

“Cry wiki – and let lose the chans of war”

Quote 1: Anonymous people on the internet, on the topic of Shakespeare and internet warfare.

1 Introduction

Medialogy is all about understanding the connection between people and technology, finding and understanding the interplay between the two, to better understand both. The internet is a perfect example of one such digital frontier, with people using new and faster communication networks and platforms to form communities and sub-cultures, which function unlike anything that has ever been seen before in human history.

It is the intended goal of this thesis to define and document a specific aspect of these new internet-based subcultures, a phenomena I call a “StandAlone Complex”, or SAC, for short. It has been inspired by multiple sources of both mainstream pop culture and internet oddities. It should be noted that the term ‘standalone’ is chiefly used in the IT world, usually meaning that something is unconnected or not dependent on a network. This is the purpose of this thesis: To propose the theory of the standalone complex, to explain it, to document it and it and to show examples of it.

I have taken the term Standalone Complex from the title of a Japanese anime series called “Ghost in The Shell: Stand Alone Complex” (1) in which an anonymous criminal sparks a wave of independent copycat crimes mimicking the original incident. The fictional crime investigation unit the series revolves around first thinks this is the result of a massive conspiracy, but later learn that it was simply a case of accidental collectivism; random individuals that started doing the same at roughly the same time, without any form of actual coordination or organization between them.

Like many others today I often entertain myself by checking up on humor aggregate sites on the internet, which has exposed me to multiple examples of hundreds, if not thousands, of people on the internet, who occasionally suddenly start doing the same thing after exposure to some kind of trigger. The parallel between the event in the anime and certain online phenomena are thus quite startling.

The basic notion of a standalone complex is not new. There are several examples of seemingly spontaneous events taking place, or at least events where there was little actual organization – but the ultimate result could give the outside impression of organization. A series of these events will be examined as part of this thesis.

The concept of emergence closely mirrors this idea. Goldstein (2), while speaking of physical and computer simulated systems, explains emergence as a culmination of five properties that together define the concept. These are: Radical novelty, basically that the emergent has to be ‘new’ compared to the state or content of the existing system. Coherence, that an emergent has to maintain its identity over time, both at the micro and macro level, meaning that there has to be a steady connection between the micro level events that make up the macro level event. Macro level, that the understanding of emergent phenomena is best understood as a sum of the micro level events that make up, not via understanding the micro level events alone. An emergent similarly has to be dynamic, for it cannot be a given what will happen, because then it is not a novelty in the system. Finally an emergence requires an ostensive quality, basically that it has to be possible to register it.

In humane studies emergence is more often called Spontaneous order (3), or social emergence (4) as it means roughly the same thing.

It is the goal of this thesis to showcase sufficient evidence to support and validate the theory and concept of SACs as a term to be used in academic and professional context to describe a specific type of emergent online phenomena, and to demonstrate that SAC phenomena have taken place on multiple occasions, and still do.

2 Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank the following for the inspiration, help, advice or support they have given me while I made this thesis:

Donna “Pinky” Sundbo, for some very sound advice and good ideas.

Christian Baron, for being an awesome co-supervisor and being the first person I’ve ever met who actually understood what I am trying to explain.

Thomas Bjørner, for being an equally awesome supervisor, for keeping my feet grounded in reality, my head out of the clouds too much and putting up with me for all these years.

Richard F. Hirsh, for giving the idea to write about something that hadn’t really been documented that well before.

And finally, I would like to thank Anonymous for all the lulz.

3 Index

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Index	3
2.1	Figure and image index	4
2.2	Quote Index	4
3	Literature and theory review.....	6
3.1	Non-academic sources	6
3.2	Academic sources	6
4	Method	12
4.1	Medialogy Study Plan compliance.....	13
5	Standalone Complex: the theory.....	15
5.1.1	Community complexes	15
5.1.2	Raid complexes	16
5.1.3	Memetic complexes	17
6	Examples.....	19
6.1	Anonymous.....	19
6.1.1	Rules of the internet.....	26
6.1.2	Distributed cognition.....	39
6.2	Online raids.....	43
6.2.1	The Jessi Slaughter and McKay Hatch raids.....	44
6.2.2	The Hal Turner, Adam Goldstein and other smaller raids	46
6.2.3	Draw the prophet Muhammad day.....	50
6.2.4	Project Chanology.....	51
6.2.5	Wikileaks and failed raids	57
6.2.6	Ocean Marketing VS Angry gamers	60
6.3	The Furry Fandom	62
6.3.1	Online Survey.....	71
6.3.2	Summary.....	76
6.4	Bronies.....	77
6.4.1	Online Survey.....	81
6.4.2	Summary.....	85
6.5	Memes.....	86
7	Discussion & Conclusion	90

8	Bibliography.....	92
---	-------------------	----

3.1 Figure and image index

Figure 1: The face of anonymous (340).....	22
Figure 2: A screenshot from 4chan's /co/ board (46)	29
Figure 3: On /b/ you can never be sure of what people will say.....	30
Figure 4: The original image that defined rule 34 (53).....	32
Figure 5: Rule 34 on concrete tetrapod wavebreakers. (337).....	33
Figure 6: Anonymous, on the popularity of cats on /b/ (340).....	33
Figure 7: A cake themed MS paint challenge (340).....	34
Figure 8: Anonymous can be amused by even the simplest of things, as long as it's funny somehow (87) ..	38
Figure 9: A screenshot from 4chan depicting the use of a reaction face.....	41
Figure 10: A compilation of Goldstein VS Anonymous on 4chan.	47
Figure 11: The 'face' of Anonymous, with a popular catchphrase.	53
Figure 12: One anon reveals himself as a furry. (190).....	62
Figure 13: Gerbasi et al's data on how much respondents felt part of the furry fandom.	64
Figure 14: An example of furry artwork, showing one furry's 'fursona' character (334).....	68
Figure 15: The entire cast of MLP:FiM, with all the background characters and extras shown. Notice the colorful art style and the massive amount of cartoon ponies. (247)	77

3.2 Quote Index

Quote 1: Anonymous people on the internet, on the topic of Shakespeare and internet warfare.	1
Quote 2: Anonymous, on who is pretending to be who online, AKA rule 29 of the internet.....	9
Quote 3: Parrel and Parker, on what Anonymous is	20
Quote 4: Quinn Norton, on Anonymous	20
Quote 5: Cole Stryker on Anonymous	21
Quote 6: Anonymous, on the rules of the internet.....	26
Quote 7: Cole Stryker, on what kind of people appear on 4chan (5 p. 31).....	36
Quote 8: Russia Today on the news of Kenny Glenn being arrested (126).....	50
Quote 9: LA Times' Andrew Malcolm on the Draw the Prophet Muhammad day	50
Quote 10: Gawker's Nick Denton, on the Tom Cruise video.....	51
Quote 11: L. Ron Hubbard, founder of the CoS, describing the evil aliens (148).....	53
Quote 12: Gabriella Coleman on the effect of Chanology (3 p. 99)	55
Quote 13: One Anon 'Gregg' on his experience with Anonymous and Chanology (164)	55
Quote 14: Jaycee Wiseboy (Possibly an alias) on Anonymous and the effect of Chanology (161).....	56
Quote 15: Anonymouse on HBGary. (5 p. 105)	58
Quote 16: Anonymouse, explaining why mainstream media have trouble understanding Anonymous.	59
Quote 17: Mike Krahulik (182)	61
Quote 18: Anonymous, Explaining what furry means. (192)	63
Quote 19: A furry on what it means to be a furry	73
Quote 20: Furry survey respondent number 20 on how he is a furry.....	74

Quote 21: Furry survey respondent 2 on what he/she does not like in the furry fandom	74
Quote 22: Furry respondent 3 on what he/she doesn't like in the furry fandom.....	75
Quote 23: Furry respondent 28 on what he/she does not like in the furry fandom	75
Quote 24: Crabtree on one reason why people might be furries	76
Quote 25: Brony respondent nr. 2 on what it means to be a brony	82
Quote 26: Brony Respondent nr. 28 on whether he/she is a brony	83
Quote 27: Brony respondent nr. 28 on how he/she expresses being a brony	83
Quote 28: Brony respondent 1 on his dislikes in the fandom	84
Quote 29: Brony respondent 3 on his dislikes in the fandom	85

4 Literature and theory review

Since the focus of this thesis is to examine and understand a specific internet phenomenon, then theory on online behavior is highly relevant to examine and review.

However, many internet cultures as they exist today are not clearly defined or understood phenomenon to begin with. There are different theories and understandings of how and why people behave as they do when on the internet – some of them conflicting and requiring discussion to sort out and understand the differences in opinion.

4.1 Non-academic sources

Sticking entirely to academic sources for this purpose could probably suffice – but since it is about certain internet subcultures and aspects of their behavior, viewed both in the context of their own norms and the norms of mainstream western culture, then it becomes necessary to also include references and source material from non-academic information sources.

For this thesis this will include several news articles and parts of news clips, but also more clearly biased sources – as many opinion pieces written and published online are, such as private blogs. The bias doesn't have to be a detriment to these sources however – it can be a boon.

An example of this is Encyclopedia Dramatica (ED), which originally functioned as a wiki index of livejournal drama but later became the de facto wiki where internet pranksters and trolls document their achievements, targets and culture (5 pp. 64-67). The site is highly biased in the sense that it glorifies the people it describes, invariably overstating and inflating their achievements – although the actual degree of this is often impossible to ascertain since few sources are ever mentioned. However, this doesn't mean that everything written in ED is pure lies and falsehood – there are plenty of events described there which are well documented by mainstream media or other third party sources. Equally, then ED give insight into not just events – but how the community that perpetrates these events see and speak of themselves and others, making it a study in the very culture itself.

The lesson is simple: The truthfulness of any given information from such sites, ED here used as an example, may not always be 100%, but if one understands the motivation behind any misleading statements involved, as well the context and culturally specific slang used, then it can give an insight into the community's perception of the topic at hand. Examples of this will be discussed later in the thesis.

This is of course common for any ethnographic probe or study – it is a matter of both filtering out useful information about the culture one is trying to understand, but also to just make sense of the information to begin with.

4.2 Academic sources

There appears to be two prevailing schools of thought when regarding computer mediated communication, a catch-all term for internet communication, be it via email, instant messengers or the likes (CMC) and the behavior used in such instances – mainly in regards of online communication and communities. I will examine these two viewpoints and argue their merits to find the best context to view the online communities I will deal with in this thesis.

In 1995 Joseph B Walther wrote about impersonal, interpersonal and hyperpersonal interaction – about how online interaction can be impersonal due to factors such limited knowledge of who you’re really interacting with, but also how it can be hyperpersonal, facilitating interaction between people better than it is possible in real life face-to-face interaction. He also noted his disagreement with the then prevailing opinion that CMC more often than not led to uninhibited hostile or profane speech acts – basically that people were more likely to act like jerks on the internet, due to depersonalization and the lack of inhibition that such a state would induce.

Walther supported the notion that even in noninterpersonal situations, where you don’t necessarily know who you are interacting with, that things do not have to devolve into hostilities, citing work demonstrating that zero-history groups using CMC were more task-oriented than groups working face to face. (6). Of course, this is easy to say when testing on work oriented tasks. This observation doesn’t take into account more leisure oriented zero-history groupings, such as people meeting randomly online.

Indeed, Papcharissi et al (7) wrote in 2000 about how people on the internet mostly go online for things like interpersonal utility (It facilitates online chat), to pass the time, simple convenience and also for searching for information – indicating that Walther’s statement probably doesn’t apply to that big a part of those using the internet.

Azy Barak wrote in 2005 about online sexual harassment, stating firmly that internet anonymity was a prime cause of offensive behavior, specifically because of the perceived lack of possible repercussions. Barak claims that online anonymity brings out the ‘true nature’ of people, allowing them to do things normally not acceptable or possible. (8)

Barak’s assumption that without personal repercussions people will behave badly is a common one – it appeals to common sense, as the notion of personal responsibility and being held accountable for ones actions are arguably a cornerstone of modern society. You would only hide your identity if you have something to hide, right? It should be noted that Barak equally words her arguments from a point of view that appears to assume the worst. As said, it is easy to fall for the flawed logic that without anyone being able to hold you personally responsible for your actions that you will be more inclined to commit less savory acts. Equally, Barak refers to cyberspace as a culture – as one culture – indicating a lack of understanding that different people might go online for different reasons, as Papcharissi et al spoke of.

In 1997 Kevin LaGrandeur talked about how online communication promotes rhetorical experimentation, due to possible factors such as anonymity (9). He speaks of postmodernity and how this rhetorical experimentation is facilitated by online anonymity in that it escapes the normal discursive limits. Online a peasant and a king are equal, and their voices are heard equally, for they’re both just bits of text on a message board.

This notion was wholeheartedly supported by Christopher Poole during his presentation at TED 2010, in pointing out that anonymous communication online makes it raw and unfiltered, which in turn makes people less afraid of making mistakes – due to them personally not having their reputation sullied by failure. By this logic Poole agrees with LaGrandeur’s notion of rhetorical experimentation, although he takes it even further by claiming that online anonymity fosters creativity and original ideas (10).

Tom Postmes et al has done a large amount of work looking at this issue as well, trying to essentially understand if things such as online anonymity really is negative or positive. For this thesis their work in 1998 and 2000 together give an interesting explanation to LaGrandeur, Walther and Poole's positive outlooks (11) (12). Postmes et al point out that online people organize into different social groups than the ones they exist in normally, in daily life. They equally find evidence supporting their theory that when one exists in an online community, then the community as a whole still needs a means to identify its member from non-members – to this end normative behavior becomes key, especially in online communities where you're effectively anonymous. However, it cannot be same the normative behavior used in everyday life in public, because everyone does that. Online communities thus establish different norms for behavior than those used in normal society, in order to differentiate themselves and to identify themselves. An example could be a car-enthusiast forum where talk of motorbikes becomes taboo and grounds for banishment.

To a casual observer this new alternative behavior can appear weird or upsetting, in the case of online communities where behavior normally considered offensive becomes the norm. However, to those in that community there is nothing wrong with their behavior, although the person sitting in front of the computer knows to disengage from that behavior when he goes to work the next morning. The implications of this also mean that a single person could have multiple sets of behavior for different online communities.

However, Postmes et al's research also points out that online groups that identify and behave in this way can equally become susceptible to commonly understood negative behavior – stereotyping, discrimination and so forth (12). The idea is simple enough: if you don't know who or what you're talking to online, it is easy to fall back on the lowest common denominators or similar stereotypical notions pervasive in society to clue you in on who and what you are probably talking to. Thus Barak's notion of online communication fostering sexual harassment can be explained as a mix of communities arising online where such behavior either becomes the norm, or where the idea that you can say anything without repercussions becomes normative. The results in that sense aren't that different, but the road to the conclusion is a very different one.

John Suler wrote in 2004 about an online disinhibition effect, perfectly explaining the above notion of switching from one way of thinking and behaving when immersed in one community, to acting differently when in another (13). Suler posits six factors that influence on various levels, for each online community, how a person will behave. For this thesis I find these highly salient and very good at explaining why people behave as they do online. Because of this I argue that a more thorough explanation of each of the six factors are needed for this thesis.

The first factor is the notion of dissociative anonymity – the fact that you can't readily be identified, nor can you identify others, when on the internet. Usernames, aliases, proxies – there exists a myriad of means to obscure your identity when online.

The second factor is that of invisibility. Suler explains that when online you cannot see if there are anyone else around until, for example, someone posts a message on a message board, or does something similar that others can actually see. In many internet communities the act of observing without interacting with the community is known as 'Lurking' which is a decade old term (14). Suler says that this sense of invisibility, combined with anonymity once you actually do something, disinhibits people to act – they don't have to be afraid of condescending looks or frowns, so they act more freely. Barak of course points out that

this leads to negative results. Suler uses the argument that disinhibition can come in both positive and negative flavors.

The third factor is the ever-present asynchronicity of most online communication. In 2004 webcams did exist, but the high speed internet connections needed to allow for ‘face to face’ conversations via webcam weren’t that common yet, so Suler points out that a factor in online disinhibition is the fact that real life communication is usually analogue: When people normal talk face to face the communication takes the form of an unbroken stream of communication. The communication can be everything from words, body language, appearance, as well as other sensory cues. On the internet, especially on message boards and forums, posting a message is disinhibiting in that there’s no fear of immediate reactions or reprisals. It also gives one more time to think over a statement before posting it. This makes much online communication digital, as opposed to its face-to-face analogue counterpart. Communication happens in on/off bursts that people have to wait for, thus making the process asynchronous.

The fourth factor is what Suler calls Solipsistic Introjection.

This sounds rather complicated, but can be explained as the fact that when online it is very easy to put on the mask of an online persona: You can pretend to be someone or something else. This links into the notion of anonymity – not only wont people necessarily know who you are, they might think you’re something else entirely. This fits in well with

“On the internet men are men, the women are men, and the children are FBI agents”

Quote 2: Anonymous, on who is pretending to be who online, AKA rule 29 of the internet

Postmes et al’s notion of different norms for different online communities one interacts with, as well as another behavior pattern for real life interaction. The example section on the furry fandom is a good example of this.

The fifth factor that Suler lists connects to the fourth, as it pertains to the notion of Dissociate Imagination. Basically, that people are consciously aware that their online personas aren’t real – that they exist in a space not in reality. To this end it is a lot easier to excuse online fictional behavior from offline real behavior. Equally the dissociative element posits that people can disconnect from these alternate personas and behavior patterns simply by logging out and leaving the website, or turning off the computer. Postmes et al’s research into online community norms found that the norms only affect the community itself – they don’t necessarily spill over into other communities, and Suler’s notion of dissociation helps explains why. This factor is highly salient in explaining the phenomena described in the sections regarding the three online communities described in the example section.

The final factor Suler posits is that of the minimization of status and authority. As Postmes et al and LaGrandeur noted; online communication has a tendency to make who you are in real life a non-issue. Online you’re your screen name, your alias, your online persona – or that is at least what others perceive you as, if no other information is given. To this end real life status or authority can be difficult to translate directly into an online community. Equally, because others might benefit from anonymity there might not be much of a sense of urgency in complying with your requests, even if in real life you’re very influential, because it might not possible to enforce such a demand online.

Suler argues that by understanding these six factors and evaluating each factor's effect in an online community, one can better understand why people behave as they do in any given online community. This also goes to explain the many variations in behavior and norms in different online communities.

Of course not all websites allow for anonymity. This must be factored in, and Ren et al's work on common and bond identity theory give great insight on this topic (15). They talk about two kinds of online communities: Bond and identity communities. A good example of a bond community would be Facebook, where social and emotional bonds are the focus. You make friends, you know people and it matters who is in that community/friend list/Google circle with you. Online communities, especially anonymous ones, are what Ren et al calls identity communities, where the individual user identifies with the community as a whole – making who is a member largely irrelevant, as long as the community itself remains the same. Their work gives practical examples to the different community guidelines and website interface features used to facilitate these different kinds of community types.

Ren et al list a series of topics that, depending on how a site administrator approaches them, shape an online community: For bond type communities, social interaction is key. With this come certain requirements for personal information to be possible to display: this means user accounts with profile information – preferably customizable profiles, so that people can stand out as individuals. This in turn allows for personal attraction through similarity. This doesn't have to be romantic or sexual attraction, but merely that through the display of personal information, such as "I like turtles" then other people with the same hobbies and likes can find and socialize with one another.

This doesn't mean that bond type communities cannot be anonymous, as many forums allow for users to register their own choice of screen name to allow for online aliases to come into effect, allowing Suler's notions of dissociative imagination and solipsistic introjection. Even on a forum where you only have one user account you don't have to be honest about who you are, and you can switch to another persona/account for other websites. Online roleplaying communities is a good example of this, as well as dating websites.

For identity based communities Ren et al point out that by identifying with one group it makes all other groups stand out, which in turns can foster even more adherence to the group one has chosen to identify with. Once you are part of something, everything else that is different suddenly becomes much easier to see – which also prompts intergroup comparisons, which can lead to rivalry or isolation. Postmes et al's work (12) specifically mention intergroup comparisons as a source of normative behavior: You look at other groups and purposely try to act differently in order tell your group appart – especially when in an otherwise anonymous community. If you cannot be told appart by names, referential decorations (uniforms, armbands, tattoos) then behavior is the only remaining option. Consider sportsfans and team slogans/chants as an example of this, as sometimes visually telling fans appart can be difficult.

Ren et al does note that this social categorization that identity communities create through their singular focus are usually focused on a goal. While bond communities tend to be more loosely organized into the vague goal of just socializing with people you like, then identity communities tend to have goals – because it is the goal you have identified with. This doesn't have to be a physical goal, but are more often simply community guidelines such as 'here we only talk about cars' – which then attracts people who like to

discuss all things car related, shaping the community's identity to be one of cars, and maybe even its language.

4.3 Summary

The conclusions to be drawn from the above examination of internet behavioral theories judged relevant to this thesis can be summarized as follows: Barak (8) represents the understanding that online anonymity is ultimately a bad thing, in the context that it allows for largely uninhibited offensive behavior, such as sexual harassment. Postmes et al's (11; 16; 12) and Suler's (13) work speak of a more relativistic understanding: Online disinhibition can lead to both positive and negative behavior, depending on local online community norms. What can be perceived as bad for us in the real world, might be perfectly acceptable behavior for others when on the internet, because in many of those communities it is understood that things done there are not real and that you can always walk away from a computer.

It is with this understanding that I will proceed into examining online communities, activities and phenomena.

It should also be noted that a lot of content related to this thesis has been supplied in an accompanying CD. For people reading this thesis online purely as a PDF: You are missing out on a lot of the material that verifies claims and statements I make, such as transcripts of interviews, or of survey results as well as screenshots from various internet websites and other samples of internet culture that all help give an understanding of what I speak of.

5 Method

In this section I will explain my approach for explaining and demonstrating my concept of standalone complexes. Equally I will argue my case for why I believe this scientific inquiry is within the realms of Medialogy, despite Medialogy officially being a predominantly engineering-oriented field.

Having already stated that my goal for this thesis is to support and validate my theory of the standalone complex, by explaining it, documenting it and showing examples of it, the method for this thesis will be as follows:

First I present a line of theories that explain aspects on online behavior, in the literature and theory review section. This was to establish my perspective on that topic and to examine how these are understood and explained. It is through a synthesis

Following this I formally introduce and explain my proposed concept of a standalone concept in section 6. This includes a an explanation of the three primary manifestations of standalone complexes that I will use in this thesis to argue for the concept's validity as a term to describe certain internet phenomena.

Following this, in section 7 titled Examples, I will demonstrate a series of standalone complexes currently in existence, following my definition of the concept.

This section is divided into four subsections dealing with three community type SACs, a number of raid type SACs and eleven meme type SACs. The order in which I examine each of these is divided primarily by community affiliation: The first community SAC that I examine, the one known as 'Anonymous' is responsible for the majority of the online raids I examine. Thus I examine those after explaining what Anonymous is and how it is a standalone complex type community. Following this I explain the online community known as the Furry fandom, and after that the online community known as the Bronies. Finally I list the aforementioned internet meme type SACs.

Section 7 takes up the majority of this thesis – for I argue that my documentation of the events, communities and phenomena that I find to be standalone complexes is key to understand, in order for me to justify the validity of the term. This section includes in depth analysis of the various communities and events, and for the furry fandom and brony communities also two small qualitative online surveys.

These two surveys into the two respective communities both follow the same model: They inquire into the personal opinions of community members – as my theory defining standalone complex will posit that such communities do not necessarily have unanimous opinions on how the community should function, or what defines a community's members. Indeed, part of the goal of the survey will be to hopefully receive conflicting opinions topics such as these, as I reason that such opinions would not be able to peacefully co-exist in a real world social community, without inciting either debate or conflict. This is part of what I argue makes my concept of standalone complexes novel, unique and thus supplementary to existing theories on social emergence.

The data analysis method for these two surveys is derived from Zhang and Wildemuth (17). I will focus on deducing opinions from the replies of respondents, my hypothesis being as stated in the above paragraph, that I will find examples of differing or conflicting opinions within the two respective community's

members – which I can use to support my theory that these communities are examples of standalone complexes.

5.1 Medialogy Study Plan compliance

This subsection pertains to the issue of whether this thesis is within the limits of the of Medialogy and can be accepted as a master thesis pertaining to that.

I am well aware that this thesis and its stated research goal lies at the very border of what Medialogy officially claims to focus on – although in my defense, I will point out that in my many years of studying this line of science I have never truly been given a definite definition of what Medialogy is beyond vague or very broad definitions. Medialogy, while it has its roots and foundations in an engineering type education, is inarguably multi-

The best definition I’ve heard was from the speech delivered by a graduating graduate Medialogy student who stated something along the lines of “Medialogy is the science of digital media interfaces, of how to develop, test such, and understand the relations between users and technology”

This has very little to do with that.

However, Medialogy (when I was taught it) also includes course such topics as Media Sociology and Digital Cultures – the last of which officially states that it teaches its students about the sociological and cultural implications of Medialogy: Basically, understanding what advanced media and communications technology does to society, both in its current state and in hypothetical future states.

Equally, all throughout Medialogy I have been taught to design, implement and finally test products on users – and this has included the creation of web-based content. Conversely, the very first undergrad semester-project I did in Medialogy was about game addiction. The first master level semester-project I did was to test the theory of whether people could get physically sick (as in nausea, vomiting) from playing computer games (They could). My point with this is that understanding how people use such technology and how it can affect them has repeatedly been, to me, confirmed to be a part of what Medialogy is.

This is what this thesis is about. Despite this being more an anthropological approach than a technical one, I still argue that it serves to further the cause of Medialogy: I wish to explain the effect of a certain confluence of communications technologies and online behavior, to show that a new understanding is needed to properly explain how parts of the internet works these days.

Beyond that, then the official study plan states that the objective for my master thesis is to demonstrate my ability to synthesize knowledge from various topics related to Medialogy and demonstrate how they relate – I argue I do this with my various academic sources on internet behavior combined with my examination of internet communities and phenomena, as it is through these I define my concept of a standalone complex.

Equally, the study plan explicitly states that for the master thesis I am allowed to focus exclusively on an scientific investigation related to a combination of technical and creative topics within Medialogy. So while Medialogy master projects might tend to focus on the designing, creation and testing of a real world

application, it is not required. The study plan says that a thesis is to focus on or more areas of Medialogy, not all of them.

To summarize, then I argue that my thesis is relevant to Medialogy in the sense that Medialogy – amongst other things – focus on understanding the relations and uses of technology, and I am trying to further that.

I have included a copy of the Medialogy master study plan in the archive CD for reference.

6 Standalone Complex: the theory

This section is purely for the explanation of my theory, with detailed examples of each in the examples section of the thesis.

With Ren et al's explanation of an identity type community, along with Suler's six factors and Postmes et al's work on the formation of normative behavior in anonymous online communities, as well as the understanding of what an emergent social phenomena is, the theoretical basis for the StandAlone Complex is covered.

I posit that a standalone complex occurs when individuals concurrently endeavor towards the same goal, but without any actual organization or coordination, to the point that it gives the illusion of a combined effort. This essentially fits the description Goldstein made for emergent phenomena (2), and indeed, a SAC is meant to be understood as a specific type of emergent social phenomena.

For the sake of delimitation this thesis will primarily deal with SAC events and phenomena happening online, as the above logic could be used to describe most aspects of popular culture – be it music fads, fashion hypes to political movements. This is primarily because SAC events on the internet, are the most common and easily observable, in line with Goldstein's point that an emergent must be ostensive: It has to be possible to recognize a SAC. I demonstrate this in the examples section.

Equally, then the scope of the field of Medialogy does not extend to matters such as politics and fashion. The focus is emergent decentralized concurrent non-committal participation in a community, event or propagation of a popular internet phenomenon.

I posit that there are three basic types of standalone complexes.

- 1) Community complexes.
- 2) Raid complexes
- 3) Memetic complexes

I posit that there are these three basic types of SACs, based on observations that lead me to believe that they are sufficiently different that they cannot simply be equated, even if they all are SACs. Funny pictures of cats being spread around online as a SAC type meme can't be compared to an entire online community, even if the goal of the community is to exclusively spread around funny pictures of cats.

6.1 Community complexes

This subsection explains the concept of the community type SAC, describing the kind of online communities where individual membership doesn't matter very much and where the norms for the community can be very different from those practiced in real life.

Ren et al's identity type communities (15) form the baseline for this concept; A community where individual members do not specifically matter, as long as the combined membership retains the same unified coherence and goal. Add to that Postmes et al's work on normative behavior in online communities (12) along with Suler's points on anonymity and dissociative imagination (13) and you have people who are well aware that while online they can behave differently than in real life – as well being aware that when

participating in largely anonymous online communities, where all you see is an obscure screen or account name, if even that, and you have what is close to being what I call a community type complex.

However, for it to be a SAC there has to be no real core to the society. This of course brings up the uncomfortable dilemma of defining what a society is to begin with. At the advice of those wiser than me, I won't. Fortunately Ren et al does that in their work on identity and bond theory (15 p. 2), stating that: *"...we define an online community as an internet-connected collective of people who interact over time around a shared purpose, interest or need"*.

The notions of a shared purpose, interests or needs are important to tell apart. A group with a perceived shared purpose could be politically motivated, while a group focused on a shared need might be looking for something – be it a specific kind of information, a challenge, or social contact. A group defined by a shared interest is where Ren et al's definition becomes relevant to this study, although the two types of communities aren't necessarily mutually exclusive.

A community complex thus comes about when individuals group together out of a shared common interest, without thought to other members, and with little to no organization of the community. In the examples section Anonymous and its many sub-communities are a good example of this type of standalone complex. However, this definition could apply to thousands of online communities.

What should set a SAC based community apart would be a lack of a formal and well defined community boundary, that is the criteria for which one defines who is part of the community and who is not, plus the lack of any regulation of who joins up. Aside from that there should be an overall loose structure with no real 'leaders' who can definitively guide or control the community. As Norman (3) put it, then a case of spontaneous order must have no real hierarchy.

To this end an online community with strict codes of conduct, or a screening process that would-be members have to go through, would thoroughly disqualify such a community from being classified as a standalone complex. There has to be spontaneity and room for individual interpretation of the subject matter.

6.2 Raid complexes

A raid complex, so named after SAC community Anonymous' "online raids" (18) is defined as standalone complexes where the focus is to pursue a specific target or goal, similar to SAC communities, but where the purpose isn't to form a community – it is to hound a target.

For such an event a point of origin has to exist, something to set off the raid – similar to how a SAC community would form through a shared interest in something, in which case that 'something' has to exist as well. The examples in section 7.2 indicate that such tend to come from the targets themselves – often through a perceived slight to the raiders or the raiders perceiving that the target is simply easy pickings. Essentially, online raids constitute a form of online harassment.

As I have defined standalone complexes based on social emergence, there must be no real authoritative organization or coordination of events in such a raid for it to be a SAC. This also means that there is no formal start or end to such events, but the examples indicate that the raids tend to cease once the goal has either been reached or the target sufficiently raided to the point that it is no longer fun to do. Equally,

participants can come with suggestions on how to coordinate an attack, but there's no formal power to these suggestions.

Compared to phenomena such as flashmobs, then a raid is unorganized not planned out. A flashmob is pre-arranged with all participants clear on what to do and where to do it – in the case of a raid complex this doesn't have to be true and rarely is, as the examples in section 7.2 show.

6.3 Memetic complexes

Internet memes pertain to online pop-culture phenomena and are often short-lived, as any pop-culture fad are. Meme type SACs represent the endless creativity of the internet and its users, in their ability to individually produce endless variations on simple and funny ideas, resulting in, for example, the large amount on online content dedicated to pictures of cats with captions – because Lolcats (19), as they're known, are hilarious.

This type of SAC is difficult to quantify: As its name alludes then this type of SAC deals with what is popularly known as 'internet memes' – or more appropriately, in the formation and creation of such phenomena. The concept of a meme was coined by Richard Dawkins (20), as a means to describe notion of self-replicating quantities of cultural knowledge. By that logic the precepts of any given culture, the customs, traditions, idioms and norms that define the culture, are memes. This too is true for this type of SAC.

It must be understood that the popular understanding of what an 'internet meme' is has little to do with Dawkins' original definition. Putting a bunch of funny pictures on the internet is not a meme – it is the concept, the combined formula and format of making a specific type of artifacts and the popular understanding that this specific type of artifact is worthy of replication, that makes something a meme. Usually the worthiness of replication and spread is judged on parameters such as how catchy a song is, or how funny a kind of picture is.

Internet memes come in many different flavors. It can be catchphrases, norms, axioms, or 'viral' artifacts just to name a few examples. It should be understood that internet memes can be highly localized. Postmes et al (12) confirm that norms do not typically move beyond their community of origin - although in the examples section there are examples of memes that managed to catch on outside beyond their point origin.

Aggregate websites such as Knowyourmeme.com is a good source of information on internet memes (21), as they catalogue, document – and most importantly explain – internet memes. Of course, whether such memes qualify as standalone complex instances can be argued.

A standalone complex meme could arguably be said to encompass all three types of SAC events and phenomena, as a meme could take the form of normative behavior which define a given community – or it could be a meme in form of an understanding that informs a dislike of something, leading to everyone who shares that dislike to mock and harass it – which could essentially start raid SAC as a response to this understanding.

To this end I delimit memetic complexes to strictly pertaining to online non-raid phenomena. Examples of this type of phenomena will in the examples section. I cannot delimit meme SACs from community-related

memes, as much of modern internet culture is essentially simply a collection of online memes and understandings that, when looked at together, form what one might call modern internet pop-culture.

Equally, then a memetic complex loses its complex status in the case of moderation or other deliberate and organized attempts at shaping it into anything other than what the general public whim dictates. This can make memetic complexes difficult to identify as such, as a viral YouTube video that is in fact a carefully engineered advertisement designed to become viral treads blurs this line. Suffice to say that in general, anything made to ascend into a meme would typically not qualify to become a memetic complex. It can become a meme if it becomes popular enough that it starts to self-propagate, but it will not be a standalone complex.

7 Examples

In this section I will list, classify and explain multiple instances of the three different types of standalone complexes explained. The purpose of this section is to present credible evidence of the existence of standalone complexes as I have defined them, so it will contain numerous of such samples.

The primary focus of the examples will be from the online phenomena known chiefly as Anonymous, as they are a great source of internet phenomena in general – being credited with the inception/popularization of many of today's obscure but popular internet memes, such as the notion of funny pictures of cats with captions, or the infamous rickroll which spread into mainstream US culture to the point that members of US congress were doing it. Indeed, a good number of these memes will also be presented as examples, and for each a case there will be presented an argument why they too are a type of standalone complexes.

