiment it was in 2005. There will be people who only watch online video for the crazy pranks or alluring titles, and

there will be content creators that only make those kinds of videos in order to keep YouTube as a full time job. However, this is not true of all content creators, and there are still communities within YouTube where vloggers actively try and maintain personal connections with their audiences, or filmmakers continue to push the boundaries of what people can do with online video. As much as the site supports broadcasting-like activities, for many users the site is still mostly about discussion, response, and interaction with audiences and friends.

Take a content creator like Tyler Oakley, for example. He has risen to fame because of YouTube through the "internal system of celebrity based on and reflecting values that don't necessarily match up neatly with those of the 'dominant' media" (Burgess and Green 2010: 23). He regularly promotes his videos and earns a living wage from the ad revenue, but he also genuinely tries to interact with fans as much as possible in comments and on other social media platforms like Twitter. Some of his videos are collaborations with other 'popular' YouTubers or include a sponsored product recommendation, but most of the time his videos are not carefully constructed narratives. He is simultaneously "within the system of celebrity native to, and controlled by, the mass media" (Burgess and Green 2010: 23) because uses his influence to raise money for The Trevor Project, a charity organization that provides support for LGBTQ youth, and wins pop culture awards, but he is also inherently an Internet celebrity who vlogs and understands meme culture and encourages critical thinking and personal growth in his viewers through this unique platform.

Separately, you have the media companies that are struggling to figure out the magic commercial success formula for online video that does not actually exist. For example, DreamWorks invested money in an entire series of *Shrek* vlogs in order to connect to an online audience and branch out into transmedia entertainment, but few people take those videos seriously. The videos feel like a satire of the vlog format; the same feeling that regular YouTube or Internet users get when they see corporations trying to emulate meme culture to 'fit in' and 'reach the younger generation.' Ford and Green's clinical description of meme culture – "trolls have sought to manufacture and spread 'memes' for their own malicious joy and to disrupt the operations of groups which take the web too seriously" (2013: 292) – shows one such incomplete understanding of Internet culture by academia. In a literary context, the analysis seems sound, much like the *Shrek* vlogs idea appears sound on paper. But their definition of meme culture might feel misrepresentative to many people who spend large amounts of time online. Ultimately, because people continue to return to YouTube to support their favorite creators or find new vloggers or participate in fannish activities, the online communities and creator-audience relationships will still survive and flourish despite the growth of industrial and commercial influence.

Online Harassment and Abuse of Power

Besides the celebrity and commercial culture surrounding YouTube, another valid criticism is the harassment that exists in online communities. As Burgess and Green explain, "this media panic convergence is exemplified by stories about 'cyberbullying' – the use of digital technologies to bully others, especially by posting humiliating or insulting videos, or by using video to document

and celebrate acts of violence" (2010: 19). Cyberbulling can extend beyond these examples to an abuse of power from either audience or creator. With every online video, there may be a slough of hurtful comments directed at the content creator or other people involved in the discussion. Or the videos themselves might be indirect forms of harassment; influential people can upload videos that contain harmful messages of sexism, racism, or other forms of prejudice that could negatively impact, or 'bully,' viewers. Because the Internet makes it possible to publicize a wide range of opinions, these dissenting and oftentimes problematic viewpoints will appear on every website, and YouTube is no exception.

One fairly recent example is of Nash Grier, a teenager who rose to fame through carefully scripted content on Vine and YouTube. He especially gained a large following of American teenage and pre-teen girls, who looked up to him and his content. However, he is also known to be sexist, racist, and homophobic by people who look more objectively at his media content. Most controversially, he and two other social media stars made a video entitled "What Guys Look for in Girls," in which they reinforced extreme societal beauty and behavioral standards like 'you must shave your arm hair to be attractive' and released it to their audience of mostly young women, who already systemically battle with low-self esteem and societal pressures on a daily basis. Because this message came from a celebrity that these individuals admired and trusted, it could be more damaging to their self-esteem than if the criticisms came from a middle school bully that they have learned to ignore.

While the initial video was clearly horrible, as these 'celebrities' used their influence and the YouTube platform to reinforce sexist stereotypes, the public nature of the video gave all other content creators the ability to criticize him and speak out against Grier's messages. There were tens, if not hundreds, of videos made immediately in response by content creators from various spheres of influence, and these videos enabled YouTube communities to come together and discuss topics like sexism and misogyny. Even though YouTube the corporation does not have a great system in place to filter for harassment in video content or comments, the massive response and complaints from community members eventually led to the takedown of Grier's video.

Thus, YouTube does have inherent problems that lie in all forms of media and celebrity culture – the opportunity for people with or without influence to spread harassment and hatred. But there are plenty of people involved in the YouTube community, both content creators and audience members, who are striving to create a safe and supportive platform and start conversations about subjects like respect, cyberbullying, and unhealthy celebrity culture involving YouTubers. Even though "the repetitive framing of YouTube as an amateur 'free-for-all' rather than a place for community of artistic experimentation, for instance, situates it as a space where the public or the masses are rising up from the bottom" (Burgess and Green 2010: 16), one must have faith in the public to form communities and learn and grow together through productive discussions.

Reconciling YouTube's Imperfections and Inherent Value

YouTube as a new media platform is problematic because all media is inherently problematic and incorporates long-standing prejudices and shared biases that exist within our society. YouTube does empower content creators to speak from a platform that allows for more direct social media interactions between creators and fans, both of whom are enthusiastic participants in the culture. This active discussion enables audience members to "'buy into' a cultural economy which rewards their participation" (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013: 294), encourages greater support for independent media producers, and allows for continuous discussion about societal issues that ought to be discussed, like sexism, racism, homophobia, and transphobia.

But the system that empowers content creators is far from perfect, because legacy media still heavily influences YouTube and our media consumption practices. There is still a dominance of the white, male, European/American celebrity even in online video. But gradually creators from typically marginalized demographics, such as women and people-of-color like Akilah Hughes, Chescaleigh, and MarinaShutUp, are having their voices amplified and heard by wider audiences. Oftentimes smaller yet passionate creators like them are more involved with fans and create the more valuable subsections of YouTube – the people who come to the platform to become a part of a community instead of to follow a single celebrity, and the people who discuss difficult topics in order to educate themselves and become more productive and considerate members of society.

Even though there is a growing imbalance between creators and fans, the YouTube community and corporation have the opportunity to grow and change. There is nothing wrong with people who stop by the website to share a viral video or find some quick entertainment, but the real cultural value of the platform is how content creators and "audience members are using the media texts at their disposal to forge connections with each other, to mediate social relations and make meaning of the world around them" (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013: 294). YouTubers are encouraged to evolve, iterate, and experiment with their videos and provide feedback on other peoples' creations. Users push each other to question and discuss ideas, rather than blindly being bombarded with media messages, or get involved with projects and communities, rather than only watching carefully curated commercial videos. YouTube helps give more agency to the creators and viewers if they want to take a more active role in the online media that exist, although it is up to the individual to decide how much they want to participate.

Additionally, many influential YouTube content creators tend to promote critical thinking, social engagement, creativity, and education, either directly or indirectly through their own actions. The impacts of Nerdfighteria and Tyler Oakley's contributions to The Trevor Project are only two such examples – Hannah Hart's fans organize volunteer trips to food banks, KickthePJ encourages everyone to use their imaginations to dream up films and games, SciShow and The Brain Scoop show how interesting accurate science information and museums can be, and Kat Blaque's animated videos and current events analyses help guide fans to become more sociopolitically aware. As Cory Doctorow writes:

> Creators usually start doing what they do for love. There are some creators who say, 'If I couldn't earn a living making art, I'd do something else," but it's hard to take this seriously. Pursuing an arts career is not the move of a rational mercenary. Almost everyone who sets out to earn a living from the arts will fail. Entering the arts because you want to get rich is like buying lottery tickets because you want to get rich. It might work, but it almost certainly won't. Though, of course, someone always wins the lottery. (Doctorow 68)

And that remains the truth for many influential YouTube creators – they began making online video as a hobby or because they wanted to express an opinion or share some encouragement; they did not necessarily want to be famous or even conceive that as an option at first. True, there will always be some social media stars that set out to create viral videos and attract fame because of that, but they fail to have the meaningful interactions with a community that some other content creators do.

The Future of Online Video, Educational Media, Creators, and Communities

Online video as an educational tool has the power to be incredibly influential, especially when impacting a younger generation or a technologically-savvy older one, and is still being further explored. Educational videos, those that promote creativity and critical thinking, do not incite as much conflict with legacy media; these videos are rarely in competition with big network programming and sometimes are even collaborative. Science videos produced by Crash Course can coexist with those sponsored by PBS and Discovery, and both of those companies can coexist with an independent video maker like MinutePhysics because everyone is pushing the medium in different directions and experimenting with different ways to teach. The independent content creators who are familiar with the Internet, whether they are new to online video or not, have the power in this situation because "as marketers and other content creators enter these spaces, they must think about questions of transparency and authenticity and the differences in their own commercial motivations and the social motivations of community members" (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013: 296). As an individual, you inherently have this authenticity and therefore have more freedom with experimentation in developing your online persona, what types of content you want to produce, and for whom you want to make things and have conversations with.

YouTube remains a powerful platform for creators, fans, and casual Internet-browsers of all ages to involve themselves in participatory culture and active online communities. There are spaces on the website that are bound to conflict with ideals of traditional media outlets, and every participant has a different motivation to be involved with YouTube – from fame to friendship and trolling to intellectual growth. YouTube has a great amount of complexity and diversity in its contemporary uses and great potential to grow beyond what it is today. Alternatively, if the industrial influence in online video expands and the corporate hand of YouTube constricts individual creativity and expression, people will find other platforms to host their content and experiment with online video. If "technology [magnifies] the power of the powerful – not just governments, but the record companies, the movie studios, and the online intermediaries who are increasingly shaping the creative sphere themselves – to the

disadvantage of everyone else," society will most likely find a way to oppose it or continue creating despite it (Doctorow 2014: 160).

To continue looking at the projected future of YouTube, it would be interesting to more rigorously compare the myriad types of online video being produced. "The everyday, often mundane decisions each of us makes about what to pass along, who to share it with, and the context under which we share that material is fundamentally altering the processes of how media is circulated," and that causes a great variation in how people are experimenting with online video creation, adaptation, and remixing (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013: 304). Is there, perhaps, a greater shift towards searching for the secret to 'viral' videos and spreadable media than this paper suggests? Or do people truly keep returning to online video because of the personalities, because of trust and authenticity and a shared human condition. On that note, it would also be interesting to explore whether YouTube celebrities influence people, especially younger generations, as much as more traditional celebrities – and, for that matter, if the YouTube influences are any more positive because they encourage discussion and activism instead of just consumerism?

Jenkins, Ford, and Green suggest that "the spreading of media texts helps us articulate who we are, bolster our personal and professional relationships, strengthen our relationships with one another, and build community and awareness around the subjects we care about," (2013: 304) and YouTube, as a tool, empowers people to create and spread media as well as build community. Online video has the power to transcend cultural boundaries and allow us to experience the life of someone else or listen to another perspective, just as it has the power to be six seconds of forgettable entertainment. And the power of online video lies in its ability to empower viewers, to encourage them to create their own content, participate in discussions, feed their curiosity, and build a more informed and engaged society.

As Doctorow succinctly puts it: "no matter who you are, remember that this Internet thing is bigger than the arts, bigger than the entertainment business – it's the nervous system of the twenty-first century, and, depending on how we use it, it can set us free, or it can enslave us" (2014: 162). The Internet, from online video and YouTube to other social media platforms or news articles, has a future ahead of it that no one person can predict. We humans can only choose to participate and use it as a tool to learn and grow from each other, to contribute our own thoughts and creative endeavors to this shared space. We must continue working for a world with more critical thinking, more open access to ideas and knowledge, and more consideration for others. And online media may be a stepping-stone to that better world.

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Chapter 2

Exploring online anonymity: Enabler of harassment or valuable community-building tool?

By an MIT student

Threatening behavior, flaming, and cyberbullying have come into the public eye over the past several years, elucidating the hazards of anonymous online communication. Whether one visits social media sites, article comment sections, or online forums, it is not unusual to come across examples of harassment and negative behavior. These problems have long been attributed to the anonymity of the Internet. Instinctively this makes sense, as most online communication modes divorce traditional personal identifiers (such as name, location, gender, age, and race) from online personas (often characterized by email addresses and usernames). Through school assemblies and news coverage, it has become common knowledge that anyone can claim to be anyone or anything online: the opinionated pretend to be experts, the average claim to be extraordinary.

Simultaneously, there are communities that thrive in anonymity, and every Internet user has likely used a site that enables some level of anonymity, whether or not they utilize it. Being unidentifiable makes talking about controversial or sensitive topics easier, allowing people who would not like their friends or family to know about their opinions or interests to participate. Anonymity enables people to create multiple user personalities online, recognizing the multifaceted nature of individuals. Furthermore, anonymity can strengthen community ties and foster a sense of belonging. Site developers with an important and unique set of challenges in determining what type of community usage to allow, ranging from relatively anonymous to fully rooted in offline identities. Each of these decisions shapes user experience, creating myriad possibilities for site usage. Since much criticism of online anonymity has come about recently, this paper will explore the assertion that anonymity is harmful to online interactions, and that it should be minimized.

