A STUDY IN HOOMANISM:

UNDERSTANDING MEANING IN GEEK PHILANTHROPY AND
CYBERANTHROPOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY IN HOOMANISM:

UNDERSTANDING MEANING IN GEEK PHILANTHROPY AND
CYBERANTHROPOLOGY

By Ailea Merriam-Pigg

In 2012, a study of one hundred and fifteen thousand nonprofits found that giving totals provided by online fundraising processors rose fourteen percent from 2011 to 2.1 billion USD. This is a much sharper growth than the overall rise in donations of 1.5% (after accounting for inflation) in 2012 (Grovum and Flandez, 2015). One conclusion is that online fundraising and philanthropy is expanding at a much faster rate than other philanthropic means. Some of this increase is due to online communities which have dedicated themselves to altruism and philanthropy. I partnered with one such group, Team Hooman, and two associated organizations, Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG, to understand how such communities are established and operate online.

The larger goal of this study was to discover how online geek groups and organizations establish group meaning, connect meaning to philanthropy, and facilitate group member philanthropy. I addressed this goal by analyzing the online philanthropic community, Team Hooman. The main objective of this research project was to investigate the online group known as Team Hooman and the collective motivations which have inspired the group to establish a strong philanthropic presence. By observing the behavior of Team Hooman members I intended to discover patterns of behavior that could be replicated by other groups interested in philanthropy.

The study consisted of one hundred and ninety-six survey respondents and thirty interviews with people who were either [1] members of Team Hooman or [2] not members of Team Hooman but with some knowledge or interaction with hoomans. Since Team Hooman primarily operates in the chatrooms of the live-stream platform, Twitch, I also analyzed hundreds of hours of archived chat logs and videos, and conducted participant observation during live-streamed content. Finally, participant observation was also conducted across various social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, to understand how hoomans interacted with each other outside of their main interactive platform, Twitch.

Key findings suggest that, though there is no correlation between hooman philanthropy and economic status, hoomans are more likely to support philanthropies supported by Felicia Day, Ryon Day, Geek & Sundry, and other hooman-promoted charity events. Hoomans report that the community is for anyone who wants to promote kindness and "do good" on the Internet or in the world, but over sixty percent of hooman interviewees stated they joined the community through Felicia Day. The findings suggest that, since leaders in the community, like Felicia Day, strongly support philanthropy, hoomans have adopted philanthropy as a central value. Despite multiple hoomans stating the community stands alone, hoomans do not support hosts or staff who leave Geek & Sundry for other interests, even if those interests are similar to Geek & Sundry's content. The following report explores the theoretical and methodological considerations that informed the research design. The report also describes key findings, insights, and outcomes that resulted from the application of this project. Since multiple deliverables were produced in conjunction with this project, the deliverables in their original form have been included at the end of this report.

this project, but create something truly exceptional, thank you. I couldn't have done this without you.

In this vein, I would like to give a specific shout-out to KyuuiPenguin and my father, Bill Pigg. These two individuals both reviewed my entire graduate report for every misplaced comma and awkward sentence. Thank you both for ripping my first few drafts to shreds so that the report could turn into something better than it was. I can't promise I'll ever stop writing repetitive sentences at three in the morning when I'm working on a deadline, so thank you for willingly reading every word, even when you're reading the same word over and over again.

Also, thank you to my family. Mom and Dad, you may not understand my research or research interests, but thank you for listening to every update I gave. Thank you for supporting me by understanding that, even if my work isn't your passion, it is mine. And thank you my sister, Lydia, who is probably my closest relative who understands social science research and is always willing to discuss methodology with me. Thank you for being a role model and someone with whom I could rant about people misusing statistical terminology.

To all those who were participants in this research project, those who helped me create it, those who inspired me, and those who gave me a kick in the pants when I needed it, thank you.

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Introduction

Over a year ago I began researching Team Hooman, Geek & Sundry, and HyperRPG to better understand how online communities form and are influenced by connected organizations. Team Hooman happens to be a group strongly connected to philanthropy so the community was ideal for understanding how philanthropic activity could be encouraged in other online groups. Since Team Hooman largely operate on the Twitch channel of Geek & Sundry and were assumed to begin operating on HyperRPG's Twitch channel after its launch, I conducted observations of both companies to understand how business decisions impacted the activities of Team Hooman, particularly actions that affected their philanthropy and support for Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG. Over the last year I surveyed, interviewed, and participated with hoomans in online activities in an attempt to address these inquiries.