This section will first introduce the online phenomena Anonymous, followed by a section on their online 'raid' activities, where I will attempt to explain how these represent various types of SACs. After this the focus will be on the online community known as the Furry fandom, where I will also argue for them to a SAC. This will be followed by another online community, the 'Brony' community, which will also be presented and explained as a SAC. Finally a number of internet memes will be presented as SACs as the last subsection to this examples section.

7.1 Anonymous

This subsection pertains to a nameless online community its participants, with their communal identity which is known simply as Anonymous. It was this online community which prompted me to write about standalone complexes in the first place – for it is, in my humble opinion, a perfect example of a SAC: There are no leaders, no real rules or guidelines, completely voluntary participation and a singular albeit very amorphous goal: to have fun on the internet.

So what is Anonymous?

A lot of people have asked themselves this question – so has the press, various religious organizations, internet security companies and other individuals who were either curious, vengeful after having raided or just plain confused.

By my reckoning Anonymous is a prime example of a standalone complex, more specifically a standalone complex based community. It should also be noted that I'm not the first to draw that conclusion, as on Urbandictionary.com their entry for Stand Alone Complex actually describes anonymous as such a thing (22) – although this would be the first time, to my knowledge, that the term is used seriously in an anthropological context.

For a more down to earth explanation of what Anonymous is, I would use the description used by the university of California - Santa Cruz student newspaper City on a Hill Press, in an article from February 2008 (23):

“The name “Anonymous” comes from the message board-type Web sites where users can post images and comments anonymously. It is more of a blanket term than a monolithic group for members of the Internet culture.”

Quote 3: Parrel and Parker, on what Anonymous is

Saying that Anonymous is a blanket term is surprisingly accurate. Being anonymous on the internet is not difficult – and the point of origin of Anonymous makes this feat even easier – although saying that Anonymous is not a culture is something that will be debated in this section.

To explain Anonymous their origins have to be understood – because in all honesty the defining qualities of them, depending on how deeply or shallowly one looks, can be quite confusing. The short explanation is that Anonymous is a blanket term for people who use certain websites that allow for anonymous posting who typically employ a rather dark and no-holds-bared sense of humor – although the humor bit isn’t necessarily required.

The long explanation is part of why this thesis is written. Anonymous originates from an imageboard known as 4chan (24), which can be found at www.4chan.org.

4chan has a reputation on the internet, a well-deserved reputation. In his book ‘Epic win for Anonymous: how 4chan’s army conquered the web’ Cole Stryker (5) describes 4chan as “...the most interesting place on the internet” “...where you’re as likely to find a hundred photos of kittens as a gallery of gruesome autopsy photos”. Wired recently published an article attempting to explain Anonymous (25):

“It’s a culture.

It takes cultures to have albums, idioms, and iconography, and I was swimming in these and more. Anonymous is a nascent and small culture, but one with its own aesthetics and values, art and literature, social norms and ways of production, and even its own dialectic language.”

Quote 4: Quinn Norton, on Anonymous

At least part of this is true. Anonymous as a community has numerous idioms and specific internal iconographical artifacts often used to identify their relation to the community and express themselves. As the wired article even points out they also have musical albums – at least in the sense that Anonymous occasionally picks out a piece of music that then becomes popular amongst anons (singular individuals of Anonymous), to the point that a Tumblr blog “lulzalbums” has put up over 14 different collections of various music tracks and songs, all somehow related to Anonymous and the internet subculture it represents (26).

This is also where finding sources that confirm aspects of Anonymous culture, that aren’t anything more than vanity sites put up by individuals, which are not indicative or representative of Anonymous as a whole becomes difficult – because in Anonymous the notion of taking credit for contributions to the collective

aren't just frowned upon: They have a name for it – they call it “namefaggotry” – and it is not looked kindly upon.

Cole Stryker remarked on this in his book (5): *“People are willing to spend shocking amounts of time creating, collaborating, documenting – and all with no recognition. The implications are staggering. Give people a place that facilitates creation and sharing, and they will conjure entire civilizations (witness the overwhelming amounts of lore preserved at Encyclopedia Dramatica).”*

Quote 5: Cole Stryker on Anonymous

This is one of Anonymous' most unique aspects – which in my opinion exemplify how Anonymous is a standalone complex. Nobody relies on anyone to get something done, even though cooperation often takes place. This shouldn't be mistaken for similar phenomena in, for example, wiki-communities, as ultimately there your name and reputation as a credible contributor and editor can become important. You might operate under an alias as a wiki-editor, but ultimately all your activity is tracked and judged.

On the other hand, if one anon gets an idea for a fun caption to add to a recently posted picture of a cat on 4chan, they don't ask others to do it, they fire up Photoshop and get ‘Shoping’ – on 4chan the use of Adobe Photoshop, Paint Shop Pro or similar photo-editing software is so ingrained in the culture that the term “to shop” has become a catchall term for photo-manipulation. It is commonly used to criticize imagery that have been altered poorly, with commentary such as “this looks shopped” (27; 28).

A good example of this communal contribution of content and lack of taking individual credit can be seen on the 4chan board /tg/, the Traditional Gaming board. Its official overall topic is that non-video game type games, such as roleplaying games and boardgames, as well as other tabletop games. This makes it the 4chan board for players of games such as Dungeons & Dragons, or the Warhammer 40K tabletop strategy game. It is common for the regulars on /tg/ to start communal creative storytelling or world-building threads where they each add their own thoughts based on a specific theme, resulting in large amounts of text describing a setting, or an anthology of small stories – credit goes to /tg/, as all the contributors are anonymous (29; 30; 31). It should be noted that these copies of /tg/ threads are stored off-site on a /tg/ archive site, as the originals, like all other content on 4chan, are wiped from the 4chan servers when people stop posting in the threads.

This exemplifies the fact that 4chan you have as big a potential to be a consumer of content as you have to be a contributor and creator of content, even if it might not be around for very long. It should be noted that while 4chan was the first western *chan, then other smaller chans have appeared since then, all running on roughly the same code – all populated by Anonymous (32).

However, Wired writer Quinn Norton's claim that Anonymous is a culture can be debated. What defines a culture? Quinn is seeing Anonymous' taste in music, its iconography of image macros and its language which, while predominantly English, features a large number of idioms that non-internet savvy individuals might find difficult to understand. But do local sayings, iconography and some music define a culture? If so, a lot of sports fans and their clubs would qualify as cultures. They have their banners, colors, chants and music – and probably quite a few colorful and/or mean-spirited sayings about other teams.

It doesn't help that anyone can access the chans and just start posting. New and old users cannot be told apart; all can and will eventually be called newfags – be it in jest or in anger over ignorance of local custom or online etiquette.

It is a lot easier to look at what Anonymous does and try to make sense of them from that angle: New York times once wrote that anonymous is the demon god of the internet (33), stating that in the context of increasing control of the internet with things like permanent identity tracking becoming more commonplace, then the internet as it once had been was now as good as dead:

"If the web is dead, then Anon is the sauronic lich lord ruling over the underworld. Anon is capricious; it cannot be predicted, defined or controlled. Anonymous is humanity's roiling id unleashed; its simmering madness unchained; its meandering whimsy unfettered.

Anonymous is at once cruel and king; dangerous and genteel; genius and deranged; noble and perverted. Anon is legion."

This article talks more about Anonymous' behavior and its reputation, citing examples of internet vigilantism and online pranks. The reason for Anonymous' reputation comes primarily from its online raid activities, but also from how it behaves on 4chan.

4chan is a very minimalistic imageboard, with about as few bells and whistles as possible. It is organized into 52 different boards, plus a search engine for online file hosting. The boards are coded using code copied from one of Japan's most popular forums Futaba channel, code that hasn't been altered or updated substantially since 4chan was launched on October 1st 2003 by the site's founder, owner and administrator then 15 year old Christopher "Moot" Poole, as a place for American anime fans to hang out.

Suffice to say that it has grown since then. At the time of writing this 4chan's Alexa rank was globally 1022, or 507 in the US (34), although it once peaked at 642 global and 307 US rank according to 4chan's own presumably outdated advertising page (35). This basically means that 4chan is more or less one of the top one thousand most visited websites on the planet. According to 4chan's own statistics it gets over 700,000 unique visitors per day, with over 22 million impressions total per day. When times live say that 'Anonymous is legion' they aren't kidding. Anonymous agrees, the term "Anonymous is legion" being part of their calling card according to the ED page on Anonymous (36).

However, with 4chan's 52 boards, divided into five major subcategories, one stands out. When other websites and news agencies refer to 4chan this is the board they most often allude to. 4chan's infamous 'Random' board – the designated off-topic board for the site. For while 4chan has boards covering nearly anything a person could want to talk about, be it sports, animals, anime, comics, all types of porn imaginable, as well as cooking or literature, then its random board /b/ is the biggest and most heavily trafficked board.



Figure 1: The face of anonymous (315)

That it is called /b/ (the forward slashes are not pronounces) comes from how the board's URL appears: 4chan.org/b/. The other boards are similarly known by their URL letter, making the comic board into /co/, the cooking board into /ck/ and the politics board /pol/.

4chan users who primarily spend their time on /b/ are, on 4chan, known as /b/tards. Similar nicknames exist for the other boards, typically in the form of puns or words where the board letters fit in. The weapons forum /k/ is thus visited mainly by /k/ommandos, while the traditional gaming board /tg/ has its fa/tg/uys or intelligen/tg/entlemen, depending on who you ask: Indeed, some of these names are used as jokes internally on 4chan, as terms such as fa/tg/uy or /b/tard simply aren't meant to be positive sounding nicknames.

The /b/tards however are the most numerous, taking up the vast majority of 4chan's traffic. This was documented in mid-2011 by Bernstein et al (37) who proved that of the seven million daily visitors, over 30% to straight to /b/.

They also did extensive data analysis on /b/'s user statistics, discovering that with so many users the amount of posts being made to the imageboard were staggering.

The way that 4chan handles this many users is by having no real memory. There are no archives were discussions go into – once people stop posting to a discussion thread or it reaches a maximum number of posts then the thread is simply deleted off the server. As Bernstein et al noted then this mechanic encourages /b/tards to repeatedly post the same content in new threads, in order to keep a topic alive.

According to Bernstein et al's numbers, then the average lifetime of a thread on /b/ is less than four minutes, although the longest lived thread they found lasted over six hours. Equally, the way that 4chan's imageboards work is that there are only so many threads visible on the front page of any given board. When a new thread is started, the oldest thread of the board is deleted, as explained above. However, the act of posting in a thread 'bumps' it up to the top of the front page, allowing popular topics to always appear first – at least while they are popular. Bernstein et al's numbers show that the average amount of time a thread exists on the front page of /b/ before being pushed off is around five seconds, over the course of its entire lifetime. This means that the exchange rate of content and threads on /b/ is incredibly high, again forcing /b/tards to repost content in order to keep popular topics alive.

This has given birth to the 4chan idiom that "Every post is a repost of a repost".

Bernstein et al compare /b/'s post counts to other popular websites – on /b/ they counted an average of 35.000 new threads, with 400.000 posts per day, while YouTube on average gets 65.000 new videos posted a day (37).

Another facet of /b/ that has shaped the 'face' (or lack of it) of Anonymous is the lack of rules. The only rules that apply on /b/ are the global 4chan rules, the rules that apply on all the boards – and even they get broken on a routine basis.

As Postmes et al wrote (12) then in anonymous online communities normative behavior becomes key to allow for identification of members. On 4chan this is very much the case, as on 4chan there are no user accounts. You cannot register a name and post under it – and by default all posts are simply attributed to

“Anonymous”. As the wired article indicated, then this has spawned quite a lot of culture within the site. Bernstein et al’s numbers show why they’re constantly reposted.

This means that /b/ essentially acts a Darwinian meritocracy – without the meritocracy having any kind of power, only being there to ‘filter’ what content sticks around and what is left behind and forgotten. Cole Stryker said (5 p. 110): “The smartest, funniest, fastest, strongest content wins, regardless of how popular, good-looking, or renowned the post’s author is. Anonymous neither accepts nor grants acclaim” to describe how the content filtering works.

Practical examples of this filtering can be seen in “You laugh you lose” threads, a popular topic on 4chan where people on any given board simply challenge each other to post funny imagery related to the board’s topic, or any topic in the case of such threads on /b/, which serve as image-dumps and subsequently filters for humorous content, although variations on the theme do exist (38; 39). The filtration works in the sense that the threads showcase humorous content (40; 41), but some of them specifically request that you only post funny pictures that you yourself have lost to previously (42) – thus these threads concentrate funny content, while unfunny content is simply left behind, ultimately training anonymous in identifying the most humorous content which then often spreads to the rest of the internet.

To summarize so far, Anonymous has no leaders and no real membership requirements – it is simply an amorphous blanket term for people who go to chan websites, as several others have appeared since 4chan’s launch. What unites Anonymous is the amorphous and emergent culture it has set up, typically focused on entertaining content originating from 4chan where the high speed of content deletion forces a filtering process that weeds out everything that Anonymous does not deem worthy of continued conversation over.

It should be noted that Anonymous is often quite good as documenting its culture. As the wired article noted, then the website Encyclopedia Dramatica at www.Encyclopediadramatica.ch is essentially a repository of Anonymous lore. It is a wiki written by Anonymous for Anonymous, using Anonymous’ own vernacular. It should be noted that as a source of knowledge for all things Anonymous ED has a major flaw: the site’s original founder, a person going by the online alias of GirlyVinyl terminated the site in April 2011. Anonymous responded quickly, resurrecting the site via the use of Google Cache and other online services that retain images of old websites. This means that dating the origins of many aspects of Anonymous’ behavior, norms and idioms is very difficult – if not impossible. I argue that this doesn’t invalidate ED as a source of information on Anonymous. The timeframe is still fairly limited: 4chan started in late 2003, so most of Anonymous’ memes and ways of operating originate within a period from then up to today, plus many of the articles contain references to specific dates, making the lack of information on when the articles were first made less critical.

The language of Anonymous has to be addressed. One of the norms of Anonymous is that more or less anything goes – and that outsiders are morons who just don’t get it. Bernstein et al touch on this, explaining that Anonymous essentially creates a barrier of offensive content that it shrouds itself in, by treating off-color humor and general offensiveness not only as funny, but as the norm.

This ultimately begs the question of how one can definitively say if person A is an anon, part of Anonymous. The simple answer is a question: how do you identify a person to be part of a cultural phenomenon? Of

course, this instantly becomes endlessly complicated due to Suler's point on Dissociate Imagination and online invisibility (13) – because that means that an anon essentially only acts and behaves identifiably as part of Anonymous when interacting in a way that identifies that person as an anon. Equally, then the moment you close the web browser tab, window or step away from the computer; you're back in reality. This is how a standalone complex works – you're only participating when you want, and can disengage at any time. There's no real control of participation and no binding commitment to continue a conversation. Indeed, in theory a person with a split personality disorder could have a very long conversation with himself on 4chan and he would never know – assuming both personalities remain anonymous.

This makes for a paradox of identification: since anons only know they're interacting with anons when the people they interact with act as anons - it is virtually impossible to tell newcomers apart from seasoned veterans. However, some pointers do exist, such as knowledge of old and largely forgotten memes no longer in use – but by that very notion, then memes no longer used aren't used or mentioned – although occasionally threads with topics of nostalgia will rouse old memories. Either way this means that the only real barrier for newcomers is the content itself, which largely limits itself to /b/ and some of the nastier porn boards, such as /d/ - the other 4chan boards are much content specific and often have rules against adult content, aside from the porn boards – plus they officially have much more active moderation to keep threads on-topic. An example of this is shown in Cole Stryker's book (5 p. 22) as he explains that he was banned for a few days from 4chan after trying to ask about people's interests in porn on one of the porn boards. You only post and talk porn on the porn boards, casual conversations or random questions goes to /b/.

It should be noted that Anonymous doesn't necessarily like public attention. Being an insular culture – or at least thinking themselves one – they will berate 'newfags' as well as anyone else who... do anything. Indeed, the suffix -fag is part of the Anonymous lingo, as they have newfags, oldfags, pc-fags, macfags, consolefags and any other combination that might be relevant for the current topic of conversation. On the Encyclopedia Dramatica page for the term Faggot Anonymous explains (43): they simply use 'fag' as a catch-all term similar to idiot, and for them calling each other names is the norm.

Ultimately the conclusion on how one can be Anonymous or not boils down to choice. Do you go to chan imageboards, do you participate in the discussions and threads there? Do you understand and enjoy the humor? Do you understand the language? Even if you can say yes to all of these, then I will argue – by the definition of a standalone complex – that the final and definitive element is still whether or not you consider yourself an anon. One should still be aware: Saying that you are a member of anonymous implies all sorts of things, such as membership is something tangible, that you can be excluded as a member – all of this is wrong. I would argue that for Anonymous, if anything, there only exists two kinds of anons, the experienced sort and the inexperienced sort, with the two being virtually impossible to tell apart – anyone not into what they do are simply not anons.

That said, then understanding Anonymous is still a monumental task that – as Anonymous often advises newfags, telling them to 'lurk more'. That is, to passively observe and not necessarily participate or contribute, until you have seen and understood how things work. This process of learning through passive participation through observation can take years, but doing something silly like actually asking for advice can easily see you met with ridicule, scorn and mistrust. If anything, the easiest way to enter into

anonymous is to simply go to the chans, join into a discussion and try to avoid talking about anything you don't understand.

However, for a more condensed look into the mentality of Anonymous one need only observe their 'Rules of the internet' – a collection of mock rules that, according to Anonymous, they don't really agree on.

7.1.1 Rules of the internet

The ED page on the rules of the internet are quite clear (44):

*"There is no real set of **Rules to the Internet**, only a standard 4 on which everyone agrees (1, 2, 34, and 35) and some bullshit rules that came out of nowhere"*

Quote 6: Anonymous, on the rules of the internet

Ultimately, like most other Anonymous artifacts, the rules are full of humorous, bizarre and often pointless references and are not meant to be taken seriously at all – it's for the lulz. This is what the above quote refers to, speaking of rule 1, 2 34 and 35 of the internet. Lulz is a central term to Anonymous. It is basically the abbreviation LOL (Laugh out Loud) run through the corrupting influences of the internet hate machine – if one is to believe Fox News (45). According to the encyclopedia dramatica page lulz is essentially a term quantifying amusement from any kind of source (46).

In my opinion, based on observation of Anonymous activities, these rules function more as reflections and understandings of Anonymous culture, practices and norms. It is for this reason that I present one version of this list of mock rules, along with explanatory commentary, to give a greater understanding of the mentality of Anonymous on the topic of how anonymous should behave and what it should know – which I believe in total represents a very example of how Anonymous is a standalone complex.

For example lists of these rules, see appendix 1a and 1b on the archive CD, for two different versions. Note that in version 1b the above quoted reference to rule 35 becomes a reference to rule 34-1.

I will now go through the rules presented in the list shown in appendix 1b and explain each rule, as examples of Anonymous mentality and culture:

1. Do not talk about /b/
2. Do NOT talk about /b/

These two rules are taken from Chuck Palahniuk's book *Fight Club* (47). The rules actually mean the same thing as in the movie – but are strictly raid related (raids are covered in the next section), carrying with the meaning that when Anonymous raids one does not say where from come from – to prevent revenge actions being taken against Anonymous. This also carries connotations of Anonymous being somewhat exclusive: Don't advertise where you come from, because Anonymous doesn't necessarily want to be inundated with inexperienced newcomers. Rule 10 in this list and this rule also demonstrate, as Postmes et al spoke of (16), how online communities can express insular norms in order to maintain a sense of cohesion. This is critical for a SAC community in which participants are largely anonymous, as it helps define the community without there being any actual border between it and other communities.

3. We are anonymous

4. Anonymous is legion
5. Anonymous never forgives

These three rules are less rules and more a calling card (48). However, they also point out several facts about Anonymous: First of all, they are anonymous... they don't know who other anons are. They are legion, for they are aware that they are many, as confirmed by Bernstein et al's numbers. Anonymous not being a forgiving type is best understood through Suler's disinhibition factors, because on the internet it is a lot easier to be cruel and get away with it. It also reflects an understanding that when Anonymous' ire is roused it can exact terrible vengeance, as shown repeatedly in the section following section on online raids.

6. Anonymous can be a horrible, senseless, uncaring monster
7. Anonymous is still able to deliver

Rule 6 is quite clear cut and refers to roughly the same as rule 5. In the section on online raids I give numerous examples of Anonymous harassing people mercilessly, simply because they can and because it is funny to them. However, rule 6 only says that Anonymous 'can' be that way. This carries the understanding that Anonymous can be reasonable enough. This shows in rule 7, a reference to an idiom used by Anonymous when requesting something, asking "Can/Will anonymous deliver?" This is a reference to the understanding that with the size of Anonymous' SAC, chances are that there will always be someone who knows or can find what you're looking for – be it pictures of sinks, pornography or anything else no matter how obscure.

8. There are no real rules about posting
9. There are no real rules about moderation either – enjoy your ban

These two are references to /b/, and the fact that it is 4chan's off-topic board – for there are no real rules on what you're meant to post or talk about on that board. It also informs the simple truth that anonymous can post/talk about anything if that is what you wish, a simple but crucial requirement for anonymous to be a standalone complex, as more restrictive community standards would limit the field of expression for members thus not make it a SAC.

That it has no rules about moderation is either a reference to the occasionally amusing or weird messages given to anons who find themselves banned from 4chan – although oddball ban messages are by no means restricted to /b/, as shown the below screenshot:



Figure 2: A screenshot of a 'Ban message' from 4chan (49)

ED has a full article containing various humorous (50) screenshots from people banned from 4chan, as well as several ones that make one question your faith in humanity (51) – but ultimately the goal of the page is quite literally to make fun of people who have been banned and the reasons for which they were banned. Anonymous is in no way above making fun of themselves at their own expense (52). However, the page also highlights the incredible diversity of transgressions done to 4chan's rules – showing a remarkable, albeit at times disturbing, variation in how creative anonymous can be in breaking the rules on 4chan. This is but one example of many of how anonymous is a very diverse SAC in my opinion, both in how it doesn't care much for rules and in the very many different ways that the participants manage to get banned from 4chan: It shows a great diversity that probably wouldn't be possible under any other circumstances.

10. If you enjoy any rival sites – DON'T

This rule is quite simple. As is common in most religious creeds, then a rule stating that you shouldn't leave the flock is quite easy to understand. This also promotes the idea that one should stick to one chan at a time, not go all over the place. Postmes et al (11) point out that when in anonymous communities then group boundaries can become very important to maintain, otherwise the anonymous user base will just blur into surrounding communities. By this logic rule 10 also promotes a kind of internet jingoism; the idea that whatever your website, board or group you're part of is the best – and that anything else just plains sucks, which goes to explain some of the language use on the chans. This also ensures the relative cohesion of the anonymous SAC, as without this understanding informing a kind of "We are cool, other places suck" mentality", then the SAC might peter out and end.

- 11. All your carefully picked arguments can easily be ignored
- 12. Anything you say can and will be used against you
- 13. Anything you say be turned into something else – fixed

These three rules exemplify much of 4chan discourse. As already established, the anonymous communication levels the playing field so to say – it doesn't matter if you're a general or a wage slave – when posting anonymously, it is only the content of your message that gets evaluated. Equally, with /b/'s high rate of user posting, it's easy to miss something. Rule 12's copy of the iconic Miranda rights lines is simply a reminder Anonymous does not forget, and if you've done or said something stupid you're likely to be picked on for doing so – especially if you've made the mistake of identifying yourself. Rule 13 refers to the inherently random nature of /b/, where threads can be derailed from their original topics multiple times during their usually brief lifetimes. All of these rules can be inferred from the random nature of Anonymous as a SAC: in a community with more strict codes of conduct, such behavior might not be possible and polite discussion would be the only viable option – but within this anonymous setting, as LaGrandeur put it (9), the limits of discourse are exceeded, although in this context in a possibly negative fashion. In this way these rules can be seen as examples of possibly negative consequences of a community based SAC.

14. Do not argue with trolls – it means that they win

This is one of the few genuine gems of wisdom in the list. Anonymous, being well versed in the arts of online harassment and 'trolling' as a means to accrue lulz, knows very well that the moment you stop

playing victim or fighting back, then it isn't that fun trolling you. It works a bit like playing dead. This point will be made very clearly in section 7.2, as nearly all examples of raids show how targets of such raids tend to fail to understand this truth.

15. The harder you try, the harder you will fail
16. If you fail in epic proportions, it may just become a winning failure
17. Every win fails eventually

These three rules refer to Anonymous' popular use of the terms epic, win and fail. A win is simply when someone does something impressive. It can be used as a congratulatory expression, and an epic win is an even bigger win. Of course, with Anonymous liking to mess with each other as much as they do outsiders, then a win can come from someone turning another anon's venture into a fail – or at least disrupting things or doing something completely unexpected. An example of this can be seen in the image below:



Figure 3: A screenshot from 4chan's /co/ board (53)

It should also be understood that the above image, where batman suddenly likes chocolate milk, is an excellent example of rule 13, 16 and 20 of the internet. It is also an example of how a SAC can work: The ultimate goal of the person making the top post is the have fun with a kind of roleplaying involving the comicbook hero Batman. Another joins in, obviously identifying what the first poster meant, but then distorts it for even greater amusement. In anonymous terms, the second poster makes a win by making the first poster, who seemed very serious in trying hard to come across with an interesting setup, fail, making this also an example of rule 15, 16 and 17 at the same time. As with rules 11 through 13: in a SAC you can never truly guess what will happen, due to the non-hierarchical non-committal nature of it. In this case the first poster had no means or authority to ensure that others would follow his lead. Of course, this example would indicate that the lack of limits or rules on discourse in Anonymous doesn't have to exclusively lead to negative effects: sometimes the outcome can be rather funny.

18. Everything that can be labeled can be hated
19. The more you hate it the stronger it gets

20. Nothing is to be taken seriously

These rules might not appear to make sense, but to understand what they refer to one must understand Anonymous' often sarcastic and snide behavior. Anything that can be labeled stops being anonymous, because at that point it becomes a known quantity – to which end it is no longer anonymous and by default not perceived as being part of the SAC anymore. The more you hate something, the more fun it becomes to you taunt you with it – giving the illusion that it is stronger and more popularly supported. Rule 20 is Anonymous in a nutshell, especially considering rule 19. Anonymous has a popular and old saying: "The internet is serious business" – this ironic idiom, for it is meant ironically, actually reflects much of Anonymous' approach to the internet. It is used to mockingly remind themselves and people not to take things on the internet too seriously, while also parodying those who truly do take the internet serious. This harkens to Anonymous' playful nature, that everything can be made fun of as well as rules 6, 11 through 15 and 19 – because if you're trying to be serious and unfunny, then Anonymous can very well find it very amusing to cause you endless grief (54). In this way rule 20 could be argued to be part of the core that forms the Anonymous SAC.

21. Original Content is original only for a few seconds before getting old
22. Copy pasta is made to ruin every last bit of originality
23. Copy pasta is made to ruin every last bit of originality
24. Every post is a repost of a repost

As Bernstein et al showed, then /b/ has a great turnover in content. These rules reflect on that truth, pointing out the fact that very little of what gets posted on /b/ is actually new to the board, that most of the content is copied from previous posts and that invariably everything has been posted before. This is equally compounded by the fact that whenever a new user, a newfag, their inexperience usually means a lot of old material will get posted because they're not up to date with what's new and hip.

25. Relation to the original topic decreases with every single post



Figure 4: On /b/ you can never be sure of what people will say

26. Any topic can easily turned into something completely unrelated

These two rules exemplify what is known as ‘thread derailment’ – with a thread gets off its tracks and goes somewhere else. This can be done in spite, or just because the discussion veered off course. The image to the right is a good example of this. The first poster, Original Poster (OP) as they’re known on chans, seeks harsh and disparaging remarks, asking for /b/’s absolute worst. What comes is a barrage of encouraging comments, as well as a random comment about hearing sheep. The caption for the image, identifying the image as an image macro, hammers this home by pointing out that on 4chan you simply cannot win. As with the previous image of batman, this image shows the random and unpredictable nature of anonymous, further exemplifying them as a SAC. Like with rules 11, 12 and 13 this also demonstrates that in a SAC community even the discourse can be unpredictable and uncontrollable.

27. Always question a person’s sexual preferences without any real reason.

28. Always question a person’s gender – just in case it’s really a man.

29. In the internet all girls are men, all kids are undercover FBI agents

30. TITS or GTFO – the choice is yours

31. You must have pictures to prove your statements

Rule 27 and 28 are references to Anonymous being perfectly ok with calling each other things like fag or other seemingly derogatory terms – because it’s the internet, nobody cares, and as long as they can get lulz from it they’re perfectly happy with a laugh at their own expense. Rule 29 both makes fun of instances of men pretending to be women in online chatrooms and games, and similarly pokes at law enforcement sting operations for online sexual predators. Rule 30 and 31 to some extent goes to rule 29, in that on an imageboard where everyone is anonymous the only way to prove much of anything is to post a picture of it – preferably a time-stamped picture: that is, including in the picture something to confirm the time and date of the picture. Equally, rule 30 refers to often lecherous nature of Anonymous, since nearly every anon who identifies herself as female will be asked this incessantly until one of the two are chosen – posting a picture of her chest, or GTFO – which is an abbreviation of the phrase “Get the fuck out”. This goes to show that Barak’s claims of online anonymity and its effects weren’t entirely unfounded. Of course, like rules 27 and 28, this can be seen just as much as Anonymous trying to have fun in any way possible.

Rule 31 is an observation on the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words. It is also a playful hint at the fact that default imageboard code requires a new thread’s poster to always also upload an image for the first post of the thread, making the meaning of the rule, in that context, “You must have a picture to make your statement”

However, rule 31 also acknowledges anonymous as faceless and without any real means to verify personal statements. The thus rule demands photographic evidence of any claim you make, something anonymous often does via quickly made webcam or digital camera images, which is made to include a timestamp of some sort – usually a note with a date written on it, or someone holding up a newspaper with a visible date on it. With no personal identification to verify integrity of a person or his claims, images are needed. This is essentially an acknowledgement of anonymous being a SAC, since in this context the rule accepts that you’ll never really know who you’re talking to – so you can never really trust them beyond what evidence they can provide.

32. Lurk more – it's never enough

As already explained, then the notion of lurking is understood as simply silently observing an internet community. This rule not only states that, but understands that it is never enough. This refers to the high turnover of content on /b/ and 4chan, pointing out that one should always keep in mind to keep tabs on what is new, so you don't fall behind and act like a newfag. In this sense it also an acknowledgement that as a SAC, one needs to keep constant tabs on what happens due to the inherently unpredictable nature of the community.

33. In this list of rules, there is no rule

33. Why is a mystery (55)

34. There is porn of it. No exceptions.

- 34-1: If a porn of something cannot be found, /b/ will make it

35. The exception to rule 34 is the citation of rule 34



Figure 5: The original image that defined rule 34 (56).

According to research done by the KnowYourMeme researchers, then this concept, this meme, originated from an obscure British webcomic called Zoom-out (56).

Rule 34 is the best known rule of the internet. There is no arguing it. It is also quite possibly one of the most easily identifiable rules, as its 'enforcement' often leads to things that can ruin your childhood and never be unseen (57). It is quite possibly also the only truly potentially axiomatic rule in this list. Rule 34's corollary, 34-1 occasionally written as a rule itself, explains the rule's enforcement. Rule 35 has actually been proven wrong on multiple occasions – as many a creative image editor and Photoshop user have added all types of images of genitals to graphical representations of the rule.

Indeed, rule 34 doesn't actually have to be pornographic – although it is always invariably explicit. On the biggest website dedicated to archival and indexing of rule 34 images, <http://rule34.paheal.net/>, there are, according to the site's front page at the time of this being written, over half a million entries – over half a million rule 34 images on its servers. However, the true brilliance and creativity that the site shows for the use (or abuse...) of rule 34 is in its Featured Images list (58). The ED page on Paheal explains the featured image list being made up of rule 34 that either exemplify epic lulz or epic childhood ruination potential, which is of course also a source of lulz (59).

However, a few of the images on the list aren't even pornographic. Explicit, yes – and you probably wouldn't want to show them to children – but some of the featured images show marvelous leaps in creativity, lateral thinking and abstract reinterpretations of the artifact being rule 34'd.

Time for examples – and a word of warning: do NOT investigate any of the linked sources referenced for images unless you are ready to see... things, such as the image to the right of a concrete tetrapod

wavebreaker, in a very small bikini. Pornographic? That can be argued, but the implication and context arguably makes it a rule 34 image.

The Paheal featured list includes apples (60; 61), food in general (62), creative reinterpretations of the great wave off Kanagawa (63), the Paheal site itself (64), Gizmo from the 1984 movie gremlins (65; 66), a surreal reinterpretation of Garfield the cat (67), rule 34 on the final conflict between analog and digital storage media (68), the Christian Jesus (69), the Large Hadron Collider at CERN (70), Cereal mascots (71), Santa Claus (72) and even comic book characters such as Asterix & Obelix (73). Absolutely nothing is sacred or spared from rule 34. If some of these images upset you, see rule 14 and 19 on why Anonymous would find that lulzy.

Anonymous holding this rule to be axiomatic, for they do, along with the examples I have given for just how mind-bogglingly varied and creative Anonymous can be in enforcing this rule, is to me, a prime example of anonymous being a SAC

– because it shows perfectly how anonymous can approach a seemingly simple concept and end up with results infinitely diverse. Equally, this also means that rule 34 is a meme in its own right, with a standalone complex constantly adding examples to it.

36. Anonymous does not forgive.

37. There are no girls on the internet

Rule 36 is a simple rehash of rule 5. As already stated, then these rules are quite random and since there is no definitive list then repeats are to be expected. Rule 37 links with rule 28 and 30, as well as Suler's notion of online invisibility and anonymity. In anonymous online discussions it's impossible to tell the gender of others, and this rule reflects an obviously erroneous but understandably easy to reach conclusion. As Barak (8) pointed out, then online disinhibition easily leads to sexual harassment, which when combined with Suler's work could indicate that some women simply hide or omit the fact that they are women in anonymous online communities, which would help give rise to this rule – although as with all the rules, then rule 37 can be understood as an ironic gesture towards that very same behavior of hiding ones true gender online, as with rule 29. In the context of a SAC this can also be seen as an understanding that on the internet it is very easy to hide who you are then enter into a community.