The factors of anonymity

Traditionally, when people speak of anonymity in the offline world, they are referring to several different qualities, including namelessness, lack of visual identification, and lack of personal details. Anonymity could consist of each individually or any combination thereof. As such, one could be visually identifiable but practically anonymous; a man on a beach would be seen by other beachgoers, but without knowing a name or personal information, he would be difficult to identify. Alternatively, two people could have a conversation and divulge their age, gender, familial situation, and other details, yet never know each other's name and thus not be traceable. Online, however, the criteria for anonymity change somewhat. Internet privacy and security scholars would be wont to point out that true online anonymity is never possible, given

that sites collect data on IP addresses and that browsers give up much information about your web browsing habits. And although there are numerous ways to reduce how closely your actions are tracked online, these methods are often outside the realm of average user skills (Gold 2013). As a result, here 'online anonymity' will refer to Internet usage that is characterized by the user's *feeling* of untraceability; whether one is actually untraceable or otherwise unidentifiable is irrelevant, as it is people's perception of the online world that affects how they communicate. Online, although the factors of offline anonymity still apply, this untraceability and anonymity encompasses some examples not present in offline interactions. The inability (by an average user) to connect an email address or user account to its real-world owner, for example, is a mark of online anonymity. Others include inability to find the location from which a message was sent or a comment was posted. Usernames, additionally, are recognized as being pseudonyms, making them irrelevant as methods of offline identification, further enabling anonymity. It is important to keep these factors in mind when discussing online anonymity, as they affect the myriad reasons people behave as they do online.

4chan and Gamergate: negative effects of anonymity

Online anonymity has a variety of problems; it encourages cyberbullying, harassment, and generally creating a negative environment. The perceived lack of accountability for one's actions and the fact that the other individuals are invisible to you (and vice versa) are thought to be part of this. Even before the popularization of the Internet, researchers were examining the effects of anonymity on human behavior and interactions. The feeling of being invisible to others, in particular, was linked to the willingness to administer greater shock levels to other people (Lapidot-Lefler and Barak 2012). More recently, the online disinhibition effect has been used to describe the negative consequences of anonymity online; those who feel they are unidentifiable or otherwise anonymous are less likely to feel they are accountable for their negative behavior, and are thus more likely to act poorly (Chang 2008, Chiu 2014). Since this theory was developed, a variety of other factors have been discussed to pinpoint the problems with online anonymity. Lapidot-Lefler and Barak (2012) emphasize the importance of unidentifiability, invisibility, and lack of eye-contact in toxic online inhibition. They posit that feeling unidentifiable (more than actually being unidentifiable), not feeling watched by others, and not having to make eye contact with correspondents lead to increased flaming behavior. Chui (2014) and Misoch (2015) suggest that visual anonymity (being visually identical to other participants) and untraceable anonymity (being able to act without connection to your offline self) are the two crucial pieces of online anonymity that lead to negative disinhibition. Another theory, The Social Identity model of Deindividualization Effects (SIDE), states that visual anonymity can increase group salience, which can in turn create bias and hostility toward the stereotyped out-group (Chang 2008, Chui 2014).

One of the most famous recent cases of cyberbullying and online harassment comes from the Gamergate controversy. Although the controversy was complicated and disjointed, Gamergate began with a few users on 4chan, an anonymous message board, who concocted a story of failed journalistic ethics in order to target harassment at a feminist game developer, Zoe Quinn (Johnston 2014). Soon after, Anita Sarkeesian, who had been producing videos about

misogynistic tropes in video games as part of her Feminist Frequency nonprofit, began receiving death threats from people who identified under the Gamergate banner. Both women (and a number of others) were harassed and threatened with bodily harm, rape, and murder for expressing opinions objectionable to the members of the Gamergate movement (i.e. for being feminists). The threats towards Sarkeesian and her family became so severe that she left her home fearing for her safety (Wofford 2014). This harassment was aided by the affordances of the sites on which the Gamergaters acted. 4chan neither allows users to make accounts nor mandates a username in order to post to boards. Reddit requires only a username and password (no email) to post, and new accounts can be made in seconds. Twitter requires an email address in order to post, but burner email accounts are easy to make, and without posting other identifiable information (such as hometown and real name), it is possible to be effectively anonymous on the site.

Using the SIDE model, one can see how a close-knit community on 4chan can create a toxic environment. Users feel a strong connection to the anonymous online communities to which they belong. These particular 4chan and Reddit boards are heavily dominated by young male gamers, whom SIDE predicts will form negative stereotypes of the out-group (in this case, feminist game critics). Users also feel a much stronger connection to the community because they are posting anonymously, making them more likely to act if they feel their community is being threatened. In the case of Gamergate, 4chan users felt that Quinn's game *Depression Quest*, Sarkeesian's "Tropes vs. Women", and perceived criticism of existing popular games threatened the traditional gamer community and the close-knit culture of the particular 4chan boards. These negative perceptions led to increased hostility, and through the online disinhibition model, it becomes apparent how intense online harassment occurred. Since their online accounts cannot be traced back to offline identities, 4chan users did not feel accountable for their actions. They were not forced to personally confront their victims or look them in the eye, making inappropriate, aggressive, and violent comments more likely. Although the organization of Gamergate mostly occurred on 4chan, many of the hateful comments Quinn and Sarkeesian received were via Twitter, which also does not require that one's real identity be used. Yet many, if not most, people do use their real identity, creating an imbalance of knowledge; Internet trolls from 4chan knew the identities of Quinn and Sarkeesian from their Twitter accounts, but the women knew nothing about those harassing them. It is this discrepancy that makes online harassment especially terrifying, as it leaves the harassed extremely vulnerable while the harassers face no punishment. Limiting online anonymity on these sites would drastically reduce the imbalance in power between the harassers and harassed, making it easier to track down, ban, and otherwise punish those who behave poorly online.

Online anonymity does not only beget harassment of a few individuals, but also can create generally negative online environments. Lapidot-Lefler and Barak (2012) did a series of experiments in which expert evaluations, textual analysis, and self-reporting were used to determine the degree of toxic online disinhibition effect occurring during online debates between pairs of subjects. In this study, three facets of online communication (anonymity, visibility, eye-contact) were studied to determine their effects on the conversations. The

researchers found that anonymity (not knowing any identifying information, just an arbitrarily assigned username), invisibility (no webcam to view partner), and a lack of eye-contact (no eye-level webcam with instructed eye contact) produced the greatest levels of flaming. All of these conditions are satisfied in many typical online communities: sites like 4chan, Reddit, YouTube, and chat sites do not encourage (and often discourage) use of personally identifying information and do not usually have affordances built in to allow eye-contact. The research shows that these factors generally led to more negative communities, which is not desirable when participating in online communication. Anonymity has a negative effect on online communication and should, therefore, be minimized to reduce harassment and foster a more positive environment.

Making the case for close-knit anonymous communities

Yet many hail Reddit and other anonymous forums as wonderful online communities. These arguments often rely on two factors – moderation and close-knit supportiveness – to make the case for the importance of anonymity. Although by no means perfect, Reddit in particular has cultivated strong online communities on the basis of anonymity. As Carr (2012) said, "Links are voted up or down by a community that is full of pseudonyms, which has the odd effect of prompting users to be very intimate and remarkably candid, albeit as avatars." Couts (2012) agrees, saying "the 'me' I am on Reddit – the communities I'm a part of, the conversations I have with others – is closer to the 'me' I am offline than anywhere else on the Web. I can say what I want without fear of retribution (save some embarrassing downvotes)." SIDE suggests that these online communities within Reddit work because their anonymity encourages personal sharing, making the communities more tight-knit and encouraging people to identify with the group. Furthermore, the different forums within Reddit encompass an enormously large variety of topics and interests, enabling users to find the particular groups on the site that suit them best.

Although critics of anonymity state that it provides a space for harassment, the guidelines and norms of subreddits have proven especially helpful in combatting hate speech in topically sensitive communities. The affordances and the benefits of the anonymous nature of these communities make anonymity worthwhile despite its potential to enable harassment. Reddit's discussions are organized into a near infinite list of 'subreddits' on different topics, each with its own threads and lists. Additionally, as Carr (2012) and Couts (2012) both touched upon, the up-/down-voting mechanism allows users within a subreddit to democratically define what things are and are not acceptable to users, systematically silencing those who seek to harass users. Many subreddits have strong community standards and moderators to enforce them, which help establish social norms and prevent trolling by outsiders. The right side of the screen contains a pane that reminds users what the rules of the subreddit are, and often give a description of the type of community they are trying to foster. With this information, new visitors to the subreddit can determine whether they would like to spend more time there, helping steer away people who do not want to participate according to the guidelines.

Subreddits relating to sex positivity and queer identities are especially good examples. As communities that often experience discrimination, anonymous online forums provide safe

spaces to discuss issues related to their sexual identities. Since the subreddits are designed to be safe spaces, community moderation helps remove negative content or ban those who post bigoted things. Because of their more niche discussion topics, these subreddits are usually only visited by those who wish to participate, and moderators make it quite clear that offensive and unkind behavior will not be tolerated. More importantly, because Reddit allows users to decouple online and offline identities, members are willing to share personal detail without worry of their comments being traced back to their offline life.

The subreddit r/bisexual, for example, contains a number of posts by users discussing their experiences coming out (or not) to their friends and families. Users who might not want their families to know about their sexual orientation, for example, can post without connection to even an email address. Even after sharing a significant amount of information about themselves and their lives, users can choose not to provide a legal name or location, retaining a sense of anonymity. User MarieAntwatnet (2015) posted hundreds of words regarding her family situation and her fears about coming out under the cover of anonymity, and asked Reddit whether they could give her any advice. Other posts like this one abound on the subreddit, providing what might seem to be incredibly intimate information regarding family, identity, sexuality, and sexual practices to a community of strangers. Yet as SIDE suggests, this anonymity brings the community closer together, allowing people to share their thoughts with likeminded individuals without fear of revelation to the people in their offline lives. As a result of this, it is not possible to conclude that anonymity necessarily results in cyberbullying; anonymity is too beneficial in some contexts to be unilaterally banned.

In addition to well-known anonymous online forums, there are numerous others that provide smaller or niche communities. Contrary to producing a negative environment or flaming, anonymity fosters closeness between users and a strong sense of community. Online networks that connect cancer patients were studied by Frost et al. (2014). In these communities, cancer patients can share tips for managing symptoms and treatments and can seek support from other patients. Medical data, however, is highly sensitive, and privacy concerns among patients abound. In this study, shareable information was categorized into three groups: clinical information, daily life experiences, and personal information. Researchers found that patients were very willing to share clinical information, less likely to share daily life experiences, and unlikely to share personal information. Clinical information was deemed the most relevant to their participation in the network and the most beneficial to share. Furthermore, without personal identifying information, which might be contained in daily anecdotes but is definitely disclosed through personal identity information, clinical information would not be easily linked to their offline selves. This disconnect further cemented the preference to share clinical information, and drastically inhibited the willingness of users to share personal information, which would betray their anonymity. For users of a site concerned with sharing medical advice and anecdotes, anonymity results from a privacy concern; the importance of keeping clinical data separate from specific individuals is crucial to the success of such a community. Anonymity, therefore, is not a hindrance to the group, but a crucial feature to its functioning, so anonymity should not be severely restricted.

Anonymity as a user experience design decision

It seems, then, that although the negative consequences of online anonymity are easily seen, they do not always outweigh the benefits for online communities, and anonymity should be neither unilaterally condemned nor praised. No level of anonymity is without criticism, so web designers should consider carefully the particular uses and affordances of their sites to determine whether online anonymity would be harmful or beneficial. Users, too, should question whether utilizing anonymous features on forums or largely anonymous communities will help facilitate their desired online interactions. Furthermore, it has been shown that there are a variety of motivations for utilizing anonymity and reasons why people may feel anonymous online. The inclusion of anonymity is not a binary decision, and developers should be encouraged to consider whether to adopt a strict policy against it, a haven for it, or some middle ground between the two. If any degree of anonymity is permitted, however, affordances for preventing trolls, flaming, and cyberbullying should be considered.

Facebook provides an example for the benefits and pitfalls of steering away from anonymity completely. The company has determined that fake identities are too problematic to be worthwhile, and now requires users to provide their real names, saying that "having people use their authentic names makes them more accountable, and also helps us root out accounts created for malicious purposes, like harassment, fraud, impersonation and hate speech" (Philip 2015). The company has decided that the ability to use false names makes people virtually unidentifiable, and that simply requiring an email address to sign up would not sufficiently link people to their offline selves, which would greatly increase online harassment. Since Facebook is about connecting users and providing an online platform for social interactions, fake accounts detract heavily from the intended environment of the site. It is difficult for users to find each other when people are not using their real names, and it also poses a safety risk for young teenagers making friends online whom they have never met in person. Furthermore, it detracts from Facebook's ability to sell data based on real users and thus anonymity does not make sense from a business perspective, either.

Yet attempting to remove anonymity is not without its own problems. Facebook has encountered a significant amount of opposition to its name-verification process, which users have to go through if their account is flagged as likely being fake. The process required providing photographic proof of government documents to verify identity and get one's account reactivated. For many transgender people and drag queens, however, this restriction was a source of stress, as many do not go by their government names during daily life. Similarly, some Native Americans, whose names often violate Facebook's name policy for use of words or phrases, have been having difficulty getting their real names verified (Philip 2015, "What names are allowed on Facebook" 2015). Beyond concerns about the real identity policy itself, Facebook users, especially teens, are still the targets for cyberbullying; anonymity is not the only reason for online bullying, and children will often bully those they know on social media without concern about being known to the victims (Gayle 2013). This unintended consequence of banning anonymity and pseudonyms serves as a lesson that even well-reasoned choices regarding anonymity will not necessarily be easy to implement well.