This participation came easy to me since I have considered myself a hooman since March 2014. It was easy to talk to hoomans, watch the same shows, and discuss the same topics because I am a hooman too. Being a hooman and conducting research on Team Hooman comes with its disadvantages. I am prone to thinking Team Hooman is all sunshine and rainbows; however no group I have ever heard about, interacted with, or been a part of has existed without drama or tension occurring at some point. This is also true of Team Hooman. This project was, therefore, not about explaining how amazing Team Hooman is, but about understanding what can be learned from this online community. This means learning both the good and the bad things: what can be taken and used in other groups and what should not be repeated by others if at all possible. The contents of this report are meant to be objective and thus includes data regarding the positive and negative aspects of Team Hooman and associated organizations.

I faced further complications because I am a moderator for both organizations with which I partnered for this project. Additionally, I am a freelance writer for one of them. Therefore, it was important to design a project that was as objective as possible to Geek & Sundry, HyperRPG, and Team Hooman. I believe I have produced work that does not praise either organization or Team Hooman unduly and have taken measures and countermeasures to ensure that objectivity is expressed in this report. For instance, the written deliverables for this research project were read and analyzed by several people outside of Team Hooman to guarantee that I

was not unintentionally favoring them in my research, deliverables, and report. Although I endeavored to be as objective and ethical as possible, there were several occurrences which could have threatened the ethical integrity of this work. These occurrences and my responses to them are discussed at the end of this report.

The objective of this research project was to investigate the online group known as Team Hooman and the collective motivations which have inspired the group to establish a strong philanthropic presence. Team Hooman raised over $300,000 in 2015 for various charities and planned to exceed that amount in 2016. However, Team Hooman was not established as a philanthropic organization, but as a group of fans of the actress Felicia Day, her brother Ryon Day, and Felicia's company, Geek & Sundry (G&S). A new company, Hyper Rabbit Media LLC (HyperRPG), was expected to become another hub for Team Hooman members once its Twitch channel went live at the end of February 2016. Twitch is a live-streaming service both Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG utilize to broadcast content to their fans.

That is not to say that everyone who watches Geek & Sundry or HyperRPG is a hooman. Although Team Hooman is the predominant community in Geek & Sundry's channel, there are also other groups which formed out of a love for a particular show or host of the channel. The largest of these subgroups, other than Team Hooman, are the critters, the fans of *Critical Role*. Although Geek & Sundry does not have an umbrella term for its fans, HyperRPG fans are called thumpers and are the dominant group present during HyperRPG shows. Membership in any one of these groups does not preclude membership in another. Indeed, many critters and thumpers are also hooman, but there is insufficient overlap such that not all critters and thumpers are also hooman or vice versa. As a result, even though this project was primarily focused on the interactions of hoomans, the non-hoomans who frequent the channels of Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG were also participants.

The project assessed how the structural frameworks of Geek & Sundry (G&S) and HyperRPG facilitate or inhibit Team Hooman philanthropy by surveying Team Hooman and the organizations' audiences, conducting semi-structured interviews with a select number of survey respondents, and thorough material analysis of chat room logs from G&S and HyperRPG charity events. I also conducted participant observation by watching G&S and HyperRPG, as well as by

participating in six Team Hooman events that occurred over the course of this study. In analyzing and participating these events, I hoped to discover the practices that successfully inspired Team Hooman members to participate in philanthropy and how to replicate these practices in other organizations. I conducted two live streams, one to receive feedback on initial insights from Team Hooman and another to present final insights; uploaded a Youtube video of the final live stream; and constructed a community toolkit which was sent to Geek & Sundry, HyperRPG, Team Hooman, and other organizations interested in forming online communities for philanthropic endeavors.

The following report is divided into five parts. In the first part I provide contextual information for readers. This includes information regarding the growth of online philanthropy, what Team Hooman is in more detail, the history of Twitch, as well as the formation of both Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG. The second part is focused on my research design and methodology. In this section readers will be provided information regarding the methods typically used in digital ethnography, how I recruited participants, the instruments that were used and why, how these instruments were constructed and distributed, specific information regarding each instrument, and concluding with the importance of and utilization of informed consent in this project.

The findings, insights, and primary deliverable comprise the next part of the report. This part begins with the findings directly related to my initial research questions and continues with the primary deliverable, adapted for this report, which was distributed to Team Hooman, Geek & Sundry, and HyperRPG. Finally, the third part concludes with a discussion of other findings not directly related to the initial research questions or primary deliverable. Since this project included more deliverables than the primary deliverable, the fourth part unpacks these other deliverables. This includes how each deliverable was designed and presented as well as how these deliverables were received by Team Hooman and the organizations. In the final part I reflect on the project, including several ethical complications that arose during the research and how they were resolved. This fifth part concludes with a discussion of additional areas of research interest that were discovered over the course of this project.