38. A cat is fine too

39. One cat leads to another

40. Another cat leads to zippocat



Figure 7: Anonymous, on the popularity of cats on /b/ (314)

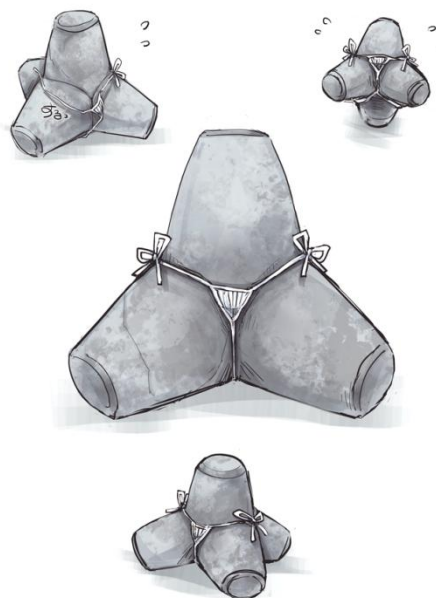


Figure 6: Rule 34 on concrete tetrapod wavebreakers. (337)

Anonymous has a thing for cats. They're often cute and images of them tend to work well with captions. Anonymous has always loved cats, popularizing the concept of the lolcat to the point that it was picked up and monetized by www.lcanhazCheezeburger.com in 2007 (19). Anonymous practices a tradition called Caturday, where each Saturday anons on /b/ gleefully post pictures of cats – often in the form of lolcats, that is pictures of cats with amusing captions (74). Still, why cats? The above image is one anons' answer to that, likening Anonymous to how a cat behaves. Depending on what kind of cat behavior you speak of, then that isn't an entirely bad analogy: Cats are very individualistic and do not care much others, Anonymous is similar in it not caring much for others, or even its own – both only really doing what pleases them. I think it's because they just like pictures of cats.

Rule 40 refers to a particularly nasty shock image composed of a series of blurry screenshots from a video in which a kitten is doused in lighter fluid and then lit on fire – with a zippo lighter. As much other offensive content on /b/, then this is used to shock and ward off outsiders, and the wording of the rule hints that if anons get too hyped up on cats someone will post something nasty to bring them down again – because it's always a source of lulz to ruin someone's happiness (75). It should be noted that in some variations of the rules of the internet a rule 0 goes "Don't fuck with cats or we'll find you" (76) – an example of this rule being enforced can be seen in the raid section of this thesis.

Still, rule 38, 39 and 40 show anonymous as both liking cats, but also enjoying screwing with each other on the topic of cats. These two seemingly counter-intuitive examples of behavior is again indicative of Anonymous being a SAC in the context that even what some of the them seem to cherish the most, others will taunt them with it – as with the batman picture, you can never fully predict what a SAC will do, and if there were enforced rules against it, then the community would no longer be a SAC.

41. No matter what is, it is someone's fetish. No exception.

This rule works similarly to rule 34, but points out the fact that on the internet there are plenty of people with seemingly weird interests – to the point that the rule posits that nothing is above sexual fetishism. This can be compared to the popular Anonymous idiom of "I can't fap to this" – a sometimes mocking or ironic reply to something meant to be sexuality arousing, when it isn't – or when it is, but you don't want to admit it (77). The term 'fap' is a term from the webcomic Sexy Losers meant to phonetically represent the act of male masturbation, which since then became the de facto internet lingo term for masturbation. (78; 79).

42. It is delicious cake, you must eat it

43. It is a delicious trap, you must hit it

Rule 42 is a reference to two 4chan memes.

According to ED the term originated from the game Super Mario 64, a game from 1996, where upon winning the game one is rewarded by the princess making you a delicious cake – this evolved into a game on /b/ where someone posts a picture, as shown to the right, challenging other anons to bring their photo editing A-game and come up with a creative solution (80).

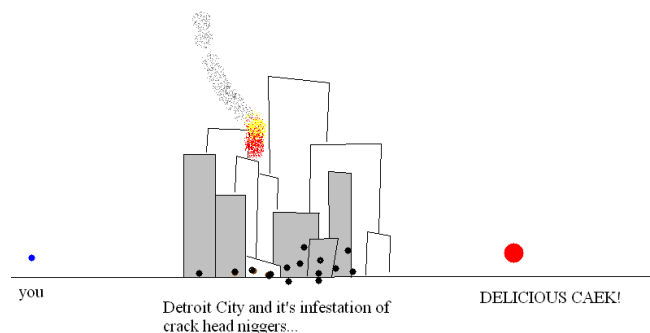


Figure 8: A cake themed MS paint challenge (318)

The game that this rule refers to, as demonstrated by the above image, pits the ‘player’ in a battle of creative thinking. However, on the ED page on the topic (80) many different challenges are shown, along with multiple creative solutions. Similar to rule 34, this meme encourages non-lateral solutions: Many suggested solutions transform the image into a 3D setting, offering the solution of simply walking around the obstacle – or similarly breaching the suggested rules for the game, if any are put up, in order to win. Basically, like rule 34, rule 42 exemplifies the incredible variety in approaches to a simple task that anonymous can summon forth, resulting in many weird and brilliant solutions that no formal, organized and rules-adhering approach could muster. It is thus, like 34, an example of how anonymous can play around and express itself as a standalone complex.

Rule 43 speaks of ‘traps’. ED explains the term as: “That which looks like it shouldn't have a cock but actually does.” (81). It breaks down traps into three categories: Transsexuals, transvestites and extreme metrosexuals. The notion of ‘hitting it’ is meant in a sexual context; it is a delicious, as in sexy, trap – and so you must want to have sex with it. Traps are often used in conjunctions with rule 27 to taunt and troll the unaware, as yet another example of Anonymous using anything to derives lulz. In the context of Anonymous being a SAC, then it again shows Anonymous’ willingness to victimize and prey on its own for lulz and its acceptance of this, which wouldn’t be possible in a more codified community with enforced rules for decent behavior.

44. /b/ sucks today

A long-running idiom on /b/ is that “/b/ was never good”. This relates again to /b/’s high rate of content turnover, as well as rule 21 and 22 – new and original content on /b/ is rare considering the amount of posts, which can easily give the impression that /b/ just isn’t that good a place to go for such things. This isn’t entirely true, as with /b/’s millions of posts per week the original content can simply be hard to see amidst the reposts and old content being posted for the umpteenth time. Another implication of this rule is that if you want good content on /b/, you have to provide it yourself, encouraging anons to come up with something better if they want things to improve. In this context this rule understands the notion that as a SAC, anyone can contribute anything – both in that you might end up with stuff you don’t want, but also stuff you might like, as well as the option that you can contribute on your own.

45. Cock goes in here

46. They will not bring back Snacks

47. You will never have sex

48. ???

49. Profit

Rule 45 is but a dick joke that got onto the list. As pointed out with the lack of a rule 33, then these rules weren’t made to be taken too seriously. Rule 46 refers to a former 4chan moderator (82) who was popular with seasoned users of 4chan for being good at banning users left and right, which might explain rule 9, or for posting perceived low quality content. Rule 44 would indicate that his efforts failed. Either way a short-lived meme on /b/ around 2007 was the then popular idea of requesting Snacks being reinstated as mod after he was banned (83), which coincides with estimates of when the rules of the internet were put together, assuming it was made shortly after the original webcomic picture with rule 34 appeared, making rule 46 a reminder of an old /b/ meme that was popular at the time of the making of this list.

Rule 47 pokes fun at the notion that if you’re part of Anonymous you don’t have a life and will never have sex. However, Cole Stryker points out that this can’t really be true, as his research indicates that 4chan attracts all kinds of people – rendering the kind of generalization and stereotyping that rule 47 implies, that all anons are virgin shut-ins that spend too much time on the internet, invalid:

“Ask Me Anything” posts are popular on 4chan. I’ve seen police officers, soldiers in Iraq, transvestites, prostitutes, midgets, scientists, ex-cons, porn actors, people who have attempted suicide, and roadies for popular bands post AMAs. It’s a fun way to peek inside someone’s life, though you can never be completely sure of the authenticity. People ask very specific questions in order to prove the veracity of AMA claims.”

Quote 7: Cole Stryker, on what kind of people appear on 4chan (5 p. 31)

Indeed, the Alexa data shows 4chan users to primarily be young men under the age of 35 – but anyone might appear on 4chan. Another reason for rule 47 can be informed by Postmes et al in their theory that online anonymity increases the prevalence of stereotyping, as people become more inclined to project stereotypes onto other anonymous users as a means to understand who they are likely to be interacting with (12). The logic is simple enough, even if it is flawed: “Hmm, who is this guy on 4chan? It’s probably some 15 year old living in his mother’s basement, because this kind of perverse humor could never come from an educated man”. However, the implied stereotype is arguably also mocked in this way, as Anonymous invariably must be aware that some of them aren’t kissless virgins. In this way this rule is a kind of joke relating to the fact that when dealing with amorphous and faceless communities like Anonymous, then falling back on stereotypes is very easy to do, which fits with Postmes et al’s theory on the subject.

Rule 48 and 49 are references to an episode of the animated series South Park.

50. It needs more desu. No exception.

Rule 50 is a reference to a very old meme on 4chan, back from its early years in 2006. ED explains that’s it a Japanese linking verb, which was picked up by 4chan and used for relentless and merciless spamming. That is, people would simply type DESU, copy the word, then paste it ad nauseum. Rule 50 infers that you can never do so enough. Similarly to rule 46, this was a popular thing to do at the time this list was supposedly made.

51. There will always be even more fucked up shit than what you just saw

This rule is very straight forward, and like rule 34, has very ominous implications. On /b/ it is common to see anons trying to out-gross each other, posting threads challenging people to post the most sick and nasty imagery they have. This also explains part of why Anonymous has been known to post child pornography to the chans, as it is at the pinnacle of the worst content possible to post on /b/ - as it is one of the only thing on /b/ you’re not actually allowed to post there, as it is illegal to do so by US law and 4chan being an American website. It should be noted that moderators do (supposedly) take swift action against such thread. This rule of one-up-manship fits well with Anonymous being a SAC, as the rule demonstrates how Anonymous has no real rules or limits on what you can do.

52. You cannot divide by zero (just because the calculator says so)

A joke amongst Anonymous is that if you divide by zero you destroy the universe – or achieve similar lulzy results (84).

53. No real limits of any kind apply here – not even the sky

As explained with rule 51 and 34, then there really aren't limits to how far anons will go in their quest for lulz. This rule is clearly referring to /b/, as the other 4chan tend to boards have more focused topics and moderation.

This rule can also be interpreted to refer to the endless variety or potential in anonymous, implying that anything can be done – and there are no limits for can't be done. While vague, this understanding wouldn't necessarily be possible in a more restricted, formalized or moderated environment, making it hint at Anonymous as a SAC through the dynamic and unpredictable spontaneity that governs it

54. CAPSLOCK IS CRUISE CONTROL FOR COOL

55. EVEN WITH CRUISE CONTROL YOU STILL HAVE TO STEER

These two rules are quite straight forward. They first imply that posting in all capital letters makes a post more cool – this can be argued, but the second rule also reminds one that you still have to do something yourself in order for all-caps content to be considered cool. These two rules can also be understood as general reminders to anons that even if they find a fun new thing to spam/repost endlessly, then they will have to keep it fresh and interesting just the same, lest rule 21 comes into effect. In this sense these two rules inform an understanding that effort has to be put into keeping the community alive with fun content.

56. Desu isn't funny. Seriously guys. It's worse than Chuck Norris jokes.

As a counterpoint to rule 50, this rule can be seen as an expression of the Desu meme having been done to death. It also refers to the 'Chuck Norris facts', an internet meme (85) that was all the rage back in early 2006 (86)

- 56.5. Fuck Gaston.

This corollary to rule 56 is another opinion on the meme based on the character Gaston from the Disney movie *Beauty and the Beast* (87). The ED page on the phenomena explains that he was a cocky and utterly macho character, so Anonymous was briefly enamored with him as Gaston was thought to match Anonymous' tough guy attitude. The rule is, like rule 56, an expression of the feeling that someone found Gaston memes done to death and no longer funny.

These two rules exemplify an aspect of anonymous rarely touched upon: internal schisms and conflicting opinions within anonymous. A joke told too often becomes boring, but with anonymous content and ideas have to be routinely brought up lest they be forgotten. This demonstrates a weakness, if it can be called that, in a SAC: people with different understandings of a subject matter can end up in a community together, even if their differences are anathema to each other. This of course invites to conflict, but with anonymous having little to no memory, then conflicts of opinion usually rage out and then disappear quickly, unless purposely brought up again on purpose. Under more formal or orderly circumstances, conflicting opinions wouldn't be able to co-exist, but in a SAC where anyone can join such is to be expected. In the subsections on the furry and brony fandoms more examples of this kind of inter-SAC schisms will be mentioned.

57. Nothing is sacred.

This fact has already been well explained in rule 34, tying into rule 27, 28, 14, 18 through 20 and 51. Except maybe cats – although the use of zippocat for trolling purposes proves that assumption wrong. It should also be understood that this notion also applies to things that Anonymous likes. Internal strife and trolling between anons is common, as with the example given under rule 16. As long as lulz comes from it, Anonymous as a whole doesn't seem to mind it. In my opinion this again goes to show anonymous as a SAC: like rule 53, there are no limits, so anyone can do anything – and with online anonymity the understanding is that there are largely no repercussions for what you do.

58. The more beautiful and pure a thing is – the more satisfying it is to corrupt it

This rule works similarly to rule 57, 51, 34, 20 and the overall MO of Anonymous of trolling others and deriving lulz from seeing their victims foam in impotent fury.

59. Even one positive comment about Japanese things can make you a weeaboo.

The term weeaboo originates from an obscure surrealist webcomic called the Penny Bible Fellowship (88). In mid-2005 the anime and manga boards on 4chan were rife with name-calling, namely people less fanatic about such content calling those who liked it 'wapanese', as in 'White Japanese' as a mocking slur. At one point 4chan Moderators tried to stop this by applying a word-filter that changed every instance of wapanese to the word weeaboo. Anonymous shrugged and accepted the word as a pseudonym for wapanese, still using the word today (89). This means that the rule is actually fairly simple and accurate: if you like Japanese things, you're a weeaboo – at least by Anonymous standards.

60. When one sees a lion, one must get into the car

This rule in fact does not refer or parody a line from the movie Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, where it is said "We can't stop here, this is bat country". While one might think so, then it originates from a small picture from a webcomic called Toothpaste for dinner (90). It was found to be amusing and fun, spawning a series of remixes and lolcat images about cars and lions, which is what the rule ultimately refers to (91).

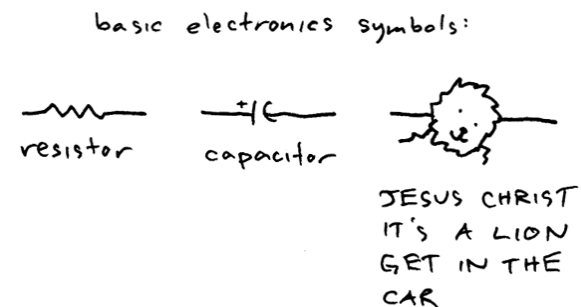


Figure 9: Anonymous can be amused by even the simplest of things, as long as it's funny somehow (90)

61. There is always furry porn of it

This rule refers to the internet subculture known as the Furry Fandom, which will be explained in detail later in this thesis. The rule implies that the furry fandom will produce pornography of anything, similar to rule 34.

62. The pool is always closed

This rule refers to the Habbo Hotel raids of 2006 through 2008. Habbo Hotel was, and still is, a chat program with a graphical interface, giving each chat participant a small character to 'move around' in a virtual environment. Anonymous has raided Habbo Hotel on multiple occasions (92) (93) (94) for much lulz

– with one of many recurring themes during these raids being to have an anon’s chat character block access to a pool area – usually claiming that it is closed due to aids, a term that since became a joke on 4chan in and of itself (95).

63. There’s always a female version of a male character. No exceptions

This rule links to rule 34, and in that context has fairly easy to see implications: If a character is butch male and unsexy to straight men – it will be photo edited into a woman. No exceptions.

64. It’s been cracked and pirated. No exceptions

This rule observes the fact that nearly every program, game, piece of music or anything else transferred around on digitally will most likely end up being cracked and pirated. On the 4chan video games board /v/ discussions often rage over whether it is ok or not to pirate such things – and why it happens.

65. It needs more pumpkin. No exceptions.

As stated with rule 33 – then not everything on the list makes sense. Exhaustive research has yielded nothing to indicate why anything needs more pumpkin. Such is the random nature of anything that comes out of /b/.

7.1.2 Distributed cognition

In the context of Anonymous as a standalone complex, distributed cognition helps to explain anonymous’ fragmented – and often scatterbrained – meme and image-based communications. I would also argue that distributed cognition gives insight into just how complicated anonymous actually is.

Yvonne Rogers (96) explains distributed cognition as new paradigm for understanding cognition – the act and process of thinking, remembering, solving problems and anything else that can be summaries as a thought process. Edwin Hutchins (97) originally came up with the idea, by applying conventional cognitive science, the science of how a single individual thinks, to a larger and more social setting: When several individuals have to think about something together, typically with a common conceptual frame of reference.

Hutchins originally used the setting of an airplane cockpit to explain the idea: A pilot and co-pilot, when sufficiently experienced, will develop a level of tacit knowledge of what needs to be done to properly and safely fly the aircraft. This is the common frame of reference. From this they can then simplify, imply or more subtly understand communication. A nod towards a dial contains a special meaning, possibly referring to a flight check procedure or something else – and without knowledge of the frame of reference, then understanding what is going on is very difficult if not impossible. This is because the cognition, the thought process, is distributed into artifacts or actions that aren’t necessarily bound to individual.

To better explain the concept, as I wish to be absolutely clear on what distributed cognition is before I apply it in context to the Anonymous SAC, then I’ll use the example of a pizzeria: A costumer comes in, unfamiliar to the establishment. The costumer hears another costumer ordering a ‘number three’. Without the shared frame of reference the new costumer won’t know what that is – but the man behind the counter does, and the man in the kitchen does as well, so they all start making a number three pizza. This really highlights the distributed nature of such a cognitive system: The menu is an artifact in which the

understanding and memory of what the pizzeria serves has been distributed on to. It becomes the link that allows others into the cognitive system, allowing them to communicate on the same level. This allows for simpler load-balancing since the workers at a pizzeria won't have to memorize the whole menu, which also goes for costumers.

As Hollan & Hutchins (98) puts it: It is natural for people to establish and coordinate different types of structure in their environment, such as a pizzeria and its menus. It takes effort to maintain that level of coordination, so instead of having a waiter memorize and explain the whole menu, then that task is delegated to an artifact: the menu card. The same logic applies to libraries, allowing civilizations to broaden their knowledge base beyond what single individuals can remember over a lifetime.

As Cole and Engeström (99) put it: Artifacts with knowledge embedded in them remembers for a social group. But not only that, then the an artifact's record of experiences can shape social action and social thought depending on how it is presented. In this way an artifact in a cognitive system can contain not just knowledge, but instructions on how to process and use that knowledge. A good example of this is religious texts: they tend come with built-in instructions. Cole and Engeström put that the combination of goals (Allowing for easy communication for ordering of pizza), tools (A menu) and setting (A pizzeria) constitutes both the context of behavior and the way in which cognition is distributed in that context. Basically, if you take an artifact or actor out of the context then things stop making sense, but at the same time the specific combination of all three specify the context in which they work together. This means that in a different context the actors or artifacts mean different things. To the guy who prints pizzeria menus they're just products for example, while to a pizzeria owner they're a tool for his business.

Of course, that's not the only aspects of such a system. In such a system, using the pizzeria example again, there is an implied understanding of the division of labor. A costumer doesn't go out back and fetch a mop and bucket if the costumer spills something – but equally it goes without saying that one should pay before leaving. These rules are usually never stated anywhere in a restaurant and are critical to successful function of the place, but are expected to be known by everyone. This goes to show that going to restaurant involves cognitive systems that go far beyond just the restaurant, but also the cognitive systems that inform the ideas of proper behavior in modern society as well as the implied understanding meant in currency as a medium of trade.

Thus, Distributed cognition, as defined by Hollan et al, Rogers and Cole et al (98; 96; 99) understand cognitive networks – social networks and systems in which communities and individuals interact – to encompass more than just individuals people interacting with people; it broadens the limits of a cognitive system to include individuals as well as their environment and the artifacts they interact with in it.

The reason that I argue for distributed cognition to help explain the anonymous SAC is due to the ephemeral nature of content and communication shared between anons on chans. Memes and the thought processes or information they represent, have to be 'distributed' and picked up by others, otherwise they will be lost once something else comes along and forces out the old content on the imageboards, and they often contain embedded information and understandings.

In this way the often short-lived nature of imageboard content – especially on the more highly trafficked boards on 4chan, such as /b/ - force users into conveying meaning and messages quickly. This becomes key

unless you want to risk people ignoring or glossing over your post. Anonymous likes to go “TL:DR” if you present a well worded and long post, meaning “To Long: Didn’t Read” – rule 12 of the internet in a nutshell: If what you post sounds boring, I won’t bother listening to you, even if you’re absolutely right in any given discussion. This also goes back to Suler’s notion of disinhibition through nullification of status, especially on anonymous imageboards, as you can’t force anyone to listen to you online.

To this end many of the memes on 4chan have a communicative aspect to them, even the image based memes.

A concrete example of this is the prevalence of ‘reaction faces’ on 4chan, which literally add credence to the old adage of a picture being worth a thousand words – as it simply involves adding a small portrait image in one’s post to add a face to ones otherwise anonymous and faceless post on an imageboard.



Figure 10: A screenshot from 4chan depicting the use of a reaction face.

(100). Indeed, the ED article on the subject indicates that the use of reaction faces dates back to the early days of 4chan itself, as it arguably is a simple way of adding extra meaning. Even the much older smilies, such as the ☺ is in essence a reaction face, as it displays an expression of an emotion embedded into an image artifact that you can then pass around.

On 4chan these reaction face images often can contain a plethora of meta-humor and information about the poster, or the posters opinion on the topic. The above image sees the use of popular /b/ character ‘pedobear’, a stylized cartoon bear that Anonymous often uses to jokingly make aware of the potential presence of child pornography in a thread – posting lecherous images of the cartoon bear as a way to both raise awareness and poke fun at the presence of someone posting such material. Note the expression of the cartoon bear face, as it conveys awe, arousal and possibly some degree of desperation in achieving its goal. (101). This is usually followed by equally joking reaction face posts featuring images of Chris Hansen, a man who hosted a TV show dedicated to luring out and catching pedophiles – which according to the ED article on Chris Hansen, is an example of epic win, in that by anonymous’ standards Hansen supremely trolls pedophiles (102).

These playful exchanges carry great amounts of hidden information, that only internet users with some level of local tacit knowledge would pick up on, requiring that they know the context of the images: Anonymous is well aware of the highly illegal nature of child pornography – the playful exchanges between Chris Hansen images, 4chan users and pedobear images carry this symbolic meaning with it, because in the images and posts symbolize this understanding.

Other, more work-safe examples of the distributed nature of Anonymous’ communication habits can be seen in text based reaction images.

This is a highly internalized form of communication often seen on chans, requiring a good understanding of an imageboard's lingo – as it literally forgoes the use of reaction faces, and substitutes them with text based replies.

A reply might go “Pedobear.jpg” instead of the image used in the image, or similarly read “Facepalm.jpg” when an anon is faced with a very stupid remark. Other variations use the formula of a short-hand for “My Face When”, implying a reaction image purely through text in a slightly more elaborate way: “MFW my discussion opponent just said something stupid” (103)

The connection to distributed cognition again comes in that the meanings and understandings encoded into these messages greatly outweigh the mere sum of the words and letters used. Indeed, in the case of written reactions, then the reader even has to pause and see the context of the reaction, in order to figure out and imagine an appropriate reaction-face on his own. The common frame of reference is the understanding of the local language.

This is also a great part of how Anonymous maintains its insular nature towards outsiders and obfuscate their culture: Unless you understand the common frame of reference that statements such as these draw on, then you will be very confused when trying to read it. It could be argued that in that sense it's not just distributed cognition, but encrypted or coded cognition.

For example, then simply writing “Popcorn.jpg” in a heated debate on 4chan symbolizes a reaction face that is eating popcorn – the meaning being that the poster likens the ongoing debate/flarewar/fun thread to watching a fun movie at a cinema and is just sitting back and observing the fun. The text or image macro is given the task of conveying a symbolic or meaningful message: the cognition of this understanding is distributed to the picture or statement artifact. Of course, without understanding the underlying context, then the statement makes little to no sense – and the only way to learn this context is often to patiently observe/lurk in a forum or on an imageboard until you've seen it often enough to see the meaning. The same logic applies to anonymous' use of the pedobear character – its outward visual appearance does in no way reveal its implied connection to child pornography, it simply looking like a stylized cartoon bear.

Ultimately all of this shows Anonymous to be very diverse and 'fragmented' for the lack of a better word, while at the same time retaining some semblance of cohesion through an obscure language of dark humor, funny images, symbols and icons. There are those who contribute with art and imagery, be it in drawing oriented challenges for cake, or drawing a picture of a can of soda molesting a sandwich (104), while others might just passively observe, with some merely focused on accruing or spreading funny pictures of cats with captions. The list of rules, even though they aren't really rules, gives insight into the mentality and norms of Anonymous; that nothing is sacred, that anything can be made fun, and if you whine about being made fun of, then it becomes even more fun!

7.1.3 Summary

Anonymous is a lot of things. It can be horrible, it can be awesome, and it can almost always deliver the lulz. Is it a culture? That can be debated, as in theory the entire user base could be swapped out with entirely different people and you might never know – as long they behave in roughly the same way. Anonymous presents a mystery to modern society, for I know of no other communities where profiling yourself in a positive light is frowned upon as heavily as in Anonymous, while individual contributions are

still somehow encouraged, since no individual gets any real credit for their work. I will however insist that Anonymous is a prime example of a standalone complex, and should be referred to only as such.

Times Live wasn't entirely wrong to call anonymous the demon god of the internet, but this facet of Anonymous only really comes out when angered or united in a common cause. The following section will explain these, their more outward acts of internet hooliganism, which have earned anonymous a good deal of its reputation.

7.2 Online raids

Online raids, defined as massive online harassment phenomena, are a very powerful form of SACs. They can ruin lives and can be very hard to stop once started. Anonymous is famous and feared for its online raids, and this subsection aims to show examples of these phenomena and explain how they as SACs get started, what they really do, and what their effects can be.

As Postmes et al (16) points out, anonymous online communities can become very insular. They don't specifically say that this can turn to hostilities, but Anonymous has for many years maintained a sense of superiority – they were the only ones who understood their own internal humor and language, making other web denizens and communities lesser beings. As Suler points out (13) with his explanation of the effects of online anonymity, then it is easy to see why Anonymous thinks it can get away with harassing others online through faceless strength in numbers versus individual targets. There's nothing to stop them, at least not when hiding behind seven proxies.

Raids done by Anonymous take on many shapes. Some are simple DDoS attacks, distributed denial of service attacks – although while conventional wisdom in 2011 still dictates that such are still mainly done via virus infected computers called botnets (105; 106; 107) then Anonymous has a rather unique approach. Using 'server stress test' freeware called "Low Orbit Ion Cannon" or "High Orbit Ion Cannon", freeware easily found and downloaded online, anyone can type in a URL or IP address, then press the firing button and essentially perform a one-man denial of service attack (108; 109).

For those not familiar with what a DDoS attack, it can be compared to a class of 30 undergrads suddenly swarming a hapless TA with endless inane requests for help - to the point that TA can't help anyone. On the internet this is achieved by sending junk requests to servers and computers until so much processing power and bandwidth is tied up responding to them, that the server slows to a crawl or crashes. As already established, then Anonymous doesn't really organize – but if enough of them think a target is worthy/lulzy enough to be attacked, they join in and fire away, essentially making for a DDoS attack, but without any real hacking or virus infected computers being involved (110)– of course, this is just one kind of raid activity. This is a SAC-type raid at its purest and simplest. Individually none of the participants can do any noteworthy damage, but by being legion – as anonymous likes to claim it is – then an effect becomes apparent.

Before examples of actual raid SACs will be given, it must be clarified what kind of targets that are usually preyed upon:

This is most easily explained through a point of criticism of Cole Stryker's book coming from an anon who used the pseudonym Chelsea M. in contacting the news blog Betabeat, after it had interviewed Mr. Stryker

(111). Chelsea points out that since Stryker claims only to have researched the book from March 2011 until publishing it in September the same year, then Stryker gets quite a few things wrong about Anonymous – especially when it comes to raid activity.

In 2007 Moot, the admin and owner of 4chan declared that raids were not allowed to be organized on 4chan – which caused a handful of smaller chans to pop up, with ‘invasion’ or /i/nsurgency boards, typically URL lettered /i/. Examples of these are 711chan.org’s, 789chan.org’s, 808chan.org’s, 4chon.org’s and rockstarmy.com’s (an Anonymous imageboard by another name) /i/ boards, all of which are focused on raiding. There exist other sites connected to raid activity, such as the Partyvan Wiki at partyvan.info – the term “partyvan” being Anonymous lingo for the black FBI van rolls up to your house when you get arrested (usually joked about when child pornography is being posted).

The raids that the media tend to talk are the raids done by anons with political agendas. Examples of these are the raids that Cole Stryker mention – such as the still ongoing Project Chanology raids (5 pp. 95-99; 112), the online attacks on Visa and MasterCard in connection to freezing Wikileaks funds (113) and other raids done, as Stryker put it, “For great justice” (5 p. 92) as opposed to being done “for the lulz” (114) which, according to the ED page on the subject, is Anonymous’ only reason for existence – to do things for lulz, entertainment and mirth.

Stryker appears to assume that from 2006 Anonymous changed in its choice of raid victims, focused more on targets assumed to be villainous or deserving of internet vigilantism, from a more political standpoint, as opposed to previous more malicious targeting criteria. This is where the term “for great justice” comes in, a line taken from an old video game that Anonymous considers full of lulz. This is also evident on an earlier article he wrote for online blog Urlesque on the topic of anonymous (115).

Ultimately this assumption is wrong on quite a few levels. In the interview with Betabeat, Chelsea M. explains Anonymous still carious out loads of small scale malicious and lulzy raids. This is evident on the aforementioned raid boards on the various other smaller chan imageboards. They primarily deal in small scale harassment, hacking/cracking of YouTube, MySpace, Facebook accounts and other decidedly non-vigilante oriented activities.

Indeed, in an interview following the release of his book (116) Cole Stryker specifically mentions that in 2010 he wrote an article for online blog Urlesque about the Jessi Slaughter incident (117) where an 11 year old girl by the name of Jessi Slaughter uploaded a series of YouTube videos taunting online trolls, after which Anonymous caught wind of her challenge – and accepted it, raining down spiteful taunts on the young girl to the point that her father got involved, which in Anonymous’ opinion was comedy gold, as he spouted several, to them, amusing and pointless threats. Here anonymous had seen a soft target, one that couldn’t possibly hit back, but equally one that seemed very keen on pretending to be an internet tough guy.

7.2.1 The Jessi Slaughter and McKay Hatch raids

As Gawker writer Adrian Chen wrote in July 2010 (118) then the girl ultimately caved in under the relentless storm of hateful comments thrown her way. Anonymous made an 11 year old girl cry... and according to ED they found this delightfully amusing, calling her a ‘lulzcow’ – a being meant to be milked for all amusement/lulz possible (119).

Anonymous has a idiom that plainly states: “Don’t feed the trolls” – while sound advice, it also has the implied message that giving internet trolls, such as Anonymous in this case, attention (feeding them) will keep their attention focused on you. By not feeding the trolls you ignore them. Jessi failed at this. As Stryker wrote in his Urlesque report of the incident (117):

“The girl was posting suggestive photos of herself, threatening people who posted nasty comments about her videos and taunting her bullies. In other words, this girl was inviting it.”

Another example of similar treatment given out by Anonymous to a perceived lulzy target was McKay Hatch in 2009 (120). The then 15 year old had started a club to encourage young kids and teens stop the use of curse words – this concept was anathema to Anonymous’ use of profanities to keep people McKay like out of 4chan, so the raiding began. Like Jessi Slaughter the MO was fairly similar: Anonymous web-sleuthed the name, address, phone number, email, instant-messenger names and other personal information they could find on the boy, then distributed it freely on the chans – allowing anyone interested to send a prank call or order the young man some pay-on-delivery pizza, or ultrafetish porn. Prostitutes were supposedly also ordered, but as with most Anonymous raids then it is virtually impossible to confirm what exactly was done as the victims rarely seem interested in documenting the events.

Case in point: Anonymous targets whoever they want – how many anons that are needed for a raid can be debated. Their only criteria for raiding someone is that it must be lulzy. Jessi slaughter was considered pretentious and loudmouthed – and so Anonymous attacked. McKay wanted people to stop swearing –and so Anonymous attacked.

Anonymous’ method for targeting individuals invariably involve finding their name, address, email and so on. In this day and age with linked Google accounts giving access to both Gmail, YouTube accounts and other accounts one guessed password is all it takes. It should also be noted that with the numbers Anonymous has available to them, then there will invariable be someone who either has the luck or programing skills to find the information needed to get the ball rolling – the only question is whether a target is appealing enough to attract that kind of attention.

For younger targets, such as McKay or Jessi Slaughter who made the mistake of using their real names online Anonymous easily finds them on Facebook or other social networking sites, through that identifying their friends and/or parents. This gives a names to search for in order to pin down geographic locations, at which point local schools with online records or yearbooks can be scanned to confirm nearby location and identity. This is not difficult when a few hundred bored and lulz-hungry young men are all competing to be the first to deliver ‘docs’ – the word Anonymous attributes to a complete list of personal documentation of a target. To “drop the docs” on someone is, amongst anons, considered the point of no return in a raid.

Once that information has been spread through the chans nobody can stop a random anon from doing something to the target – be it order pay-on-delivery pizza or prostitutes of various genders and orientation. Essentially, once sufficient target information is publicly available a SAC can start with anyone interested being able to join the fun.

It should equally be noted that anons who get uppity and try to claim the role official spokesperson or leader tend to get the same treatment. Anonymous does not like anyone trying to steal the collective’s glory or infamy – or if someone just gets too disruptive. An example of this is known on ED as the

“Chanocalypse Naow” incident from 2008, intentionally misspelled because that’s apparently lulzy (121). What happened was apparently a group of anons from a lesser known chan that set up a DDoS attack on all major chans, as well as ED. However, this quickly ended when someone dropped docs on the offending anons – revealing who they were, allowing the then vengeful hordes of Anonymous to retaliate. What exactly was done to them was not noted on the ED page of it, but it is safe to assume that standard Anonymous raid protocol was enacted – giving them a treatment similar to the Slaughters and Mckay.

Others have equally tried to fight back when Anonymous began raiding them. It has so far never been documented to work – but Anonymous still finds it quite amusing when people try. On /b/ attempts of invasion or telling them to stop is likened to “pissing in an ocean of piss”, because of the high turnover rate of content on /b/ meaning that such threats will be gone in minutes if not seconds.

7.2.2 The Hal Turner, Adam Goldstein and other smaller raids

Another couple of examples of raids targeting individuals that Anonymous found to be full of themselves can be seen in the late 2006 Anonymous raid on internet radio host Hal Turner (122), and New Jersey PC repair and serviceman Adam L. Goldstein (123).