Other sites have taken drastically different approaches to online anonymity. Gawker Media owns a large variety of news blog sites, including Deadspin (sports), Kokatu (video games), io9 (science fiction/technology) and Jezebel (feminism/celebrity). All sites within this network follow similar commenting policies, in which users may post anonymously, but whose comments are subject to moderation. This moderation prevents trolling and flaming comments, while allowing users whose first comment is approved to comment on any future articles without moderation, in order to save time for the bloggers themselves ("Gawker Comments FAQ" 2007). This attempt to balance the desire for anonymity (an email address is requested but not required for signup) and the need to prevent trolls is not perfect, but shows a very different compromise than Facebook's choice. Unlike Facebook, whose focus is the users themselves and the connections between them, Gawker sites are focused on responses to the particular content produced by the staff writers. The content focus mitigates the danger of directed, sustained cyberbullying, making anonymity a feasible choice. Additionally, the use of moderation allows a large, loose-knit community to post responses anonymously without the development of a hostile environment. Commenters often complain, however, that their comments go unseen, and if they do not receive moderator review and approval, it is very difficult for other readers to see their comments. Some worry that since the authors are the moderators on their own articles, contrary opinions are censored, preventing readers from gaining a nuanced perspective on a topic or knowing what criticism for the author's work exists. Gawker has worked to fix these issues by allowing viewers to see all comments, even those that have not received approval, but this is not the default state and thus the compromise does not please all users.

On the other end of the spectrum, 4chan has taken a very hands-off, anything-goes approach to online anonymous communities. 4chan boards have little moderation, and all new content automatically appears at the top of the thread, giving each user a strong, uncensored voice (Kushner 2015). Users do not need to use an email address or even a pseudonym to post, nor can they connect directly with other users outside the posts themselves; there is no private messaging system. Users are free to act in contradictory ways, potentially posting many times on the same thread with differing opinions (to cause a flame war) or the same (to make their own viewpoint seem supported). Old threads expire a set time after their original posting, strengthening the perception of impermanence that users feel. Overall, this creates a user culture that, while all are devoted to the site and its freedom of speech, is often cited as being a hotbed for questionable and illegal activity. Gamergate, as previously mentioned, saw its beginnings on a 4chan forum, as did the hacks revealing celebrity nude photos and various acts by Anonymous. Illegal activity, too, from copyright infringement to child pornography exists in the depths of 4chan image boards (Dewey 2014). More than likely any other site, 4chan is known for its lack of rules and its anonymity. Both of these facts often bring out the worst in the community, as no one can be held accountable for anything they do on 4chan, even among other 4chan users. As described by the SIDE model, 4chan users experience a very strong connection to the site as a result of its anonymity. Yet this tight-knit community, which is very supportive of its members, paradoxically, breeds hatred toward out-groups. The 4chan community is thus full of tension, exemplifying both the best and worst of online anonymity.

Online anonymity is a highly nuanced, complex topic. Stating that anonymity unilaterally causes harassment, cyberbullying, and negative online environments does not accurately depict the reality of many Internet sites, which cultivate close-knit and caring communities. Yet even on sites that take a middle ground between anonymity and verified identity, the benefits and pitfalls of anonymous communication are hard to navigate. SIDE illustrates this sentiment quite well: the tendency of anonymous sites to create strong communities is ostensibly a positive effect, but it can often lead to negative behavior toward and stereotyping of out-groups. Although it is easy to experience a knee-jerk reaction to the horrible harassment that occurs via anonymous forums and advocate for their discontinuance, it is important to recognize that not all online communities produce such hateful posts and that the abuse of the system by some does not invalidate the entire system. The threats that Quinn and Sarkeesian experienced during Gamergate surely show off the worst that online anonymity has to offer, and no one should have to experience the vitriolic words that they did. At the same time, cancer patients and closeted queer individuals have benefited significantly from the anonymity their online communities provide. The ability to share clinical or personal information with a group of others without fear of identification is important for the privacy of these people. Furthermore, sites with verified identities still may not prevent hostile environments and bullying. These examples have shown that neither anonymity nor the lack thereof can alone provide the perfect online community. Given the examples explored here, it is encouraged for site developers to consider the purpose of the sites when building comment systems, considering a middle ground and including features for moderating or banning toxic users.

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CHAPTER 3

When EleGiggle Met E-sports: Why Twitch-Based E-sports Has Changed

By an MIT student

E-sports is far from a new endeavor. Long before Twitch.tv was a registered domain name, events like DreamHack were bringing together gamers in a quest to distinguish the best of the best in live competitions. Games like Quake and Counter-Strike have been around long enough to have multiple generations of pro players contribute to, and make their eternal mark on, the scene for the next wave of serious neophytes.

Although electronic gaming is a relatively new pastime, it still might be tempting to view it through some of the older lenses of interpreting media. For instance, Lasswell's formula of media is an old classic that might have been of merit in the early days of e-sports. Using this model the communicating party had all of the persuasion on their side, such that the recipient only received influence, and never participated in an exchange so much as just absorbed what came at them (Berger). When e-sports events were fledgling, and events were reserved for the few that could afford to travel to them, perhaps their influence on the community could be viewed as unidirectional. Those with the means or the skill to attend would bring back tales of triumphs and strategies from the larger LAN events. But the recent inclusion of streaming services into the medium of e-sports, specifically Twitch.tv in the last four years, has fundamentally changed that relationship.

Twitch.tv is an offshoot of Justin.tv, a streaming service opened in 2007 to allow users to broadcast their lives to a waiting audience. While Justin.tv allowed the streamer freedom to broadcast nearly anything, Twitch.tv is streaming service intended to cater to the broadcasting of games to a willing audience of viewers. Opened in 2011, and later purchased by Amazon in 2014, the service beat out it major competitor in Own3d.tv in 2013 to become the premier source of online broadcast gaming (Wikipedia). It is a service that allows any individual with the network connection necessary to upload video and charisma, to maintain and develop a viewer base and the ability to become a micro-celebrity. These days, many turn to Twitch.tv with hopes to make money by live streaming the video of their online or offline exploits to waiting viewers, and in turn become a full time streamer who can focus just on streaming and playing their game. Viewers can interact with a streamer through an in-browser IRC channel complete with custom emoticons and its own pervasive force of moderators and bots, and have the freedom to watch any live stream at any time. This environment made up of millions of active viewers has proved to be a veritable cocoon that has prompted quite the metamorphosis upon the world of e-sports.

Specifically, I believe that Twitch.tv has pushed the world of e-sports to be an almost exclusively participatory designed field. Meaning that an e-sports event today is much more dependent on a symbiotic interaction between its consumers and producers because of the influences of

Twitch.tv. Twitch has transformed from the earlier versions of hypodermic needle-like injections of culture from producers, or the more prevalent encoder-decoder schemes of media that still clearly distinguish the two sides, to a completely new paradigm. Twitch.tv has caused actors from every part of the process of an e-sports event, from production to viewership, to directly, explicitly trade influence and shape the execution of the event and as a result has changed the industry culture even when divorced from Twitch.tv itself.

To illustrate my point, it is perhaps most appropriate to first look at the elements of Twitch.tv that lend themselves to a participatory design, and how in turn these elements have directly influenced e-sports events when hosted through Twtich.tv.

The themes explored by Jenkins, Ford and Green in discussing what makes a media form "spreadable" are also applicable to what would encourage a participatory culture around a media artifact. If members are encouraged to become contributors by sharing and spreading the media artifact, then they are participating in its execution. Twitch has biases for 3 of the elements of "spreadable media" built into the website and its services directly. Because of these biases, viewers and other streamers of Twitch.tv are invited to participate in advertising and facilitating the performance of e-sports on Twitch and in turn become part of the collection of actors that produce an e-sports event.

First among these biases is Twitch.tv's promotion of diversified experiences, which is summarized as providing content tailored for the niche audience that might consume it no only by the producer but by other consumers as well (Jenkins, Ford and Green). In essence, Twitch.tv is fundamentally built for the niche audience of gamers. But, the open streaming of e-sports matches has permitted an even greater niche to develop within the greater gaming community. Casters have become a face of the e-sports community on the level of recognition of professional players themselves. These casters provide the play-by-play analysis and color commentary for tournaments, and often do interviews with players and host miniature talk shows revolving around the professional scene and its developments.

Many of these monolithic casters get their start on Twitch by taking tournaments that do not provide a broadcast in their native language and re-streaming the tournament with their own commentary. Take for example Dota 2's EpiCommentary, a German caster who broke into the e-sports scene by providing German language casts of English tournaments (EpiDota2). While the practice has been restricted in the last year or so in efforts to protect the IP of tournament hosts, leading to many of Epi's early videos being removed, the practice has transfigured e-sports.

It is common now for larger e-sports events like DreamHack and StarLadder to have 3 or 4 channels broadcasting the same tournament in multiple languages to facilitate viewership from around the globe. And even now smaller tournaments often partner with fledgling casters who touch different viewerships due to language or style to re-broadcasts them for greater exposure in exchange for the use of their footage. In this way, casters, from the neophyte to the veteran,

have been pulled into participating the production of e-sports, even when they are not directly hired for the events.

Second, the blurring of producer and consumer expressed as an eventual collaboration between roles is a natural part of Twitch.tv (Jenkins, Ford and Green). Fundamentally, Twitch allows any motivated individual to become a producer by making their own gaming-related stream and broadcasting their own content. But just because any consumer can become a producer does not mean that they expressly collaborate, in fact there are thousands of streams that will never exceed 100 or so viewers. Where this freedom to move between roles can have an impact on e-sports is in ways that Twitch.tv encourages streamers to advertise and promote one another.

A popular streamer in the Twitch.tv community is given the ability to "host" another streamer when they decide to end their streaming session. By "hosting" another streamer, one voluntarily re-directs their viewers to the page of another broadcaster and has their personal Twitch.tv URL reflect the content of another user. For professional players and influential casters who stream, it is common to "host" a tournament they are intending to watch, or that a favorite player or caster of theirs is participating in. By doing so, the streamer fluidly transfers from producer, to consumer of a stream and also becomes an advertiser for an e-sports event, moving viewers that might have otherwise floated on to another stream or another site directly to the e-sports online venue. This "hosting" mechanism is not one-dimensional either, popular tournaments will sometimes "host" up and coming professional players and casters that contributed to their events, in return becoming advocates for the next set of e-sports participants.

Through this mechanism, the already blurred line between producer and consumer in the "anyone can be a streamer" market of Twitch.tv is further smudged for e-sports. E-sports events are often advertised not just by the tournament itself, but also by other prominent streams, sometimes even other tournaments themselves. In addition, popular professional players, casters and personalities are given a power over tournaments, if they are not chosen to participate in an event; they could easily influence the viewership of an event by starting up their own stream.

In an extension of the last two points, Twitch is a service that is built for sharing and spreading the e-sports phenomenon (Jenkins, Ford and Green). Many actors participate in expanding the visibility of an e-sports event by exercising their power over a viewership on Twitch, and this power can be wielded both positively and negatively with respect to the event.

But beyond just those influential streamers, we also have the power of the viewership itself ever represented through a scrolling chat window that accompanies every stream. Viewers of a stream are given the power to communicate in real time, often sharing details on the event as it takes place, cheering and jeering like a real time crowd and sweeping up fledgling viewers into the hype of the event. It is not uncommon for questions like "Who won last round?" or "Who is that player?" to be answered not by casters or event staff on moderation duty, but by other viewers engaged in the event. When particularly large e-sports events occur, the results often

spill outwards into other streams across the site, the echo of the winning team or a big play may make waves in chats for other games and streamers for weeks after the event has played out.

And when the event is over, Twitch provides video archives of events and allows producers to export their events to services like YouTube to allow repeated or belated viewing of the event. External communities of fans on sites like Reddit and TeamLiquid often share links to the archived videos from Twitch.tv of popular e-sports events for those that could not watch live, and create survival guides for new viewers to reference explaining when and where to watch the games, as well as what supplementary material will enrich the experience (0Hellspawn0).

It is unfair, however, to say that the viewership only contributes meaningful content to an e-sports event because of Twitch.tv. For every insightful comment and answered question spawned in a Twitch chat, there can be thousands of indistinguishable spam messages and memes. The influence of these messages can be far reaching, as there are sites dedicated to cataloging and archiving these spam artifacts, and numerous bots and auto moderators designed to curb the ever-encroaching tide of spam messages. However, even these seemingly useless spam messages contribute to the participatory culture being impressed upon e-sports by Twitch.

In his book, *Spam: A Shadow History of the Internet*, Brunton repeatedly contests that the efforts made by users on the Internet to combat spam is an integral part of shaping the landscape of the Internet in the modern age (Brunton). Similarly, all the moderators and bots that e-sports streams use to try to police their chats have shaped e-sports and other events hosted through Twitch.tv in return. Because some forms of spam, like reactionary emotes to big plays and comical chants in reference to players, are permitted while other actions get bans, the viewership of a stream is constantly fighting with moderation to see what is permissible. The production staff of an event is ever reacting to their audience, balancing between what they see as meaningful jeers and cheers within the "venue" of a Twitch.tv e-sports event that lies within the chat window to the right of the broadcast and risking losing viewers by banning too many jests and jeers and having their stream be deemed unfit for viewer contribution. If the chat is the body of Twitch-based e-sports then spam are the invasive bacterial, important to growing a healthy immune system, but dangerous in excess.