This report concludes with several appendices, including the informed consent form and instruments used. I have also included the primary deliverable in its original format, links to non-written deliverables, and copies of other written deliverables. As most members of Team Hooman consider themselves geeks, I realized that many of the stories I have included from the community include multiple references to geek culture which may be difficult to understand without prior knowledge. Some geek terms are ambiguous and mean different things to different geek groups. As such, I have also included a geek word glossary to help readers who are unfamiliar with geek culture and to better define how certain terms are being used in this report.

Contextual Information

This research study was conducted in collaboration with organizations and a community which operate at a cross-section of several themes and areas of interests. Team Hooman, for example, is an online group that promotes philanthropy from community members. The community also happens to be primarily composed of people who self-identify as geeks and nerds, thus making elements of culture affiliated with geeks which is central to member identity. In addition, Team Hooman members frequently consume content produced by Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG. These organizations also have their own connections to geek culture, the Internet, and philanthropy. This section, therefore, is constructed to provide a brief understanding of each organization which participated in the study, as well as the shared themes these organizations, including Team Hooman, utilize as part of their group identity. In the first part of this chapter, I discussed the growth of online philanthropy and the academic study of philanthropy, particularly in the social sciences. Since hoomans typically self-identify as geeks, the second part of this section is about geek culture and how anthropologists have previously studied geeks and nerds online. Since the community I was studying, the businesses with which I partnered, and the study itself primarily operated online, I decided to give a brief background of the Internet in the third part of this section. After I discussed the Internet in general I moved on to explain Twitch as a website and company. In the fifth part of this section I discussed Team Hooman, followed by Geek & Sundry in the sixth part, and HyperRPG in the seventh.

The Growth of Online Philanthropy

In 2012, a study of 115,000 nonprofits found that giving totals provided by online fundraising processors rose 14% from 2011 to 2.1 billion USD. This is a much sharper growth than the overall rise in donations of 1.5% (after accounting for inflation) in 2012 (Grovum and Flandez 2015). The conclusion is that online fundraising and philanthropy is expanding at a much faster rate than other philanthropic means.

Academic papers related to philanthropy from anthropologists within the last ten years primarily focus on reviewing books about philanthropy that were written several decades prior, with the exception of Rhoda Halperin's 2009 work in intercommunity altruism. Studies conducted on philanthropy outside of anthropology have largely focused on the individual or models of an "elite" donating to a "lesser."

Online philanthropy has been more recently studied by cyberpsychologists than cyberanthropologists (Eller 2008, Leskovec 2010, Waters 2007). When I first conducted a literature review for this project, the most recent philanthropy-centered anthropological articles were reviews of philanthropy books written several decades prior. However, philanthropy is a major topic within economic anthropology and is intrinsically tied to practices of gift exchange and reciprocity (Elfenbein et al 2012, Leskovec 2010, Waters and Tindall 2011, Mauss 2012) and extreme gifting and altruism (Halperin 2009). Reciprocity practices may either involve direct barter and immediate exchange of goods or a delayed gift exchange where one person gives an item and the other trades a different item at a later date. This gift exchange also encompasses philanthropy, which involves one person gifting monetary or non-monetary donations and, in exchange, earning social capital and reputation (Elfenbein et al 2012, Leskovec 2010, Waters and Tindall 2011, Mauss 2012).

Many philanthropic movements now focus on crowd-funding platforms, like Kickstarter, which allow people to donate to a cause or business in exchange for various perks (Kshetri 2015, Leskovec 2010, Ozcelik 2008, Waters and Tindall 2011). Many of these perks include visual representations of the donor's contribution, such as mugs and other items which display the title of the venture to which they donated (Cnaan et al 2011, Leskovec 2010, Waters 2007). This practice has altered the philanthropic landscape. Previously, only large contributors would generally receive perks that allowed them bragging rights about their charitable donations. Now, because of crowd-funding, even the smallest donation perk levels often include an element of the organization thanking the contributor publicly (Eller 2008, Leskovec 2010, Waters 2007).

Given the move of philanthropy towards online engagement and networking, it makes sense that online groups would begin adopting philanthropy as part of their group's activities (Berman 2007, Castillo et al 2014, Kim and Lee 2014, Waters 2007). In this way, philanthropy

acts as a status builder within the group and as a way for the group to legitimize themselves. Even in philanthropy, power is present, as various group members compete for the top donator spot and these online groups compete to be known as the most philanthropic and, therefore, the best (Desai and Kharas 2010, Elfenbein et al 2012, Leskovec 2010, Waters and Tindall 2011).