Hal Turner operated an internet based radio talk show where people could phone in. According to ED the show was full of right-wing conspiracy nonsense, with Turner being very full of himself, so his show on December 20th 2006 Anonymous rallied 4chan, 7chan and users from the website Ebaumsworld to perform a raid on the call-in show. Enough crank calls were made to drown out legit callers.

Turner struck back, posting all the phone numbers of the crank callers – but due to caller ID spoofing technology that most sensible anons had employed, then that didn’t amount to much. However, Anonymous still took offense to this counter-attack, finding all of Turner’s personal information and releasing that on the internet in kind. Turner folded after that, removing the phone numbers – plus his website was defaced, overall resulting in Turner supposedly losing the respect of his fanbase.

The story of Adam L Goldstein is fairly similar. In July 2009 a disgruntled costumer spread the word online that Goldstein ran his computer hardware and service shop with very impolite and possibly unlawful business practices. Regardless of the truth of this, when the story hit 4chan it quickly spread throughout most of the chans and Goldstein was soon targeted in all most every way possible.

Like Turner, then Goldstein too tried to strike back – discovering that he was being talked about in a negative way, to which he made his arguably biggest mistake: He first went to SomethingAwful.com where the disgruntled costumer had started, then went to 4chan, found the thread in which he was the topic – and told people to stop it.

Someone actually called Mr. Goldstein and suggested that he should stop playing into the online trolls’ game, as it only made them all the more happy to pick on him (124).

Despite urgings to stop, Goldstein insisted on threatening to sue people talking bad about him – plus it is obvious from the recorded phone call that Goldstein did not recognize the futility of trying to stop people from calling you things on the internet. You can’t win a pissing contest against a proverbial ocean of piss.



Figure 11: A compilation of Goldstein VS Anonymous on 4chan.

The above figure is a compilation of posts from the thread in which Goldstein tried to discourage Anonymous from further speaking badly about him and spreading his personal information. The posts are excerpts from a larger image submitted as Appendix 2 which contains a combined line of screenshots showing the entire thread of 230 posts, which shows the true nature of /b/, as some joke, some refuse, some sit and watch and some participate in the unfolding drama.

In the above image the top, middle post(below the picture of a man with a cup) and bottom posts are (supposedly) Goldstein's own posts, the rest is /b/ having a field day at his expense. Notice the humor and mention that Goldstein is somehow the one attacking /b/: Anonymous greatly values its home turf. Goldstein arrives on 4chan seeing users talking trash about him and demands that the thread is deleted.

Anonymous reacts in kind, some surprised, many amused, and quite a few making fun of him – especially by typing his name into the name field, pretending to be him or at least mocking Goldstein’s choice to name himself on 4chan.

As one anon wrote: *“By stepping into this place and provoking us, you are asking for on ten different levels.”*. This anon wasn’t kidding. The ED page on the Goldstein raid contains a list of what was supposedly done to Goldstein following this, which truly went above and beyond what Anonymous usually did:

- 1) Constant phone calls to his home, cell, and place of business (prank calls, death threats)
- 2) Black Fax copies that have successfully emptied his home and business fax ink cartridges.
- 3) His personal website has been shut down.
- 4) The Provider of his website has been shut down.
- 5) Misc. Porn magazines have been delivered to his home.
- 6) Has had dead animals thrown at his house (evidence: testimony by Adam on phone)
- 7) Several ‘pornstars’ contacted to meet at his home. (Probably prostitutes)
- 8) MySpace account hacked/shut down.
- 9) Local pizza parlors delivering pay-on-delivery pizzas
- 10) At least 25,000 UPS boxes shipped to his home and place of business.
- 11) 2000 sq. ft. of maple hardwood samples sent to his home.
- 12) Several months’ worth of free condoms & Lube sent to him
- 13) Bibles, Korans, and Jehovah’s Witnesses scheduled to come by his office.
- 14) Various free samples/products/literature/brochures addressed to his home.
- 15) Gay Newsletters subscribed to his email/home address
- 16) Constant harassment and billing charges due to excessive cell phone messages.
- 17) Streams of Islamic bibles and DVDs with conversion tips were been constantly shipped.
- 18) Male prostitutes have been sent.
- 19) Posters warning of outbreaks of H1N1 virus posted around his house.
- 20) Posters warning his neighbors calling him a child molester have been posted around his house.
- 21) Two business websites shut down
- 22) Thousands of postcards and 24hr information hotline pamphlets ordered for his home phone.

It should be noted that none of these are possible to verify and the list has been edited to be clearer on what was supposedly done, but they all fit Anonymous’ MO from other raids. The only verifiable parts of the list are those from the phone call with Goldstein, wherein he mentions death threats on his answering machine and dead animals being thrown at this house. However, assuming that it is even marginally truthful this list shows the terrifying and awe-inspiring power of a raid type SAC. Imagine if you were subjected to this kind of treatment? If someone threw dead animals at your front door and left death-treats on your answering machine? This is the terrible might of anonymous and the raids it has carried out.

However, understanding the context of the threats – that they're not meant for real, only to scare and provoke reactions – which can only be understood if one realizes that an internet raid has been called down upon you, takes a lot of the fright out of it and informs the proper cause of action: Ignore it until it goes away.

These raids all follow the same pattern: Someone starts doing something that gets the attention of anonymous, anonymous finds them a worthy target for whatever reason and a raid commences. These are all thus perfect examples of anonymous' raid SACs, with the list of offenses committed against Goldstein showing just how varied and bewildering some of anonymous' ideas for pranks can be.

While these raids might give the impression that Anonymous' raid MO strictly revolves around crank calls, hacking and shutting down websites and ordering unwanted free stuff to targets – then other approaches have been done as well, as evident in Hal Turner's phone call barrage.

An example of unconventional raids was in April 2006, following the suicide of one Mitchell Henderson. The ED page on the topic (125) explains the sad events: A young 7th grader lost his Ipod, and in despair he committed suicide. Some of his friends created a memorial MySpace page, in which amongst other things it was written:

"He was an hero, to take that shot, to leave us all behind. God do we wish we could take it back, And now he's on our minds. Mitchell was an hero, to leave us feeling like this..."

The quote is credited to a 'Lila'. The misspelling of 'a hero' caught Anonymous' attention – they found it oddly humorous, to the point that they following that event describe the act of suicide in a perceived silly/stupid/amusing/lulz context as that of becoming or committing an hero.

Anonymous returned the kindness by raiding the memorial sites, defacing them, as well as crank calling his parents saying that his Ipod had been found.

In this case the SAC wasn't focused on a target being perceived as pretentious or full of him/herself – but the target was none the less amusing and Anonymous found that lulz could be had. Either way the goal was to cause as much grief as possible, to milk to the situation of lulz.

It is curious to observe the 'an hero' SAC, for it merges all three types of standalone complexes. It was a raid, the term an hero became a meme, and Anonymous took the meme and the term and integrated them into their community.

However, it cannot be said that Anonymous' raids have only caused grief – sometimes, they cause both grief and save the lives of innocents: On February 15th 2009 a YouTube user uploaded two videos abusing a cat named Dusty.

Now, while Anonymous in reality holds absolutely nothing sacred – then cats might just be an exemption to that rule. Either way, Anonymous flew into a rage.

It took Anonymous less than 24 to web-sleuth their way to one Kenny Glenn's real name, home address, the highschool he went to – and so on. At this point the SAC manifested: Standard raid protocol was enacted, ordering random free stuff and pay-on-delivery pizzas. Someone even supposedly ordered a

funeral hearse to his home – again, these claims aren’t possible to confirm, but fit Anonymous’ MO and are thus more likely than not. While ED pages invariably must be expected to embellish Anonymous’ deeds, then outright lying about what they did doesn’t seem to be their style – since for them, being discovered on a lie about ones deeds is a very bad thing to ones online reputation. Anonymous hasn’t developed its reputation by not doing what they claim to have done.

Kenny Glenn was also reported to the local police by Anonymous, at which point the press picked up on the story (126; 127):

“The internet does not only produce megabyte upon megabyte of chatter, but can also be a useful tool in administering justice. Dusty, a cat from Oklahoma U.S., is living proof of this.”

Quote 8: Russia Today on the news of Kenny Glenn being arrested (126)

Anonymous had its fun outing Glenn and ruining his life, ensuring that anyone who ever Googles his name will quickly learn of his animal abuse (128). It should be noted that I consider the story of Dusty sufficiently covered by media and online news blogs that mentioning Kenny Glenn’s full name in this thesis isn’t adding much further insult to injury.

7.2.3 Draw the prophet Muhammad day

Another event that Anonymous participated in was the ‘International Draw the Prophet Muhammed day’. The chain of events leading up to American cartoonist Molly Norris getting the idea and proposing the event are best summarized by LA Times political commentator Andrew Malcolm: (129)

“The outcry from Comedy Central’s decision to censor an episode of South Park with depictions of Muhammad last week led a cartoonist and a Facebook user to fight back. That is until they realized it might be controversial, apparently.

In declaring May 20th to be “Everybody Draw Muhammad Day,” Seattle artist Molly Norris created a poster-like cartoon showing many objects -- from a cup of coffee to a box of pasta to a tomato -- all claiming to be the likeness of Muhammad.

Such depictions are radioactive as many Muslims believe that Islamic teachings forbid showing images of Muhammad.”

Quote 9: LA Times’ Andrew Malcolm on the Draw the Prophet Muhammad day

This led to Norris ending up on a radical Islamic execution hit-list (130) and Norris ultimately retracting her call to action for freedom of speech and solidarity for the right to draw whatever you want.

However, by then it already been picked up by the rest of the internet – Including Anonymous, who saw the opportunity to do some truly epic trolling for the lulz. She had sowed the seed and a SAC followed.

This makes it a curious kind of raid: The target, an oppressive ideology informed by a religion, couldn’t be attacked directly – you can’t DDoS a deity, but instead the ‘raid’ manifested through mass upload of offensive material meant to troll and get a reaction from those in support of the targeted ideology.

It should be noted that for an online event of this scale, then this wasn’t Anonymous’ brainchild – Miss Norris has that dubious honor. However, what she asked for fit perfectly with Anonymous’ MO: To produce so many pictures of the Islamic prophet Muhammad that no single cartoonist could ever be targeted or

censored again. That was the political/ideological agenda originally behind the event. There were probably anons who supported that political message as they drew their pictures – but the majority seemed far more intent on simply pissing off Muslims everywhere, because that was lulzy. They did so with gusto.

The ED page on the event (131) hosts a number of Anonymous' graphical representations of the prophet, both from the original 2010 may 20th draw Muhammad day, but also from the 2011 may 20th event by the same name – for a longstanding idiom amongst Anonymous is that they never forget. This is both in reference to the unforgiving nature of anonymous over real or perceived slights against them, but also in that Anonymous never truly forgets their lulzcows – and they are more than willing to return to milk it for more lulz. On the ED page Anonymous advertises at the top of the page that on the 20th of May 2012 they're going at it again. As long as it remains fun to, which in part depends on whether they can get a response from those they antagonize, Anonymous will keep up their activities.

7.2.4 Project Chanology

To briefly summarize so far: Anonymous raids anyone or anything it perceives as being lulzy to raid. Nothing is sacred, well maybe cats, but by and large Anonymous doesn't shy away from anything. Be it raiding epilepsy support forums with flashing imagery to cause seizures (132) or mercilessly causing grief and disruptions in online chat rooms year after year (92) (93).

This leads us to arguably the greatest standalone complex type raid undertaken by Anonymous, targeting the Church of Scientology, which had its beginnings in early 2008 and still isn't over at the beginning of 2012.

Gawker, an online news site, described the now infamous internal Scientology video featuring Hollywood Actor Tom Cruise was leaked onto the internet – with the Church of Scientology (CoS) promptly reacting with copyright claims and DMCA claims to have any hosting website remove the video. They also host a copy of the video for the entire world to see (133).

"You have to watch this video. It shows Tom Cruise, with all the wide-eyed fervor that he brings to the promotion of a movie, making the argument for Scientology, the bizarre 20th-century religion. Making the argument is an understatement. The Hollywood actor, star of movies such as Mission Impossible, is a complete fanatic. "When you're a Scientologist, and you drive by an accident, you know you have to do something about it, because you know you're the only one who can really help... We are the way to happiness. We can bring peace and unite cultures." There's much much more. Let me put it this way: if Tom Cruise jumping on Oprah's couch was an 8 on the scale of scary, this is a 10."

Quote 10: Gawker's Nick Denton, on the Tom Cruise video.

Anonymous caught on to this as the CoS attempted to suppress the spread of the video, which only caused a Streisand Effect (134) – as with the Goldstein raid, then Anonymous did not take kindly to the originator of such a lulzy artifact attempting to suppress its existence. The Streisand effect, named after Barbara Streisand, is when upon trying to conceal an event or artifact, that public attention to that which is being concealed intensifies – making the act of trying to hide something a highly counter-productive activity.

On ED a page titled 'The Chanology Experiments' lists the overarching events and drama of the Anonymous side of Chanology (135), yielding a rough and mostly date-less timeline up to late 2008 when whoever last

edited the page stopped. Equally, the ED shutdown and reboot in 2011 has caused most of the images used on the page to no longer be available, making it more difficult to discern the context and relevance of some of events listed.

Either way Project Chanology is largely well documented due to the fact that amongst the anonymous protestors it was the norm, from the start, to bring cameras to document the fun – they called it ‘camerafaggotry’. There are countless hours of footage of anonymous protests on YouTube, ensuring that the lulz can be seen by all.

The prelude to the raiding started with discussions on 4chan in mid-January 2008, which culminated in a call to action that was apparently effective enough to prompt SAC which raided various CoS websites and phone lines, with the usual ordering of pay-on-delivery pizza, prank calls and black-page faxes. This was standard raid protocol for all Anonymous cared, but this soon changed radically.

Following this a man Anonymous dubbed Wise Beard Man (136) also known as Mark Bunker, a long time protestor of the CoS posted a YouTube video (137) and advised Anonymous to stop using DDoS attacks and illegal tactics – and instead focus on legal real life protest activity.

For some unknown reason Anonymous actually followed his advice – as is the fickle and unpredictable nature of SACs, resulting in a YouTube video called “Message to Scientology” posted on the 21st January 2008 by a YouTube user mockingly named “ChurchOfScientology” (138) which roughly explained to the rest of Anonymous how one could get started on this, allowing the SAC to change focus and evolve. This led to the first global anti-CoS Anonymous protest on the 10th of February 2008. According to the ED page approximately 200 protests took place in front of various CoS locations – and was met by antagonistic Scientologists trying to start trouble, in pretense of allowing the CoS to call the police to remove supposedly violent protesters according to Anonymous (139). 4chan founder Christopher ‘Moot’ Poole stated that over 70.000 anons took part of the initial global raids (10), which is impressive, considering the usual MO for Anonymous. However, this simply demonstrates that a new SAC had arisen, that of project Chanology, and that it was popular enough to draw such participation.

Video footage from two of the protests on February 10th 2010, as well as from subsequent protests reveal a strange translation of internet jokes and culture for real life protest use (140; 141). Many of the protestors attempted to remain anonymous by wearing a Guy Fawkes mask, a symbol often referred to ironically on 4chan in the wake of the movie V for Vendetta, as Anonymous identified with the character V who wore a mask among other things and was thus perceived as a faceless terror to the rest of the world around.

Equally, the protests often looked more like street parties than protests – as Anonymous brought its online lulz into the real world (142; 143; 144). This demonstrates how the SAC had transitioned into the real world and how it had maintained its popularity: people weren’t considering this a boring old protest, this was a party at the CoS’s expense.

While the initial wave of attacks that Anonymous threw at the CoS were mainly out of lulzy spite over attempted video censorship, then as anons circulated secret CoS lore they found it incredibly lulzy, such as CoS claiming that reading certain parts of their lore called ‘OT level 3’ (145) before one was ready would literally kill you (146). This helped fuel the SAC as it became even more appealing and amusing. Anonymous equally laughed heartily when a leaked email seemed to indicate that the CoS leader David Miscavige

honestly and seriously believed that Anonymous was the vanguard of an alien invasion fleet (147). That part of the CoS founder L. Ron Hubbard's description of these aliens in CoS lore match part of Anonymous' iconography didn't help either – making for an amusing ED page where Anonymous revels in its alien overlords (148). This goes to show how the SAC dynamically responded to its target's reactions.

“Various planets united into a very vast civilization which has come forward up through the last 200,000 years, formed out of the fragments of earlier civilizations. In the last 10,000 years they have gone on with a sort of decadent kicked-in-the-head civilization that contains automobiles, business suits, fedora hats, telephones, spaceships — a civilization which looks almost an exact duplicate but is worse off than the current U.S. civilization”

Quote 11: L. Ron Hubbard, founder of the CoS, describing the evil aliens (148).

Compare that to the figure on the right, an image Anonymous often uses to graphically represent itself (36). Well, the business suit part at least fit – and with the photo-editing skills many anons had after years of adding captions to pictures of cats, then adding a fedora hat wasn't that difficult. These coincidences and assumptions of extra-terrestrial origins arguably strengthened the chanology SAC, by making it more fun and thus more popular. The chanology SAC thus had a participant overlap between it and the anonymous SAC that birthed it.

It should be pointed out that Project Chanology caused a great deal of internal strife in the chans and between anons. Those dubbed the hate or lulzfags just wanted to troll the CoS and its members for lulz, while those dubbed the cause or moralfags saw it as a greater cause. This caused some inter-chan warfare, usually in form of DDoS attacks, as not all of Anonymous thought that it was a good idea to give Anonymous this kind of exposure.

One example of this, according to ED, was 420chan's ra/i/dboard planning to raid the website through which the chanology anons organized their protests (149). While it does require some understanding of Anonymous lingo, the entry explains that hatefags from 420chan planned to DDoS the chanology site, but another Anonymous raid board discovered this and DDoS'd 420chan before the chanology site could be attacked.

This kind of DDoS operations were commonplace in the first year of Chanology, as Anonymous actually began to get positive mentions in the press – which clashed with /b/'s traditional understanding of Anonymous being a cruel and heartless lulz-seeker.



Figure 12: The 'face' of Anonymous, with a popular catchphrase.

This internal schism, along with how the individual protests are organized, exemplifies how Project Chanology is a perfect example of a standalone complex: You participate at your own leisure, and even if others don't like it – then they have no power to stop you. There was and still aren't any real organization to project chanology. It still continues actively, albeit with far fewer active protest cells, as after almost four years the initial hype and lulz has worn off – but the protests continue, headed by dedicated causefags, who still occasionally receive ridicule from the chans. Participation in protests is voluntary and attendance invariably depends on individual motivation and interest – but this also makes Chanology incredibly robust.

This also means that, since the anonymous and chanology SAC overlap, people can go back and forth between the two. As Suler's disinhibition theory suggests (13) then people are aware that while at one place you act in one way, while at another you are expected to behave differently.

Another side of the Chanology SAC, with its decentralization, non-committal nature and its lack of organization is arguably one of the most impressive aspects of Project Chanology: The CoS has a reputation for hounding its critics (133; 150). Here they were faced with leaderless protests. There was no real organization to sue for harassment or libel – as people just showed up if they wanted to. There were no membership lists to go through, and no funding to cut off. This is the power of a standalone complex.

The effects of project chanology are many. However, it must be understood that after the lulzfags from the initial protests left due to lack of further lulz then the SAC shrank a lot. The remaining anons focused their attention not on harassing or trolling individual members of the CoS – instead focusing on the CoS itself for how they saw it to misbehave. This was the course of action that Mark Bunker AKA Wise Beard Man had urged on, resulting in many former scientologists joining chanology – or merging their own personal protest activity with that of the anons', which has bolstered the SAC slightly.

Another example of the chanology SAC's effects, according to ED on the subject, is as follows (151). They aren't in any way related or indicative of the nature of the SAC, but it is impressive to consider what it has managed to achieve.

- 1) Anonymous ensured that all CoS lore, especially the parts that the CoS considers proprietary and secret, are now easy to find online, both on Wikileaks (152) and via links on ED (153)
- 2) Multiple members of the CoS have left the organization
- 3) Anonymous' protest doctrine of "camera faggotry" has resulted in numerous CoS members being caught on video attacking or harassing peaceful protestors, giving the CoS multiple PR nightmares (154; 155; 156; 157; 158; 159)
 - a. This also had the effect of the CoS members now rarely coming out to confront/harass protestors
- 4) Many ex-CoS members have spoken out against the CoS in public after Anonymous made them aware of outside support being available (160) (161)
- 5) A lot of public awareness raised over questionable CoS practices via Anonymous' protest activity
- 6) Due to Anonymous' focus on raising awareness about the CoS' litigious nature and activities, it has become possible for academics and journalists to write more freely about the CoS without fear of reprisals for publishing critical articles on the subject.

Cole Stryker interviewed anthropologist Gabriella Coleman for his book, and got the following statement the effects of Chanology:

“Scientology has received so much negative attention that they’ve refrained from legal intimidation tactics. If I had released some of the papers I’ve released recently six years ago, I would have been embroiled in legal battles. Anonymous really changed the landscape.”

Quote 12: Gabriella Coleman on the effect of Chanology (3 p. 99)

Or to put it differently: If Anonymous hadn’t paved the way –I would not have dared to write about the CoS and the Chanology SAC in this thesis. I don’t want to see my pet cat dead (162).

Coleman has equally made some rather insightful observations on the Anonymous/CoS conflict. According to her then Anonymous, with its free spirit and lack of rules are the polar opposite to the CoS, who according to her have rigid dogma dictating nearly every aspect of scientologists’ lives (163). This allows Anonymous to poke endless fun at the CoS who, according to their teachings aren’t allowed to find that funny. One example is that Anonymous mockingly calls its approach to peaceful protesting ‘Gandhi tech’, after the Indian political leader, as well as to mock the CoS’ lore, which it likes to call tech.

Apart from overall perceived victories that Anonymous may or may not boast about, then a discussion thread on WhyWeProtest.net’s forum titled “What has Anonymous done for YOU?” started in 2008 (160) contains hundreds of statements about how being part of Chanology has done everything from giving some monthly blisters on their feet from attending protests, to restoring their faith in humanity – although most of it is written with Anonymous’ dark humor. This thread perfectly exemplifies the SAC that Chanology is, through the very different replies made to the thread’s topic.

An example is this, from an early post in the thread by a anon using the alias ‘Gregg’, show’s a response to be expected from Anonymous:

“o hai.

Anonymous gave me aids and a court case.

Anonymous has turned me into a moralfag.

Anonymous has gotten me more emails and private messages saying nice things to me than I could have ever thought possible.

Anonymous has taken many hours of every day from me for nearly 6 months. And it’s been worth every minute of it.”

Quote 13: One Anon ‘Gregg’ on his experience with Anonymous and Chanology (164)

The reference to aids is a part of Anonymous humor, similar to rule 62 of the internet – but beyond that then Gregg states that Anonymous turned him into a moralfag through participation in chanology, meaning that he now believes in the good that Anonymous can do. Another post from the same thread made in late October 2011 is from a former scientologist who joined up with chanology:

“Anonymous has impressed me ever since I first heard about it on the TV news. As an ex-scientologist I gave up trying to explain Scientology for the most part to people since it is such a huge subject (tldr: it’s a cult). Then I find this forum because someone slipped a YFTC in a library book that I was also going to slip flyers in.

I discover that a lot of Anons actually have read a lot more LRH than I have and they even understand the workings of Scientology as a theory and as an organization. I never thought that was possible since the books are so boring and full of a lot of made-up words and lunatic ideas. Surely nobody except a Scientologist would have the patience to read this insanity.

Anonymous has given me some hope. Before, Scientology would deal with its handful of critics one at a time but now that tactic is useless given the nature of the Anon Phenon."

Quote 14: Jaycee Wiseboy (Possibly an alias) on Anonymous and the effect of Chanology (161)

This thread on how Anonymous has affected the chanology participants are full of this kind of heartwarming message – but also the more lulzy ones as written by Gregg. As stated earlier, this shows how diverse the approaches and individually perceived results of Chanology are – revealing it at a SAC. To clarify: Gregg speaks like a 4chan regular, while Wiseboy claims to be a former scientologist. One approached Chanology as a source of lulz, the other approached Chanology as a source of hope. These are, to put it very mildly, different understandings of the same thing – but ultimately they amount to the same effect, and are thus exemplar of being a standalone complex.

The chanology raids and protests are, at the time of this being written, still going strong. As mentioned earlier they aren't as numerous as they were to begin with – but they're still apparently quite effective and still have an impact, as indicated by statements from this Wiseboy character.

Indeed, in October 2011 Danish newspaper Politiken ran an article with a headline that, in English, reads "The rebellion under the white mask" (165). The article featured images of anons in Guy-Fawkes masks from various protests, and explains in no uncertain terms that Anonymous has popularized the use of the mask as a new modern symbol of rebellion and resistance – much like how Che Guevara was in the 1970s. Basically, according to the article, Anonymous has through Chanology made the Guy-Fawkes mask a new global symbol – a global meme. It is curious to see that the writer of the article apparently fails to see the connection, in writing that Guy-Fawkes mask wearers are appearing in other protests, such as the various Occupy Wall Street protests, without drawing the conclusion that it is quite possibly cause-oriented anons who are taking their Chanology experience with them to other protests.

Finally, one has to keep in mind that while Anonymous does protest the CoS, using the full 'name' and implication of that in the process – then not all of anons take part of such activities. This is a danger of standalone complexes – especially when those in it diverge in activities or 'overlap' in this way with regards to naming conventions. On the other hand: You cannot tell if an anon on 4chan also takes part in the protests – but assuming that they all do so does not correlate with the millions of 4chan users and the comparatively few Chanology participants. This links back to the notion that Anonymous as a whole is usually 'the one' credited with the creation or success of an activity or event.

A good example of this kind of "Is this all of anonymous or only bits of it doing this?" is the more recent events surrounding whistleblower publisher Wikileaks, which show how declaring a grand SAC raid by anonymous to take place is not all you need to get one started, quite the contrary.

7.2.5 Wikileaks and failed raids

This subsection details a series of arguably failed raids initialized by parts of Anonymous – and explains why they failed, demonstrating that SACs have criteria for a reason: If not met, it won't manifest: You will simply be left standing alone.

Following PayPal, MasterCard and Visa shutting down Wikileaks donation and bank accounts in late 2010, parts of Anonymous attacked PayPal, MasterCard and Visa with LOIC-fueled DDoS attacks. The attacks didn't do that much damage – MasterCard and Visa's credit card operations weren't influenced to any meaningful degree, indeed Anonymous' attack was more a demonstration of power. As mentioned in an MSNBC news broadcast, then these attacks were followed up by Anonymous hackers releasing ten thousand MasterCard card numbers as a show of force, to indicate that they were serious about punishing their perceived 'ally' in lulz, Wikileaks (166).

It must be understood that only parts of Anonymous engage in actual hacking activities. However, telling exactly which anons who do it virtually impossible – similar to the issue of telling anons who participate in anti-CoS protests apart from anons who just frequent the chans, as all the groups invariably overlap.

Equally, then politically motivated Anonymous activities do differ from regular lulz-focused Anonymous shenanigans. There is little lulz in calling for a boycott of PayPal, but in July 2011 some anons did call for such as an initiative – resulting in a 3% drop in stock price for PayPal (167).

Indeed, this is part of why the regular lulzfag anons consider such activities unfunny and bad. There's little to no lulz in it, plus it doesn't follow Anonymous' reputation as evil internet overlords.

Of course, some lulz is always there to be had – once the proper opportunities come. This happened in the case of the CEO of US security company HBGary Federal, one Aaron Barr, claimed to have identified the 'leaders' of Anonymous (168).

Now, simply assuming that there are leaders of Anonymous is wrong to begin with. The CoS initially tried to find leaders of Anonymous, and had to settle with the idea that it was alien overlords. Barr on the other hand anonymously entered into a series of chatrooms and tried to correlate chat postings to twitter posts, in an attempt to ID anonymous users. His logic appeared to be that Anonymous was controlled by groups of hackers.

This is actually an interesting theory. Not the notion that Anonymous is controlled by hackers, but that Anonymous can be controlled.

Cole Stryker interviewed an anon who used the alias Anonymouse (5 pp. 103-105). Anonymouse is a good example of an individual with political motivations, who claims that his contributions to Anonymous helped shape the course of operation Sony, which resulted in a DDoS attack that paralyzed Playstation.com and its web store and later the entire PlayStation Network (PSN) (169) – although the real damage didn't come until later when a group of anons, calling themselves Lulzsec, had their go at the PSN and found that Sony stored user, admin, government and military passwords and account information on unencrypted plain text files. These files also included credit card information. Lulzsec dropped the docs and released everything to the public. (170). This made for a massive public embarrassment of Sony as it revealed how poor their security had been – forcing them to rework corporate policy.

What had Sony done to incur Anonymous' wrath? They were cracking down on PlayStation users who were trying to install homemade applications on their PlayStation 3 consoles (5 p. 104). But what did Anonymouse then do to contribute? He ran an IRC channel focused on recruiting and organizing people for DDoS attacks – basically telling people what IP address or URL to target. As with all Anonymous raids, participation could only be voluntary, as nobody can force anyone to start up their LOIC program – although it should be noted: LOIC has a function that allows users to switch on 'hivemind' mode, which connects the program to other LOIC users, essentially volunteering your computer to a botnet for large scale more centrally controlled DDoS attacks. This could also be considered the lazy mode: now you don't even have to bother typing in where to attack or push the start button.

The Sony PSN attack and the events that occurred relating to HBGary are strikingly similar. Anonymous found itself annoyed by something. In the case of Sony it was their handling of users trying to mod and customize their consoles – because Anonymous would have you always free to have fun with products you've bought and paid for. In the case of HBGary it was their CEO Aron Barr claiming to have found the identity of their 'leaders'. This makes Anonymous' motivation for attacking HBGary more akin to the Goldstein or Slaughter raid in that it was someone who, in Anonymous' eyes, called Anonymous out – dared them to do something.

They did. Anons completely hacked HBGary's servers and got away with thousands of emails, detailing most of the company's commercial endeavors. What was revealed was not pretty. HBGary was revealed to be working on software that would allow a user to influence public opinion polls through automated social network user account creations.

Anonymouse puts it quite well: *"Here's the really frightening part in my view. HBGary were a small, obscure security company. We only went after them because they tried to dox a bunch of us. It was an act of personal revenge at first, rather than actively hoping to expose crime. But look what happened. The can of worms we opened was millions of times bigger than anyone ever expected. Same kind of situation with Operation Payback. [A leak of fifty-three hundred IP addresses collected by a UK firm because they were associated with pirating porn.] When the emails were leaked nobody expected the sheer amount of black ops which would be exposed. I guess you dream of a day when technology has empowered enough common people that it will be nearly impossible for any government entity or corporation to pull this kind of shit."*

Quote 15: Anonymouse on HBGary. (5 p. 105)

This all goes to show that occasionally when Anonymous targets something then something big can come out of it. It also goes to show that Anonymous raids are anything but ineffective, although it has gotten quite a few participants arrested on various charges for computer crime – although it has been debated whether this kind of protest activity is worth prosecuting (171).

Indeed, with the DDoS attacks on PayPal, MasterCard and Visa having been largely ineffective – seeing as they didn’t unfreeze the Wikileaks accounts – it is evident that once the lulz goes out of a raid, so does its effectiveness, when it comes to online activism. Political and ideological agendas just aren’t that funny, and thus cannot muster the same numbers as the more popular targets. Chanology has been able to keep going, even with lower numbers, due to the fact that they don’t need hundreds of protestors per protest to get their message across – but for DDoS attack and regular raids numbers are required get noticeable results.

During 2011 many examples of this have come up (172; 173; 174; 175). The primary reason being lack of participation has already been covered, but another aspect of the problem is the media.

Gregg Housh, founder and admin of WhyWeProtest.net – the hub site which contains the primary forum for project chanology and a handful of other more politically oriented movements that some anons support, specifically the Occupy Wallstreet movement, Wikileaks and the activities surround it as well as the aiding of Arab and middle eastern protestors – has been interviewed by both CNN (176) and other media outlets (177).

To quickly summarize Anonymous’ involvement in middle eastern affairs, then anons have helped Egyptian protestors and later rebels bypass government lockdowns on internet activity and connectivity in 2011 (5 p. 106; 321), as well as hacking various middle eastern government websites to send the message that Anonymous (or at least parts of it) wasn’t happy with they were treating their civilians (328). Menn quotes sources stating that Anonymous was instrumental in ensuring that during the ‘Arab spring’ could organize and take place, by publicizing instructions on how to use freeware proxies, encryption and other means to avoid government crackdowns and internet blockades of social networking sites. The arab spring rebellions can in essence be likened to SACs, especially in the initial periods where it was mostly a question of organizing sharing information online, which is what Anonymous advised on.

Housh was interviewed by CNN in connection to the Wikileaks related Anonymous attacks on PayPal, MasterCard and visa, as his administration of WhyWeProtest.net allows him to be constantly up to date with nearly all cause-oriented Anonymous initiatives. It is interesting to see in the CNN interview how confused and disappointed the CNN news host is when Housh tries to explain that he isn’t a spokesperson – and that saying that you’re a member of anonymous is a bit of an oxymoron.

When Stryker spoke with Anonymouse, Anonymouse explained the confusion very well (5 p. 104):

“They screw up specifically because they don’t get the concept of a “group” with no hierarchy, social structure, pecking order, or organization. The press are always looking for a “boss”, but there isn’t one. The FBI are the same.”

Quote 16: Anonymouse, explaining why mainstream media have trouble understanding Anonymous.

Anonymouse’s sentiment is part of why I am attempting to define Anonymous as a standalone complex – so that people can finally understand what they are and refer to them properly. This is why I write of standalone complexes: To help things like the media understand what they’re talking about.

However Anonymouse's notion of total lack of hierarchical structures isn't entirely true. He himself admits to moderate an IRC channel, giving him power to block anyone he doesn't deem fit to join up – which, if nothing else, can be very discouraging to would be raiders. Equally, then the creator of the LOIC program undoubtedly had power in determining how effective he wanted to make it – or if he wanted to make it at all.

This reveals a curious dual lynchpin in a standalone complex type raid: There has to be something to start it to begin, but then there has to be popular support for and there has to be docs. With one missing it difficult to get anything done. In the case of the more politically oriented raids the issues was usually popular support. For a raid like the Goldstein raid, things can't start until docs are dropped – even with popular support.

It is curious to notice that with /b/'s reputation for malicious raiding of worthy targets it is not uncommon for spiteful ex-girl or boyfriends to post their previously significant other's docs on /b/ and request a raid. This is in fact so common that Anonymous has a saying about it – a standardized response to anyone seeking to sick Anonymous on whatever they don't like at the moment: "NYPA" – this is short for "Not your personal army". Indeed, the ED page on that specific topic details three instances of individuals with grudges who tried to recruit an internet army for their cause... only be raided themselves by Anonymous because they were deemed far too full of themselves – plus it was obviously lulzy to turn the tables on them. Then there's also the story of Paul Fetch (178) who tried to stir up support on YouTube for a SAC raid to take on Anonymous. The army never showed, but Anonymous did with a their own raid – and three days later Mr. Fetch's docs were all over the internet (179).