Thus, even when the chat for a major event is flying by with multiple deleted messages and reaction emotes weaved between discussions and questions, every viewer that types a line is still contributing. Like the crowd at a normal professional sporting event, every voice represented in chat makes up the tapestry of background noise that makes the experience unique. It would not be a home game if the fans did not jeer the visiting team, and it is not an e-sports event if the viewers are not fighting the moderators and criticizing the players too.

I want to emphasize that it really is viewers contributing to e-sports because of Twitch.tv, beyond just forcing moderators to react to the cries of the masses or being helpful to other fans. When T.L Taylor discussed the assemblage of play, she mentioned a range of contributing actors from the system itself and its affordances (discussed above) to the community around

the game itself (Taylor). Twitch might have all the affordances necessary to force participatory designs onto e-sports, but it means nothing if the community does not contribute directly to the events themselves through Twitch.

To make a long story short, they have. For example, in Dota 2 when a player pauses a professional game in the tensest of scenarios, it's a “Puppey Pause” – named after professional Dota 2 player Puppey, after the chat began spamming “Puppey Pause” during a particularly offensive stoppage time that changed the course of a nail-biting match (joinDota). Since then, every caster in the professional scene knows that term birthed from a Twitch chat, it is even sometimes jokingly used in other games due to its popularity. Other neologisms from chat include many of the names for locations in Counter Strike maps, often reflexively named after players who had moments of glory or failure around those locations that followed them in fame or infamy through memes created by chat participants. Chat acts like a Grecian chorus, reflecting the action that takes place during an event and often spawning cultural artifacts out of this repetition and tomfoolery (Encyclopedia Britannica).

But viewers and Twitch do not only create neologisms for e-sports, they uplift players and teams into the scene itself. Recently, one major Dota 2 tournament decided to have a fan vote for the last qualifying position in their LAN event, which prompted many professional players to speak out on social media, popular forums and even their own streams about their preferred team to receive the final coveted spot. Before that, smaller tournaments would often send their invites to well recognized teams with rosters including popular players in hopes of securing more viewership to ensure profitability. And when a player is given the power to re-direct their viewership towards and e-sports even through hosting the best measure of recognition for event hosts is Twitch.tv viewership that can become viewers for their events.

In many ways, a professional player, a commentator, a micro-celebrity in e-sports becomes known for their interactions through social mediums, and foremost among those is often the stream. The ability in live time for jokes and memes to take place there, exchanges with the community to be facilitated there and their handle to spread to viewers far and wide is massive. Mirroring the avatars of popular MMOs, for an e-sports professional, a Twitch stream could be likened to their embodied form on the Internet (Taylor, Living Digitally: Embodiment in Virtual Worlds). A player or a caster can be slingshotted into fame and recognition by the size of their viewership. Moreover, E-sports is forced to respond to them because, as mentioned before, they can influence those same viewers’ decisions to participate in an event as well.

I can vouch for this personally as well. A very good friend of mine goes by the Twitch name BananaSlamJamma (Twitch.tv/bananaslamjamma). At his behest, I helped him craft a media persona around the game of Dota 2, wherein he was recognized as a good player upon winning a premier in-house league. By interacting with an audience through streaming and navigating that terrain effectively, he was able to secure himself a spot on an up-and-coming North American Dota 2 team, and recently played in one LAN event and might even be able to compete for the biggest prize in Dota 2 history (Strom). Twitch.tv enabled him to participate in

the big e-sports dance himself, by re-shaping e-sports into a media where many factors and many actors contribute to the production of every event.

All this is well and good if one believes it. Twitch as I depicted it is certainly a force for participatory design. As one might expect of a platform in the vein of YouTube, where anyone can be a contributor, much of the way the service is designed and the effects on its streamers forces participation. But saying that Twitch.tv encourages a participatory design for the events created through it says little about why it is affecting e-sports as a whole. After all e-sports has been around far longer than Twitch.tv has, and many events are not hosted through Twitch.tv services. To address this, I will focus on why for e-sports the affects it has had on the e-sports events that have subscribed to Twitch.tv has had a rippling effect on the industry as a whole.

The less extreme of two options would be to address using Twitch.tv as a service without selling your service out to a participatory design. Considering for now that this is a possible avenue of action, imagine if one could host a stream on Twitch.tv without interacting with the viewership at all. In essence a completely automated streaming environment.

There was a popular project that did almost just this, it was known as Twitch Plays Pokemon (Twitch Plays Pokemon). A user made a stream where in the chat controlled an emulator through inputting commands in plain text, and its creator could summarize his interaction with the audience as turning the stream on initially and keeping the server running. Its very close to the concept of a “Design from Nowhere”, an anonymous design freed from biases or implications, which would be what you would need to really enact a one-way transfer of design from the producer to the consumer (Suchman). It gained a massive wave of interest as a purely chat-centric experience; an event where in the producer had embedded his message into the very code of the system and then left the viewers to experience it. Plenty of imitators emerged, with similar streams built around other gimmicks and titles like “Fish Plays Pokemon” or “Fish Plays Street Fighter”. The approach seemed feasible at this point, a producer had gained the attention of consumers without ever reacting to them, and instead being content letting them control a bot in a chat while he raked in viewership.

This story was not meant to last however, as his system had flaws, like any code it was injected with his biases and chat was quick to acknowledge this and cry out for change. In the evolution of Twitch Plays Pokemon, the creator of the system was quickly drawn into a debate between the viewers of the stream facilitated by other external forums and through images posted as links into the chat. The debate can be summarized as a choice between allowing voting to influence the game on stream, or sticking to the original system of random choice of read command from the deluge of chat message, a choice between democracy and anarchy. The community had acknowledged what was being forced upon them and had begun to push back to try to influence the producer to change the system for their benefit. At this moment, the game on stream was stuck in a portion of the game that required a long sequence of very specific button presses, an even that would be almost impossible with the current system limitations. The viewership of the stream was waning in response to the seemingly impossible task, and the novelty of the stream was wearing thin, so the producer was forced into a choice.

Either give in to the participatory culture by acknowledging the community and modifying the system, or stand firm in the one-way transfer of content and risk losing the influence given by viewership itself.

E-sports is usually given a similar catch-22 when attempting to participate in Twitch.tv without responding to the viewership. If one tries to host a tournament without participating in the culture of Twitch itself – using the memes they have made, promoting some form of chat, providing emoticons for subscribing viewers and encouraging subscription through various means and perks – then one risks losing viewership by not conforming to the understood elements of success through Twitch.tv. Because this participatory culture is accepted in much of the rest of Twitch.tv, it is expected when one participates in a new stream, and the backlash to being denied contributions due to chat bans or a lack of viewer incentives is often a loss of a viewer.

So, if an event hosted through Twitch.tv must bow to Twitch.tv viewers' expectations of participation why then, can e-sports not just avoid Twitch.tv in general? If it is accepted that it is nearly impossible to participate successfully in Twitch without ceding some of your event or stream design to the masses, then just avoid the service all together. After all for a system to be participatory designed, the designers themselves must make the first secession to actually use the participatory system (Lowgren and Stolterman).

That is definitely an option, as Twitch.tv was not always the only major streaming service available, and it certainly is not the only one accessible now. But, I contest that even managing to avoid Twitch.tv does not free an e-sports even from the influence of Twitch.tv and the shift in e-sports to a participatory design. That is to say that the damage has already been done to the design of an e-sports event, such that if Twitch.tv were to cease to exist tomorrow, e-sports would still be forever changed.

For my example, I will take the e-sport of Dota 2 that I have discussed up to this point. In its infancy, Dota 2 was thrust into the e-sports scene with a million dollar tournament hosted by Valve during Gamescom in 2011. Such an event was almost unprecedented; e-sports tournaments did not usually offer that much of a prize for winners, and it quickly drew the attention of many e-sports journalists (Sullivan). Yet now, if you look at the highest paid e-sports players 17 of the top 20 come from Dota 2, with each new year of tournaments creating even more highly paid e-sports stars (E-Sports Earnings). So, where did all that money come from? The answer is the viewers themselves, as Valve embraced the concept of incentivizing viewership of tournaments in conjunction with Twitch.tv as a service. They turned viewer participation into viewer contribution to the prize pool for tournaments, and thus let people vote with more than just their attention to a stream, they voted with their wallets.

Valve released an in-game ticketing service for Dota 2, which allowed a viewer interested in a tournament to purchase a ticket which would increase the prize pool of a tournament by some percentage of the sale in exchange for allowing the viewer to watch the game through a linked Twitch account with the added bonus of potentially receiving an in-game prize during the

matches. This meant that a viewer could now directly support the tournaments that they preferred to watch with monetary investment in the event, in exchange for the potential of obtaining in-game prizes associated with that tournament and the players participating in it. It encouraged tournaments to secure popular players and casters who would in turn produce more profitable items for viewers, and it encouraged viewers to directly support tournaments to gamble at striking it big with autographed items.

The system has been revised multiple times since then. Now popular artists often provide further in-game incentives in the form of cosmetic items that come bundled with tickets. These artists sometimes use Twitch.tv to stream the creation of their cosmetic items for further exposure, broadcasting the tournament that the final item will be affiliated with in the process. This has caused this new division of popular artists to gain their own footing in influencing and participating in the generation of an e-sports event by manipulating their own band of followers of their cosmetic items (Khaw).

Other games have followed suit in different manners. While not ever game offers the linked cosmetics through viewership, it is common for tournaments to reward viewers with incentives for viewing and contributing to crowd funded tournaments. Raffles for in-game items, Kickstarter rewards for backers and custom emoticons for subscribers who pay for perks on Twitch.tv to increase the prize pool of tournaments or facilitate more events are all now common occurrences (Beyond The Summit). What this means is that e-sports events are quickly growing in prize pool and reach by relying on participation from a dedicated viewership. To forsake that viewership is to lose that additional funding and thus lose prize pool and influence for your tournament.

There are many criticisms of this design in Dota 2, and its adoption in tournaments, but its existence is undeniable. It has made the ever-competitive realm of securing sponsorship and teams for an e-sports tournament even harder, as the expectations grow with the size of the prize-pools, to try to subvert the participatory design emergent from Twitch is to take a path of greater resistance. Let alone trying to privately fund a multi-million dollar tournament like The International is now, without relying on the contribution of viewers and other members of the community (Valve Corporation).

The take away from all of this I hope is clear; Twitch.tv has pushed e-sports into a participatory model as a result of depending on the service for so long. Its hard now to see a tournament succeed without facilitating or employing crowd funding, offering a raffle, having a fantasy league, a bundled set of community created cosmetics or at the very least having an accompanying chat full of rowdy viewers and careful mods interacting with the commentators and the event itself. I think that what Leigh Star says about formal systems like what has settled in for e-sports is true, there is definitely a great value in the tournaments and events in e-sports that have managed to avoid the system and biases that come with participatory e-sports, but they are few and far between (Star). It is difficult to envision them because they are not prevalent in the community, they are not re-broadcast by fledgling casters looking to make a mark, or re-posted in forums by contributing community members looking to flaunt their

influence; they rely only on the voice that they construct to represent them, and thus lag behind the ever surging monster of fan and community driven representation and re-appropriation. For every other e-sports event that exists right now, it is broadcast on Twitch, or a service that seeks to mimic it, and thus it plays by these rules of participant design and contribution. Rules that as paraphrased from Xangold, staff programmer for Twitch.tv and creator of the first major chat bot xanbot, go as follows.

You want more viewers on Twitch? Be constantly talking to and with your viewers, watch other streams and take notes, partner up with popular people and mutually advertise each other (Xangold). To be successful Twitch.tv the expectation is simple, you need to buy into a participatory design for your content, and E-sports has been widely successful by exploiting and employing everything Twitch.tv has to offer.

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CHAPTER 4

NEGOTIATING IDEOLOGIES IN E-SPORTS : THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE RISKY IN FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF PROFESSIONAL PHYSICAL SPORTS

By Ryan Alexander

Less than ten years ago, the term eSports would have meant nothing to most people. The idea of a professional video game player would have seemed laughable or downright paradoxical. But today, organized professional video game competitions, collectively referred to as eSports, are incredibly popular. Millions of people watch international tournaments in games like League of Legends, Dota 2, Counter-Strike, Halo and Call of Duty. The prize pools for those tournaments are also now in the millions (E-Sports Earnings). Viewers cheer on their favorite professional players, bet on games, and even take part in fantasy team events. Professional players have become celebrities to them and fans will flock to live streaming sites, most often Twitch.tv, to watch players play casual games with friends on a daily basis. In fact, Twitch reports that more than 100 million viewers a month on average tune in to watch everything from casual games to livestreamed tournament games (Twitch). Companies like Redbull, SteelSeries, Gigabyte, Asus, Samsung, Kingston, Coca-Cola, and Logitech are all scrambling to sponsor events, individual players, and teams.

Clearly, the eSports scene is not the same as it was just a few years ago. One cannot help but draw parallels to professional physical sports leagues such as the NFL or the NBA. Those leagues are obviously very successful and while the rapid changes that have been made in the eSports scene have clearly attracted more viewers and garnered financial benefits, such rapid growth can have consequences. E-Sports has been around long before the multi-million dollar tournaments and corporate sponsorships. There is a culture associated with competitive video game playing that has slowly been degraded in favor of pursuing the same trajectory that professional physical sports have taken - namely, an emphasis on media attention and monetary benefits. Which this ideology is not inherently harmful to eSports, sacrificing the culture of its origins to adopt cultural aspects of other spaces in the hopes of mimicking their success is a risky move and might end up hurting eSports in the long run.