One way crowdfunds acknowledge donators is through social media. Many crowdfunders use social media sites, such as Twitter and Facebook, to send a short message of acknowledgment, naming their donors from specific perk levels within the messages. In these ways, charity has become a substitute for reputation and an area where bragging rights are now prolific. Articles abound instructing people how to thank their supporters through social media, including the following example from *The Balance*.

Image 1.1: An article on The Balance informing people how to retain donors.

Donors make a decision to stay loyal to your organization and to give again based on three things:

- ==They must receive a timely (read: immediate) and meaningful (read: not just a receipt) acknowledgement of their gift.==
- They must have an opportunity to assist a particular project rather than the "general operating" bucket.
- They must understand the impact of their gift and what it helped to accomplish.

Image 1.2: A section of that article outlining important factors for retaining donors.

As seen here, *The Balance* lists immediate and meaningful acknowledgement of a donation as the first thing that retains a donor. This indicates that donating to a worthy project is less important to donors than being recognized for donating. This phenomenon is also seen on Twitch, where some channels have programmed their channel display to include a "Top Donor" or "Most Recent Donor" spot so that viewers will donate large sums of money, or donate more often, to maintain the top spot and associated reputation (Personal Observation, 2015-2016). Here is an example from Twitch streamer Amazhs, who advertises both his daily and monthly top donors above and below his face display:

Image 1.3: Amazhs advertises his top daily and monthly donors while streaming.

Conversely, Team Hooman members may donate to crowdfunding campaigns, but most of their philanthropy seems to occur during charity drives and online charity streams (personal observation, 2015). G&S and HyperRPG both acknowledge donations immediately, but they do not display the username of any top donors for the length of the stream.

"Geek Culture"

Although there is little current philanthropy research in anthropology, there is established anthropological literature concerning how geeks and nerds operate online. However, most of the research has been into how geeks and nerds operate in gaming worlds, such as *World of Warcraft*, rather than the general online world, such as Facebook or other social media platforms (Badrinarayanan et al 2014, Caratarescu-Petrica 2015, Golub 2014, Huang et al 2015, Jan and Ryu 2011, Jordan 2014, Kowert et al 2012, Lee 2015, Lehenbauer-Baum and Fohringer 2015). Some notable exceptions have taken the geek out of game, but the most well-established anthropologists of geek culture still tend to focus on gaming culture (Martoncik and Loksa 2016, Murphy 2015, O'Conner et al 2015, Park and Chung 2011, Poor 2014, Servais 2015, Visser et al 2013, Waddell and Ivory 2015, Williams et al 2014), which is a separate, but related subculture to the geek subculture being observed in this research. These studies gravitate towards roleplaying games, predominantly World of Warcraft, and how this roleplay reflects cultural values and practices in the physical world.

Part of this is because a "geek" is often defined by their interests in popular and material culture (Kohnen 2014, McCain et al 2015), which includes video games and online roleplaying games (Caratarescu-Petrica 2015, Croft 2013). For many geeks, their gaming identity supersedes all other identities attributed to themselves (Kelty 2005a, Kowert et al 2012, Lee 2015, Lehenbauer-Baum and Fohringer 2015). However, present in both gaming and non-gaming articles is the idea that geeks now compose a digital subculture that is an entangled network of people from around the world (Henderson 2012, Badrinarayanan et al 2014, Caratarescu-Petrica 2015, Golub 2014, Huang et al 2015, McArthur 2009). Indeed, many geek groups now cross political borders on a global scale, leading to new versions of transnational communities (Kelty

2005b. O'Connor et al 2015, Park and Chung 2011, Poor 2014, Visser et al 2013). These groups can form through the use of social media, chat rooms, forums, and comment sections around the web (Nichol and Blashki 2008, Waddell and Ivory 2015, Yu 2007). By allowing comments, forums, and chat rooms on web pages, people can discuss their interests with like-minded individuals and this, in turn, can lead to the formation of an online group (Reagle 2015, Visser et al 2013, Yu 2007).

The Internet

When considering online groups and online philanthropy, it is important to consider the history and use of the Internet (Ahmad 2010, Meintel 2012, Pauwels 2006, Stockl 2003, Svilicic 2012, Wilson and Peterson 2002). The Internet can trace its roots to a 1960s United States government research project, designed to build robust communication through computer networks. By the 1990s, this project had expanded to worldwide participation and the linking of commercial networks, marking the beginning of contemporary use of the Internet. Many studies have been conducted across the digital sphere regarding how people use, imagine, and reshape the Internet to fit their needs (Ahmad 2010, Bourdon et al 2015, Fay 2007, Lingel and Golub 2015, Meintel 2012, Reagle 2013, Teli et al 2007, Thornham 2008, William 2007). This reshaping can occur because the Internet has no centralized governance, technological headquarters, or policies regarding access and use. Many countries create laws regarding Internet use or, in some cases, create blockages to regulate what citizens can view and utilize. Still, the use of the Internet is growing on a global scale, with almost half of the world's population (49.7%) having access in some form or another (Internet World Stats 2017).