7.2.6 Ocean Marketing VS Angry gamers

This raid is another example of the fact that Anonymous isn't the only force on the internet that can do raids. On the 27th of December 2011 on 12:30 AM the gamer website Penny Arcade reported on a nasty email-correspondence between Ocean Marketing, a PR company at the time in charge of marketing a game controller accessory and a costumer that had taken place from the 16th to the 26th of December 2011 (180). Short version: marketing consultant Paul Christoforo was very rude to a costumer – and the costumer told the internet about it, and the internet responded in kind. This was basically the start of a second Adam Goldstein raid.

This was then picked up by gamer news website Kotaku.com on the same day at 4:30 AM (181) at which point the story was all over the internet. The people at Kotaku then tried to verify the story with the company that was using Ocean Marketing to market their product, which revealed that the incident had gotten Ocean Marketing fired and so was no longer representing the game controller accessory producer.

However, the most interesting factoid that this investigation revealed was Mr. Christoforo's personal email address – part of his 'docs' to use Anonymous terminology. The original Penny Arcade News entry that started the event had also leaked Mr. Christoforo's business email addresses, as well as twitter account name and phone number, out of spite.

At this point fans and regulars at the Penny Arcade forum, as well as regulars from 4chan's video game board /v/ descended upon Christoforo – evidence of which was posted as a follow-up on Penny Arcade's new blog at 4 PM on the same day (182). The news update reported that at 7:12 AM, just fifteen hours

after the original story had been posted online, Christoforo emailed an apology to Penny Arcade begging Krahulik to ‘make it stop’.

However, Krahulik makes a wise observation at this point:

“The reality is that once I had posted the emails I didn’t have the power anymore. The Internet had it now and nothing I said or did was going to change that.”

Quote 17: Mike Krahulik (182)

The statement essentially recognized that the moment Krahulik had posted the docs, he had relinquished any and all control of what his fans and others might use it for. In essence he recognized that he had sowed the seeds of a standalone complex raid targeting Christoforo and was disavowing any responsibility for what others used the information for.

This fits well with what Krahulik explains in the news post, stating that Christoforo subsequently sent a longer explanation – detailing, amongst other things, that he hadn’t slept yet due to dealing with spam and ‘personal information intrusions’ as well as his family being smeared online. The SAC raid had begun – and when it would stop nobody could tell. MSNBC reported that he had been bombarded with over 7000 emails during the first 24 hours of the SAC raid on him (183).

This goes to show how quickly a SAC raid can get started, once docs have been leaked, provided that popular opinion towards the target is sufficiently hostile.

Indeed, the popular phenomena – the meme – that was “Look at this Christoforo guy making a fool of himself, making fun of him is fun!” even managed to spawn a couple of YouTube parody videos within 24 hours of the story going public (184; 185).

It should be noted that Anonymous was probably involved with this – since the topic of Ocean Marketing was supposedly briefly mentioned on 4chan’s /v/ board – so some anons might have been involved in the subsequent harassment of Christoforo. See appendix 3 for a screenshot of a discussion of Ocean Marketing, which includes a link to a thread on 4chan’s /v/ board - a thread which is now gone due to the turnover of content on /v/, similarly to /b/. Either way then this kind of online raiding and harassment fits Anonymous’ MO.

7.2.7 Summary

To summarize, then online raids can take a number of different forms – but the goal ultimately seems to be the same: To have fun harassing something. Since SACs are without leaders or management, then there is no coordination: this makes them good examples of SACs, as they only truly appear once a mass of individual raiders all attack the same target, making it appear as a concerted effort. Their effects can be terrible, as exposure of private and possible embarrassing information is never fun, and websites can get shut down through DDoS attacks which can incur a heavy financial penalty through bandwidth charges from website hosts. Chanology shows that raids can effectively be taken to the real world, and Wikileaks shows that raids can fail to have an impact if it doesn’t have popular support. Ocean Marketing and the Draw the Prophet Muhammad day shows that Anonymous aren’t the only online raiders.

7.3 The Furry Fandom

What is the furry fandom? Like Anonymous, the short answer to this question is that the furry fandom is a standalone complex. Indeed, comparing this community, this fandom, to Anonymous is not entirely wrong, as they do share certain common traits – but the two are also very much different. It is for this reason that I examine this standalone complex type community.

It should be noted from the start that the furry fandom is very different example of a community type SAC: the shared interested that loosely unites it is a common interest in all things dealing with mainly anthropomorphic animals, although it must be understood that this leaves quite a lot of room for individual interpretation. In more common English: Anthropomorphic means animals with humanoid qualities, or likewise humanoid creatures with animal qualities – think cartoon characters and you're not too far off. As with any SAC particulars do vary, and like Anonymous there is no formal definition of what it means to be a 'furry' beyond the above vague definition.

It should be noted that I will not be writing nearly as much on the furry fandom as I have Anonymous: they simply don't do nearly as much as Anonymous, such as raiding (more often they're the targets of raids and Anonymous ridicule) although with that in mind the furry fandom is a lot more friendly, open and accepting of newcomers, as opposed to Anonymous.

So, what does it mean to be a furry and why exactly is the fandom a SAC?

As already explained, then there is no core definition of what it means to be a furry. Simply having an interest in anthropomorphic animals or objects says absolutely nothing about how that interest has to be expressed. This leaves endless room for various aesthetic styles and preferences, personal interpretations and choice of expression.

I have found seven different instances of explanations of what 'furry' means (186; 187; 188; 189; 190; 191). While some of these are from decidedly 'furry' websites, which might call in question how biased they are – then they all agree: There is no commonly agreed definition beyond merely a fascination or liking of anthropomorphic artifacts and concepts.

The subject of explaining – if not defining – what the furry fandom is, can be a hotly debated topic amongst furries. Indeed, even some non-furries have caught on to this and agree that some elements of the furry fandom are weirder than the rest of it.

An example of this can be seen on a thread on Operatorchan.org, a chan like many others (192). A discussion on roleplaying experiences involving furry characters develops as an anon reveals himself to be a furry and starts to trash talk furries himself.

This kind of bashing of furries is a common Anonymous activity, but the interesting development in the discussion happens when two anons identify themselves as furry in the subsequent discussion – and despite that continue to declare their hatred of the notion of a certain kind of furries.

3rd Fgt 11/11/23(Wed)22:20 No. 9880 ID: 5e4bb4

As a furry who has to put up with dipshit furries moreso than even normal folks... I want to buy you a beer for going through all this.

Purge. Purge. Purge.

Figure 13: One anon reveals himself as a furry. (192)

Specifically, in the above image – taken from a screenshot of the discussion - the anon declares himself to be a furry, but he still wants to see furies 'purged', as in purged with fire, using the casual Anonymous lingo of calls for violence and destruction on the internet. This leads into other anons curiously asking if there is such a thing as 'moderate' furies, as the common understanding that Anonymous has of furies, as explained on the ED page on the subject, would have that all furies are far more extreme or weird. It should be noted that this also indicates that being a furry and being part of Anonymous is possible to do at the same time, as Suler pointed out with people being able to switch from one mindset to another when going around on different websites on the internet (13).

The other furry anon explains this, stating that in his opinion there are two kinds of furies: the sort that 'get sucked into batshit escapism' and then the sort that sits on the sideline and scowl at the ones making fools of themselves.

"Yeah, I'm a furry. The thing about the term furry is that it applies to a fairly large swath of interests. Pretty much anything involving anthropomorphic creatures can be classified as such. You don't have to produce things involving furry characters or dress up to be a furry. The only thing required is intense interest. You have the fetishists, the spiritual people who treat it like a religion kind of thing, the poptarts who slather themselves in highlighter and shove glowsticks up their asses, and still more who just use an animal as an avatar/analogy for themselves.

I keep my furry bullshit to myself so as to not bother people, however I tend to go furfag when I'm drunk. I guess the point I'm trying to make is that you can take it in several different directions with drastically different results for each one."

Quote 18: Anonymous, Explaining what furry means. (192)

Again it is pointed out that being furry can mean any number of things. The lesson to take from this discussion is similar to the hate vs causefag schism from Chanology: SACs can overlap, even if that causes tensions, a 4chan regular can also be a furry. Equally, it implies that within the furry fandom there are very different kinds of furies. Both of these observations support the notion that the furry fandom is a SAC: the implied difference in furies, to the point that some furies don't even like certain other kinds of furies, and the fact that it is possible to be part of the furry fandom and Anonymous at the same time, since it's impossible to tell if you jump the fence every now and then. This last bit might not sound impressive, but looking at the ED page on furies (193) then it becomes clear that at least certain parts of Anonymous thinks very poorly of furies, as the discussion on operationchan equally hints at.

In a survey done by the University of California, Davis department of psychology in 2007 on 600 respondents the results indicated a number of things regarding the furry fandom (194):

The average age of respondents were about 24 years old, 81% were male, 89% Caucasian, 83% American, 38% were students in one form or another, 82% did not own a fursuit, about half were in relations of which 76% of those were with other furies. However, no real name or accreditation is given of the researchers, so it is difficult to confirm the validity of these statistics.

However, a similar and more recent study done by a group of psychology, sociology and leisure studies professors in 2011 have produced similar results, lending some credence to the UC Davis numbers (195):

Amongst their thousands of respondents (4824 total) the average age was 23, over 50% of respondents being in the 18-21 bracket – though they do note that due to ethical reason they did not include data from respondents under the age of 18, so the data is somewhat incomplete in that sense. They found 66% of respondents to be American, 15% to be from northern Europe, 10% to be from Canada, and the rest spread around the world on six different continents. 84% were male and over 50% were students.

However, this survey asked more than the UC Davis survey – inquiring into spiritual matters as well. 25% of respondents were Christian, 27% atheist, 23% agnostic, 5% pagan and a whopping 16% were ‘other’ – as the anon on Operatorchan described some furies taking an approach to the fandom in a more religious nature, identifying with their anthropomorphic creations and using them as a personal totem. This kind of animal-totem approach can be seen as a reference back ancient Egypt and their animal-headed gods – by that logic, the furry fandom is quite old.

However, Gerbasi et al’s survey also probed a number of other critical points on the fandom, asking furry and non-furry respondents how much they felt themselves ‘par’ of the furry fandom:

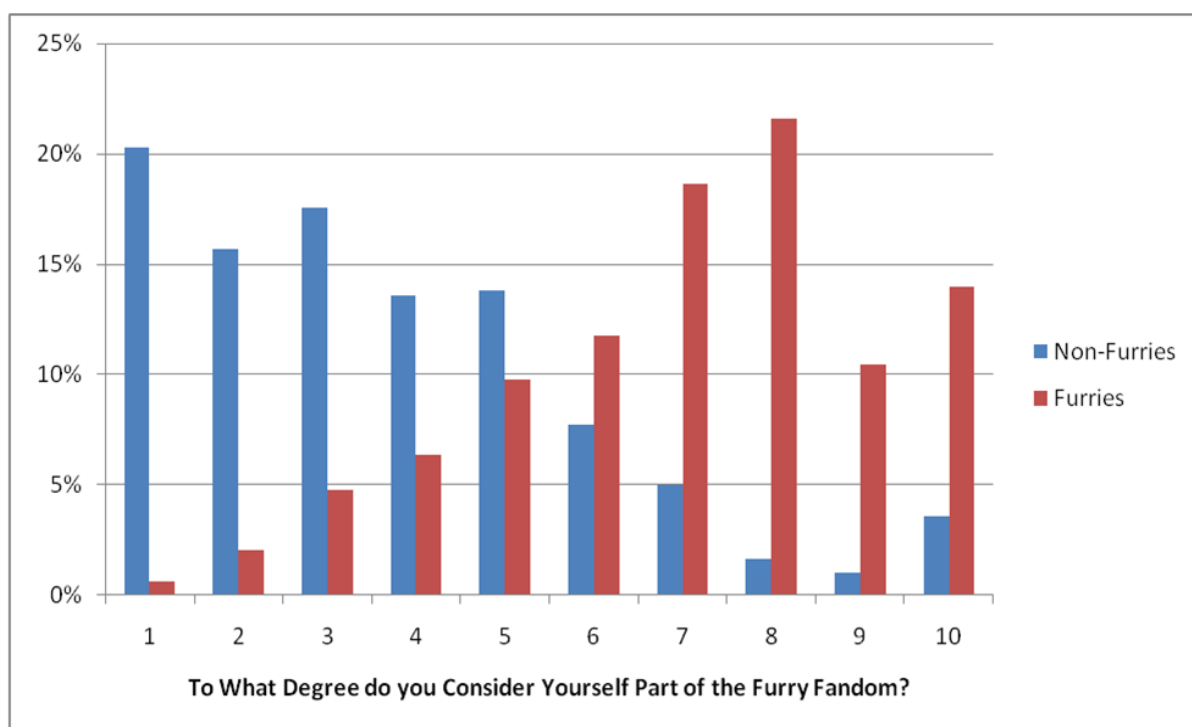


Figure 14: Gerbasi et al's data on how much respondents felt part of the furry fandom.

The rating of one to ten is to be understood as low scores indicate not feeling very much part of the fandom, while a high score shows a strong feeling of connection to the fandom. It should be noted, as shown in the above graph, that some 30% of respondents who identified themselves as furry didn't consider themselves that much part of the fandom. This correlates with my notion that the furry fandom is a SAC, as it explains the very individualistic approach many furies have to how they see themselves as furry. Some furies think themselves very much part of the fandom – while there are also people who do not think themselves furry, who also consider themselves part of the fandom – but there are also furies who seem to not think themselves very much into the fandom. This wide variation is highly indicative of a

SAC, as a more formalized community with a more specified profile would arguably only cater to that one specific type of members. This also fits with the statements from the operatorchan anons.

This also correlates with Suler's disinhibition factors, specifically Solipsistic introjection and dissociative imagination (13): Online you can adopt any kind of 'online persona' you want – and even more so you can have that persona behave any way you want, as you are aware that it is not the real life you.

That the furry fandom fosters and encourages the creation of your own personal online 'fursona' takes on a different meaning in light of the spiritual/totemic implication that some furies exhibit. Gerbasi et al inquired into how human the respondents felt, and if they would like to become animals. Their answers allowed them to define four types of furies:

Type 1 felt completely human and did not want to become non-human. 41% of furry and 64% of non-furry respondents fit this category. It is curious to note that only two thirds of non-furies who took the survey fit this category.

Type 2 felt equally human, but wished to become non-human, as in become an anthropomorphic creature. A third of the furry and 22% of the non-furry respondents fit this category.

Type 3 did not feel human to begin with but did not want to become decidedly non-human. 6% of furies and 5% of non-furies fit this category.

Type 4 did not feel human either, but also wished to become non-human anthropomorphic in nature. 19% of furies and 9% of non-furies fit this category.

The survey, having broken furies down into these four categories, were then able to point out that type 4 furies were the ones who considered themselves most part of the fandom, while type 1 furies felt the least part of the fandom, referring to data sets such as the one displayed on the previous page as graph.

Another discovery that Gerbasi et al were able to make was cross-referencing type categories with questions of how likely individual respondents were to exhibit furry online-behavior in real life, breaking with Suler's notion of dissociation. Unsurprisingly half of type 4 furies were likely to exhibit this kind of behavior, while only around 30% of type 1 furies would. Equally, then according to the survey data then type 4 and 3 were very much inclined not to believe that being a furry is not something you individually have any control over – indicating a belief in something more than just hobby-level fascination or adherence to a social group. This can be linked with the spiritual implications mentioned.

However, Gerbasi et al's data also show that type 4 furies very much feel that the furry fandom fulfills a need for belongingness – that they it simply gives them a community and identity to belong to, indicating that answers relating to how human they might feel could more be attributed to a sense of social belonging that overwrites personal identity... a bit like Anonymous ignoring personal identity. Type 4 furies, according to the survey, also indicated that the furry fandom fills certain self-esteem needs – again reinforcing the notion that feeling furry could simply be a result of having found a social network which in turn shape one's personal identity and likings. This could in theory be compared to a sport fan club, where one might enjoy the sport second to the community around it.

Indeed, type 4 and 2 furies, the types wanting to be non-human, rated highest in the survey on whether the furry fandom fulfills a need to 'escape'. The anon on operatorchan referred to this specifically – and the ED page on furies equally ridicules furies for their escapist fantasies. Type 4 furies also rate highest on the question whether or not the furry fandom fulfills a need for attention, as well as if they feel a connection to the species of their furry online persona, if they feel like another species trapped in a human body, if they share traits with their persona species, share a mystical connection with said species, resemble it, believe in animal spirit guides and if they chose a hybrid of one or more species as their representative species.

Just to rehash, type 4 furies represented only 19% of furry respondents, while type 1 furies, who scored the lowest on nearly all the questions about how furry one felt, spiritual connection and so forth, represents 41% of the furies. Type 2 furies came in second to scoring overall lowest on all the questions.

This indicates that there is a very wide spectrum of furry expression and behavior – again fitting with the anon from Operatorchan's statements, making this a good indicator that furies represent a SAC. This is again confirmed by most of the other sources I have found on the subject, including the website for 'Anthrocon', the world's biggest annual furry convention – which according to its own statistics gets over 4000 attendees every year (196) – as they can't narrow down what a furry is, beyond that it is someone who likes anthropomorphic stuff: The biggest real life annual meeting between furies cannot explain in exact terms what it means to be furry beyond the vague definition that 'its people who like anthropomorphic stuff in all shapes and sizes'.

As also explained this means that there are multiple instances of one group of furies liking something that others do not – causing conflict, similar to the Anonymous cause and lulzfag schism. The ED page on furies is quite keen to point out elements of the furry fandom that are particularly perverse or stand out as very lulzy – in particular in the context of other furies trying to give the fandom an outward appearance that is more acceptable to mainstream media and the public.

Examples of this could be diaper-furs, furies who like anthropomorphic characters in diapers – similar to adult baby fetishists, or cub-furs, who like the idea of baby anthro-animals, occasionally in a sexual manner, with all the creepy implications that follow.

As unlikely as it might sound, even the ED page on diaper furs claim that diaper furs are a fringe element that most other furies frown upon, while still making endless fun of them (197). Indeed, some baby furs have discussed how to handle the topic of public behavior as baby furs, even attempting to post normative guidelines (198). This just goes to show again how fragmented the fandom is, although on the plus side it also indicates those with more extreme fetishes and likings recognize that some care must be taken not to alienate themselves from the remainder of the furry fandom. This is a great example of an in-SAC schism.

Equally, the rest of the furry fandom has occasionally recognizes that certain aspects of itself carry far more negative connotations than positive ones, resulting in the furry art site FurAffinity, which according to data on popular furry art sites is the biggest around (199), banning and deleting all pornographic imagery of underage anthropomorphic characters on its servers in 2010 (200), after previous rules on the subject having been more lax or not enforced to any effect (201). For a SAC to have parts of its gathering places

attempt censorship arguably diminishes the SAC to some extent, but the fandom as a whole is still very diverse despite of it.

I would like to claim that things like diaper furs and baby furs are but fringe elements of the furry fandom – indeed, most of my observations indicate this, but at the same time I have absolutely no data the distribution of sexual fetishes, if any, in the furry fandom. This is one of the tricky aspects of a SAC: it can be very difficult to get reliable statistics on the specific behavior of a supposedly small part of a SAC, for only the whole of the SAC is easy to recognize.

However, on FurAffinity (FA), their latest statistics on submitted art indicate that art tagged as ‘general’, that being not pornographic, violent and generally child friend, outnumbered mature and adult tagged art submissions by roughly 3 to 1, and that such art was far more popular as well, having just under four times as favorites compared to adult submissions, and just under twice as many as mature submissions.

This indicates that at least on FA, the biggest of three main furry art sites, the two other being Sofurry.com and InkBunny.com, that clean art is preferred over adult art. If this is indicative of content preference in the fandom then it would suggest that fandom primarily deals in non-adult topics and artwork. As with the notion of ‘furry sexuality’, then identifying individual preference patterns in art from the overall statistics of the SAC is not possible. Certainly the statistics are formed by the collective actions of the participants, but that doesn’t mean that there aren’t also furies who are exclusively in the fandom for only thing or another.

It should be noted that the focus on art sites is not coincidental. The furry fandom, being a fandom with no core franchise or artifact to be fans about – as opposed to well established fandoms such as star wars fans, star trek fans, pony fans, sports fans or anime/mange fans – lead to artists that contribute and produce furry art holding a special position in the fandom as propagators of the community and therefor the SAC.

Like with Anonymous, where participation through contribution of new lulzy content is consider a productive use of one’s time, in the furry fandom contributing to the fandom is chiefly done through visual or other artistic expressions of one’s unique interpretation of what it means to be furry, or of one’s own furry creation(s). In other words, then while one might fantasize and dream up a dragon/wolf/chipmunk superhero as one’s personal online avatar for participation in the furry fandom, then it is very common to express it through art, fiction or other forms. A picture is worth a thousand words, and having a picture for online avatar helps cement your identity in the furry fandom as it gives other furies an image of ‘you’, your fursona – who they will think of as you. With a picture of your fursona you stop being a person at a computer in the mind of other furies, you are instead expressed through that character. This concept isn’t unlike online roleplaying, which some furies do partake in for the very same reason. As Gerbasi et al pointed out: some furies express a connection to their choice of species, making a display of their furry alter-egos as potentially vital as wearing a rosary might be to a catholic: “This is my totem, how I view my inner self”

Of course, as other sources indicate, a furry’s connection or association to a given character he or she might make up can be nothing more than ‘that thing I like to draw’ (188).

This ultimately means that furry art sites also function as large community hubs where furries express themselves, uploading art, fiction, commenting on each other's work and generally interacting with each other. Like Anonymous maintaining much of its identity through funny pictures and a shared joy of lulz from them and other sources, then furries focus their SAC through visual representations and other crafts that exemplify that of the furry.

The variety of furry art is staggering. While the above image shows one artists interpretation of another furry's online avatar/furry persona, then there exists a myriad of other aesthetic styles and formats. Other examples can be seasonally themed and fantastical (202; 203) others put their characters in a zombie apocalypse (204) or even make their fursonas as zombies (205). Some work with colored pencils to produce unique looks (206; 207), some defy explanation (208), some animate their characters (209), some use them in references to pop culture (210) or computer games settings (211). And this is just the art side of the furry fandom; There are plenty of furry stories written (212), some furry writers developing entire universes of species for their personal settings (213), while others stick to short stories that can move you to tears (214). Another popular focal point for furries are online web-comics with anthropomorphic characters, which again can be of nearly any genre, be it science fiction (215), slice-of-life (216; 217), fantasy (218), noir (219) and at least one about paintball (220).

These examples are but a small sample of the plethora of furry artists, cartoonists and sculptors – but they should give you an initial idea of how broad the fandom is in its forms of expressions, again making the furry fandom a good example of a SAC.

There has been a number of misconceptions about furries – much like how media mentions of Anonymous in relation to a raid tend to portray it as if all of Anonymous is involved (176) – then when hearing of babyfurs, or daiperfurs, or six-limbed hermaphroditic cat-taurs, one might come to believe that all furries harbor fetishes and similar far out preferences (187).

As with any SAC then the elements that stand out the most are the most easily identifiable – such as extreme fetishes or other content that looks anything but normal.

A recent example of modern media getting furries very wrong by focusing on fringe groups that are not indicative of the entire fandom comes from National Geographic. On January 3rd 2012 they aired an episode of their Taboo series, focusing on the 'secret lives' of some people. They looked at a man who secreted pretended to be a hobo and a woman who liked to make people think she was a paraplegic, while she really wasn't – and National Geographic also looked a group of furries in that connection (221). According to the seven minute segment from the show, then all furries dress up in fursuits, believe they are part human part animal. As indicated by the above statistics, then that is very far from the truth. This is a prime example of



Figure 15: An example of furry artwork, showing one furry's 'fursona' character (307)

how modern media latch on the, to mainstream western culture, more outlandish aspects of the fandom and automatically assume that such behavior is normal for the rest of the fandom. This illustrates the problem of focusing on one aspect of a SAC and assuming that it is indicative of the entire SAC – which can be an easy thing to do, if you're not aware of the big picture, as one might be led to believe that the SAC focuses on a different topic.

Another example of this happening came September 16 2009 when a couple going under the furry aliases of Chew Fox and Tom Cat appeared on the Tyra Banks Show, and explained that being a furry meant that you had an inner animal, and that you dressed up in a fursuit and had sex with someone while doing so (222). The reaction to this by the rest of the furry community was so strong, that on Chew Fox's furaffinity journal entry about the criticism she was starting to get from other furies about her appearance on the show, she got so much feedback (mainly negative feedback about her and Tom Cat misrepresenting the fandom) that FA was in effect submitted to a DDoS attack in form of furies furiously posting comments on the topic. Chew Fox was actually temporarily banned from the site simply to lighten the load on the servers – although later after the ban was lifted she was banned permanently from the site for, amongst other things, intentionally causing drama for the fandom (223). If nothing else, then this shows that enough people disagreed with Chew Fox's understanding of being furry to crash a large website. No use of LOIC software needed, just thousands of angry furies. This can be likened to the inter-chan warfare at the start of the Chanology SAC, with participants of the same sac disagreeing on how to do things, but without much power to enforce their views.

Another example of the many ways in which furies internally can perceive the many differences between themselves is from a blog entry on FA by a user there (224). This 'Felixpath' furry lists ten different types of furies that he hates, implying that there can be even more variations. Non-furies might not recognize furies being different on the surface, as with Anonymous, but internally they appear to recognize many different flavors and understandings of being a furry – which indicates that the furry fandom is a SAC.

In an interview conducted over Skype with a furry artist from FA, I was able to question a furry regarding examples of such furry drama and internal strife – and why such takes place. At the request of the artist, his name will not be mentioned directly in the thesis – but a rough transcript of the interview, the artists name and online alias, can be found in the archive CD.

He gave the example that in the period of 2004-2005 when he was entering into the furry fandom as a new artist he became subject to harassment and ridicule from a livejournal group called VCL_Horrors, which was run by furies who simply wanted to troll less skilled artists or make fun of artists who uploaded fetish art on a then popular furry art archive site called "Vixen Controlled Library" (225).

VCL_horrors has since been deleted and no longer exists, but it serves as a good example of furry elitism, trolling and how some furies might not deem what other furies create as good enough or valid within the context of the fandom.

When asked for another example of furry conflict I was told the story of how at one point the artist had been commissioned – paid to draw artwork – to draw a 12 page comic in 2010. When the costumer received the artwork I was told that the artist got barraged with harsh criticism, told that it sucks and so on – but to the artists surprise, the costumer then asked to commission more work from the artist. It turned

out that this costumer had successfully alienated himself from all of the fandom, to the point that nobody but this artist, and others who hadn't heard of the costumer, would deal with him – due to his offensive attitude and behavior. That there exist individuals with offensive or abrasive attitudes in any open community is to be expected. This can be argued to be a vulnerability to SACs, due to their open nature, but equally it shows the effect of online invisibility in the context of a SAC: people can disappear and reappear in a community very easily, meaning that there might be members of a SAC you're in that you'll never hear of, even if widely known in other parts of the SAC. This of course isn't an entirely new phenomena, people not knowing about you not knowing you – but online this can be done to an even greater effect, even more so in a SAC where people can come and go as they please.

At the end of the interview the artist gave his own explanation for his understanding of some of the conflict and drama in the furry fandom: *"Furries do not know what they want – they mix species like crazy, horse/rabbit/fox whatever – and will ask you to draw it – but then they will complain that what you drew isn't what you should have drawn! They can get so specific and personal in their creations that nobody can reproduce it"*

He does point out that this is also a strength of the fandom – since it means that it is free and open to all who want to be part of it. Still, he mentions one example where a furry was so dedicated and specific to what he wanted that the artist, in trying to draw, correct and redraw the same character over and over, ultimately wore through the piece of paper he was drawing on, from repeatedly erasing and drawing over and over on it.

This statement supports the notion that the furry fandom is a very individualistic fandom – resulting in other furries possibly finding it difficult to accommodate exotic or particularly creative/nitpicking furries, as with the artist's story of the overly critical and abrasive costumer, or the example with VCL_horrors which resulted in furries harassing other furries which were perceived inferior. Again, this potential weakness is derived from the furry fandom functioning like a SAC, allowing for infinitely varied participant creations, with equally widely varying standards – which can then lead to conflicts.

Similar to the National Geographic or Tyra Banks programs' examples of how furries can easily end up being misrepresented, then a yearly poll run by an anthropologist by the name of Alex Osaki since 2008 (226; 227; 228; 229) has been asking furries, amongst other things, questions regarding how furries feels sexuality relates to the fandom in various contexts.

According to Osaki's statistics, including the preliminary numbers from the at the time of this being written unfinished 2011 survey, furries tend to perceive the notion that non-furries think that furries are far more focused on sexual content in the fandom, than they rate themselves or the rest of the fandom to really be.

This is an interesting look at how furries in essence understand the stereotyping often done to them, as shown on the ED page on furries. It at least confirms that furries think that others think do – while the numbers from the 2008, 9, 10 and preliminary number for 2011 show that they generally rate the importance of sexual content in the fandom to be less vital than that. This shows a communal awareness of what I describe in that SACs as a whole are easily stereotyped as it is always easiest to identify and stereotype a community based on what stands out the most, and sexual content can do that over clean and more casual imagery, while the true nature of individual participants can vary greatly.

Of course, like any voluntary online survey it must be asked if such questions aren't leading – because there exists within the fandom a strong understanding that it is important to show a good public exterior, which might call such data into question.

7.3.1 Online Survey

While the prevalence of statistics on the furry fandom allows for nice numbers and graphs to be shown, even if some of the numbers might be questionable, then for the purpose of this thesis these statistics fall short on a very important topic: They do not give any qualitative information on the personal opinions of furries on the fandom itself. As shown with the example of Chewfox appearing the Tyra Banks show, then there are undeniably differences of opinions in the fandom. I argue that differences of opinions reflect difference in conduct, preferences and ultimately the understanding of how the fandom should be and how it is – this kind of personal opinions can be very difficult to get via quantitative surveys.

Beyond the overall method for these surveys, as written in section 5, the procedure I used was very straight forward: I find an online forum that fits my criteria: that it be a forum primarily catering to the community I'm focusing on, then establish an account there and introduce myself and the purpose of the survey and ask my questions. I give the option for questions to be sent to my student email or be posted directly in the forum thread. I aim for a maximum of fifty responses, at which point I'll end the survey should I get so many, as I reason I do not need any larger numbers seeing as this will be a qualitative survey – not a quantitative one requiring larger numbers for more representative overall statistics. Should I not reach fifty responses I will end the survey once I receive no more responses.

The questions I asked were as follow:

- 1) how old are you and on what continent do you live? (Europe, north America, Australia, Africa, south America...)
- 2) what does it mean, to you personally, to be a furry
- 3) are you a furry? and if so, for how long?
- 4) how do you personally express being a furry? (through art, roleplaying, give your car a tail, socializing with other furries, etc)
- 5) Are there any aspects of the furry fandom you do not agree with/like? (if there's something you don't like, or don't feel match the way you understand it is to be furry)

As is clearly evident then the questions do not gather much in the form of statistical data, beyond age and general geographic location, meant for comparison with the other furry surveys and statistics I have shown, as a means to show how well the data collected fits with the overall fandom. Equally, while aware of the potential for leading the answers, then suggestions for answers were given – simply to ensure proper understanding of the questions. Experience with online surveys have told me that it is better that respondents are certain of what to answer, which might narrow down the range of answers one gets, as opposed to respondents freely interpreting questions, as that can easily lead to respondents answering a different question than that asked. Considering how diverse the furry fandom is, then I argue this to an acceptable compromise.

To get the most responses I distributed a survey to the two biggest furry forums I could find: The FurAffinity online forum and the SoFurry online forum.

Between December 14th 2011 and January 3rd 2012 I received a number of responses (n=50). The responses came primarily from the FA forum as direct posts in the forum thread where I had presented the survey and the questions, or via email, and finally four responses from the SoFurry forum thread. All replies have been copied to a text file which can be found on the archive CD, which also includes links to the forum threads in which survey responses were posted.

It should be noted that I used no screening processes for the survey beyond looking for obviously non-serious/joke responses and as such responses to the survey could in theory be incorrect, in so far as the respondents might have been dishonest in their answers– but experience within and observations of the furry community leads me to believe that all responses are genuine and honest enough to be used for what I intend, except for a single duplicate entry first detected after the survey had been closed, reducing the number of useful responses (n=49). On the FA thread a handful of respondents expressed that they had intended to send me falsified/intentionally silly replies, but chose not to because I apparently came across as sympathetic and knowledgeable of the fandom.

Equally, then I have stored no personal information from any of my respondents: It would be a largely useless exercise, as the majority of the respondents answered using a furry or similar online alias, especially those who replied directly via the forum threads. For the purpose of this thesis the names of respondents are irrelevant. Their opinions are relevant: the goal of the survey was to seek out personal opinions from furries on furries.

Of the fifty respondents 45 gave their age, the youngest being 14 and oldest being 41, with the average age of the respondents who listed their age being 21.5. This fits well with the numbers from Gerbasi et al's statistics. Furthermore, of the 49 respondents 12 did not live in north America, with one from Africa, one from Australia and the rest living in Europe, again fitting roughly with Gerbasi et al's statistics.

Beyond the raw data collected, then the answers contain a slew of opinions and statements on what the respondents consider being a furry means, as well as opinions on what they personally do not like. Reading through the answers is an enlightening experience, but they will not be shown in their totality in this thesis beyond a few choice quotes for the sake of brevity. The opinion questions, questions 2, 4 and 5, have all their answers roughly coded, categorized and indexed as per respondent in a spreadsheet in the archive CD for easy overview of differing or matching opinions and statements. It is from this table that I'm able to point out conflicting opinions, and a number of them reflect very different opinions and preferences.

One thing that they do all seem to agree on is that being a furry can only be summarized roughly as 'liking anthropomorphic animals' – of as one put it: "I like animal people". While particulars of course do vary, then none of the answers given to the second question deny this. Some explain it being a furry as a hobby, other that's all about making your very furry persona, but its ultimately still the same.

However, one particular answer for question 2, from a person claiming to a seventeen year old from north America, stands out:

"For help on your report, I should say that you're exactly right when you say that every definition of 'furry' is different. But if this helps, there are three types of furries, IMO. First are the hobbyists, who find the fandom interesting enough to be a part of it. Then, they're the lifestylers, who are practically in love with the idea of anthropomorphism and try to put it into their everyday lives. These people may be tied with therians and otherkin, but they're initially separate. That's not to say they aren't in the fandom at all, though; many lifestylers are therians or otherkin. Finally, there's the people that use the fandom to broaden an audience and make money through selling art and other goods. They may like the idea of the fandom, but don't consider themselves to be a part of it. Now, don't take this the wrong way. It's not exactly using the fandom. It's finding where the buyers are."