There are two major cultural aspects of competitive gaming that I fear will be abandoned if the scene continues to mimic professional physical sports. The first is the idea that gaming tournaments prioritize the competition over the media potential. If the focus of eSports shifts to the media and monetary centric foci that physical sports have, the integrity of the competition may no longer be maintained. The second cultural aspect that I believe is at risk is very nature of what a professional player is. In order to be recognized as a professional gamer, one previously only needed to demonstrate sufficient skill, but now the media attention a player can provide is so highly valued, recognition within the community might overshadow skill as the primary asset of a professional player.

Attending a professional football game is an electrifying experience. As you approach the stadium surrounded by thousands of fans, the loudspeakers pumping out music, the smell of hot dogs in the air, you can't help but get swept away in the experience. You're there to watch the game, to witness the athletic competition that is about to take place. It somehow feels so much more authentic than watching the pre-game show on TV. On television, there are advertisements cutting into coverage, logos are constantly being shown on screen, and you are constantly reminded that the halftime show will be brought to you by Subway and that Goodyear is bringing you the overhead view from a blimp floating high above the crowds. Game day for the millions of viewers who tune in from home every weekend is not just about the athletic competition. Instead, the "hypercommodification" of these physical sports have rendered games into massive media spectacles (Giulianotti). Viewers get to enjoy flying camera shots and impossibly close images from the field in exchange for being reminded every few minutes about just how good Coors Light is when it's cold. They get to watch famous analysts discuss the game's finer points and watch the pre-taped interviews with their favorite players, committing to watching the 4 hour show that will only contain an hour of actual football. As soon as the leagues were created, NFL, NBA, NHL, etc., this has been the norm for professional physical sports. These leagues require the players to be present for a certain number of press events and mandate that teams must produce a certain amount of content for their fans (Florio). The yearly football championship, the Super Bowl, is the most heavily aggrandized. Advertisements during the Super Bowl are incredibly sought after despite the multimillion dollar price tag for a few seconds of air time. Before the game day, the NFL requires that all players must be present for interviews with the press for an entire day (Florio). You would think that the few days leading up to the Super Bowl would be completely focused on training for the players, but the press day is absolutely mandatory. Most players are not pleased with the requirement, exemplified by Seattle Seahawks player Marshawn Lynch's infamous interview before the last Super Bowl during which he only answered "I'm just here so I don't get fined." to every question. Even the traditions after winning the Super Bowl have been commercialized. The traditional question asked to the victors is "Now that you've won the Super Bowl, what are you going to do next?" and the response is always "We're going to Disney World!" All the media attention is not necessarily harmful to the game, and it definitely allows more people to be a part of the sport. However, it is abundantly clear that the main purpose for the league is to make a profit, not to host a competition.

There are very few people who remember football before the NFL took over back in the early 1900s and before the league, there was not much of a culture beyond the rules and traditions of the game itself. This is not the case when it comes to eSports. Because eSports began a relatively short time ago and because it has grown so quickly, a great deal of eSports fans remember the early DreamHack and Evo events. These events were not media spectacles by any means, even after the technology for livestreaming became available. They were opportunities to surround yourself with likeminded individuals who enjoyed playing the same games as you (Taylor). The competitions at these events were open to everyone and if you were good enough, you could move through the bracket and reach the finals. Nothing else was

required. You could be a totally new player with no friends and still be eligible to play at the highest levels. At these events, the only relevant factor was your skill level.

However, in the last five years, studios and companies have swooped in to invest in these events. Simple halls filled with gamers were replaced with well decorated arenas, full of banner advertisements, loud music, and lots of food and drinks. The exciting atmosphere and shared interest in gaming remained, but the experience was much more refined and a lot of the changes were gladly welcomed. Walking into Dreamhack and walking into football stadium on a game day were suddenly not so different. Attendance spiked and studios began to livestream the entire event for all those could not make it. Every year, the events moved to larger halls and this year the ESL One tournament was actually held in a soccer stadium in Germany (ESLOne). The International, the Dota 2 yearly championship, had to move from a concert hall to a full sized arena in order to accommodate all those who wanted to watch the event in person and tickets still sold out in minutes (Pereira). The production value of the live streams skyrocketed and we began seeing the same visual effects, instant replays, and multi-language casting that previously had only existed in the sphere of physical sports.

Now, most of these changes were quite beneficial. The competitions were being streamed to hundreds of thousands of viewers, prize pools increased exponentially providing incentive for the now well-known teams around the world to come and play, and the in person experience was generally improved. But the cost for all these improvements was the transformation from a competition centric event to a media centric one. The space of eSports can no longer be limited to the pursuit of glory through gameplay. The requirements of capitalist pursuits have been allowed to impress themselves upon the space of play (Crawford). Now that the companies and organizers had spent a good deal of money improving the event, they needed to be able to turn a profit. Tournament organizers began pressuring professional players to spend a certain amount of time at photo shoots, meeting fans in person, and sitting for interviews (Valve, The International Event) (Redbull). These media events often take place a few days before the competition kicks off, striking a remarkable resemblance to the Super Bowl presser mandates. The shift in focus away from the competition itself and towards management of the media event is a high price to pay for the comforts of financial support. The underlying principle that anyone could participate as long as they were skilled enough has been eroded by the mandate that the professional players should be media objects themselves. After all, a well-known player who is adored by the community is much more profitable than someone no one knows, regardless of skill. Event organizers now focus solely on getting established teams to participate. Amateur tournaments are kept entirely separate and often are not even streamed (joinDota, Amateur Event Rules). It is no longer possible to show up at Dreamhack with only your computer and participate in the main tournament. In a few short years, eSports events have abandoned elements of their culture in exchange for pomp and circumstance and as a result, have lost some of what makes eSports unique. While the number of fans who became disillusioned as a result of these changes are far less than the massive influx of new fans, as time passes and the viewership stabilizes, we could see more and more people leaving the scene every year and these issues would eventually have to be addressed.

Along with abandoning some of their founding principles, these new media-centric eSports events have also begun to sacrifice the integrity of their competitions. Ideally, championship events would extend invitations to the teams that are currently performing exceedingly well because the goal of a championship tournament is to determine who the best team is currently. But the best teams are not necessarily the most popular and thus are not the most profitable. Furthermore, in order to incentivize viewers from around the world to watch these tournaments most event organizers will invite teams from every region in order to promote diversity and to prevent any one region from feeling alienated. Therefore, the teams that end up participating in these competitions may not even be the top teams, but that is preferable because they will be the most profitable teams. This change has not been welcomed by the community and this year's International Dota 2 championship invitations drew a lot of criticism for inviting last year's winners to return, despite their extremely lackluster performance as of late and for inviting a popular team from South East Asia that did not demonstrate the roster stability that is supposedly required (Noxville).

The League of Legends championships (LCS) are not any better as Riot, the creators of League of Legends (LoL), requires all eligible professional team be part of their league, which means all championships will only consist of existing teams that have been around for a certain period of time. Riot approved teams have to adhere to strict rules that severely limit roster changes, so it is also difficult to enter the league as a brand new player (Riot, LCS Official Rules). Of course, as in the other cases we have discussed, there is a tradeoff. Professional LoL players are paid a guaranteed salary by Riot and can focus entirely on playing even if their team does not have the most generous sponsors. This model of an inter-league championship whose victors are unilaterally declared the best team in the world, ignoring the potential for outside challengers, is same model that the NFL follows. However, at least it is unlikely that a player who never played in college or plays in the minor leagues can become good enough to play football at the professional level. Getting to the professional level in a video game by yourself is not uncommon, but Riot makes it very difficult for new players to enter the scene.

Valve, the creators of Dota 2, are a bit more flexible in this area because they do not require professional Dota 2 players to be in a league. The tradeoff here is that Valve does not directly pay professional players any form of salary. But just because there are no formal restrictions to new players entering the pro scene does not mean there aren't any barriers to entry in practice. As mentioned previously, professional players are now pressured into becoming media icons. The notion of "strategic self-presentation" in order to become a "micro-celebrity" has become a pertinent job skill in this field (Boyd). Similar to computer scientists maintaining a sample of their work on a GitHub page or graphic designers keeping a portfolio of their designs, professional eSports players curate a presence within the community via social media and through their Twitch streams. After all, just like in any professional field, your past work helps you land a new job. When the time comes for a player to leave a team it's not only their skills, but their relevance within the scene that helps them find a new team. When eSports players retire, if the community already respects them and is aware of their experience and knowledge, they can transition into becoming full time casters or analysis as two long time players, Maelk and SyndererN, have done. As a result of this new emphasis on becoming a media asset and a

micro-celebrity, players who are seeking to break into the professional scene now find it almost necessary to establish a stream and gain recognition within the community in order to get noticed by existing teams.

Just a few years ago, even after the focus of eSports switch to a more media centric approach, this was not a requirement. For instance, there was a player who went by the name of AdmiralBulldog. Bulldog was not a professional player, but was very talented. When professional players would play regular matchmaking games for practice, they would often get matched with him and over time got to know who he was. One of the professional players that was impressed by Bulldog was Dendi, star of Na'Vi, the Ukrainian Dota team that won the very first International. Na'Vi was playing in a tournament and one of their players couldn't make the game, so Dendi had Bulldog play as a stand in (Na'Vi.Dota2). Bulldog performed extremely well in his first professional game and eventually got picked up by another Dota team, [A]lliance. A year later, they won the third International tournament, winning 2.8 million dollars. Bulldog, who a year ago, was just a casual player, became known as one of the best players in his position and instantly gained a large following within the community. This Cinderella story espouses the same ideals that early eSports culture was all about. Sadly, these stories are, for the most part, resigned to the history books. For one thing, stand in players are now heavily discouraged in professional games in an effort to enforce the same roster stability that all physical sports teams have (joinDota, Professional Event Rules). Secondly, demonstrating a high level of skill at the game is no longer enough for professional teams to take on a new player. Because teams are not salaried, they need corporate sponsors in order to fund their careers. These sponsors prefer to back teams that can win games, but even more valuable than these players' skill is their clout. If they back popular players, they will be able to directly advertise to all those players' fans. Therefore, teams look to pick up players that have demonstrated both a high level of skill and have shown that they can be valuable media assets. For example, Redbull sponsors a player known as DeMoN, who until recently, wasn't even on a team. He was just a popular figure in the community and thus it made sense to sponsor him, even if he wasn't actively playing in the professional scene (Smith).

One of my friends is currently a professional Dota 2 player (who is actually on the same team as DeMoN) by the name of BananaSlamJamma, or BSJ for short. Just like Bulldog, BSJ was a very highly ranked player and frequently played with professional players. He spent months trying to get on a team, but was unable to find anyone willing to take him on. So with help from a few of his friends and myself, BSJ created a Twitch account (http://www.twitch.tv/bananaslamjamma) and began to stream his gameplay. He would provide in depth commentary on his actions in-game and established his role in the community as an instructor. Players came to his stream not necessarily to laugh or to be dazzled by high level play, but to learn. He filled a niche in the community and as a result, his stream became fairly popular. Unsurprisingly, a few weeks after proving his value as a media object, BSJ was picked up by a professional team.

The divide between a professional eSportsman and a normal player is getting larger as the community comes to expect a certain semi-distinguished, media friendly behavior from the professional players (Mora). Given the incredibly vast divide between professional physical

sports players and fans, this trend makes sense. While there are many obvious benefits to adopting artifacts from physical sports culture, the fact that eSports will have to sacrifice its core tenant of inclusiveness is worrisome. If barriers to entry into the professional sphere continue to be raised, the eSports scene will soon stagnate and fresh talent will be hard to find, regardless of how much production value goes into the streams or how much gourmet food the events offer.

Of course, some eSports events are successfully negotiating the requirements of taking a media-centric approach while maintaining the original competitive and inclusive culture of competitive gaming. This year's International, although not without its issues, has included the opportunity for open qualifiers. The qualifiers allow any team of five players to enter in a massive bracketed tournament. The team that wins will compete in the qualifiers with professional teams and if they can win there, they will earn a trip to the International (Face-It, Open Qualifiers). Of course, no one really expects the open qualifier winners to even make it to the main event, much less perform well there, but the point is that it is a possibility. Riot has also introduced the LCS Challenger Series which allows the top 20 teams from regular matchmaking to compete with the winner advancing to the LCS tournament (Riot, Challenger Series). As long as you give players a chance to prove themselves, to bypass all the media requirements and compete solely on the basis of their skills, you are keeping the original spirit of competitive gaming alive.

It is also important to note that the open qualifiers for this year's International are being held by third party studios that have demonstrated an ability to provide coverage for previous tournaments. Valve could not possibly coordinate all of the open qualifier games while ensuring that all games were played fairly. However, the studios, FaceIt and PerfectWorld, have already invested so much into the eSports scene that they have the automated tools and personnel needed to run such a large tournament (Face-It, How it Works). Furthermore, by broadcasting these games on Twitch, they can continue to generate profit. Essentially then, we have a studio who thrives on the new media-centric eSports model sponsoring an open qualifier that espouses the values of the old competition-centric model illustrating that it is indeed possible to prioritize one approach without completely disregarding the other as long as a few extra measures are taken.