There is, however, debate regarding whether online groups can be considered communities or if they are simply like-minded individuals forming a group. Some anthropologists believe that a shared spatial element, whether current or previous, must be present for a group to be defined as a community (Beaulieu 2004, Fay 2007, Fortun et al 2014, Pauwels 2006, Steinmetz 2012, Stockl 2003, Teli et al 2007). Others consider areas of the World Wide Web as pocket universes, creating a space that allows these groups to be defined as

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communities, if they share other communal characteristics (English-Lueck 2010, Bourdon et al 2015, Lingel and Golub 2015, Wilson and Peterson 2002). One of these characteristics is the ability of website users to interact with each other, moving the website from a place of passive broadcast to an interactive platform. Twitch is one such interactive platform.

Twitch

Twitch is a livestreaming web platform that allows people to both stream and watch streamers. The website was first introduced as a spin-off of Justin.tv in June 2011. Justin.tv was a general-interest version of Twitch which gradually diminished in popularity until the website shut down permanently in August 2014. Twitch content primarily focuses on video games, but this has expanded to include music broadcasts, tabletop gaming, daily vlogging (video blogging), lifecasts, creative non-gaming broadcasts, and even a Bob Ross marathon. Content produced on Twitch can either be viewed live or, for a short period of time, as a video on demand automatically archived from the live broadcast. In October 2013, Twitch had forty-five million unique viewers and by February 2014 was considered the fourth largest website for peak Internet traffic in the United States (behind Netflix, Google, and Apple). During peak periods, Twitch makes up 1.8% of total US Internet traffic. In 2017, Twitch stated they had over 2.2 million broadcasters and averaged ten million active users every day (Twitch 2017). Twitch is headquartered in San Francisco, CA.

In August 2014 Amazon announced they would acquire Twitch for $970 million USD. This occurred after rumors that Google was intending to purchase the company. According to Forbes (2014), Google backed out of the deal due to concerns regarding its existing ownership of Youtube. Supposedly, Twitch's owners wanted to retain some control of the company, which they would not have received in a deal with Google. Amazon's acquisition of Twitch was finalized September 25, 2014. Twitch is now a wholly owned subsidiary of Amazon, but has kept Emmett Shear as CEO. Since its purchase by Amazon, Twitch has purchased GoodGame Agency, an organization that owns Evil Geniuses and Alliance, two eSports teams. Although no official statement has been released, it appears that Twitch has shut down GoodGame Agency. Twitch

also acquired Curse, Inc. in August 2016 and on September 30, 2016 announced Twitch Prime, a service which allows free premium features for Amazon Prime subscribers. Some of these features include advertising-free streaming, one free Twitch subscription a month, game discounts, and free add-on gaming content every month.

When Twitch Prime was launched, Amazon hosted a charity drive where the company would donate $100,000 USD for every 100,000 subscriptions made on Twitch using Twitch Prime within the first week of the program's launch. Within five days, Twitch Prime helped raise $500,000 USD for GameChanger Charity. In fact, Twitch has a long history of being a tool for charity drives. By 2013, the website had hosted events leading to over eight million USD for various charitable causes, including Extra Life 2013. Extra Life is a twenty-four-hour gaming marathon that raises money for children's miracle network hospitals. As of 2017, Twitch states they have raised over $65 million USD through their community. This longstanding history with charity drives may explain some of Team Hooman's commitment to philanthropy.

Team Hooman

Team Hooman was born on the Internet in September, 2014. Felicia Day, one of the stars of Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and a well-known character in the "geeky" areas of the Internet, and her brother, Ryon Day, a long-time fan of the live streaming game platform Twitch, were out of town at the same time and decided to stream something together. The stream quickly incorporated fan commentary, as Twitch allows viewers to chat while watching a channel and the Day siblings could not help but interact with the chatters. The stream was a success, leading the Day siblings to schedule more Twitch streams together. These streams always had an easy-going nature to them and strove to create a welcoming environment which was extremely popular. Fans would regularly flock to Felicia and Ryon's channels, making connections with each other as well as the Day siblings.

The community prides itself on being inclusive and using friendliness and acceptance as its standard for community membership. For instance, many self-described hoomans have stated that being a member of the community is all about following Wheaton's Law. This refers to Wil

Wheaton's general rule for interaction on the Internet, which he describes as, "don't be a dick" (WilWheaton.Net 2012). Basically, if you are a fan of either of the Day siblings, Geek & Sundry, or HyperRPG and are not a jerk, you are a member of the community (Merriam-Pigg 2015).