Quote 19: A furry on what it means to be a furry

This furry first of all agrees with my initial statement in my introduction to the survey that being a furry is a very subjective concept – but goes beyond that and describes three archetypes of furries: The hobbyists who simply find being part of the fandom fun, the lifestylers who often take on a more spiritual connection to them being a furry and finally the profiteers to sell furry content (art, fursuits, other related crafts) to the two other types. All are equally part of the fandom, but for very different reasons. And while this is but one person's statement, then it certainly supports my claim of the furry fandom being a SAC.

This isn't to say that there weren't conflicting statements in the answers to the first question – at least when compared a lot of the responses to question five: Two specified that being a furry meant being part of the furry fandom and then implied that that entailed the fandom being in such a way that it does not criticize you for your choice to be a furry. Five respondents, for question five, specifically voiced dislikes against this 'hugbox' mentality – that being a furry puts you beyond reproach. One in particular voiced a dislike of the fandom being so protective of its. Four equally expressed a dislike to the lack of entry requirements to join the fandom, many others chiming in by citing examples of social or sexual deviants using the fandom as a cover for their activities and their disapproval of that. Twelve went so far as to specify that they found the fandom much too accepting of sexual deviants (cubfurs, daiperfurs, the likes) for their liking. This is a strong example of there being very different opinions in the fandom of how to run things. Some describe an open arms policy and their approval of it; others want tighter moderation of whom and what can come in.

For the third question there were six respondents that did not list how long they had been furries – five of which were because they simply said they weren't furries, either because they had never been furries or because they no longer considered themselves furries. One of them did say that he had been a furry for a total of 19 seconds at the time of taking the survey, but that he was mainly into Pokémon (as was another respondent) – it is a curious observation that a lot of modern games contain variations of anthropomorphic animals, Pokémon included. Pokémon is an originally Japanese trading card game based on 'pocket monsters', many of which are clearly anthropomorphized versions of existing animals or fantasy hybrids of other objects, such as magnets (230). For those who did respond the average time that they had been furries was 4.6 years, with the 41 year old respondent, the oldest, having been a furry for fifteen years.

For the fourth question I got a very wide range of answers – and this was arguably to be expected. Most respondents told of how they would frequent furry websites (such as FurAffinity) to socialize with other furries, some said they drew furry art, some said they write furry themed fiction, some attended furry

conventions, some like furry online roleplaying. These answers indicate a very varied approach to expressing that of being a furry, but they also indicated certain common activities, such as online socialization and making furry art, both of which were to be expected as the fandom's greatest hubs are online art sites – although since this is only from fifty respondents then statistics done on their listed activities cannot be considered indicative of the entire fandom, plus the fact that there is no other sources to corroborate such numbers. Both Gerbasi et al's survey and Osaki's Surveys do not ask into what furies actually do as furies – while the UC Davis survey does include numbers on the topic, but it being the least well documented survey makes those claims equally dubious.

To summarize so far, then the furry fandom is a diverse fandom –easily stereotyped by outsiders, due to the very fragmented nature of the fandom, much like Anonymous – although the focus here is much more on the individual establishing his own identity, rather than the community as a whole doing stuff with the individual being non-existent as with Anonymous. On the topic of individual furry behavior, one respondent, an 18 year old from north America, answered:

"I draw furies sometimes, but I don't usually let people see. I sometimes wear a tail around the house and when I'm out with friends, though they probably think it's more of an anime thing; I think only a couple of my friends would even know what a furry is. I've only told 2 of them, and only one of them was like, "I think I've heard of that before... what was it again? I want to see if I'm right." I'm not a fan of textual RPing, but I'd totally play a furry character in D&D or other tabletop games if my friends could ever start up a monster-race-inclusive campaign that lasted for more than 2 meetings"

Quote 20: Furry survey respondent number 20 on how he is a furry

This response, and many others, indicates a fairly relaxed approach to expressing being a furry. None of the respondents appeared to express any kind of spiritual connection, nor did they express any kind of 'furry lifestyle', although six did answer the fifth question in ways indicating a dislike of lifestylers, although since there is no set definition of what a 'furry lifestyle' is, then labeling anyone as such is quite difficult. The above respondent who says that he occasionally wears a tail, does that a lifestyler make? Some furies might say yes? Others no – nine respondents claimed to often wear furry accessories. There is no consensus in the furry fandom on what makes a lifestyler, so I will not use term either to describe anyone in particular, although it is curious to see furies making that distinction themselves without being very clear on the topic. This can be understood as furies having greater tacit knowledge of their own fandom, making it easier for them to make such distinctions – but it could just as well be the opinions of individuals, which do not necessarily add up. I argue that this is again a sign of furies being a SAC, since it shows that you cannot discern much knowledge of the whole fandom from observation of individual participants, while equally it shows a very wide range of furry behavior: Some draw, some write, some make costumes, some roleplay and some go to real life meetings with other furies.

The fifth answer had the most opinionated responses, as was expected. One was very broad in explaining his/her dislikes:

"Meh, anything about the subculture is something someone could find bad. I personally dislike the people that fit the general furry stereotypes."

Quote 21: Furry survey respondent 2 on what he/she does not like in the furry fandom

This response can be interpreted in any number of ways, chiefly because the respondent doesn't specify what 'the general furry stereotypes' are, although if assumed to mean negative stereotypes this would mean acting like something described on the ED page for furies. Another specifies in particular that he doesn't like the fetishistic parts of the community:

"My strongest dislikes are the porn, the fetishizing of animals and animal features, and how accepting the fandom is towards sexual deviants.

Some of my other stronger dislikes with the fandom are the mentality that furies have to stick up for other furies solely because they are furies, that one must make it a point to "come out" to others about being a furry, that furry is this all-accepting unjudgmental group that isn't allowed to have standards, and how some treat it as a "lifestyle."

Quote 22: Furry respondent 3 on what he/she doesn't like in the furry fandom

This respondent's answer can be likened to the Chewfox and Tyra Banks show incident. Here the furry speaks of a dislike for a perceived requirement of solidarity, even to sexual deviants. This opinion is at least partially shared by many other respondents who voice dislike to things like zoophiles and bestiality fetishists who seek refuge in the fandom – because according to the respondents, then these fetishists give the rest of the furry fandom a bad reputation.

Others voice concern and dislike of the more social aspects of the fandom:

"The fandom is too accepting of some people. These individuals can be very disturbed individuals who cannot function in normal society, but any criticism against such people will result in others claiming "you are an internet troll," and line up to protect them, even if this person engages in activities that harm the group's public image, perhaps ones that are overtly perverted in nature. This behavior is not limited to the Furry Fandom--it can be found in most other subcultures, but it seems to be magnified here through the unrestrained acceptance of any and all furies, despite the possibility of harming the fandom's image."

Quote 23: Furry respondent 28 on what he/she does not like in the furry fandom

This quote and many other responses to the fifth question describe socially inept or even dysfunctional individuals that the respondents claim enter the fandom uninhibited. As the previous quote also mentioned, then this is where there is also talk of a perceived kind of 'required' solidarity – that the moment you're a furry, you're good enough, no questions asked and that you must support others similarly in being furies. It is a curious parallel to Anonymous' approach to join its community, for there nobody gives a damn who you are either – but unlike Anonymous, then in the furry fandom you are meant to create an identifiable persona and interact with others through that, meaning that there is a community memory of your actions, something anonymous does not necessarily feature.

Indeed, the majority of all the responses to the fifth question – aside from the very few who did not voice any dislikes at all of which there were only three, one of them being the respondent who said he'd only been a furry for 19 seconds – seem to focus on the fact that social or sexual deviants can far too easily enter into the furry fandom. Despite these being arguably negative claims, then this fits perfectly with the furry fandom being a SAC; anyone can be a part of it, and it is very difficult to say that a given individual is not/cannot be a part of it if that person wants to join. If the fandom was more restrictive and formalized in

its requirements for people to join this wouldn't be an issue, but then it would lose the freedom and spontaneity that makes it a SAC.

Anonymous avoids similar problems simply by having it be the norm that it's not an issue if you're a pervert: nobody knows who you are, and if you're posting on a well-trafficked imageboard, then your statement indicative of sexual deviance will be gone soon anyway.

I would argue that my mini-survey into the furry fandom supports my claim that the furry fandom is a SAC. There are many different opinions, some more well-worded than others, and equally many – if not more – different ways that the respondents claim that they exercise their furry tendencies. Some like the porn, some hate it, some like the conventions, some don't. There is no clear consensus on how to be a furry to be drawn from the replies.

7.3.2 Summary

This ultimately begs the question of why? Why anthropomorphic animals or other things like that? Why is this such an appealing concept to some that a SAC has formed around it, becoming the furry online community?

My personal theory is that it pertains to the fact that by attributing human qualities to animal characters – or animal qualities to human characters – then each furry has the option to fully customize how much of each goes into one such creation. This is an interesting choice to make. As Vexen Crabtree points out in his exploration of the furry fandom (186):

“Most furies do not know, exactly, the reasons that make them associate themselves with an animal. Most neophytes to the scene are simply on to something that feels comforting, or allows them to express themselves without the dogma of restrictive 'normal' society. But many acolyte furs also remain unsure as to 'why they do it'.”

Quote 24: Crabtree on one reason why people might be furies

Crabtree's point on expression without the dogma of restrictive normal society is key here. In creating an imaginary character that is not entirely human, I posit that furies enable themselves to become more at ease with their characters doing things that would be impossible, illegal or considered wrong in modern society. This fits perfectly with Suler's notion of dissociative imagination, minimization of status and authority and dissociative anonymity: If you cannot be a sexually uninhibited person in real life, you can make a humanoid raccoon, fox or fox-raccoon to play around with online, to live out fantasies not possible under normal circumstances – especially if ones fantasies go beyond the humanly possible or acceptable. Of course, ones reason for being a furry doesn't have to go that far, as a furry persona could also just be a soapbox to voice otherwise unpopular opinions, or be used to blow off steam if one has a frustrating daily life with no obvious permissible outlet for frustration. LaGrandeur (9) probably wasn't thinking of people roleplaying as dog or cat-men, but the same logic applies from when he said that online anonymity promotes rhetorical experimentation – in this case it's a different kind of experimentation, but it is still only possible due to the internet allowing people to go beyond what is possible in the real world.

A reason for being a furry can also be in the form of an artist accepting that he cannot make the leap over the uncanny valley (231), and so chooses to stay on the side of stylized imagery (choosing an anthropomorphic aesthetic) as an easier solution.

Finally, to give an impression of just how far-reaching the furry fandom actually is: The website deviantArt.com, which is the 13th largest social network in the US with almost 4 million weekly visits (232), and almost 15 million members (233). It exists to allow its members to upload and showcase their own artwork and other creative creations. Users can favorite uploads that they like, and in 2011 the top 10 most favorite submissions to deviantArt contained 2 anthropomorphic themed entries (234). It should be noted that one of the two was a pony themed entry.

7.4 Bronies

The brony fandom is an odd occurrence. It is a fandom comprised of fans of the latest iterations of the My Little Pony franchise by Hasbro, called My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic, or MLP:FiM for short (235). Like the furry fandom I argue that it is a SAC, and thus it stands that I will explain what the community is about and how it is a standalone complex.

For an introduction into the origins and focus of the Brony phenomena I have included as appendix 4 a two page explanation on what it is about and why grown men like pink ponies. For a very quick version: Look at the picture to the right. That's what bronies like, that's what their community is about.

Thus the way in which the brony fandom functions as a standalone complex is similar to

how the furry fandom is one. While the bronies have an artifact as a the center for the fandom, the cartoon show My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic, or MLP:FiM for short, and isn't spread as widely as Anonymous, nor have the number of artists like the Furies, then the sheer number of different artistic interpretations shown through fan art and MLP:FiM-themed original fan-made content that the bronies have come up with is still staggering. A Google-map script on ponychat.net map the last 500 visitors in the IRC chatrooms to a map of the world (236) revealing that bronies log on from all over the world, be it south America, north America, Europe, Australia, Asia – even a few from Africa.

While much brony art focuses on fan art, which is common in many fandoms, then bronies also take their artistic homages to the show beyond just pictures, showing the diversity of the bronies (237): Custom handmade and hand painted figurines in the likeness of the show's characters are normal to see, or handmade plush toys in the likeness of characters from the show – or even the odd stained glass window



Figure 16: The entire cast of MLP:FiM, with nearly all the background characters and extras shown. (330)

depicting an image from the show. The ways in which bronies express their liking of the show are many and that variation in approach to contributing with homages to the show is a sign of the bronies being a SAC.

Another popular form of expression for bronies is 'Pony Music Videos', or PMVs. Remixes of animated shows with music to it is by no means something new, it being common in anime fandoms, but some bronies go beyond that as well, creating entire original scores and themes for the various characters of the show in all kinds of music styles, be it orchestral (238), glitch dubstep (239), electronica (240), heavy metal (241) House (242), melodic techno (243) and rap (244), just to give a small example. Some even go as far as creating animated pony shorts themselves (245; 246; 247; 248; 249; 250; 251; 252). The creativity at play here is enormous and the diversity of the content is quite impressive.

A drawback that the brony community has as a result of its young age is that relatively little statistical data has been collected on them – unlike Osaki's four annual surveys on the furry fandom – the bronies simply haven't been around for long enough to for there to be much statistical data on them, beyond informal polls on the various brony websites which cannot be used as there's little to no way of confirming their validity – plus many of them are just popularity contests such as "Which pony is best pony" and so on. Having seen a number of episodes of the show as part of my investigation of bronies, I have personally concluded that the show's character Twilight Sparkle is clearly best pony.

However, some data does exist on what demographic the bronies represent – primarily in the form of viewer statistics from YouTube where all of the show's episodes have been uploaded. An example of this can be seen here (253) for the first episode of MLP:FiM season 2, which indicate that bronies are primarily male, one third of which are between 13 and 17 years old, 20% is 18 to 24 and 25% is 25 to 34, the rest older. Primary viewership in the days around the upload of the episode was from North America, but the UK and Australia also featured in the top five countries from which viewers had come. Unfortunately the video that these statistics were derived from is marked as private on YouTube, making it impossible to verify these numbers. Indeed, YouTube view statistics are unreliable in that sense, since there are several YouTube accounts that have episodes of MLP:FiM uploaded, making it impossible to gain statistics that I can be certain are representative since are spread over so many videos, some of which get taken down occasionally or are made unavailable when someone closes a YouTube account.

However a recent, and at the time of this being written unpublished, survey by Edwards and Redden (254), both professors of psychology at Wofford College in Spartanburg SC, has shed some light on the brony demographic. While their numbers might show inaccuracy due to the survey being voluntary and thus not necessarily completely representative, it is so far the only academic source of quantitative statistics on bronies. Of course, with the brony fandom having first really started in 2011 it shouldn't be any surprise that there has yet to be conducted any large scale surveys on the topic.

Over 72 hours Edwards and Redden received 1300 responses to their online survey, which is what they base their statistics on. According to their data 53% of respondents were under the age of 20, with 41% being between 20 and 30. 87% of respondents were male, and 70% of respondents described themselves as heterosexual, 12% were bisexual, 9% Asexual, 2% homosexual, 3% were unsure and only 2% chose not to answer this question.

Beyond these numbers Edwards and Redden also inquired into location and level of education. As already indicated by the ponychat.net map, then bronies come from all over the world – Edwards and Redden’s numbers confirm this with their data: 69% of respondents were from North America, 21% Europe, 7% from Australia, 2% were from south Africa. There were a few respondents from Africa and Asia, but Edwards and Redden do point out that language issues might have caused less bronies from these parts of the world to take the survey.

19% of the respondents were at the time still studying in high school, and 15% had completed high school. 43% were college students, and 15% had completed a college education. 5% were in or had completed graduate degrees.

Overall these numbers show that the bronies consist largely of young male fans, well educated, from most of the English speaking parts of the world – most of which being located in the US. As with the furry online surveys, then the question of how representative this data also has to be addressed. There is a non-zero possibility that respondents have not answered the survey honestly, in order to give the fandom a better image. For the lack of anything better I am forced to accept this risk, however, upon review of the statistics in comparison to my own observations of the brony fandom then I find them plausible and realistic. Particulars might vary and the numbers on brony sexuality simply do not add up: The listed orientation percentages only add up to 98% - but beyond that, they appear sufficient to give a general idea of what kind of people bronies are general.

Beyond these purely demographic statistics, then Edwards and Redden also inquired into what bronies liked in the show, concluding that the majority of the bronies experience a high level of engagement to the show. Engagement, as defined by Dow et al (255) as “...refers to a person’s involvement or interest in the content or activity of an experience, regardless of the medium”, or Lindley (256) “Engagement in that case facilitates the discovery of schemas of games or narratives “ or O’Brien and Toms (257) who understand the concept as “...engagement may share some attributes with flow, such as focused attention, feedback, control, activity orientation, and intrinsic motivation medium”, adding that “...it is the interaction between users and systems operating within a specific context that facilitates an engaging experience”. All in all they all agree that engagement is when someone gets highly focused on/with something, engaged if you will. Flow, as O’Brien and Toms mention fit this well, the term coined by Csikszentmihalyi (258) which amongst other things describe the experience of losing all perception of time and temporarily forgetting all awareness of everyday frustrations while focused on something, such as the show.

In short, Edwards and Redden’s numbers indicate that watching MLP:FiM makes you happy and forget about things while watching it. While this might sound simple, then for a cartoon show aimed at young girls to achieve such effects on young adult men is arguably impressive.

Beyond strong engagement when watching the show, then Edwards and Redden statistics indicate that a third of the respondents actively participate in the brony community, 8% take their fan activities into the real world, as in purchasing MLP:FiM merchandize and toys and 30% express immediate positive reactions to hearing others in public mention the show. A large number of the bronies, 43% of the variance, also find the moral lessons of the show realistic and useful – indeed, in the fourth episode of the first season the moral of the episode was not bite over more than you can chew, shown as a farmer working herself half to

death and not getting enough sleep – a surprisingly mature message that one might expect adult audiences to understand better than five year old children.

Equally, then a large number of the respondents, 50% of the variance, enjoyed the virtues expressed in the show – the six ‘elements of harmony’, which list kindness, laughter, generosity, honesty and loyalty – with the sixth being ‘magic’, which supposedly binds it all together. Edwards and Redden found that of the five non-magical virtues then Kindness was rated as the most important, indicating that Bronies value compassion to others the most, explaining their kind community spirit.

Ultimately Edwards and Redden define four types of bronies:

Social bronies, 37.5% of the respondents, who socialize both online and in real life with other bronies.

Secret bronies, 12.6% of the respondents, who socialize online but not in real life with other bronies, most likely due to the perceived threat of social stigma for liking a show for little girls.

Hidden bronies, 39.6%, do not participate in the online or real life brony communities at all – lurking in the shadows of the internet, observing, but not actively contributing or interacting in any meaningful way.

Independent bronies, 10.2%, are bronies and are open about it, but do not engage in the online or real life brony communities.

This spread in the types of bronies fit well with the notion of bronies being a standalone complex, as especially independent bronies and hidden bronies can effectively still be fans, but drop in and out of existence as such without anyone noticing – just as an anon can appear and reappear on various chans. Secret bronies primarily use online aliases to hide their identity as bronies, making it even easier for them to drop in and out of the fandom depending on what internet alias they appear under.

To summarize so far: Bronies qualify as a standalone complex by virtue of being a largely unorganized and spontaneously emergent community, comprised of both anons from the chans, furies and anyone else who finds the show and the fan community appealing. The large variety of fan works, be it creative reinterpretations of character as stereotypical hillbillies (259), as dark-humored hardcore SM fetishists (260) or as sexual predators (261) (Suffice to say that rule 34 lives on strong even amongst bronies) – but there are also cheerful original fan-made characters set in the pony universe (262): the variations are endless. Combined with Edwards and Redden’s survey, it becomes easy to see how nearly anyone who finds themselves a fan of the show can simply come online and join the community, enabling them to add their own unique contributions, be it via art, friendly banter or similar activities, without any real restrictions on how one can express ones fandom – perfectly fitting my model of a standalone complex, since even active participation isn’t even required.

This isn’t to say that the bronies are without conflict. Ponychan doesn’t allow pornographic imagery to be uploaded or discussed, while fimchan allows it – and EqD, while being a focal point for the fandom in that it showcases all the latest and greatest brony art, crafts, fan-fiction and news, equally doesn’t post adult imagery and has high quality standards for anything to be displayed – showing evidence of a polarization in the fandom, in that anything that doesn’t look nice enough won’t be given nearly as much attention and exposure. However, these differences do not hinder expression, only exposure, which isn’t relevant to the

fandom being a SAC – indeed, the different rules and requirements only further support the brony fandom being a SAC, in that they show different norms being advocated in different places within the fandom, revealing a lack of consensus on norms for content and behavior.

7.4.1 Online Survey

As with my examination of the furry fandom, then I have found a distinct lack of qualitative information from individual bronies to support my claim the brony fandom to be a SAC. So, like my small online survey on the furry fandom, I conducted a concurrent online survey on the three biggest brony forums I could find.

Exactly like the survey for the furry fandom, then beyond the overall method for these surveys, as written in section 5, the procedure I used was very straight forward: I find an online forum that fits my criteria: that it be a forum primarily catering to the community I'm focusing on, then establish an account there and introduce myself and the purpose of the survey and ask my questions. I give the option for questions to be sent to my student email or be posted directly in the forum thread. I aim for a maximum of fifty responses, at which point I'll end the survey should I get so many, as I reason I do not need any larger numbers seeing as this will be a qualitative survey – not a quantitative one requiring larger numbers for more representative overall statistics. Should I not reach fifty responses I will end the survey once I receive no more responses.

I asked the following on the Globalestria.com, Canterlot.com and friendshipismagic.org forums, using this variations of the questions used for the furry survey:

- 1) How old are you and on what continent do you live? (Europe, north America, Australia, Africa, south America...)
- 2) What does it mean, to you personally, to be a brony?
- 3) Are you a brony? if so, for how long?
- 4) How do you personally express being a brony? (Through art, roleplaying, give your car rainbow stripes, socializing with other bronies, etc)
- 5) Are there any aspects of brony culture/communities/expression that you do not agree with/like? (something you don't like, or don't feel match the way you understand it is to be a brony)

As with the furry survey, then all replies to my questions and links to the forum threads where I posted the surveys are in the archive CD.

It should be noted that due to the young age of the brony community then there might have been better and bigger brony community forums and hubs where I could have posted my survey requests. For example, I did not post any requests on brony imageboards, such as FIMchan or ponychan. I didn't post such there because it would be much harder to track replies in such places, plus the more anonymous nature of these imageboards do cater to a flavor of bronies more akin to the bronies roots in 4chan, meaning that I figured I would get far more non-serious answers. Because of this I chose regular bulletin board style forums where people had to make named user-accounts. Or put in a different way: Imageboard culture, as taken from the chans by the bronies, does not lend itself to giving out personal information and opinions in the way that I requested. I am aware that this skews my results, in that there is a very real non-zero chance than my

survey didn't reach as wide an audience of bronies as it could have, but as with my furry survey then I did not do this for quantitative statistics on brony demographics: The purpose of this survey was to gather examples of differences of opinion on how one is a brony, how some behave as bronies and what some do not like about bronies. If everyone responds with the same answers and there is no observable differences in opinions it'll support the idea that bronies aren't a SAC, while differences of opinions – especially potentially conflicting opinions, would support my claim that bronies represent a SAC.

Over the same time period as the furry survey, that is from the 14th of December 2011 until January 3rd 2012 I received a smaller number of replies than the furry survey, arguably because of the smaller size of the brony community compared to the furry fandom, plus one of the replies were discarded in the screening process (n=29). It should be noted that I ended the survey at this point for two reasons: One, the furry survey had at this point received fifty responses, and secondly I was close enough to my deadline that additional time needed for re-processing of all of the responses in light of the few brony responses that still trickled in couldn't be justified anymore. At the time of completing the thesis I had received an additional 11 replies.

For the respondents that took the survey seriously their age was 19.6, and five of them weren't from north America – three Europeans, an Australian and a New Zealander. Again this roughly fits what little demographic data there is on bronies, indicating that bronies are clearly mainly English-speakers, either as primary or secondary language – although via news reports on Equestria Daily about brony meetups I do know that there are bronies worldwide, from Malaysia, to Russia, to Mexico to Hungary (263; 264; 265; 266) The opinion questions, questions 2, 4 and 5, have all their answers roughly coded, categorized and indexed as per respondent in a spreadsheet in the archive CD for easy overview of differing or matching opinions and statements. It is from this table that I'm able to point out conflicting opinions, and a number of them reflect very different opinions and preferences.

The majority of the respondents agree that the definition of being a brony simply means that you enjoy the MLP:FiM show – and possibly the fan community around it, the brony community, although there were different ways in which this was understood. One respondent had a very specific definition:

"I personally believe the term "Brony" refers to any person that enjoys, and actively watches the My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic show. This means people that follow the series. However, I also believe that a TRUE fan learns from the show and exhibits the very values that the series presents (in other words, the qualities of friendship: honesty, kindness, generosity, laughter, and loyalty). I personally believe that if everyone attempted to follow the example set by the show, then there would be a lot less strife in the world (as unrealistic as I know it to be)."

Quote 25: Brony respondent nr. 2 on what it means to be a brony

As Edwards and Redden's survey indicated, then there are bronies that take the lessons and morals of the show very much to heart – and this respondent is clearly an example of that, although it is also clear that the respondent is aware of how unlikely it would be for the whole world to fall in line to the morals of the show. There are nine other respondents who share this bronies opinion that a 'true' brony takes the lessons and morals of the show with them into their daily lives. Furthermore, the idea that a 'true' brony also actively watches and enjoys the show would actually exclude the nineteen other respondents, as some simply defined being a brony as simply liking the show and being an active part of the fan community, while

others only required or gave the option that you to be part of the community to call yourself a brony – liking the show wasn't even required. This is the kind of difference in opinion I was looking for with this survey, as it shows examples mutually exclusive opinions on how to be part of a SAC, existing within the same SAC, which in my opinion is indicative of bronies thus being SAC, as such conflicting understandings would arguably not be able to coexist under more formalized circumstances. This can be explained by Suler's online disinhibition factor of invisibility (13): These two respondents can't really see each other when online, and thus they can't get into any arguments over why they both think they're bronies, plus the same illusion can allow them to assume that everyone else they meet actually share the same opinion, assuming nobody says anything to the contrary.

The third question proved largely redundant: all respondents said that they were bronies in some form or another – some just simply saying "yes, I'm a brony", while others stipulated conditions such as "Yes, by the definition I gave for question 2" indicating an understanding for some bronies that not all of them think of or approach the fandom in the same way.

Indeed, one 20 year old north American respondent had a very specific answer in that respect:

"/b/rony? Never. Vile, though amusing, corner of the internet. By its new definition? It was when Winter Wrap Up was leaked before the episode aired and spread around /co/. Song was damnable catchy. Then watched a few episode, and was mildly stunned when I continued watching them not for ironic value but rather because I was looking forward to it. Winter Wrap Up aired December 2010, so I'll call myself a brony for a year and a bit."

Quote 26: Brony Respondent nr. 28 on whether he/she is a brony

This brony indicates that it came into contact with the show back on 4chan's /co/, which is a lot calmer than /b/ - when bronies were still known as /b/ronies. Equally, this brony seems to dislike the overall /b/ feel that some of the anons that have entered into the community has given the community – while another respondent actually said he liked that. Another example of how bronies can be perceived to be a kinder alternative can be seen in brony respondent 28's answer to question 4:

"Any gamer can relate to how difficult it is to find a decent guild/server/team/group online. Meeting another brony group online has always been a pleasure with more "nice shot" rather than "aimbotting fuckface" in chat. Keeping to the reputation, I always try to uphold such a standard when I join a brony group (Team Fortress 2, Puzzle Pirate, Call of Gods to name a few). Wear t-shirts with cutie marks in the corner occasionally and "ponified" my computer. Subtle enough that others overlook it while at the same time I've gotten a few "bro-hoofs" and knowing looks. Also, coding a fan-made game."

Quote 27: Brony respondent nr. 28 on how he/she expresses being a brony

Again brony 28 raises an interesting point. While the majority of the other respondents simply answer question 4 in much the similar way that the furry respondents answered their fourth question, by stating that they socialize online or in real life with other bronies, draw art, write fiction, make pony-related crafts, then brony 28 claims that brony gamers are simply nicer to play with.

This undeniably relates to this brony's understanding that true bronies take the lessons of friendship and kindness from the show with them into real life activities. Other respondents have answered the second

question simply by saying that to be a brony is to be loving and tolerant – now, there are many things that can be said of online gamers, but in heated moments and tense fights in especially online FPS games, then being loving and tolerant is rarely a quality exhibited. I base this statement purely on my own experience as an online gamer, but also because if you go to Youtube.com and search for “Xbox live trash talk” you get over 9000 results (267), most of which are recorded videos of people shouting obscenities to each other via the Xbox live online gaming network. This is of course by no means representative of all gamers, but my point is that such behaviors exist and brony respondent 28 says that brony gamers are a haven of polite attitudes compared to the less politely inclined. This goes to explain part of the allure of the brony SAC.

For the fifth answer I expected a wide variety of answers, similarly to the furry survey. Eleven of the respondents actually say that they don’t feel that there are any parts of the fandom and community they dislike – while others list multiple grievances.

One specifically dislikes the pornography being produced by the fandom – that is, pornographic renditions of the MLP:FiM show’s characters:

“Well, to be honest about it, the porn.

Written or drawn, the porn kind of bothers me.

Don't misunderstand.

I'm a guy; naked women in any form or medium is not really going to offend me.

I'm certainly not surprised by it either. Being a fan of Pokémon, Digimon, Dragon Ball Z, and several other games/cartoons have shown me that rule 34 is not only definitive, but irrefutable.

At least it's more "acceptable" for characterizations of the ponies to be floating around when compared to the massive amounts of Pokémon Girl 34, half of which being furry/bestiality and the other half being loli/child pornography. At least the characters from MLP are adults and can speak in full sentences.

The show itself is pure, innocent fun with little tweaks of crazy every once in a while. It also happens to be a fair deal better than most other shows that receive the (ei) label. I am mature enough to distinguish between the show itself and its fandom. I can enjoy watching this show with my niece all the same, but I don't look forward to the day when she's searching for "that show we used to watch" and ends up stumbling upon gigabytes worth of well-drawn porn and badly written "clop-fics".

Quote 28: Brony respondent 1 on his dislikes in the fandom

Aside from the acknowledgement of the inescapable nature of the axiomatic rule 34 of the internet, then this brony isn’t the only to voice a dislike of brony pornography, four other respondents said the same thing, making it the most disliked topic in the survey responses. However, this should be compared to the eleven respondents who did not take issue with such content: This kind of difference in opinion, as with the previous example of different understandings on what was a proper brony, is a perfect example of what a SAC community is, in that it really shows two very different opinions of what brony is existing in the same community – three of the responders who dislike brony themed pornography specifically stating that people who make or like that stuff aren’t really bronies at all. Another respondent had an altogether different gripe with the issue of erotica and pornography in the fandom, which again pits two different preferences against each other in a battle which is best:

“I feel like I sometimes see an uncomfortable amount of rage from some folks towards Hasbro for trying to enforce their copy rights, and between different camps of fans against one another. One that bothers me is

the casual shipping fanfic camp (circa some Canterlot.com writers) vs. the hardcore romance fic camp (circa Butterscotch Sundae and others). I wish folks would understand that standards of comfort differ from person to person, and that there will always be someone who interprets fandom differently than they do. Even grimdark writers and people who twist the fandom on its head have a place in it."

Quote 29: Brony respondent 3 on his dislikes in the fandom

Here the issue is a question of debate over factions within the brony fandom that advocate different approaches to how proper written pony erotica, called "clap fics" are to be done (Clap is brony lingo for fap). This brony advocates an understanding that people will have different preferences and styles and so would prefer it if everyone in the fandom accepted that – over squabbling online over what style is appropriate. Like the above grievance with pornographic brony material in general, then this reflects the widely differing opinions of the fandom, which is indicative that it is a SAC, since a community with formal guidelines for content and enforcement of such would make this kind of situation impossible to arise.

Other respondents flat out state that they dislike rule 34 and pornographic brony material in general – all in all there is no clear pattern in the twenty-eight respondents on what they like or don't like. Many write as the first quoted respondent on the subject, using a very accepting tone: they recognize that certain parts of the fandom might revel in content they personally don't subscribe to, but that doesn't mean that they themselves dislike that aspect of the fandom. In short they display a very tolerant attitude if nothing else.

7.4.2 Summary

A final example of how multi-faceted the brony fandom is comes from a Tumblr account. On the online microblogging website Tumblr an account exists called "Pony Confessions" (268). This account, if nothing else, is in my opinion the single greatest piece of supporting evidence that the brony fandom is a standalone complex. The Tumblr account has a simple stated goal: people submit their pony related 'confessions' and they are posted on the account, with no information of who submitted them shown – making the Tumblr a long list of images and text showcasing secret thoughts and confessions on the subject of the fandom and the show – showing the great variety of opinions within the fandom.

Indeed, one confession specify that "When I first saw this blog, I thought it was a stupid concept. I now have come to see that this is a place for every facet of the fandom to be seen" (269). Another says "I only like MLP:FiM because of the fans" (270). Some confess their love for characters in the show (271; 272).

A good number of the confessions deal with frustrations relating to the fandom. One hates rule 34 material made about the show and its characters (273), another likes rule 34 material (274), another dislikes that some bronies express the attitude that bronydom is a 'lifestyle' (275), a term carried over from the more spiritually inclined furies who joined the brony fandom. Some express frustration over bronies supposedly saying that the MLP fanbase should be tolerant of everything thrown their way, indicating a dispute over both how tolerant bronies should be to fringe elements of the community (276; 277). One hates not being able to express a dislike in the fandom without being told by others to just love and tolerate it (278) while another simply complains that there isn't enough rule 34 material on that brony's favorite 'ship', or fan couple made of characters from the show (279)

Then there are the more heartwarming confessions, such as one plainly stating that after hearing one of the child characters in the show a brony and his wife went from being childless by choice to 'maybe just

one' (280). Indeed, like with the forum thread on how Anonymous had the lives of those involved in project chanology, then many of the confessions on the Tumblr speak of how the show either saved them somehow (281; 282) or gave them a more positive outlook on life (283; 284), possibly explaining why other bronies might see parts of the fandom as being just zealous enough in its adoration of the community and the show.