In the same vein, there are teams that recognize talent and will pick players up regardless of whether or not they've proven to be capable of being a popular icon or not. It no longer happens often, but there are a few examples of this occurring quite recently. A few months ago, the American Dota team Evil Geniuses (EG) picked up a 15 year old Pakistani player by the name of Suma1L. Shortly afterwards, the team went to China and won an event there, earning a little over 1.2 million dollars (Valve, DAC Results). Suma1L's story is even more dramatic than AdmiralBulldog's and it occurred well after teams began focusing on acquiring media-ready players, illustrating that it is not impossible to transition from gamer to an eSportsman in a short period of time. However, a lot of stars had to align in order for Suma1L to get his break. EG had just lost their mid player (the position that Suma1L plays) and needed to fill the slot quickly due to upcoming the Chinese tournament. Using a stand in player from another team was not a possibility since virtually every team would be attending the same tournament. So EG tuned to

the leaderboards and played with a few of the top ranked mid players before settling on Suma1L. Fortunately for EG, one of their players, Fear, is extremely experienced and can actually play any role in the game. This additional flexibility allowed them to alter their playstyle to complement Suma1L's (GosuGamers). So to reiterate, the original idea that any gamer can become a professional is still alive in the current eSports scene, but it is not thriving. Still, it proves that the changes the scene has undergone have not entirely destroyed its original culture and that is possible to blend the two ideologies.

Until now, we have kept our discussion focused on the players, the teams, and the sponsors but we haven't talked about the shout casters and what effect the changes in the eSports scene have had on spectatorship. In the earliest days of competitive gaming, the audience simply watched the players play. Shoutcasting began quite naturally when a few experienced players grabbed microphones and began discussing the game. As the competitive scene grew, shout casters became a permanent fixture. However, since their role is to "shape the viewing experience of other spectators by providing a running commentary" and to improve the viewers' experience of watching professional gameplay, as eSports began to mimic physical sports, the quality of the casts improved dramatically (Cheung). Previously, the only requirements for casting were that you were actually capable of speaking and you knew enough about the game to make intelligent comments. Now, with the focus on production value and appeal, casters have not only be capable and intelligent, they have to be humorous, personable, and have to be able to keep a chat with hundreds of thousands of viewers entertained even through pauses in gameplay or during slow paced games. The scene also has a lot more casters in general. This is particularly helpful when tournaments overlap. In fact, since the media-centric changes have taken effect, there has not been a single major professional game that was unable to be casted due to a lack of available casters. Furthermore, most games are casted in multiple languages, most often English, Chinese, and Russian. At the International, along with all the various language casts, there was also a cast specifically for those who were unfamiliar with the game (McWhertor). One the biggest problems with bringing in non-players to watch eSports is that it can be extremely confusing to watch. With the addition of a caster who purposefully explains what is happening to those who are completely new, a lot more viewers may retain interest in the game. In this regard, the shift in eSports has actually improved casting and spectatorship with no real negative repercussions. Again, this is unsurprising given that the casters are inspired by the announcers who cast professional physical sports who have virtually perfected the art.

The evolution of eSports is quite complex. This is not unexpected given how many actors are at play within the field of eSports and while the situation should not be over simplified, there are a few vital cultural factors at work. The major concern here is that the focus of eSports has lured away from its competition-based roots by the affluence of a media-centric ideology. We can see however, that while media appeal has become the top priority, the old values have not been completely replaced. The largest eSports tournaments are still willing to offer unknown players a chance to compete at the highest levels, but the majority of events do not give players this opportunity because in most cases, the event organizers simply cannot afford it. Now days, people will not be content with a simple tournament held in an unadorned hall. Players,

attendees, and viewers have come to expect a certain amount of panache. Free food and elaborate stage design are now the standard for eSports events, not to mention a six figure prize pool at the very least. It is simply no longer possible to host such an event on a budget. Now, if you are able to get a lot of popular players to compete, you will have better ticket sales and more viewers online, meaning you can make the money you invested back and then some. But if you spend half your tournament catering to unknown players, your income will be significantly reduced and you might not even break even, much less a profit. This means it's up to the larger tournaments to go out of their way to include open qualifiers in order to keep the spirit of open competition alive. While Riot and Valve have taken great pains to ensure the growth of eSports, their profit margins will be their primary concern, leaving the primary custodians of the community's culture to the community itself.

Fortunately, the community has a fair amount of agency, especially by exercising media advocacy, and it is possible for the community to push for continued support of open qualifiers. They are capable of realizing when an entity within the sphere of eSports has made a poor decision and have the ability to use social media to loudly and persuasively call for change. Despite the fact that the game developers and event organizers essentially form a hegemony, their media-centric models motivate them to pay attention to the community they rely upon (Hall).

For example, a few years ago, most Dota players thought that Valve was going to release a special game mode for Halloween called Diretide because they had done so last year. When Halloween came and went with no game mode release and no word from Valve, Dota players began to protest online, uniting under the phrase "Give Diretide". The Dota2 subreddit was filled with requests for the game mode and in the span of a few days, players posted complaints to the social media and Metacritic pages for Valve and Dota 2 and even went as far as to post the request for Diretide to the social media pages of the car manufacturer Volvo (simply because their name sounds like Valve). Eventually, Valve posted a statement apologizing for being radio silent on the matter and explaining that they were not planning on releasing Diretide because they were focusing on improving the game, but after seeing how passionate the community was about the matter, they put out the holiday mode. This event has actually caused Valve to redesign their public relations policy and now the company is much more open about delays and special events (Valve, Not My Best Work!).

We can see that we essentially have some form of checks and balances within the eSports sphere. As developers, event organizers, and casting studios push for more media-focused cultural aspects in order to raise profit margins, the community can push back to keep competition-focused artifacts intact. This will ensure that skill level of professional players remains relevant. Even if attaining micro-celebrity status is now essentially a prerequisite to becoming a successful professional gamer, as long as the skill requirement is still firmly in place, the ideals of eSports are not being betrayed and will allow future players to possibly follow in the footsteps of AdmiralBulldog and Suma1L. Furthermore, as video games become more popular, more and more people will attempt to transition from gamers to eSportsmen, but tournaments and events can only support a limited number of professional teams Already we

have tens of millions of unique players who are actively playing Dota 2 and League of Legends with only 20-30 top tier five person teams in each game. Adding a few more barriers to entry into the exclusive club of professional players may in fact be necessary. However, it is important to note that if the community fails to challenge the acting hegemony in this sphere, these barriers could become too high to overcome, discouraging new players from even attempting to go pro, which will only lead to a stagnating professional scene.

It is unsurprising, given the explosive growth of the eSports, that capitalism has come to exert its influence on the space. And certainly, without financial support, eSports could not have grown in to what it is today. In reality, the effect of capitalism does not need to be destructive, but only if counterbalanced by stubbornly holding on to the initial culture of the space. I believe that eSports' tendency to move forward and address economical necessities by incorporating artifacts from professional physical sports, including the prioritization of a media-centric approach, is a risky move that could have dire consequences for the space. However, it is obvious that such changes have had positive effects on the space and it would be just as damaging if eSports rejected the changes now. The standard for LAN events has increased, making it much more desirable to physically attend tournaments and the production value of streams for viewers who cannot attend in person has vastly improved the spectatorship experience. There is support for a truly international scene, with players, casters, organizations, and events coming from around the world. Third party organizations like Twitch and FaceIt help sustain a large amount of tournaments and allow players and events to generate income. Game developers and event organizers are given ample opportunities to invest in this space, increasing prize pools, attracting larger audiences and in return, generating more profits.

The risk comes when these changes overpower the culture of the space. When a tournament focuses so much on being a media spectacle, they neglect to maintain the integrity of the competition itself. When winning takes a back seat to simply being a public figure. When players are glorified not for demonstrating skill, but by gaining popularity. When only well-known figures can impact the scene. If the culture of eSports is lost, the space will lose its uniqueness. It will simply become yet another facet of our vast network of entertaining content being mass produced in this digital age. The space will lose its vitality, its fluidity and interest will eventually decline with nothing to captivate new audiences.

Fortunately, there is a way to embrace and even prioritize media-centric and financially beneficial changes while ensuring that the space does not have to sacrifice its core cultural tenants. The eSports community is now extremely large and because of the technical nature of the games themselves, most members of the community are somewhat technologically literate. They have shown that they have the ability to quickly bring issues to the attention of the space's hegemony, which is mostly composed of the game developers, event organizers, and casting studios. The eSports community has successfully exercised media advocacy in the past and as long as they retain the willingness and ability to exercise it in the future, they will have a say in what elements of the space remain untouched. Melding two ideologies in order to shape the sphere of eSports is a difficult task, but it can be accomplished and I believe it will allow the scene to grow while remaining true to its origins.

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CHAPTER 5

The Moral Grey Area of Manga Scanlations

By an MIT student

The Internet made it easy to share media with each other, which turned the innocent act of lending a favorite movie to a friend into an entire organized industry where people get money not for making content but for sharing it. It's become so normalized that the people who pay the creators for content are laughed at, while the ones who bypass the law and give ad revenue to content hosts are seen as the more reasonable ones. It's hard to tell which method is really better, given that most of the creators we hear about in the media still seem to be doing fine. Both the music and movie industries have adapted to the public's new consumer patterns and are able to balance creator needs and consumer desires, but the manga industry struggles to keep up.

Manga, Japanese comics, are brought to an English audience in a variety of ways. One way is publishers license a series and release physical and/or digital copies, translated and edited by paid professionals. This process is usually slow, since the English publisher has to get the license from the Japanese publisher, which can take months or even years. Another way manga makes it to the English-speaking world is fans de-bind, scan, translate, and painstakingly edit the volume and share it for free online, a process called scanlating. Since these are done by fans for fans, they are faster and often better than the official releases from publishers. These two methods are always in conflict, since publishers say scanlations take away from their and the creators' profits while scanlators say that they are causing no harm and can actually be a huge asset to the industry.

The scanlation scene is large and more complicated than movie and music piracy, since it involves more work from the distributors. It has its own factions and many people within the community have different opinions on the practice and consumption (Deppey), but I argue that people who work on and provide this pirated manga only do it for their love of the media.

In this paper I will go over the motives of scanlators and how their content sharing patterns are not too different from what people have been doing from decades. I'll look into how sometimes their actions don't match their pure intentions, but analyze why that may not be the fault of the scanlators themselves. The manga scene in the US is large and looking at it as just scanlators versus publishers ignores much of the complexity and interplay between the two. If both sides refuse to recognize these nuances, the issue of manga piracy will remain convoluted and it will take a long time to reach some sort of resolution.

Noble Intentions

Culture of Sharing

Although it seems like scanlations and content piracy are new phenomena with the rise of the Internet, these kinds of sharing practices have been common for years. Friends naturally share content with other friends. A single book or movie can be passed around a group of friends and only one person ever had to spend money on it. It's normal to ask the people you know if they already have a book you want to read. These kinds of practices have been the backbone of fan communities, since they not only allow the media to reach a wider audience but also foster a community around them. If you got a book from your friend, you know at least one person who you can talk to about that book, and you don't have to actively seek out a community to interact with.

With foreign media like manga, both finding the content and the community can be tough. There is a barrier to entry to the medium and it is not universal. Many people are not used to reading comics, and on top of that are not used to reading from right to left (the original reading direction manga are drawn in). There are also a lot of cultural differences in manga that may throw people off. For all these reasons, it is hard to introduce people to the medium if they have to pay for the content, so sharing books is a natural conclusion. To go one step further, with the Internet as a natural tool for connecting people with niche hobbies or backgrounds, it makes sense that people would start reaching out on the Internet to find like-minded readers.

Although the transition to the Internet makes sense, sharing manga digitally gets complicated. Because manga is not common and many stores don't stock it, just recommending a title and suggesting users buy it themself is not always feasible. Another issue is that manga are comics, and the art and image quality are an integral part of the content. On top of that, the foreign nature of manga plays an important role here. If someone wants to share a manga but it is not available in English yet, they're going to have to take extra steps in order to spread the content they feel so passionately about (gum). All of these factors show how manga sharing evolved from lending physical books to digital distribution. Not only is it easier to transfer image files and translate dialogue digitally, it's natural to want your work to pay off by reaching a larger audience and creating a community (Lee 1016). In fact, most scanlation groups used to operate via IRC channels, like open group chats. When readers downloaded the latest release, they could chat about their impressions and talk with the scanlators.

The work that scanlators put into the content they share is indicative of the fact that much of the content wouldn't be available if the scanlators didn't provide it. A lot of the series that scanlators work on are obscure or old, and therefore have no chance of being released officially in English. For these cases, it's clear that the only motivation behind their actions would be to share the comics that they love so much to people who may not be able to read them otherwise. For many scanlators, this is the prime reason they started scanlating (Deppey).

Artist exposure

For many scanlators, it goes beyond just sharing a single series that they like. Many of them want to promote specific artists and make readers overseas more aware of them (Lee 1016). This can mean either scanlating the older works of an already well-known artist, or releasing the work of new artists. Although this is similar and certainly related to the act of sharing a favorite book, the intentions behind it are a little different. The motivation behind it is promotion. Jenkins talks about amateur film makers, who make fan-made versions of commercial media. "More often, these amateur filmmakers see themselves as actively promoting media texts that they admire." (Jenkins 301) We can also draw similarities from the music piracy scene, and how piracy actually introduced many people to a wider variety of music and helped the music industry grow (Hart-Davis).

For series that do eventually get licensed, many scanlators argue that the original artists would never have gotten released in English unless the scanlators had released their work online and built up the hype. Condry brings up the idea of "market disobedience", similar to civil disobedience, as a way for fans to influence or force the industry (Condry 203). Although he brings it up in the context of fan-subbing, and the anime industry is much different from the manga industry, fan-subbing is probably the practice that is most similar to scanlating. Both fan-subbers and scanlators only wish to expand the English-speaking audience and help the industry grow.