Image 1.4: One of the many images of Wil Wheaton alongside his catchphrase, "don't be a dick."

That is not to say that everyone who watches Geek & Sundry or HyperRPG is a hooman. Although Team Hooman is the predominate community in Geek & Sundry's channel there are also other groups, such as the Critters, which formed out of a love for a particular show or host of the channel. Although Geek & Sundry does not have an umbrella term for its fans, HyperRPG fans are called Thumpers and are the dominant group present during HyperRPG shows. Membership in any one of these groups does not preclude membership in another. Indeed, many Critters and Thumpers are also hooman, but there is not so much overlap that it is possible to say all Critters and Thumpers are also hooman or vice versa. As a result, even though this project was primarily focused on the interactions of hoomans, non-hoomans who frequent the channels of Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG were also participants.

Since its beginnings in 2014, the Team Hooman community has grown, with over 1500 Facebook group members and over 1600 Twitter followers. These group members have transcended their online community through friendliness, by scheduling in-person meetups at events, buying tangible gifts for each other, and forming new gaming groups (Merriam-Pigg

2015). The community quickly extended its friendly atmosphere to philanthropic concerns as well, and, in 2015, raised over $300,000 for various charities including The Lupus Foundation and Extra Life, a charity that raises money through gaming for children's hospitals.

In initial observations of Team Hooman, it is clear that specific individuals who have donated large sums of money to multiple charity drives are recognized and respected by the group, though these individuals and their contributions are sometimes taken for granted. These individuals donate so much or so often that some community members have stated in Twitch chat that it is expected they will donate, no matter the cause. However, hoomans who are not able to contribute financially to charities are also recognized and respected in the group (personal observation, 2015-2016). Due to this inclusion, it is unclear how large a part philanthropy plays in affording respect or legitimizing an individual as a hooman. It is clear, based on the survey I conducted as well as self-identifying information hoomans have provided in Twitch chats and on social media, that Team Hooman is an international group and includes members from the United States of America, Canada, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Austria, Italy, Russia, Germany, the United Kingdom, as well as many more.

Team Hooman formed as the result of people using chat rooms on Twitch. At present, Team Hooman operates across Twitch, has its own social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) and even has its own separate website where hoomans may create blog posts or display their hooman-inspired artwork. For this study, it is important to note that Team Hooman members call themselves a community, as evident in the welcome greeting on Team Hooman's Facebook page:

> "Welcome to Team Hooman! This is an inclusive gathering of fans that originally arose around the Twitch streams of Felicia Day and Ryon Day. The creation of the Geek & Sundry Twitch channel has grown our community even more. One of our defining characteristics is that we actively work together to build a positive, supportive online space ❤️"

This group is also recognized as a community by both Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG, based on

multiple references to Team Hooman as "the community" by both channels (personal observation, 2015-2016). For this reason, I will refer to Team Hooman as both an online community and an online group during the scope of this research.

Image 1.5: The Team Hooman logo, found on their and Geek & Sundry's website.

Geek & Sundry

Geek & Sundry, a multimedia production company, was launched in April 2012 by Felicia Day, Kim Evey, and Sheri Bryant as part of Youtube's 100 million dollar original channel initiative. Initially, the company launched with three unscripted shows on their Youtube channel: The Flog (hosted by Felicia Day), Sword & Laser (hosted by Veronica Belmont and Tom Merritt), and Tabletop (hosted by Wil Wheaton). Tabletop became extremely popular and is considered the most watched show premiering on the Youtube channel. The Flog relaunched on the Youtube channel after a several-year hiatus, but Sword & Laser has not experienced a relaunch.

In May 2013, Geek & Sundry announced the launch of its vlog channel. The channel was a way to showcase diverse voices from across the Internet that aligned with Geek & Sundry's pro-geek and fan-driven philosophy. Anyone could enter to become a vlogger for the channel

and the entire Geek & Sundry fanbase had the opportunity to vote on their favorite submissions. This lead to a channel with content ranging from geek fashion to painting miniatures to following one vlogger on his quest to win the world thumb wrestling championships, which he did. However, in February 2015 it was announced that the vlog channel was coming to an end. When the end of the channel was announced, Geek & Sundry also announced they intended to reformat the channel and continue posting videos to it. No new videos have been posted to the vlog channel since February 27, 2015.