At the time of writing this, the Tumblr account Pony Confessions had 1578 entries since its start in late October 2011 (285). The confessions are incredibly diverse, and while they are more or less completely unverifiable in that you can't tell who said what or determine if they are true – then they do indicate that the brony fandom has little to no uniform opinion on subjects such as whether adult imagery of show characters should be allowed in the fandom, or if original fan-made characters should be encouraged or discouraged. It also reveals that bronies can approach being a brony from any number of angles, with very little to stop them from expressing themselves in ways that other bronies might even object to.

These are, in my opinion, telltale signs that the brony fandom is a standalone complex, in that the fandom has few if any real norms that every adheres to with any certainty, with the exceptions of a vaguely defined interest in the show MLP:FiM or the brony community itself – much like the furry fandom's liking of all things anthropomorphic and Anonymous' eternal quest for lulz.

7.5 Memes

As already explained then the popular understanding of what an 'internet meme' is can be somewhat nebulous. However, in this thesis multiple internet memes have already been mentioned – but arguably not all of them fit the bill of emerging as a standalone complex, although many do.

This section will briefly explain a small selection of internet memes as standalone complexes.

First of all then Anonymous, the furry fandom to some extent and the brony fandom all technically qualify as memes. The units of cultural information that comprises the logic, the loose behavioral codes, the customs and iconography that make up Anonymous are arguably all memes – spread by those who know them, to those that might not know them as well as those already well versed in their ways. This is how any community maintains itself, by keeping its traditions and ways alive.

Popular internet phenomena as memes take on a somewhat different form. They're often short-lived, fading from active memory the moment something newer and more novel pops up – although they are rarely forgotten entirely, as sites such as ED or Knowyourmeme.com index and describe many of them.

A recent example of this came from the video game Elder Scrolls 5: Skyrim (286). The game being a single player RPG has many of its NPCs (Non-Player Characters) use stock lines, and one of them goes "I used to be an adventurer like you. Then I took an arrow in the knee...". Any player of the game will hear that line being said by city guard NPCs ad nauseam (287) – which is fairly ironic due to the prevalence of healing magic and healing potions in the game, something a player will have to use repeatedly. Because of this the line became quite popular on the internet as a joke, in the form of the template "I used to [blank] but then I took an arrow to the knee" or more openly "I used to X but then Y in the Z".

The meme is thus a combination of this phrasal template and the understanding that it is funny. This first led to image macros being made as well as the line becoming a common sight in YouTube comments, but

also YouTube videos with creative remixes featuring parodies or reinterpretations of the line (288; 289; 290 s. 00:50; 291) or videos about the frustration of the game character hearing the same line over and over again (292; 293; 294), or even meta-content ultimately decrying the meme as no longer funny (295).

on the archive CD I have included three screenshots from five of the above linked YouTube videos, all of which contain examples of arrow in knee comments – some spreading the meme in its original form, others being variations on the theme and finally a few showing scorn for the meme, saying that it's old and done to death.

Indeed, a meme doesn't have to focus on something that is well liked – it can be popular to dislike something.

The following is a list of ten memes that I argue show how varied internet memes can be. They're arguably all examples of meme-type standalone complexes, in that their propagation was not in any way formalized, moderated or controlled. They are examples of popular concepts or ideas that just spread and, as it is popular to call it 'went viral'. The memes are from KnowYourMeme's top ten popular internet memes of 2011 (296).

Their nr 10 choice was the internet phenomena surrounding one Rebecca Black and her song Friday. The meme was that the song from the young singer was terrible – and the meme was thus both encouragement to ridicule the song and arguments why it was to be treated so. This prompted a SAC which expressed itself in silly image macros making fun of the singer and the song, as well as Black's song Friday on YouTube officially becoming the most down-voted video on YouTube. Another aspect of the SAC targeted Rebecca Black directly, making fun of her. This culminated when Black ended up having to be homeschooled due to relentless teasing at her school (297). In this sense this is an example of an overlapping meme and raid type SAC.

Know Your Meme's nr 9 choice was the meme named 'First World Problems', which first took the form of a trending topic on Twitter where first world citizens would complain about minor inconveniences. What made this into a meme was that it quickly became a fun thing to make into silly image macros, as it made fun of how privileged and entitled many first world citizens felt or behaved, making an expression of often self-referential meta humor (298). This SAC is simple, revolving around the propagation of funny images, which at the same time propagates the meme and shows how others can replicate it.

The number 8 choice was the Occupy Wall Street movement. This might sound weird, but the understanding and common consensus, the meme, of protesting corporate control or feelings of helplessness spread via social network and microblogging services on the internet, making it at least partially an internet meme taken into the real world, not unlike Project Chanology (299). Indeed, the parallels to the Chanology SAC are many. The Occupy movement as a SAC has spawned multiple protest, most of which center in the US, with no real control or guidelines for who can set up a protest where, as individuals joined in on the idea and grouped together as a consequence of that.

The nr 7 choice was that of Planking, a type of photography fad where the meme is the understanding that it is funny to arrange and take pictures in this unique style – where one is to attempt to lie down flat (like a plank of wood) in the most unlikely of places (300). As a SAC-meme this is almost identical to the First

World Problem SAC-meme: The images propagate the meme and show how others can replicate and contribute new the content

The nr 6 choice was the image macro meme of 'Scumbag Steve', where an image of a nameless young man in a jacket and sideways fitted Burberry cap leaning through a door in a hallway were given captions indicative of the man being a no-good scumbag. The meme uses the image as a template on which stereotypical high school or college scumbag two-line phrases are written, making fun of people who behave in such ways (301).

The nr 5 choice is a similar template-based meme known as "X all the Y", combining an image template of an excited looking character and a fill-in-the-blanks phrasal template anyone can customize with an image editing program, allowing anyone to choose any combination of character and catchphrase, such as a generic looking person going "rule 34 all the things" or "Eat all the pie" (302).

The nr 4 choice started as a made-to-go-viral advertisement for a taxidermist named Chuck Testa, which succeeded in catching on and spawning a host of remixes and photo-edits, using the pun of something not being what you think it is, it instead being a stuffed version that Testa had made, in all kinds of humorous contexts (303).

The nr 3 choice originated as a short looped 8-bit pixel animation of a cat with a popart for a body flying through space, leaving a rainbow in its wake, to the sound of a simple Japanese musical loop known as Nyan Cat. The meme was expressed in adapting the cute and simple graphics style and music to anything else possible, as the original was found oddly catchy (304).

The nr 2 choice in KnowYourMeme's 2011 top memes list was that of '60s Spiderman', a series of image macros similar in execution to scumbag Steve, using images taken from the animated Spiderman cartoon from the 60s along with weird added captions expressing Spiderman's supposed inner dialogue. The meme originated in 2009 on 4chan, but first caught on outside 4chan in 2011. The meme was expressed by the various humorous combinations of images from the show and weird statements that Spiderman is made to appear think or say and the understanding that such were hilarious (305).

The Scumbag Steve, "X all the Y", Chuck Testa, Nyan Cat and '60s Spiderman' memes are all examples of SACs similarly to the planking and first world problem: It's a fun and catchy concept, with a relatively easy to understand method for replication and propagation, that people saw, were amused by, and contributed to – which ultimately gave the overall effect of it appearing as these were the latest and greatest fads in 2011. This is what an internet meme is at its most basic, and the standalone complexes that rose around them was how they got so big and popular.

The nr 1 meme of 2011 according to KnowYourMeme was My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic, but since that topic has already been covered – it won't be explained any further, suffice to say it was during 2011 that it took off.

Arguably, all of these memes represent standalone complexes – in that the propagation and acting upon the information informed by the memes, even though how to use the format outlined in the memes was completely up to the individual contributor.

This does imply that many internet memes qualify as instances of SACs, but to examine all of them would be beyond the scope of this thesis. The examples listed here and in the rest of the thesis are but a tiny sample of the viral memetic content available on the internet – and it is my opinion that if nothing else, then my theory of a standalone complex can be used to describe how these propagate and become popular, beyond one simply stating “It got popular and it spread via the internet and word of mouth”, as a SAC also explains the decentralized nature of a meme’s adherents and propagators, as well as why a meme can end up with widely different interpretations and remixes. SACs also explain why a meme can be very difficult to forcefully end once it has caught on, like the arrow to the knee meme.

Finally, to demonstrate just how far reaching a single meme can get, I have produced a seven minute video explaining the rise and fall of the internet meme known as the ‘Rickroll’. The video is attached on the archive CD. The video demonstrates that a simple joke on 4chan can become a meme that spreads to even the highest echelons of society – demonstrating how far and wide a meme-type SAC can go if its gets popular enough.

8 Discussion & Conclusion

The face of the internet is changing rapidly these days. Many move for more permanent identity features to ensure that everyone knows who everyone is when online. Facebook logins are a popular way of ensuring that you are who you say you are when making a new account somewhere online.

However, this way of thinking of community structuring and social dynamics are all simply copied and pasted from the common understandings most people have of how decent society works in real life – and I will argue that I have shown repeated examples of people behaving in ways that they are very unlikely to behave in reality, and equally explained why that is through my theory of standalone complexes.

On the internet people can drop in and out of communities, both in a membership context and when it's come active or passive participation, for many of them function as standalone complexes: Very few online forums have any kind of entrance fee or requirements. There is no binding commitment to the community, so you can leave at any moment, and equally return if you feel like it with little to no real hindrance. That you can't really tell who's in the SAC with you allows for a very broad interpretation of participation, which can lead to conflict, but can also simply lead to a very broad community, varied raiding styles or different expressions of a meme.

To this end I argue my case for the standalone complex: I mean it as a term to describe this new kind of online social phenomena, because to my knowledge there isn't one at the moment. I do admit that I am not an anthropologist, so I may very well have missed something explaining this already, but I still stand by my work. Also, at its base the SAC isn't strictly speaking a 'social' phenomena: I only call it social in the context that it is not a technical phenomenon, even if online communications technology makes it possible – it is a phenomena that happens with people in emergent groups, that can scatter just as quickly as it forms, so there isn't necessarily any real social connection between participants. The section on raids is a good example on this, as the SACs that the raids took the form of ended once the raiding wasn't fun or interesting anymore, with community and meme type SACs live and die according to their ability to maintain people's attention and participation as well, although they do tend to have longer lifespans than raid SACs.

I would argue that my concept of a SAC is a bit like the concept of distributed cognition: It is a new way of understanding things that we already know to exist. All it does is shed a different kind of light on it, which in turn allows us to understand the world around us in a different way – a better and more completely way hopefully. That said, one can't explain the other. A SAC doesn't have to have anything to do with cognitive science, although it is always an option to look at SAC participants' thoughts and reasons for doing what they do – this is, to a very mild degree, what I tried to do with my mini-surveys: I looked for differing and conflicting opinions, and I found them. Distributed cognition can possible be used to explain certain aspects of a SAC – especially community SACs such as Anonymous and the way they communicate. However, distributed cognition cannot explain the occurrence of an entire SAC, as a SAC as a cognitive system uses standalone actors, actors that are independent and not necessarily communicating with each other. Good examples of this are in the form of the online raids I described. I am not ruling out that distributed cognition and my theory of standalone complexes cannot help explain each other: A SAC will ultimately always represent a specific understanding that can be plotted as a cognitive system, although plotting

actors and the distribution of labor in such a system will probably be very difficult – as both of those will be in constant flux as people drop in or out of the SAC.

Social emergence on the other hand covers a lot of what I've been trying to show. A more cynical person could argue that social emergence essentially already explains what I'm saying with SACs – I would disagree. I don't aim for SACs to replace emergence as a way to understand online social or behavioral models – I simply want to put a name of a specific kind of emergent phenomena that I've shown to happen nearly the all the time on the internet, to supplement the field.

It is by this logic that I argue that I have adequately explained what a standalone complex is – and given several varied examples and solid evidence of that.

9 Bibliography

It should be noted that many of the pages referred to on Encyclopedia Dramatica (ED) contain very adult content – and much of the content on its pages are written in a language meant to confuse, shock and insult anyone who reads it. Equally, as mentioned previously then in early April 2011 ED was deleted, but subsequently resurrected via cached copies, meaning that many of the re-written articles show no date of origin before mid-April 2011, making accurate dating of many entries virtually impossible. Some entries refer to specific dates or years, allowing dating that way around, while others can be dated via mention of the topic in news media archives.

1. **Masamune, Shirow.** Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex. *productionig.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: january 4, 2012.] http://www.productionig.com/contents/works_sp/03_/index.html.
2. **Goldstein, Jeffrey.** Emergence as a construct: History and issues. *Emergence: A journal of complexity issues in organizations and management*. 1999, Vol. 1, 1, pp. 49-72.
3. **Norman, Barry.** *The Tradition of Spontaneous Order*. Arlington, VA, USA : Institute for Humane Studies, 1982.
4. **Sawyer, R. Keith.** *Social Emergence: Societies as Complex Systems*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2005. 0521844649.
5. **Stryker, Cole.** *Epic win for Anonymous: how 4chan's army conquered the web*. New York : Overlook press, 2011. pp. 64-67.
6. **Walther, Joseph B.** Computer mediated communication: impersonal, interpersonal, hyperpersonal interaction. *Communication research*. 1996, Vol. 23, 1, pp. 3-46.
7. **Papcharissi, Zizi and Rubin, M. Alan.** Predictors of internet use. *Journal of broadcasting & electronic media*. 44, 2000, Vol. 2.
8. **Barak, Azy.** Sexual Harasement on the internet. *Social Science Computer Review*. 2005, Vol. 23, 1, pp. 77-92.
9. *Splicing ourselves into the machine: Electronic Communities, systems theory, and composition studies*. **LaGrandeur, Kevin**. Phoenix, AZ : s.n., 1997. Annual meeting of the conference on college composition and communication.
10. **TED.** Christopher "moot" Poole: The case for anonymity online. *TEDtalks: Christopher "moot" Poole: The case for anonymity online*. [Online] TED, Febuary 2010. [Cited: january 6, 2012.] http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/christopher_m00t_poole_the_case_for_anonymity_online.html.
11. **Postmes, Tom, Spears, Russel and Lea, Martin.** Breaching or building social boundaries? SIDE-effects of computer-mediated communication. *Communication Research*. 1998, Vol. 25, 6, pp. 689-715.
12. —. The Formation of Group Norms in Computer-Mediated Communication. *Human Communication Research*. 2000, Vol. 26, 3, pp. 341-371.
13. **Suler, John.** The Online Disinhibition effect. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*. 2004, Vol. 7, 3.
14. **Techtarget.** What is lurking? Definition from Whatis.com. *SOA Information*. [Online] 1999. [Cited: october 30, 2011.] <http://searchsoa.techtarget.com/definition/lurking>.
15. **Ren, Yuqing, Kraut, Robert and Kiesler, Sara.** Applying common identity and bond theory to design of online communities. *Organization Studies*. 2007, Vol. 28, 3, pp. 377-408.
16. **Postmes, Tom, Spears, Russel and Lea, Martin.** Intergroup Differentiation in computer mediated communication: effects of depersonalization. *Group dynamics: theory, research, and practice*. 2002, Vol. 6, 1, pp. 3-16.
17. **Zhang, Y and Wildemuth, B. M.** Qualitative Analysis of Content. [book auth.] Barbara M. Wildemuth. *Applications of social research methods to questions in information and library science*. s.l. : Libraries Unlimited, 2009.
18. **Raid.** *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: january 18, 2012.] <http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/Raid>.

19. **Knowyourmeme.** Lolcats. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] december 12, 2008. [Cited: november 17, 2011.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/lolcats>.
20. **Dawkins, Richard.** *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford : Oxford university Press, 1976; second edition 1989. ISBN 0-19-857519-X.
21. **Cheezburger, Inc.** Internet Meme Database. *Knowyourmeme*. [Online] 2011. knowyourmeme.com.
22. **UrbanDictionary.com.** Stand Alone Complex. *UrbanDictionary.com*. [Online] 2008. [Cited: january 4, 2012.] <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Stand%20Alone%20Complex>.
23. **Parral, Jessica and Clark, James.** Internet Group Takes Action Against Scientology. *City on a hill press - a student run newspaper*. [Online] february 21, 2008. [Cited: november 18, 2011.] <http://www.cityonahillpress.com/2008/02/21/internet-group-takes-action-against-scientology/>.
24. **Poole, Christopher.** 4chan.org. *4chan*. [Online] october 2004. [Cited: december 18, 2012.] www.4chan.org.
25. **Norton, Quinn.** Anonymous 101: Introduction to the lulz. *Wired.com*. [Online] november 8, 2011. [Cited: november 8, 2011.] <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2011/11/anonymous-101/all/1>.
26. **AnonymOS, DJ.** Lulz: A corruption of LOL albums. *tumblr.com*. [Online] january 2008. [Cited: december 2, 2011.] <http://lulzalbums.tumblr.com/>.
27. This Looks Shopped. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: october 30, 2011.] http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/This_looks_shopped.
28. **Cheezburger, Inc.** This Looks Shopped. *Know Your Meme*. [Online] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/this-looks-shopped>.
29. **Thisisnotatrueending.com.** /tg/ space stealth discussion. *Sup/tg/*. [Online] october 1, 2010. <http://suptg.thisisnotatrueending.com/archive/12995135/>.
30. —. /tg/: Island Setting Creation. *Sup/tg/*. [Online] august 10, 2008. <http://suptg.thisisnotatrueending.com/archive/4974301/>.
31. —. sup/tg/. *Thisisnotatrueending.com*. [Online] August 11, 2011. <http://suptg.thisisnotatrueending.com/archive/15897590/>.
32. Chans. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: november 7, 2011.] <http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/Chans>.
33. **Times live.** The demon god of the internet. *Times live*. [Online] august 26, 2010. <http://www.timeslive.co.za/opinion/columnists/article624456.ece/The-demon-god-of-the-internet>.
34. **Alexa.** 4chan.org site info. *Alexa: 4chan statistics*. [Online] January 6, 2012. [Cited: january 6, 2012.] <http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/4chan.org#>.
35. **Poole, Christopher.** 4chan: Advertise. *4chan.org*. [Online] [Cited: december 28, 2011.] <http://www.4chan.org/advertise>.
36. Anonymous. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: december 4, 2011.] <http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/Anonymous>.
37. **Bernstein, Michael S, et al., et al.** *4chan and /b/: An Analysis of Anonymity and Ephemerality in a Large Online Community*. Cambridge, MA & Southhampton UK : MIT & University of Southhampton, 2011.
38. **Chanarchive.org.** YOU LOVE YOU LOSE >super fucking easy mode. *Chanarchive.org*. [Online] september 12, 2011. [Cited: january 4, 2012.] <http://chanarchive.org/4chan/b/20759/you-love-you-lose-super-fucking-easy-mode>.
39. —. you save you lose - pt5. *Chanarchive.org*. [Online] may 4, 2008. [Cited: january 4, 2012.] <http://chanarchive.org/4chan/wg/3300/you-save-you-lose-pt5>.
40. —. try not to laugh. *Chanarchive.org*. [Online] december 11, 2006. [Cited: december 18, 2012.] <http://chanarchive.org/4chan/b/112/try-not-to-laugh>.
41. —. you facepalm you lose. *Chanarchive.org*. [Online] october 28, 2007. [Cited: january 4, 2012.] <http://chanarchive.org/4chan/a/990/you-facepalm-you-lose>.
42. —. Laugh And Lose. Hard Mode. *Chanarchive.org*. [Online] august 12, 2010. <http://chanarchive.org/4chan/b/6825/laugh-and-lose-hard-mode>.
43. Faggot. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: december 27, 2011.] <http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/Fag>.

44. Rules of the Internet. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: january 18, 2012.] http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/Rules_of_the_internet.
45. **FoxLA**. Fox 11 News Report on Anonymous. *Youtube: Fox 11 News on Anonymous*. [Online] FoxLA, october 11, 2008. [Cited: december 7, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkAngvWVkk>.
46. Lulz. *encyclopedia-dramatica.ch*. [Online] december 6, 2012. [Cited: december 6, 2012.] <http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/Lulz>.
47. **Palahhnuik, Chuck**. *Fight Club*. s.l. : W. W. Norton, 1996.
48. **S, Scott**. We Are Anonymous, We Are Legion. *Yale Law & Technology*. [Online] november 9, 2009. [Cited: october 24, 2011.] <http://www.yalelawtech.org/anonymity-online-identity/we-are-anonymous-we-are-legion/>.
49. **Hyperion09**. File:Banned27.jpg. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] 2007. [Cited: november 8, 2011.] <http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/File:Banned27.jpg>.
50. —. File:Banned8.png. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] 2007. [Cited: november 8, 2011.] <http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/File:Banned8.png>.
51. **1DollarSkank**. File:God-emperor-of-trollkind.jpg. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] may 20, 2011. [Cited: october 30, 2011.] <http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/File:God-emperor-of-trollkind.jpg>.
52. 4chan Bans. *encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: november 4, 2011.] http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/4chan_Bans.
53. Batman. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: november 29, 2011.] <http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/Batman>.
54. Srs_bsns. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: october 24, 2011.] http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/Srs_bsns.
55. Mystery of the druids. *1d4chan.org*. [Online] 2001. [Cited: november 4, 2011.] http://1d4chan.org/wiki/Mystery_of_the_Druids.
56. **Yokai**. *Rule 34*. zoom-out.co.uk, s.l. : 2005.
57. **Knowyourmeme**. Rule 34. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] 2006. [Cited: november 10, 2011.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/rule-34>.
58. **Shimmie**. Featured image. *Paheal Rule 34*. [Online] april 24, 2007. [Cited: november 6, 2011.] http://rule34.paheal.net/post/list/featured_image/1.
59. Paheal. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: october 30, 2011.] <http://encyclopedia-dramatica.ch/Paheal>.
60. **Sanntu**. Featured Image Apple. *Paheal rule 34*. [Online] july 4, 2008. [Cited: november 6, 2012.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/178210>.
61. **Titanium**. Featured image: Apple. *Paheal rule 34*. [Online] november 10, 2008. [Cited: december 11, 2011.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/48233>.
62. **Slashfiend**. Featured image: Thanksgiving turkey. *Paheal rule 34*. [Online] july 13, 2007. [Cited: november 11, 2011.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/18123>.
63. **Anomalous**. Featured Image: Hokusai the great wave off kanagawa. *Paheal rule 34*. [Online] september 1, 2011. [Cited: november 6, 2011.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/511794>.
64. **Repairman-man**. Featured image: Paheal. *Paheal rule 34*. [Online] january 5, 2008. [Cited: november 11, 2011.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/69667>.
65. **Jeb**. Featured image: Gizmo. *Paheal rule 34*. [Online] january 26, 2008. [Cited: november 6, 2011.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/80060>.
66. **Dante, Joe**. *Gremlins*. Warner Bros. Pictures, Amblin Entertainment, 1984.
67. **Som**. Featured image: Garfield, Odie & Jon Arbuckle. *Paheal Rule 34*. [Online] may 3, 2008. [Cited: november 11, 2011.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/142487>.
68. —. Featured image: analog vs digital. *paheal rule 34*. [Online] june 10, 2008. [Cited: november 11, 2011.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/166745>.

69. **Scarface**. Featured image: Jesus. *paheal rule 34*. [Online] november 11, 2008. [Cited: november 6, 2011.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/237861>.
70. **Gackt**. featured image: Large Hardon Collider. *Paheal rule 34*. [Online] december 9, 2008. [Cited: november 6, 2011.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/251938>.
71. **Estoyloco**. Featured Image: Cornelius. *Paheal rule 34*. [Online] january 30, 2009. [Cited: november 6, 2011.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/277054>.
72. **Warrior**. Featured image: Santa Claus. *Paheal rule 34*. [Online] december 1, 2007. [Cited: november 11, 2011.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/55697>.
73. —. Featured Image: asterix & obelix. *paheal rule 34*. [Online] november 30, 2007. [Cited: november 11, 2012.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/54807>.
74. Caturday. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: January 6, 2012.] <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Caturday>.
75. Zippocat. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: october 30, 2011.] <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Zippocat>.
76. **yyxoB**. Rule Zero. *Urban Dictionary*. [Online] december 28, 2009. [Cited: november 17, 2011.] <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Rule%20Zero&defid=5036049>.
77. **Knowyourmeme**. I can't fap to this. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] july 26, 2011. <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/i-cant-fap-to-this>.
78. **Hard**. Video Girl Etchi 1. *Sexy Losers*. [Online] april 28, 1999. [Cited: june 2, 2011.] <http://sexylosers.com/003.html>.
79. **Knowyourmeme**. Fap. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] march 25, 2010. [Cited: november 4, 2011.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/fap>.
80. Delicious cake. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: january 3, 2012.] <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Cake>.
81. Trap. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: october 30, 2011.] <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Traps>.
82. W. T. Snacks. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: october 30, 2011.] <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Snacks>.
83. Bring Back Snacks. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: january 2, 2012.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Bring_Back_Snacks.
84. Divide by zero. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: december 21, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Divide_By_Zero.
85. **Know Your meme**. Chuck Norris. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] july 2011. [Cited: november 24, 2011.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/people/chuck-norris>.
86. **Google**. Google Insights: Chuck Norris Facts. *Google.com/insights*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: november 20, 2011.] <http://www.google.com/insights/search/#q=chuck%20norris%20facts&cmpt=q>.
87. Gaston. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: January 7, 2012.] <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Gaston>.
88. **Gurewitch, Nicholas**. The Perry Bible fellowship: Weeaboo. *The Perry Bible fellowship*. [Online] [Cited: november 7, 2011.] <http://pbfcomics.com/71/>.
89. **knowyourmeme**. Weeaboo. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] 2005. [Cited: october 30, 2011.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/subcultures/weeaboo>.
90. **Drew**. Tooth paste for dinner archive: august 2005. *Tooth paste for dinner*. [Online] august 2005. [Cited: december 19, 2011.] <http://www.toothpastefordinner.com/archives/2005/Aug/>.
91. JESUS CHRIST IT'S A LION GET IN THE CAR! *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] february 2006. <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Lion>.
92. The Great Habbo Raid of July 2006. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] july 2006. [Cited: november 20, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/The_Great_Habbo_Raid_of_July_2006.
93. The Great Habbo Raid of July 2007. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] july 2007. [Cited: november 20, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/The_Great_Habbo_Raid_of_July_2007.

94. The Great Habbo Raid of July 2008. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] 2008. [Cited: november 20, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/The_Great_Habbo_Raid_of_July_2008.
95. Pool's Closed. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: november 4, 2011.] <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Pool>.
96. **Rogers, Yvonne**. Distributed Cognition and communication. [book auth.] Keith Brown. *Encyclopedia of language and linguistics (2nd ed)*. 2005.
97. **Hutchins, Edwin**. How a cockpit remembers its speeds. *COGNITIVE SCIENCE*. 1995, Vol. 19, pp. 265-288.
98. **Hollan, James and Hutchins, Edwin, Kirsh, David**. Distributed Cognition: Towards a new foundation for human-computer interaction research. *ACM transactions on computer-human interaction journal*. june 2000, pp. 174-196.
99. **Cole, Micheal and Engeström, Yrjö**. A cultural-historical approach to distributed cognition. *Distributed cognitions: psychological and educational considerations*. Cambridge : Press syndicate of the university of cambridge, 1993, pp. 1-46.
100. Reaction Face. *encyclopediadramatica.ch*. [Online] 2004. [Cited: january 4, 2012.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Reaction_Face.
101. Pedobear. *encyclopediadramatica.ch*. [Online] [Cited: january 4, 2012.] <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Pedobear>.
102. Chris Hansen. *encyclopediadramatica.ch*. [Online] [Cited: january 4, 2012.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Chris_Hansen.
103. Reaction.jpg. *encyclopediadramatica.org*. [Online] [Cited: january 4, 2012.] <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Reaction.jpg>.
104. **Loosegoose24**. Rule 34 on lunch. *Paheal rule 34*. [Online] june 8, 2009. [Cited: november 6, 2011.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/317316>.
105. **Garg, Kanwal and Chawla, Rshma**. DETECTION OF DDOS ATTACKS USING DATA MINING. *International Journal of Computing and Business Research*. 2011, Vol. 2, 1.
106. *DDoS Attacks Traffic and Flash Crowds Traffic Simulation with a*. **Wang, Jie, et al., et al**. london : s.n., 2011. 2011 World Congress on Internet Security (WorldCIS), . pp. 15-20.
107. **Kandula, Srikanth, et al., et al**. *Botz-4-sale: Surviving organized DDoS attacks that mimic flash crowds*. Cambridge, MA : CSAIL, 2004.
108. **Abatishchev**. LOIC. *Sourceforge.net*. [Online] june 24, 2009. [Cited: november 17, 2011.] <http://sourceforge.net/projects/loic/>.
109. High Orbit Ion Cannon. *High Orbit Ion Cannon*. [Online] november 18, 2011. [Cited: november 29, 2012.] <http://hoic.99k.org/>.
110. LOIC. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/LOIC>.
111. **Tiku, Nitasha**. 4 Chan Vet 'Chelsea M.' Says Author Cole Stryker Glossed Over Child Porn. *Betabeat.com*. [Online] August 26, 2011. [Cited: december 9, 2011.] <http://www.betabeat.com/2011/08/26/4-chan-vet-chelsea-m-says-author-cole-stryker-glossed-over-child-porn/>.
112. Project Chanology. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] 2008. [Cited: december 6, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Project_Chanology.
113. **BBC**. Anonymous hacktivists say Wikileaks war to continue. *BBC*. [Online] december 9, 2010. [Cited: december 10, 2011.] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-11935539>.
114. I did it for the lulz. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/I_did_it_for_the_lulz.
115. **Stryker, Cole**. Who Are Anonymous? An Urlesque F.A.Q. *Urlesque.com*. [Online] october 12, 2010. [Cited: december 9, 2011.] <http://www.urlesque.com/2010/12/10/who-are-anonymous/>.
116. **Wortham, Jenna**. One on One: Cole Stryker, Author of 'Epic Win for Anonymous'. *New York Times blog: Bits*. [Online] september 2, 2011. [Cited: november 27, 2011.] <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/09/02/one-on-one-cole-stryker-author-of-epic-win-for-anonymous/>.
117. **Stryker, Cole**. The Jessi Slaughter Scandal. *Urlesque.com*. [Online] July 19, 2010. [Cited: december 9, 2011.] <http://www.urlesque.com/2010/07/19/jessi-slaughter/>.
118. **Chen, Adrian**. How the Internet Beat Up an 11-Year-Old Girl. *Gawker.com*. [Online] july 16, 2010. [Cited: december 7, 2011.] <http://gawker.com/5589103/how-the-internet-beat-up-an-11-year-old-girl>.
119. Jessi Slaughter. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] 2010. http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Jessi_Slaughter.

120. **Davies, Shaun.** 'No cussing' teen faces net hate campaign. *Ninemsn.com*. [Online] january 18, 2009. [Cited: november 15, 2011.] <http://news.ninemsn.com.au/technology/720115/no-cussing-teen-faces-net-hate-campaign>.
121. Chanocalypse Naow. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] 2008. [Cited: December 19, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Chanocalypse_Naow.
122. Hal Turner. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: december 17, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Hal_turner.
123. Adam L. Goldstein. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: november 20, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Adam_L_Goldstein.
124. **Mrspatula.** dispute.mp3 (phonecall with Goldstein Recording). *tindeck.com*. [Online] july 19, 2009. [Cited: october 11, 2011.] <http://tindeck.com/listen/ubme>.
125. Mitchell Henderson. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] april 2006. [Cited: november 13, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Mitchell_Henderson.
126. **Russia Today.** U.S. cat abuser punished by the internet. *Russia Today*. [Online] february 16, 2009. [Cited: october 30, 2011.] <http://rt.com/news/us-cat-abuser-punished-by-the-internet/>.
127. **Watson, Leon.** Sicko beats cat in youtube clip. *The Sun*. [Online] february 16, 2009. [Cited: february 9, 2011.] <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/article2241852.ece>.
128. Kenny Glenn The Animal Abuser. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] february 15, 2009. <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Dusty>.
129. **Malcolm, Andrew.** Creators of 'Everybody Draw Muhammad Day' drop gag after everybody gets angry. *LA times*. [Online] april 26, 2010. [Cited: november 29, 2011.] <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/washington/2010/04/creators-of-everybody-draw-muhammad-day-abandon-effort-after-it-becomes-controversial.html>.
130. **Hannan, Caleb.** Molly Norris, "Draw Mohammed Day" Cartoonist, Placed On Execution Hitlist By Islamic Cleric Anwar al-Awlaki. *Seattle Weekly blog*. [Online] july 12, 2010. [Cited: november 23, 2011.] http://blogs.seattleweekly.com/dailyweekly/2010/07/molly_norris_draw_mohammed_day_1.php.
131. Everybody Draw Mohammed Day. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] 2010. [Cited: november 28, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Everybody_Draw_Mohammed_Day.
132. Epilepsy Foundation. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] march 2008. [Cited: march 6, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Epilepsy_Foundation.
133. **Denton, Nick.** The Cruise Indoctrination Video Scientology Tried To Suppress. *Gawker*. [Online] january 15, 2008. [Cited: february 20, 2011.] <http://gawker.com/5002269/the-cruise-indoctrination-video-scientology-tried-to-suppress>.
134. **Mellen, Mickey.** The Streisand effect: About. *The Streisand Effect*. [Online] 2008. [Cited: december 6, 2012.] <http://www.thestreisandeffect.com/about/>.
135. The Chanology Experiments. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: december 6, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/The_Chanology_Experiments.
136. Wise Beard Man. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: december 5, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Wise_Beard_Man.
137. **Bunker, Mark.** Scientology: XENU TV Speaks to Anonymous. *Youtube.com*. [Online] 2008. [Cited: october 30, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-bRE1NZ0vg>.
138. **ChurchOfScientology.** Message to Scientology. *Youtube.com*. [Online] january 21, 2008. [Cited: november 25, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCbKv9yiLiQ>.
139. Project Chanology: Anonymous Protesters Worldwide. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: december 6, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/PROJECT_CHANOLOGY#Anonymous_Protesters_Worldwide.
140. **spanishrevolutionsof.** Anonymous Protests Scientology - 10th February 2008 - London [www.keepvid.com].mp4. *Youtube.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: october 29, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wlgrx8K57BM>.