There are many examples of groups that stop scanlating a series when it gets licensed, or groups that take down their own hosted files and download links of a series after it's released officially in English. From this it's clear they don't want to be fighting the publishers and just want to make sure that the content is out there in English. One group, September Scanlations, has even had direct and productive conversations with the English publishers. When one of the bigger series they were scanlating, *No. 6*, got licensed by Kodansha USA, they decided to take down all their existing releases and only provide future chapters for a limited time. However, after speaking with a representative from Kodansha USA, they decided not to provide future chapters at all and instead give summaries and teaser images, similar to a book review. This way, fans whom have been keeping up with the series won't have to wait months to find out what happens next from the official editions, but they will still be highly motivated to purchase the manga. A big concern about licensing for both fans and scanlators is the wait time between Japanese releases and English releases, so September Scanlations struck a balance between giving fans what they wanted and supporting the original creators through official releases. This balance has worked out, and Kodansha USA has said multiple times on their Tumblr that the *No. 6* fanbase has been amazing at supporting the series.

For series that never get licensed, there are even more reasons to scanlate. Not only does it do no harm to the English manga market, it leads to more possible profit for the original artist. The overlap between the English-speaking audience and Japanese-speaking audience is very small, so it's unlikely that many of the people who read scanlations are potential Japanese edition buyers that the industry is losing. And if there is no English edition to purchase, then there is no

profit lost there. But not all of it is about just avoiding profit loss—this actually can generate profit for the original creators. Scanlation readers who fall in love with the series enough will be motivated to buy the raw Japanese versions despite not being able to read it directly. Many scanlators actively encourage this; Bunny's Scans always notes the publisher and ISBN in its releases, and also has multiple links for where to purchase the Japanese edition, both print and digital, for all their projects on their website.

The Real World Consequences

Online Readers

Aggregate online readers have changed the English-speaking manga scene drastically. Aggregate sites host both scanlated and scans of licensed manga, which don't involve any work from scanlators and are direct rips of official editions. Aggregate sites, both for just downloads and for online reading, cropped up in the late 2000s and changed how readers interacted with the content they were reading, the scanlators that brought them that content, and the original creators.

Aggregate online readers collect various series and put them all in one place for users to access. They also don't require readers to download or sign up for anything, and are extremely accessible. Because of this, online readers have become extremely popular. One of the most popular ones at the beginning of this boom, OneManga, was even among the world's 1,000 most-visited websites (Melrose). Online reading removed many of the barriers of entry into the scanlation scene, since now users didn't have to figure out IRC or seek out specific groups to find a certain series.

Since aggregate online readers made it extremely easy to find and read manga online, it changed the system of sharing content. Rather than it being a model of friends sharing a single book, it became more like large library that anyone could take and keep from. Instead of acting as friends who are excited to share their favorite series with each other, it's turned into a more commercial model of sharing. There is no longer any fan-passion behind any of the content distribution.

This also effects how communities form around these interests. There is no reason for readers to interact with each other if they are just reading the same files on an online reader, so communities are harder to build around these shared interests. What was once one of the most important parts of scanlation is now one of the most ignored, and people have to look elsewhere to find people to talk to about the latest update.

The Actual Fate of the Original Artist

Although one of the main arguments for scanlations is artist exposure, often their actions do not match with their ideals. Many scanlators claim that their work does not affect official publishers since they stop releases when a series is licensed, but in reality, that doesn't stop the online

piracy of the manga. For example, the scanlation group Tsundere Service Providers has recognized the official license of one of their projects, and will take down the downloads of their content when the official version comes out, but will still keep on scanlating future chapters and releasing them on online readers. Although they may not be delivering the content directly into readers' laps via downloads anymore, most people are unlikely to purchase the book and give back to the original creators if the content is already online.

It's not just publishers and scanlators involved with these issues, though; the original creators must be considered too. Since the original Japanese publisher basically functions as a wall between reader and creator, it's hard for average fans to get directly to the creator, but that doesn't mean the creator's wishes should be ignored. When Libre Publishing sent out cease-and-desist letters to various scan groups, they said they were acting to protect the rights of the original creators ("Publisher Libre Confirms..." *Anime News Network*), so we can view the Japanese publishers as the voice of the original artists. Vertical Comics has said on their Tumblr and Ask.FM (which has since been deleted and moved) that much of what they have over scanlators is direct contact with the artist through the original Japanese publisher. The original artist can request cover design changes, translation edits, etc, but it's the Japanese publisher that is responsible for relaying that information to the American side of production. For Vertical's title *Chi's Sweet Home*, they have been working closely with the original publisher and artist, who have a huge amount of influence over the production (Alverson).

With independent productions like scanlations, there is almost never contact with the original artist. So despite saying that they are working on releasing those projects just for the artist to get exposure, they may be going against the original artist's wishes just by sharing the content. There are many examples of this with Pixiv comics. Pixiv is an image sharing site, similar to DeviantArt, where users have a profile and can upload galleries of images that they've created. It's used primarily by Japanese people to share fanart and fan comics. In the past two years, many English-speaking fans have taken, translated and edited the comics and put them up on other sites, mainly Tumblr. There was a big debate on how ethical this process was, since it divorced the work from the creator and garnered popularity for the sharer or translator rather than the original artist, who had done the bulk of the work. Fans who asked the artists for permission to edit and repost were often met with rejection.

Several Japanese-speaking fans talked with the original artists about their reasons behind their unwillingness to share. The issue of editing someone else's work came up. The artists felt they had worked hard on their creations to be a specific way and did not want them to be altered. However, even without image editing, some artists are against translations of their comics. They mentioned that they were worried about the lack of control they had over their own creations in other contexts. Having created the work with nuanced meanings in Japanese, they did not trust that the same message would carry across languages (brumalbreeze). Even those these are independently created and distributed mini comics, from this example we can see why artists would want more control over how their content makes it across seas.

But Who's Fault is it Really?

Online Readers are a Separate Issue

Although aggregate online readers have undoubtedly changed the manga licensing situation, the people behind them are not the same people who actually scanlate manga. Online readers are a good example of the negative effects of scanlation, but are not indicative of the original intentions or the core ideals of the scanlation scene. In fact, there has been a lot of fighting between scanlators and online readers, and many scanlators hate online readers just as much as English publishers do.

One big issue is that aggregate readers actually make a profit from ad revenue. Each page of manga is a different web page with new ads, which are often cleverly placed so that readers accidentally click them. With these, online readers are actually making money off of both the original artist and the scanlator's work. Online readers are also not focused on providing readers with top quality content, they mostly exist solely to generate ad revenue. They downsize images and choose worse-quality scanlations just to get the latest chapter up. Most scanlators do not allow online reader sites to host their releases, but most reader sites do not comply with these wishes and defy the scanlators.

Aside from these more individual reasons, scanlators also dislike online readers since they feel it dissipates the community. Scanlators are still focused on creating a community of people with mutual interests, and when online readers take the audience away from the scanlator, that community is lost (gum). The scanlation teams themselves then have trouble attracting new members, which causes that sub-community to shrink as well.

Although scanlators disapprove of online readers, that tension is not enough to make them stop scanlating. In fact, many groups are adapting to the audience's new habits in order to fight back against online readers. Most groups continue to ban uploads to online readers, and instead have their own online readers which host their images in high quality and have no ads. This method of sharing content brings online reading back into the scope of sharing books among friends, rather than a mass-distribution system like a library.

How Much is the Artist Really Losing?

Returning back to the topic of the effect of scanlating on the original creator, we have to think about how much the creator is actually losing, and how much we can expect the community to care. As mentioned in the first part, for artists who are obscure or draw non-mainstream manga, it's likely that their work will never make it into English via official methods. For them, they are losing zero potential customers and maybe even gaining some.

For artists who do get official releases in the US, it's hard to tell how much of their overall success is due to the purchases of overseas fans. Many times when fans whine about how the Japanese industry is not considering American fans, others point out how ridiculous it would be

if they were. So much of their profits come from Japanese fans; it would be a waste to divert their focus and attempt to please the small amount of American fans that care enough to purchase official goods. Whether we like to admit it or not, manga is still a pretty niche interest in America and it would be hard to make enough noise to sway the original Japanese publishers and creators, who are busy dealing with the local fans. It's hard to find any artist opinions on scanlations, the news has been more dominated by artists who are frustrated with Japanese fans' tendencies to get their content by illegal means ("Black Lagoon, Hellsing creators..." *Anime News Network*).

So profit-wise, we can say that the original artist isn't losing much through the circulation of scanlations. We can also argue that although the original artist's original intent behind the piece may not be the same after it is scanlated, since the artist's main concern is not the overseas fans, that issue is also not a big problem. However, if we discount both these things, then we must reevaluate the motivation of the scanlator. One of the reasons scanlators give for scanlating is to promote an artist so that they gain popularity and hopefully more fans, which leads to more profit and success for the artist. If we take this out of the picture, then the motivation for scanlators is to share content that they are passionate about. This in itself isn't a problem, but if they are not considering the artist, then we can say that their sharing is actually harming someone, both morally and economically. It isn't the same as creating an independent piece of fanart, with your own ideas entwined in it. Many scholars have studied these kinds of practices and we can see that they can act more purely as promiting source material (Jenkins 301). However, since the scanlators are sharing source material, it affects the original creators more directly, and they must take this into consideration.

Conclusion

In the first section, we can see that scanlators have pure intentions and their passion carries them to share their favorite works. Their tendencies are not unique to manga or scanlation; they are just one example of how fans share their love for the media they consume. However, these pure intentions do not mean that their every action is without consequences. The effects of their work cannot be controlled the way that they hope to be. The strength of their passion for this media led them to reach out to larger communities, but those communities have taken their work and expanded it beyond anyone's reach. Much of this is not direct fault of the scanlators, who are often on the same side as the official publishers.

That being said, these effects cannot be ignored. Sure, scanlators have started to deal with online readers in small ways, by pleading with their fans or hosting their own readers, but they have done little else about the other issues in the manga industry. Their passion for the media affects their priorities, and they continue to focus on providing and sharing content rather than thinking about what the original creator wants. With an ocean separating them and both cultural and language barriers, scanlators have kind of invented their own ideas of what's best for the artist without actually consulting them.

In the future it would be interesting to look at other points of views of scanlators, namely those who do it more for artistic purposes and value quality of their work over anything else. We can also look into the actual work that goes into scanlations, and how they are a sort of middle ground between straightforward Hollywood movie uploads and the more involved creation of fanart and fanfiction. Scanlations done by different people are going to be different, while American movies uploaded and shared by different people will always be the same. However, scanlators cannot claim the same amount of ownership over their work as fanartists do. The balance that scanlations have between these two worlds is one of the reasons that they remain more of a moral grey area, and would be interesting to explore.

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CHAPTER 6

The Importance of Distinguishing Act from Actor: A Look into the the Culture and Operations of *Anonymous*

By Hannah Wood

"How did we get to a point where people expect a gang of young geeks with nanosecond attention spans wearing masks from an action movie, who write manifestos in faux-revolutionary prose and play amateur detective in chat rooms, to help a fraught social cause like Ferguson?" This is the response from Adrian Chen, a writer for *The Nation*, to Anonymous's reactions to the controversy surrounding Michael Brown and Officer Wilson. In 2014, Anonymous, a collection of internet activists and trolls dedicated to both fostering "internet motherfuckery" and spreading awareness of valid social issues, had scheduled a "National Day of Rage" gathering as a protest of the Ferguson shootings on the same day as a previously planned protest, the "National Moment of Silence," an event organized by Feminista Jones (a famous black, feminist blogger) to support the very same cause under a very different attitude. Jones, obviously dismayed by the seemingly intentional planning, asserted that this shows Anonymous's lack of care about "the safety and well-being of Black people." Anonymous then went on to falsely yet confidently claim that they had found the officer who actually killed Michael Brown (Chen).

Some networks initially commended their gusto, and others condemned their blatant disrespect and immaturity: reactions quite representative of the strong feelings of those who have ever followed any part of their polarizing history. There are supporters and haters everywhere; The Guardian called them "Digital Culture's Protest Heroes" while Fox News very early in Anonymous's career labeled them the "Internet Hate Machine" (Eordogh). Justin Bieber has even been seen in public wearing a Guy Fawkes mask (one of Anonymous's multiple symbols of either support or membership) (Stone). They have made a reputation for themselves as being hacktivists and masked heroes while simultaneously wreaking havoc on the lives of innocent web-dwellers. But should their future arguments be invalidated by their past malice? Although Anonymous has a history of carrying out destructive operations while fostering an anti-gay, anti-women, anti-anything-you-can-think-of culture, many of their actions should be taken seriously and individual campaigns should garner support or opposition based solely on that individual campaign. In other words, their attempt to generate lulz doesn't necessarily have to overshadow the role Anonymous can play in political and social issues. Then again, their role in these issues, no matter how respectable, does not excuse the racism, homophobia, and sexism that persists on many Anonymous channels. Separating the issues and observing them independently is the best way to parse, and therefore make judgments on them.