In August 2014, Geek & Sundry was acquired by Legendary Entertainment and is now a subsidiary of Legendary Digital Network, along with Amy Poehler's Smart Girls and Nerdist Industries. In March 2015, Geek & Sundry launched its Twitch channel with a forty-eight-hour charity stream. In that forty-eight hours, the channel raised over $160,000 USD for The Lupus Foundation. Initially, Geek & Sundry Twitch programming started around 4pm PST and ended around 10pm PST. When Legendary Digital Network launched its new platform, Alpha, Geek & Sundry's Twitch programming was shifted, with most days ending by 6pm PST to accommodate Alpha's programming. In February 2017, Geek & Sundry's Twitch channel reached 35,000 subscribers and nearly 266,000 followers.

In addition to the Youtube and Twitch channels, Geek & Sundry has a website where videos from the two channels are sometimes posted and articles are posted multiple times a day. The articles range from being about geeky news, tips and tricks for gaming, news about Geek & Sundry content, and more. Before being purchased by Legendary Digital Network, the website also included forums for fans to communicate about Geek & Sundry content as well as their other interests. These forums disappeared for a period after the website relaunched and, as a result, Team Hooman created their own forum website. At present, website visitors can access current and previous shows from the Youtube channel, an embedded window for the Twitch livestream, gaming articles and videos, information about International Tabletop Day 2017, a forum section, information about Alpha, articles unrelated to the previous content, and a shop where people can purchase merchandise.

HyperRPG

Hyper Rabbit Power Go (HyperRPG) is an entertainment company operating on Twitch. The company launched its Twitch programming in late February 2016 with a charity stream benefiting The Halo Foundation. In forty-eight-hours, the channel raised over $66,000 USD for the charity. The channel streams live content for approximately twelve hours a day, six days a week, focusing primarily on shows about various roleplaying games (RPGs). The channel was created by Jordan Weisman (creator of Shadowrun, Battletech RPGs) and Zac Eubank (former showrunner of Geek & Sundry Twitch). As of February 2017, HyperRPG has approximately 1,800 subscribers and 21,087 followers.

Although HyperRPG is based in Seattle, in January 2017 the company opened an additional Los Angeles studio, coinciding with the launch of new content, such as a Star Wars RPG, and relaunch of older shows, such as The Gautlet, a team battle roleplaying show based on the RPG Pathfinder. As of February 2017, all midday weekday programming (five shows) is operated out of the Los Angeles studio, four shows (all RPGs) of the channel's sixteen shows are broadcast from Seattle. Of the remaining shows broadcast from Los Angeles, three contain RPG elements or are identified as RPGs. The remainder are varied in their content, ranging from a movie and trailer review show to a show about wrestling.

Although one of the creators of HyperRPG came from Geek & Sundry and many members of the audience came from Team Hooman, HyperRPG's fanbase quickly established a separate name for their group, Thumpers. The name Thumpers was inspired by the rabbit mascot of HyperRPG. The rabbit mascot and presence of "rabbit" in Hyper Rabbit Power Go's name are acknowledgments of Harebrained Schemes, a video game studio founded by Jordan Weisman and Mitch Gitelman in 2011. Mitch Gitelman is both the current president of Harebrained Schemes and the showrunner of HyperRPG's Seattle studio.

As of February 2017, HyperRPG primarily operates on their Twitch channel, but the company also has a website. The website's homepage includes an embedded video of the live Twitch content. Other content on the website includes an About Us section, an explanation of each show on the channel, explanations of how audience members can interact with the various

shows, an up-to-date schedule of programming, an explanation of subscriber benefits, and a merchandise shop. In addition to these sections, the website lists the profiles of cast and crew, a "Partners and Friends" section for partner companies and sponsors, and contact information for various inquiries, including business collaborations.

Research Design and Methodology

The goal of this study was to discover how online geek groups and organizations establish group meaning, connect meaning to philanthropy, and facilitate group member philanthropy. Based on preliminary observation and discussion with employees of Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG, I established several hypotheses and questions related to what my research would discover. First and foremost, it was important to understand how hoomans experience philanthropy (Research Question One), testing if the rate of philanthropic contributions increased among hoomans when organizations promote philanthropy (Hypothesis One). This hypothesis was partly tested by observing the live promotion of philanthropy by HyperRPG and Geek & Sundry, but also by observing the behind-the-scenes conversations and decisions that led to how philanthropy is discussed on the channel. Since the first research question partially depended on observing business interactions, it was necessary to also observe how hoomans interact with each other as well as the organizations (Research Question Two). I tested whether promotion by HyperRPG and Geek & Sundry of Team Hooman caused Team Hooman to increase philanthropic activity, their in-group interaction, or their interactions with each organization (Hypothesis Two).