141. **Ebaumguy**. Anonymous Feb 10 2008 Philadelphia Scientology protest. *youtube.com*. [Online] february 10, 2008. [Cited: december 20, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHxy8OoQXVI>.
142. **Landers, Chris**. Serious Business. *Citypaper.com*. [Online] february 4, 2008. [Cited: november 18, 2011.] <http://www2.citypaper.com/columns/story.asp?id=15543>.
143. **Davodshayler1**. Anonymous lays down Terms of Surrender. *youtube.com*. [Online] february 14, 2009. [Cited: november 3, 2011.] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAl3Ad_YJOw.
144. **SDBSeth**. NYC Anonymous sings mean Christmas Carol to Scientology. *youtube.com*. [Online] january 20, 2011. [Cited: october 20, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DG3O8dO6XpQ>.
145. **Touretzky, David**. OT III Scholarship Page. *Secrets of Scientology*. [Online] january 17, 1997. [Cited: december 17, 2011.] <http://www-2.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/OTIII/>.
146. **Wakefield, Margery**. The wall of fire. *Carnegie Mellon online library*. [Online] december 21, 1996. <http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~dst/Library/Shelf/wakefield/testimony-10.html>.
147. **Hagglund, Gregg**. Madness, Absolute Madness. *Google group: Alt.religion.scientology*. [Online] february 15, 2008. [Cited: december 6, 2011.] http://groups.google.com/group/alt.religion.scientology/browse_thread/thread/c0976de8b6d1c384/ca7608a087a8a6f0?pli=1.
148. **Marcab Confederacy**. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] 2008. [Cited: november 24, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Marcab_Confederacy.
149. The Chanology Experiments: 420chan divides by zero. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: december 6, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/The_Chanology_Experiments#420chan_Divides_By_Zero.
150. **Beresford, David**. Sect framed journalist over 'bomb threats'. *Freewinds.be*. [Online] The Guardian, february 9, 1980. [Cited: november 25, 2011.] <http://cosmedia.freewinds.be/media/articles/grn090280.html>.
151. Project Chanology: A very, very small sample of Anonymous WINS against Scientology. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: december 6, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/PROJECT_CHANOLOGY#A_very.2C_very_small_sample_of_Anonymous_WINS_against_Scientology.
152. **wikileaks**. Category: Scientology. *Wikileaks.org*. [Online] [Cited: January 4, 2012.] <http://www.wikileaks.org/wiki/Category:Scientology>.
153. Project Chanology: Leaked docs. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: december 6, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/PROJECT_CHANOLOGY/LEAKED_DOX.
154. **ChanologyOfHalifax**. Donkey Punched : The Assault of an Anti Scientology Protester in Halifax. *youtube.com*. [Online] may 4, 2010. [Cited: november 25, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0px3oJq-u28>.
155. **xstaticonaremix**. DM - Catch Me If You Can. *youtube.com*. [Online] june 19, 2010. [Cited: january 4, 2012.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vw5ey1VpRKE>.
156. **TheEndOfScientology**. Attack on AnonOrange and Xenubarb at Gold Base - Longer Version. *youtube.com*. [Online] february 16, 2009. [Cited: october 20, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3c0uJgMVmKk>.
157. **Axiom142**. Scientologist grabs camera. *youtube.com*. [Online] october 15, 2011. [Cited: november 20, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5PU5rCqWCI>.
158. **Zhent**. SCIENTOLOGIST LOOSES IT, ASSAULTS. *vimeo.com*. [Online] january 16, 2010. [Cited: october 14, 2011.] <http://vimeo.com/8778505>.
159. Clearwater Anonymous Protest - January 17th - Bullbaiting Failtroll Angle 1. *youtube.com*. [Online] january 17, 2009. [Cited: January 9, 2012.] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_4_b3z2E-0I.
160. **Anonagi**. What has Anonymous done for you? <http://forums.whyyweprotest.net>. [Online] june 18, 2008. [Cited: january 2, 2012.] <http://forums.whyyweprotest.net/threads/what-has-anonymous-done-for-you.15421/>.
161. **Wiseboy, Jaycee**. What has anonymous done for you. <http://forums.whyyweprotest.net>. [Online] october 31, 2011. [Cited: january 2, 2012.] <http://forums.whyyweprotest.net/threads/what-has-anonymous-done-for-you.15421/page-7#post-1935616>.

162. Rorschach: Co\$ killed Roschach's cat. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] march 13, 2008. [Cited: december 6, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Rorschach#Co.24_killed_Rorschach.27s_cat_Mudkips_NEVAR_4GET.
163. **Coleman, Gabriella**. Hackers vs. Scientology. *Youtube.com*. [Online] april 30, 2010. Video recording of lecture, part 1 of 6. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPd9Gd5vAD8>.
164. **Gregg**. What has anonymous done for you? <http://forums.whyweprotest.net>. [Online] june 18, 2008. [Cited: january 2, 2012.] <http://forums.whyweprotest.net/threads/what-has-anonymous-done-for-you.15421/page-2#post-347152>.
165. **Bech-Danielsen, Anne**. Oprøret under den hvide maske. *Politiken*. october 25, 2011.
166. **liekmudkips**. msnbc news on Anonymous Operation Payback [Mirror]. *youtube.com*. [Online] december 11, 2010. [Cited: october 19, 2011.] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ye_F0w5nP5w.
167. **Dwyer, Tom**. Anonymous calls to boycott PayPal - stock drops ~3%. *Neowin.net*. [Online] july 27, 2010. [Cited: december 8, 2011.] <http://www.neowin.net/news/anonymous-calls-to-boycott-paypal---stock-drops-3>.
168. **Anderson, Nate**. How one man tracked down Anonymous—and paid a heavy price. *Arstechnica.com*. [Online] February 9, 2011. [Cited: november 3, 2011.] <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2011/02/how-one-security-firm-tracked-anonymousand-paid-a-heavy-price.ars/1>.
169. **Ragan, Steve**. Anonymous' Operation: Sony is a double-edged sword. *Thetechherald.com*. [Online] april 5, 2011. [Cited: october 14, 2011.] <http://www.thetechherald.com/articles/Anonymous-Operation-Sony-is-a-double-edged-sword>.
170. **Stevenson, Alastair**. Post-PSN Hack: Sony confirm LulzSec hack. *International Business Times*. [Online] june 8, 2011. [Cited: october 12, 2011.] <http://uk.ibtimes.com/articles/159417/20110608/sony-hack-lulz-lulzsec-psn-security-playstation-network-store.htm>.
171. **Johnson, Carrie**. U.S. Hunts 'Hacktivists;' Some Ask: Is It Worth It? *National Public Radio*. [Online] december 13, 2010. [Cited: december 4, 2011.] <http://www.npr.org/2010/12/13/132015315/as-u-s-hunts-hacktivists-some-ask-is-it-worth-it>.
172. **Medgyesi, Jakob**. Nu vil anonymous angribe Facebook. *TV2.dk*. [Online] august 10, 2011. [Cited: september 2, 2011.] <http://beep.tv2.dk/entry.php/id-407289.html>.
173. **Mcmillan, Graeme**. What Happened to Anonymous' November 5 Operations? *Time: Techland*. [Online] november 10, 2011. [Cited: november 10, 2011.] <http://techland.time.com/2011/11/10/what-happened-to-anonymous-november-5-operations/>.
174. **Anderson, Nate**. Empty suit: the chaotic way Anonymous makes decisions. *Arstechnica.com*. [Online] february 21, 2011. [Cited: november 3, 2011.] <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2011/02/empty-suit-the-chaotic-way-that-anonymous-makes-decisions.ars>.
175. —. Chaos as Anonymous attacks toilet paper, Sweden, itself. *Arstechnica.com*. [Online] march 3, 2011. [Cited: november 3, 2011.] <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2011/03/chaos-as-anonymous-attacks-toilet-paper-your-mom-itself.ars>.
176. **Paynter, Maxwell**. THE Gregg Housh on CNN. *Youtube.com*. [Online] december 9, 2010. [Cited: january 2, 2012.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdKwmmHxXGQ>.
177. **AnonymousInsurgency**. Gregg Housh on NPR Anonymous segment - Protest 2.0. *youtube.com*. [Online] may 16, 2011. [Cited: december 15, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kzwDorQ-Q8>.
178. Paul "Fetch" Carnes. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] 2007. [Cited: october 30, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Paul_Fetch.
179. Not Your Personal Army. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: october 28, 2011.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Not_your_personal_army.
180. **Krahulik, Mike "Gabe"**. Just Wow. *Penny-arcade.com*. [Online] december 27, 2011. [Cited: december 28, 2011.] <http://penny-arcade.com/resources/just-wow1.html>.
181. **Plunkett, Luke**. Controller Company Berates Customer, Then Penny Arcade. Bring Popcorn. *kotaku.com*. [Online] december 27, 2011. [Cited: december 28, 2011.] <http://kotaku.com/5871235/controller-company-berates-customers-penny-arcade-bring-popcorn>.
182. **Krahulik, Mike "Gabe"**. an update. *Penny-Arcade.com*. [Online] december 27, 2011. [Cited: december 28, 2011.] <http://penny-arcade.com/resources/an-update1.html>.

183. **Orland, Kyle.** Chastened gaming rep responds to Internet infamy. *MSNBC.msn.com*. [Online] december 28, 2011. [Cited: december 28, 2011.] http://ingame.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2011/12/28/9770514-chastened-gaming-rep-responds-to-internet-infamy.
184. **newchallenger.** Ocean Marketing FAIL. *youtube.com*. [Online] december 27, 2011. [Cited: december 28, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqV9kx40RG0>.
185. **scottnich77.** Ocean Marketing Guy Gets hit with Missile. *youtube.com*. [Online] december 27, 2011. [Cited: december 28, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2brMITgstl>.
186. **Crabtree, Vexen.** An Intimate Exploration of Furry Fandom. *Human Truth.info*. [Online] january 9, 2009. [Cited: december 17, 2011.] <http://www.humantruth.info/furry.html>.
187. **Smith, S.E.** What is Furry Fandom? *Wisegeek.com*. [Online] [Cited: november 18, 2011.] <http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-furry-fandom.htm>.
188. **Smrgol.** What is "furry"? *hudsonfur.org*. [Online] <http://www.hudsonfur.org/Furry.html>.
189. **wikifur.** Furry. *Wikifur.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: december 28, 2011.] <http://en.wikifur.com/wiki/Furry>.
190. **Annoymous.** Furry. *urbandictionary.com*. [Online] january 16, 2005. [Cited: november 17, 2011.] <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=furry>.
191. **Muth, Douglas.** Just what IS "Furry" fandom? *anthrocon.org*. [Online] march 28, 2006. [Cited: december 8, 2011.] <http://www.anthrocon.org/about-furry>.
192. **Operatorchan.** Fur heresy. *Operatorchan.org*. [Online] november 23, 2011. [Cited: december 27, 2011.] <http://operatorchan.org/cp/res/9874.html>.
193. **Furfag.** *encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: october 29, 2011.] <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Furry>.
194. **UC Davis Furry Research Team.** Furry Survey Results. <http://studyf3.livejournal.com>. [Online] may 4, 2007. [Cited: january 5, 2012.] <http://studyf3.livejournal.com/1383.html>.
195. **Gerbasi, Kathy, et al., et al.** International Online Furry Survey: Winter 2011. *Anthropomorphic Research Project*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: december 28, 2011.] <https://sites.google.com/site/anthropomorphicresearch/past-results/international-online-furry-survey-2011>.
196. **Muth, Douglas.** What anthrocon is all about. *anthrocon.org*. [Online] march 28, 2006. [Cited: december 8, 2011.] <http://www.anthrocon.org/about>.
197. **Diaperfur.** *encyclopedia dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: october 15, 2011.] <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/Diaperfur>.
198. **Babyfur public behavior?** *adisc.org*. [Online] may 26, 2009. [Cited: december 8, 2011.] <http://www.adisc.org/forum/babyfur-diaperfur/12164-babyfur-public-behavior.html>.
199. **growlithe, Rakuen.** Analysis: Fur Affinity's staff revamped; dev team still lacking. *flayrah.com*. [Online] august 34, 2011. [Cited: november 30, 2011.] <http://www.flayrah.com/3657/analysis-fur-affinitys-staff-revamped-dev-team-still-lacking>.
200. **Dragoneer.** The New Policy on Cub. *furaffinity.net forum*. [Online] november 25, 2010. [Cited: november 4, 2011.] <http://forums.furaffinity.net/threads/87380-The-New-Policy-on-Cub>.
201. **wikifur.** History of fur affinity. *wikifur.com*. [Online] [Cited: january 8, 2012.] http://en.wikifur.com/wiki/History_of_Fur_Affinity#Pornographic_cub_art.
202. **Sidian.** Messy Colors - One-Gryph open sleigh... *furaffinity.net*. [Online] december 14, 2011. [Cited: december 17, 2011.] <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/7034408/>.
203. **Princess_Rei.** Chilled. *furaffinity.net*. [Online] december 14, 2011. [Cited: december 14, 2011.] <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/7034931/>.
204. **Jailbird.** what is that thing?? *furaffinity.net*. [Online] december 14, 2011. [Cited: december 18, 2011.] <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/7036140/>.
205. **CCLebo.** Zombie Cougar. *furaffinity.net*. [Online] october 15, 2010. [Cited: november 15, 2011.] <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/4637580/>.

206. **Mommyspike.** Lynx 2. *furaffinity.net*. [Online] april 1, 2011. [Cited: november 6, 2011.] <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/5500260/>.
207. **Kacey.** Echo's Yukata. *furaffinity.net*. [Online] january 9, 2008. [Cited: november 8, 2011.] <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/996403/>.
208. **Meglyman.** cowthulhu. *furaffinity.org*. [Online] march 14, 2009. [Cited: september 18, 2011.] <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/2089178/>.
209. **Cerberus.** Roses are red. *furaffinity.net*. [Online] march 27, 2008. [Cited: november 20, 2011.] <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/1179332/>.
210. **Crazy-Go-Lucky.** Tron: Base Core Protection: Nightwind. *furaffinity.net*. [Online] january 3, 2011. [Cited: december 5, 2011.] <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/5034183/>.
211. **Blotch.** Dragonborn. *furaffinity.net*. [Online] december 10, 2011. [Cited: december 11, 2011.] <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/7010038/>.
212. **Raccoon, Mike.** The Raccoon's Bookshelf. *raccoons-bookshelf.com*. [Online] june 6, 2005. [Cited: november 2, 2011.] <http://www.raccoons-bookshelf.com/Site/>.
213. **Doove, Bernard.** The Chakat's Den. *chakatsden.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: february 19, 2011.] <http://www.chakatsden.com/chakat/>.
214. **Drakenfenwick.** The Cold Ones. *furaffinity.net*. [Online] april 22, 2008. [Cited: november 18, 2011.] <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/1244449/>.
215. **Foreman, Alan.** Poisoned Minds. *poisonedminds.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: january 17, 2012.] <http://www.poisonedminds.com/>.
216. **Holbrook, Bill.** Kevin & Kell. *kevinandkell.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: january 18, 2012.] <http://www.kevinandkell.com/>.
217. **Jenner.** Doc Rat. *docrat.com.au*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: december 21, 2011.] <http://www.docrat.com.au/>.
218. **Williams, Amber M.** DMFA. *missmab.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: december 13, 2011.] <http://www.missmab.com/>.
219. **Hohenstein, James.** Stymie. *portheius.com*. [Online] october 2011. [Cited: november 22, 2011.] <http://www.portheius.com/stymie/>.
220. **Nickel, Doc.** The Whiteboard. *the-whiteboard.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: january 18, 2012.] <http://www.the-whiteboard.com/index.html>.
221. **Furries.** *Nationalgeographic.com*. [Online] january 3, 2012. [Cited: january 6, 2012.] <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/player/national-geographic-channel/shows/taboo-1/ngc-furries.html>.
222. **wikifur.** The Tyra Banks Show. *wikifur.com*. [Online] 2009. http://en.wikifur.com/wiki/The_Tyra_Banks_Show.
223. —. Chew Fox. *Wikifur.com*. [Online] 2010. [Cited: december 20, 2011.] http://en.wikifur.com/wiki/Chew_Fox.
224. **Felixpath.** Ten Types of Furry. *furaffinity.net*. [Online] december 18, 2011. [Cited: december 18, 2011.] <http://www.furaffinity.net/journal/3011322/>.
225. **wikifur.** VCL horrors. *wikifur.com*. [Online] 2005. [Cited: december 18, 2011.] http://en.wikifur.com/wiki/VCL_Horrors.
226. **Osaki, Alex.** Furry Poll Results - 2008 Edition. *klisoura.com*. [Online] january 15, 2009. [Cited: december 11, 2011.] http://www.klisoura.com/ot_furrysvey2008.php.
227. —. Furry Poll Results. *klisoura.com*. [Online] february 26, 2010. [Cited: december 12, 2011.] http://www.klisoura.com/ot_furrysvey2009.php.
228. —. Furry Poll Results. *klisoura.com*. [Online] january 19, 2011. [Cited: december 12, 2012.] http://www.klisoura.com/ot_furrysvey2010.php.
229. —. Furry Poll Results. *Klisoura.com*. [Online] december 14, 2011. [Cited: december 11, 2011.] http://www.klisoura.com/ot_furrysvey.php.
230. **Nintendo.** Pokemon.com. *Pokemon.com*. [Online] 2010. [Cited: january 5, 2012.] <http://www.pokemon.com/>.
231. **Mori, Masahiro.** The Uncanny Valley. *Energy*. 1970, Vol. 7, 4, pp. 33-35.
232. **Rosoff, Matt.** These 19 Social Networks Are Bigger Than Google+. <http://www.businessinsider.com>. [Online] july 27, 2011. [Cited: january 4, 2012.] <http://www.businessinsider.com/these-19-social-networks-are-still-bigger-than-google-2011-7#13-deviantart-an-online-community-for-artists-to-share-and-display-their-work-384-million-7>.

233. **EvanitaEWM**. deviantART 10th Birthday Bash at House of Blues - Angelo Sotira's Closing Speech PT 2. *youtube.com*. [Online] august 10, 2010. [Cited: january 4, 2012.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9O2IRAOoUWk>.
234. **Danna, Matt**. Happy New year from deviantART. *deviantart.com*. [Online] january 1, 2012. [Cited: january 4, 2012.] deviantART 10th Birthday Bash at House of Blues - Angelo Sotira's Closing Speech PT 2.
235. **Hasbro, Inc.** My Little Pony. *Hasbro.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: january 6, 2012.] http://www.hasbro.com/mylittlepony/en_US/.
236. ponychat map. *ponychat.net*. [Online] december 18, 2011. [Cited: january 6, 2012.] <http://ponychat.net/maps-testing/>.
237. **Scotellaro, Shaun**. Custom Pony Compilation #35. *EquestriaDaily.com*. [Online] december 13, 2011. [Cited: december 13, 2011.] <http://www.equestriadaily.com/2011/12/custom-pony-compilation-35.html>.
238. **OrchestralDesign**. Wintertime in equestria. *youtube.com*. [Online] november 25, 2011. [Cited: november 27, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbGlpSBm-nA>.
239. **DJAelxs**. My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic Intro (Alex S. Glitch Remix). *youtube.com*. [Online] july 9, 2011. [Cited: september 8, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2R677MV--WI>.
240. **KeepOnRockingBrony**. KeepOnRockin' - Spin That Record Vinyl Scratch. *youtube.com*. [Online] september 10, 2011. [Cited: november 2, 2011.] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_5QNXskDdc.
241. **Dethonator**. Friendship is Metal - In Flames (Spitfire's Theme). *youtube.com*. [Online] september 7, 2011. [Cited: september 8, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTucY9IN75g>.
242. **demonlucario**. Silva Hound - Spitfire (Silva Hound Remix). *youtube.com*. [Online] september 9, 2011. [Cited: january 9, 2012.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nr1bCP7FFHM>.
243. **makkon06**. Luna Deos MLP Remix. *youtube.com*. [Online] may 3, 2011. [Cited: may 9, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nd9qQiwHP5U>.
244. **Woodentoaster**. Nightmare Night - [WoodenToaster + Mic The Microphone]. *youtube.com*. [Online] october 31, 2011. [Cited: october 31, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PCEp8z7FN>.
245. **MrPoniator**. The Ponifying mister! *youtube.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: november 8, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/user/MrPoniator>.
246. **hotdiggedydemon**. apple.mov. *youtube.com*. [Online] october 11, 2011. [Cited: october 12, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxAJqvsIV7M>.
247. **klinok101**. Trailer.Fallout:Equestria. *youtube.com*. [Online] october 9, 2011. [Cited: november 6, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCsfgkAzG4M>.
248. **nomorethan9**. Epic Cupcake Time. *youtube.com*. [Online] october 3, 2011. [Cited: october 4, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJLL-DNu3P4>.
249. **Bronytoons**. Bronytoons - Luna's Lament. *youtube.com*. [Online] september 30, 2011. [Cited: september 30, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkpRUhdVNmU>.
250. **ocarinaplaya**. My Little pony: cupcakes (offical HD). *youtube.com*. [Online] october 27, 2011. [Cited: october 27, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oaYkYcYadU>.
251. **DragonCurse**. Aperture Pony 2.0. *youtube.com*. [Online] september 21, 2011. [Cited: september 22, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-FFBvG-ph0>.
252. **Sakojima5555**. Somepony's Spying (Rarity and Spy). *youtube.com*. [Online] august 10, 2011. [Cited: august 18, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=587UZztCLTg>.
253. **Scotellaro, Shaun**. Season Two Episode One Demographics. *equestriadaily.com*. [Online] september 26, 2011. [Cited: september 28, 2011.] <http://www.equestriadaily.com/2011/09/season-two-episode-one-demographics.html>.
254. **Edwards, Patrick and Redden, Marsha**. BRONY STUDY (Research Project). *bronystudy.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: december 17, 2011.] <http://www.bronystudy.com/>.

255. *Presence and engagement in an interactive drama*. **Dow, Steven, et al., et al.** New York : chi2007, 2007. Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on Human factors in computing systems.
256. **Lindley, Craig A.** *Ludic Engagement and Immersion as a Generic Paradigm for Human-Computer Interaction Design*. Visby : University of Gotland, 2004.
257. **O'Brien, Heather L. and Toms, Elaine G.** What is user engagement? A conceptual framework for defining user engagement with technology. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*. 2008, Vol. 59, 6, pp. 938-955.
258. **Csikszentmihalyi, M.** *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*. s.l. : Harper Perennial, 1991.
259. **Gilardi, Max.** Ask Applejack. *tumblr.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: November 18, 2011.] <http://ask-jappleack.tumblr.com/>.
260. **Esbroeck, Jay R. Van.** Ask lil miss rarity. *tumblr.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: november 13, 2011.] <http://ask-lil-miss-rarity.tumblr.com/>.
261. **JohnJoseco.** Ask Princess Molestia. *tumblr.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: december 17, 2011.] <http://askprincessmolestia.tumblr.com/>.
262. **Gasara.** Echo the wonderwolt. *tumblr.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: december 10, 2011.] <http://ask-echo-wonderbolt.tumblr.com/>.
263. **Anthony, Daniel.** Magic makes it all complete. *Drivethesensation.com*. [Online] january 4, 2012. [Cited: january 6, 2012.] <http://www.drivethesensation.com/2012/01/magic-makes-it-all-complete.html>.
264. **Nameless brony.** Googledocs writeup of Russian Brony Meetup in moscow. *docs.google.com*. [Online] december 21, 2011. [Cited: january 6, 2012.] <https://docs.google.com/document/pub?id=1YPIKYbWF9R6rWg9YkcFY04v0r1n86Yt1230FzHkeV-E&pli=1>.
265. **Falling Star.** HunBrony meeting - Summary. *HunBrony.blogspot.com*. [Online] december 19, 2011. [Cited: january 6, 2012.] <http://hunbrony.blogspot.com/2011/12/teli-harmadik-hunbrony-talalkozo.html>.
266. **Sethisto.** Nighty Roundup 200. *equestriadaily.com*. [Online] december 29, 2011. [Cited: january 6, 2012.] <http://www.equestriadaily.com/2011/12/nightly-roundup-200.html>.
267. **YouTube.com.** xbox live trash talk. *youtube.com*. [Online] janaury 6, 2012. [Cited: january 6, 2012.] http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=xbox+live+trash+talk&oq=xbox+live+trash&aq=0&aqi=g8&aql=&gs_sm=e&gs_upl=3684l5495l0l6483l6l5l0l0l0l0l198l826l0.5l5l0.
268. **Pony Confessions.** Pony Confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/>.
269. **pony confessions.** pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] december 15, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/14259522497>.
270. —. pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] december 15, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/14226608724>.
271. —. pony confessions. *pony confessions*. [Online] december 15, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/14265922257/but-i-hate-how-much-im-like-her-my-shyness-and>.
272. —. pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] december 16, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/14265075115/because-she-has-all-my-personality>.
273. —. pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] november 16, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/12215245178>.
274. —. pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] december 24, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/14779151484>.
275. —. pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] december 16, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/14262681075/i-hate-the-attitude-throughout-the-community-that>.
276. —. pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] december 14, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/14145985488/i-didnt-want-to-go-there-but-fine-it-really>.
277. **pony confessions.** pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] january 2, 2012. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/15177060165/to-tolerate-does-not-mean-that-you-have-to-agree>.
278. **pony confessions.** pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] december 2, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/13635555136/cut-it-out>.

279. —. pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] december 15, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/14231064722>.
280. —. pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] december 15, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/14245845933>.
281. **Pony Confessions**. Pony Confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] december 16, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/14269489077>.
282. **pony confessions**. pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] december 12, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/14123635026/my-little-pony-friendship-is-magic-saved-my>.
283. —. pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] december 16, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/14258050253/when-i-first-entered-college-i-was-honestly>.
284. —. pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] december 16, 2011. <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/post/14256700852/its-not-about-what-you-look-like-its-all-about>.
285. —. pony confessions. *tumblr.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: december 16, 2011.] <http://ponyconfessions.tumblr.com/archive>.
286. Know your Meme: Skyrim Catchphrases. *youtube.com*. [Online] december 15, 2011. [Cited: december 16, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13nHKH1m-xA>.
287. **Asna00**. Arrow in the knee. *youtube.com*. [Online] november 30, 2011. [Cited: december 4, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vncIBREXCwU>.
288. **eaglez0**. I used to be an adventurer like you, then I took an arrow in the knee. *youtube.com*. [Online] november 21, 2011. [Cited: november 22, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXmPrYEOvM8>.
289. **MeganLeeHeart**. Arrow in the knee. *youtube.com*. [Online] december 2, 2011. [Cited: december 6, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQ7N-MWHOFw>.
290. **UberHaxorNova**. Happy Wheels w/Nova Ep.52 - A Legit Arrow To The Knee and ALIENS. *youtube.com*. [Online] december 15, 2011. [Cited: december 15, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjIBERrWZh4>.
291. **XeniraX**. Skyrim - I Took An Arrow In The Knee + Bonus!! *youtube.com*. [Online] december 3, 2011. [Cited: december 20, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPBHQ3kHov4>.
292. **RageNineteen**. An arrow in the knee. *youtube.com*. [Online] december 8, 2011. [Cited: december 10, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tIC6Z0iRoOA>.
293. **SamGreenMedia**. Arrow to the knee - Skyrim Parody. *youtube.com*. [Online] december 14, 2011. [Cited: december 18, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmNcQIT62zU>.
294. **Roosterteeth**. Achievement Hunter: Skyrim: Kill the meme. *youtube.com*. [Online] december 20, 2011. [Cited: december 29, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UagqsOT4Vic>.
295. **link1812**. Arrow to the knee. *youtube.com*. [Online] december 9, 2011. [Cited: december 9, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgJAcZkGM6w>.
296. **KnowYourMeme**. Know Your Meme: Best Memes of 2011. *youtube.com*. [Online] december 7, 2011. [Cited: december 7, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILixaeFLOUo>.
297. —. Rebecca Blacka - Friday. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] march 13, 2011. [Cited: january 5, 2012.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/rebecca-black-friday>.
298. **knowyourmeme.com**. First World Problems. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] june 30, 2011. [Cited: january 5, 2012.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/first-world-problems>.
299. **Knowyourmeme**. Occupy Wall Street. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] september 9, 2011. [Cited: january 5, 2012.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/events/occupy-wall-street>.
300. —. Planking. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] may 25, 2011. [Cited: january 5, 2012.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/planking>.

301. —. Scumbag Steve. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] january 18, 2011. [Cited: january 5, 2012.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/scumbag-steve>.
302. —. X all the Y. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] june 27, 2011. [Cited: january 5, 2012.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/x-all-the-y>.
303. —. Nope Chuck Testa. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] september 15, 2011. [Cited: january 5, 2012.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/nope-chuck-testa>.
304. —. Nyan Cat. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] april 16, 2011. [Cited: january 5, 2012.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/nyan-cat-pop-tart-cat>.
305. —. '60s Spider-man. *Knowyourmeme.com*. [Online] march 31, 2011. [Cited: january 5, 2012.] <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/60s-spider-man/>.
306. Encyclopedia Dramatica. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] April 15, 2011. <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch>.
307. **webkill**. pinkyfox. *furaffinity.com*. [Online] october 18, 2009. <http://www.furaffinity.net/view/2930315/>.
308. **Alexa.com**. equestriadaily.com site info. *Alexa.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: december 16, 2011.] <http://www.alexac.com/siteinfo/equestriadaily.com>.
309. **Alexa**. ponychan.net site info. *alexa.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: december 16, 2011.] <http://www.alexac.com/siteinfo/ponychan.net>.
310. —. 413chan.net site info. *alexa.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: december 16, 2011.] <http://www.alexac.com/siteinfo/413chan.net>.
311. —. derpyhoovesnews.com site info. *alexa.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: december 16, 2011.] <http://www.alexac.com/siteinfo/derpyhoovesnews.com>.
312. **SCHWARTZ, MATTATHIAS**. The Trolls Among Us. *Nytimes.com*. [Online] august 3, 2008. [Cited: january 4, 2012.] <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/03/magazine/03trolls-t.html?pagewanted=all>.
313. **Tvtropes**. Expy. *TVtropes.org*. [Online] december 18, 2011. [Cited: january 6, 2012.] <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/Expy>.
314. **The-Blue-Tick**. File: Cats are made of b. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] february 2, 2007. [Cited: january 6, 2012.] http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/File:Cats_are_made_of_b.jpeg.
315. **Anonymous**. *Anonymous Legion Crowd.jpg*. Encyclopedia Dramatica, Internet : s.n.
316. **1d4chan**. Chakat. *1d4chan.org*. [Online] [Cited: January 9, 2012.] <http://1d4chan.org/wiki/Chakat>.
317. fimchan. *fimchan*. [Online] [Cited: september 24, 2011.] <http://fim.413chan.net/>.
318. **E**. File: Cake. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: december 15, 2011.] <http://encyclopediadramatica.ch/File:Cake.png>.
319. **Kent, Olivia**. g33k Advice – Learning to Accept Your Brony Friends. *g33kwatch.com*. [Online] november 2, 2011. [Cited: november 4, 2011.] <http://www.g33kwatch.com/news/g33k-advice-learning-to-accept-your-brony-friends/>.
320. **Lamarche, Una**. Pony Up Haters: How 4chan Gave Birth to the Bronies. *betabeat.com*. [Online] march 8, 2011. [Cited: october 9, 2011.] <http://www.betabeat.com/2011/08/03/pony-up-haters-how-4chan-gave-birth-to-the-bronies/>.
321. **Menn, Joseph**. They're watching. And they can bring you down. *Financial Times Magazine*. [Online] september 23, 2011. [Cited: november 6, 2011.] <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/3645ac3c-e32b-11e0-bb55-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1YtFTuZd2>.
322. **Nerimon**. 'My Little Pony' Reaction Video. *youtube.com*. [Online] august 24, 2011. [Cited: november 1, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4fRYSelplQ>.
323. **Pipian**. Bronibooru. *mlponies.com*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: october 24, 2011.] <http://bronibooru.mlponies.com/>.
324. **Scotellaro, Shaun**. Derpy Officially Named! *equestriadaily.com*. [Online] december 17, 2011. [Cited: december 17, 2011.] <http://www.equestriadaily.com/2011/12/derpy-officially-named.html>.

325. —. Pony Card Creator + More Hearth Warming Eve. *equestriadaily.com*. [Online] december 14, 2011. [Cited: december 14, 2011.] <http://www.equestriadaily.com/2011/12/pony-card-creator-more-hearth-warming.html>.
326. —. Premiere: Extended Equestria Girls. *Equestria Daily*. [Online] may 27, 2011. [Cited: may 27, 2011.] <http://www.equestriadaily.com/2011/05/extended-equestria-girls.html>.
327. **sethisto**. Season Two Episode One Demographics. *equestriadaily.com*. [Online] september 26, 2011. [Cited: september 26, 2011.] <http://www.equestriadaily.com/2011/09/season-two-episode-one-demographics.html>.
328. **Shannon, Brad**. Syrian Ministry Of Defense Website Hacked By 'Anonymous'. *The Huffington Post*. [Online] august 8, 2011. [Cited: october 17, 2011.] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/08/syria-ministry-of-defense-hacked-anonymous_n_920733.html?ncid=edlinkusaolp00000003.
329. **Uploadingmovies01**. Christopher Poole (Moot) at SXSW Interactive Live. *youtube.com*. [Online] march 13, 2011. [Cited: december 3, 2011.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtTR7hbR3tM>.
330. **Velocity, Cereal**. Exclusive My Little Pony Comic-Con Poster. *EquestriaDaily.com*. [Online] july 20, 2011. [Cited: july 20, 2011.] <http://www.equestriadaily.com/2011/07/exclusive-my-little-pony-comic-con.html>.
331. **facepalm**. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: october 18, 2011.] <http://encycopediadramatica.ch/Facepalm>.
332. **TvTropes**. Mary Sue. *tvtropes.org*. [Online] 2010. [Cited: october 14, 2011.] <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/MarySue>.
333. **Offended**. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: september 11, 2011.] <http://encycopediadramatica.ch/Offended>.
334. **ponychan**. *ponychan.net*. [Online] [Cited: november 30, 2011.] <http://www.ponychan.net/chan/>.
335. **Troll**. *Encyclopedia Dramatica*. [Online] [Cited: october 30, 2011.] <http://encycopediadramatica.ch/Trolling>.
336. **Amidi, Amid**. The End of the Creator-Driven Era in TV Animation. *Cartoonbrew.com*. [Online] october 19, 2010. [Cited: december 4, 2011.] <http://www.cartoonbrew.com/ideas-commentary/the-end-of-the-creator-driven-era.html>.
337. **Anomalous**. Featured image: inanimate tetrapod wavebreaker. *Paheal rule 34*. [Online] september 6, 2011. [Cited: november 6, 2011.] <http://rule34.paheal.net/post/view/710593>.
338. **AnonOrange**. The best Cease & Desist letter delivery video ! *WhyWeProtest.net*. [Online] september 18, 2008. [Cited: november 6, 2011.] <http://forums.whyweprotest.net/291-scientology-discussion/best-cease-desist-letter-delivery-video-29271/>.
339. **Blotter**. Ponibooru. *ponibooru*. [Online] 2011. [Cited: october 30, 2011.] <http://ponibooru.413chan.net/post/list>.
340. **Colman, A. M.** Crowd psychology in South African murder trials. *American Psychologist*. 1991.