"Lulz", which is a corruption of "lol", "lolz", or "laughing out loud", supposedly originated in the same deep dark corner of the internet as Anonymous: 4chan (aka, "The Asshole of the

Internetz"), the image board with minimum moderation and maximum eccentricity. Lulz, essentially an adaptation of the German word *schadenfreude*, is defined as humor at the expense of others, despite the consequences or moral implications. Encyclopedia Dramatica elaborates on the meaning of "lulz" saying that it is "engaged in by Internet users who have witnessed one major economic/environmental/political disaster too many, and who thus view a state of voluntary, gleeful sociopathy over the world's current apocalyptic state, as superior to being continually emo" ("Encyclopedia Dramatica"). Anonymous became Anonymous by reaching just a couple ethically questionable steps beyond the acceptable intensity of heckling. They aren't your average trolls. In fact, their first act as a collective, and what brought them into existence, was the incident at the Habbo Hotel in July of 2006: organized in 4chan's random board, aka "/b/" (an even deeper darker corner of the internet), a group of members decided to troll the users of Habbo Hotel, a virtual world/social network where members interact through personalized avatars. Each Anon (someone who affiliates him/herself with Anonymous) joined the site and customized their avatar as a suited, black man with an afro; together the trolls formed swastikas with their avatars, blocking real users, who were mostly kids, from entering the hotel pool. When other Habbo users would ask for a reason, Anons would simply respond with "due to fail and AIDS" (Coleman 4).

In January of 2008, Anonymous put its name onto the map by launching "Project Chanology," the intense, multi-year assault on the Church of Scientology that included constant distributed denial-of-service attacks (*DDoS*) on their main website, calling for unpaid pizza and escorts to various church locations, leaking the personal information of some of the higher-ups (*doxxing*), and eventually physically protesting outside of churches (Coleman 5). Considering these events, why would anyone take Anonymous seriously? They ceaselessly torment innocent people (in these cases, children and Scientologists) behind the innate security of being anonymous. But what people often miss regarding Anons' actions is that although "the lulz" is supposedly a significant motivating factor in their decision-making process, there is usually a cause or an incident that ignites their fury. In the case of Habbo hotel, a few 4chan members asserted that Habbo moderators were arbitrarily banning users who created dark-skinned avatars; the forthcoming raid was, to at least some members, a response to those actions, a protest in a way. Project Chanology was prompted by the Church's attempt to hide a very revealing and embarrassing video of an interview of Tom Cruise spouting off-putting statements regarding Scientology. The Church has a discordant past with a subset of the internet community due to a history of attempts at ridding some sites of revealing information about the Church. In doing everything they could to prevent this video from proliferating, they pushed the boundaries yet again and offended the group that hates censorship the most: Anonymous. One could say the Anons' response was more an act of "freedom fighting" to preserve their rights than an attempt to solely induce the lulz. And this seems to be the direction they have gone since 2008 (Coleman 5). Over the past 7 years, Anonymous has been the face of many social justice and political issues regarding causes from threatened freedom of speech to rape cases, but is this so-called "freedom fighting" actually benefitting anyone?

In 2010, at the tail end of Project Chanology, Julian Assange was becoming a household name for his whistleblowing site, Wikileaks, leaking thousand of documents, videos, and other

classified media to the public. On November 28th, Wikileaks released 220 classified US government cables, a leak so influential it earned the title “Cablegate” (Coleman 118). From this we learned that the US government was launching secret missile attacks on supposed terrorists in Yemen, that North Korea gifted Iran a large number of deadly missiles, that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton ordered her underlings to collect personal information, such as credit card numbers, on foreign government officials, that the US was in alliance with Hamid Karzai, a drug lord and brother to the Afghan president, and even more astonishing behind-the-scenes trades, deals, alliances, and secrets (Coleman 119). The world was mortified, and the US government was not happy. Julian Assange became one of most influential (and therefore most feared) men in the world and consequently became the target of political rage. Politicians from all sides declared his acts “despicable” and that he should be hunted down “with the same urgency we pursue al-Qaeda” (Coleman 120). As a result, Senator Joe Lieberman and his staff urged Amazon to ban Wikileaks from its servers, and although Wikileaks and Assange had not been ruled guilty of any charge, Amazon complied causing the site to be inaccessible. Paypal, MasterCard, and other corporations followed suit and disallowed the site from accepting donations through their channels. Consequently, the outrage expressed by the government was matched by the outrage of the most passionate of dissenters, Anonymous. Their favorite and most effective weapon, the Low Orbit Ion Cannon (LIOC), a denial-of-service attack application used to take down websites, was downloaded over a hundred thousand times by Anons and their affiliates all over the world to support the DDoS campaigns against corporations such as PayPal, MasterCard, Visa, EveryDNS, and politicians Joe Lieberman and Sarah Palin (Coleman 118). Anonymous was responding to the harsh reality of the situation: “the Internet, so often experienced as a public space, is in fact a privatized zone, with the Amazons and PayPals of the world able to shut down conversation and commerce” (Coleman 128). People were baffled at the lack of these corporations’ justification for providing services to organizations like the KKK while Wikileaks, which had not violated any terms of service or been convicted of anything illegal, was deemed unfit for their business (Coleman 127).

Initially, Anonymous was simply a voice for many outraged citizens, but it soon became their tool. This era of Anonymous’s history saw an enormous growth in membership (if you can call it that). No longer was this a small subset of internet trolls organized on /b/; Anonymous was a full-fledged dis-organization filled with what seemed to be impassioned anarchists and anti-censorship activists. They got the attention of all major news outlets and quickly found their way into the political spotlight. They proved hacktivism can be a valid form a protest and made it clear that people are very protective of their internet rights.

Some say it’s difficult to don Anonymous with the “activist” hat due to their ever-changing values, nonexistent membership requirements, and no defined organizational hierarchy. They may be a big name in internet rights advocacy, but they have a varied network of members and have been known to fuel a culture of sexism, racism, and homophobia. In December 2013, one of Anonymous’ Twitter accounts announced a campaign against “feminazis instigating an evil Trollocaust against free speech” founded on the baseless claim that some feminist bloggers had influence in getting others’ Twitter accounts suspended (O’Toole). Weev, one of the most well-known and influential Anons, made statements such as, “all the social sciences have become an

elaborate scheme for giving white kids racial inferiority complexes, or destroying the gender roles that make our society work," and went on to say that Jews "abused our compassion to build an empire of wickedness the likes the world has never seen," and has announced his allegiance to neo-Nazism (Chen) (Coleman 28). Anonymous discussion boards are riddled with every slur you could think of, and women and minorities are unsurprisingly barely present and, when their identities are revealed, often bullied off the scene. The lulzy attitude fosters a culture of irresponsibility, and the innate value of being anonymous is being able to avoid dealing with the consequences of your actions. Much of their protest is carried out illegally; doxxing and DDoSing are very much against the law and their execution raises many ethical concerns. Many of our most prevalent social problems are thriving at the very heart of some Anonymous communities. Misogyny, racism, classism, rape culture, and other prominent social issues are proliferating in these corners of the internet and therefore in the minds of the people involved, mostly of the white male sort.

One of Anonymous's most concerning aspects is also one of its most defining qualities: it's not a unified group; it is a collective where "Anonymous" is merely an umbrella term for anyone claiming to be a part of it. The lack of formal membership standards and moderation prevent the group from having a unified front. Quinn Norton from *Wired* defines their style saying, "Individuals propose actions, others join in (or not), and then the Anonymous flag is flown over the result. There's no one to grant permission, no promise of praise or credit, so every action must be its own reward" (Norton). This is naturally going to attract those whose behavior is socially unacceptable because individuals aren't held accountable. The praise or the blame is hardly ever attributed to a single Anon and instead the responsibility is held in the hands of the entire collective. But this is troublesome because the collective is a chaotic mass of a diverse-thinking individuals who are unable to come to a conclusion on what Anonymous ultimately stands for. The contradiction here lies in the question of whose hands should the responsibility/blame/credit fall to? Individuals, by definition of the group, have no identity and in most cases can't carry out an effective protest solo and therefore can easily avoid the responsibility. Anonymous as a whole is defined as anyone who claims to be Anonymous, but not specifically those involved in a certain task or issue. So is the name itself the culprit? No, but that's the stance of most onlookers. The inside operations of Anonymous to spectators (which since Operation Avenge Assange has been the entire world) are quite difficult to fully comprehend. Gabriella Coleman, an anthropologist focused on digital activism and an Anonymous expert observes this trend saying, "The number of relationships, fiefdoms, and cliques in simultaneous existence is largely invisible to the public, which tends to see Anonymous from the vantage point of carefully sculpted propaganda and the media's rather predictable gaze" (Coleman 115). So how can we choose either to ignore or discount the actions of one Anonymous group based on a the actions of different group under the same name?

Even if you believe that merely claiming the name creates enough of an affiliation that all self-professing Anons are responsible for the actions of each other, is invalidating their current actions based on prior offenses not an example of ad hominem? Attacking the perceived "character" of the group and discrediting them based on small subsets of the collective or controversial personal stances, like Weev's misogynistic, white supremacist attitude, the

reaction to Ferguson, or the ruthless doxxing of religious leaders, instead of forming an opinion based on a single argument is simply wrong. But this goes both ways. One cannot excuse the wrongdoings of an Anon because he or she is supportive his stance. Coleman herself and other Anonymous advocates are guilty of this. In her book, "Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy," she writes about the 6 years she spent studying the ins and outs of Anonymous. Given her devotion, she got very emotionally involved and therefore defends their exclusivity and "boys' club" culture and praises their diversity by calling attention to the participation of both Irish college students and an English 20-something (young, white males from two different European countries? Wow!) (Coleman 173). She argues that "by cloaking markers of the self, like ethnicity, class, and age, all sorts of different possibilities are opened up" (Coleman 174). But this does not explain why over the 6 years she studied this group, she discovered a total of zero female hackers. She goes on saying, "Occasionally, hearing constant belittling of female contributions from certain Anons, I would find myself wondering, 'Is this sexism or just trolling?'" (Coleman 175). Just as someone cannot totally devalue their arguments on social issues based on their online behavior, Coleman cannot excuse their online behavior based on her support of their arguments. It is very important in situations like this to be able to decouple the activist from the activism.

What the media have shied away from (by distracting themselves with either being impressed by their intrepid attitude or focused on their lulz-centered culture) is actually valuing a cause or campaign based on both its merit and effectiveness, and unfortunately for Anonymous, it often lacks both. In the case of Chanology, one emerging theme was Anonymous's aversion towards the Church's desire to censor content in order create a carefully designed public face. The interview footage was stolen material and leaked online, and the Church's response was a natural though ineffective one: to remove the embarrassing content. Anonymous's response seemed to become more a petty act of revenge against an organization who was trying to take back their stolen property than an empowering anti-censorship campaign. But regardless of intentions, what exactly came from this? Swaths of Scientology critics dedicated to raising awareness of the Church's human rights violations saw these actions as anti-productive and, ironically, a violation of the Church's freedom of speech (George-Cosh). In the end, the Church was able to play the victim and some young Anons who were in it for the lulz ended up getting arrested.

Even regarding seemingly more meaningful campaigns like OpTunisia, the hacking of Tunisian government websites in response to the country's strict censorship laws, there is a gross lack of evidence that their operations accomplished anything significant (Chen). Operation Payback, the mother campaign of Operation Avenge Assange, which was an attack on many anti-piracy and pro-copyright groups and organizations, was unsuccessful beyond getting their name and cause into the media. The corporations they attacked experienced minimal downtime, and no long-term damage was felt by any of their victims. When the UK Intellectual Property Office site was DDoSed, people were perplexed because the most significant result of the attack was preventing UK citizens from accessing information they had a democratic right to access ("CMU Website"). There are speculations as to why these digital protests most often lead to dead ends. Some say that it's because most Anons' intentions are in the wrong place. If the activist

population of Anons is anything like the original Habbo Hotel Anons, the intentions are less focused on positive results and more focused on creating chaos in the world, and that's often what these campaigns seem to fueled by. Some condemn their uncritical and undying admiration for the internet and modern technology and how they believe it excuses their misconduct and empty results. Adrian Chen, quoted in the introduction, believes that "the shallowness of their politics and their uncritical embrace of technology means this energy is easily channeled into Silicon Valley's parody of revolution: a techno-liberation from the doldrums of day jobs with health insurance and steady benefits, in favor of the radical freedom and flexibility to pilot an Uber under contract." He goes on to assert that "Internet activism is at its most effective as an extension of real-world solidarity," something Anonymous can boast very little of. So it's the intrinsic pieces of their culture (the lack of organization, consistency, and groundwork) that will prevent them from ever creating any social change, according to Chen. Some say that the importance of Anonymous lies in their pioneering of internet weapons, such as the LOIC and DDoS. Coleman states that these weapons are "a modality of politics exercised by a class of privileged and visible actors who often lie at the center of economic life...who were taking political matters into their own hands and making their voices heard." It's good to know that "privileged...actors...at the center of economic life" are finally getting out there and "making their voices heard"!

So what can we non-Anonymous-ers take away from all this? We must separate the issues and analyze the outcomes in order to come to a decision. Researching Anonymous bewildered me due to the unwritten standard that I had to be either a "yes" or a "no". Each article I read either praised the heroism of Anonymous and simultaneously used it to justify their grievances, or denounced the entire collective regardless of positive awareness they spread. I felt myself going forwards and backwards and became awash with seasickness. What I finally ended on a was a balance of disdain for much of their culture, a respect for many of the causes they have stood for, and a curiosity for how they can manage to carry out these campaigns more effectively in the future. They aren't exclusively trolls nor are they "Digital Culture's Protest Heroes". Anonymous, the community that started a campaign to seek justice for Rehtaeh Parsons, a 17-year-old gang rape victim, is also the community that spawned the "Rick Roll" (Norton). I have no choice but to maintain a multi-faceted view of them.

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