I was also trying to understand the meanings hoomans associate with Team Hooman as well as the meanings organizations associate with Team Hooman (Research Question Three). I tested, using a quantitative analysis of online interactions, whether stronger bonds of individuals to Team Hooman lead to more philanthropic activity (Hypothesis Three). I tested whether an increase in organizational affiliation with Team Hooman led to more consideration of Team Hooman's reaction in making business decisions. This consideration by the organizations may not be obvious in their online presence, so face-to-face observation allowed for more robust data. Finally, this research project also focused on how hoomans situationally identify themselves (Research Question Four). I tested whether organizations associated with Team Hooman refer to the community when they mention philanthropy. This connectivity would create a feedback loop that closely ties philanthropy to Team Hooman's core values (Hypothesis Four). Some of the ties can be observed with digital ethnography, such as when hosts or staff would mention Team

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Hooman onscreen, but was also looked for in off-camera conversations and business practices, such as organization staff discussing the community with each other and decisions they made based on their knowledge of the community. The table below lists the four research questions and their associated hypotheses.

Table 2.1 Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question (RQ)	Hypothesis (H)
RQ1: How do hoomans experience philanthropy?	H1: When organizations promote philanthropy, philanthropic contributions among hoomans increase.
RQ2: How do hoomans interact with each other? With Geek & Sundry? With HyperRPG?	H2: When HyperRPG or Geek & Sundry promote Team Hooman, Team Hooman philanthropy, in-group interaction, and interaction with either organization increase.
RQ3: What meanings do hoomans associate with Team Hooman? What meanings do the organizations associate with Team Hooman?	H3: Stronger bonds of individuals to Team Hooman leads to more philanthropic activity. Organizational affiliation with Team Hooman leads to considering hooman reactions when making business decisions.
RQ4: How do hoomans situationally identify themselves?	H4: Organizations associated with Team Hooman specifically mention the community when discussing philanthropy, creating a feedback loop that closely ties philanthropy to Team Hooman's core values.

Methods for Digital Ethnography

There are debates regarding the use of anthropological methods in a virtual world. Some anthropologists believe that the traditional ethnographic methods are acceptable (Ahmad 2010,

Bourdon et al 2007, Pauwels 2006, Stockl 2003, Wilson and Peterson 2002) and others believe traditional methods merely need to be adapted to function in a virtual world (Beaulieu 2004, Bengtsson 2014, Fay 2007, Fortun et al 2014, Sproull 2011, Steinmetz 2012, Svilicic 2012, Williams 2007). This research project adapted traditional methods for online human behavior. I used online surveys, semi-structured interviews conducted across the Internet (Skype, Google Hangout, Discord, etc), and archival data of chat rooms across social media platforms where Team Hooman operates to address my research question and hypotheses. My use of participant observation was also adapted, as observations occurred primarily across the Internet in the channels of Geek & Sundry, HyperRPG, and in spaces where Team Hooman members are found, such as their Facebook group or forum website.

   I produced the survey, designed to capture demographic data and attitudes about Team Hooman, was produced and completed online using the survey software Qualtrics. Qualtrics is an online survey software that allows participants to fill out a survey on any device that has Internet access, including their mobile phone. This software also allowed participants to start the survey at one time and return to complete it at a later date. This characteristic of the software did yield some incomplete surveys, but, overall, having the survey available on Qualtrics made it easier for people to participate. Instead of needing to email a survey and collect answers individually to aggregate later, Qualtrics provided a simple link for participants and automatically aggregated the data for me. Qualtrics also provides easy methods for simple analysis and will export the data as an SPSS or Excel document, making analysis with either of these programs a quicker process.

   Since Team Hooman is an international community and Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG both have an international audience, interviews were conducted online, using a face-time program such as Skype or Google Hangouts. It was not possible to interview participants in person since the community is spread across the globe; it would have taken an exorbitant budget and extended the length of the research phase into an impractical time frame. Since Team Hooman operates primarily online, with in-person events being the outlier rather than the rule, it made sense to interview participants in a digital environment.

Digital document analysis, though in some ways similar to traditional document analysis, also needed to be adapted for this project. The main reason adaptation was necessary was because of the nature of the documents. Document analysis was used for Twitch chat logs, Facebook group interaction, a forum website, and various social media, including Twitter and Reddit. Twitch chat logs, unless saved by a community member, are not publicly accessible after a period of time. For these records it was necessary to request the archived logs from a chat member who was known to keep the chat logs, primarily as a record for moderators to check when a ban or timeout is challenged. Keeping these logs allows moderators to identify which comments led to the ban or timeout and determine if the punishment should be reduced. Facebook, Twitter, the forums, and Reddit required less adaptation but, due to the format of these sites, parsing and analyzing the information present on each site took longer. I used these documents, primarily chatroom logs, to identify patterns of behavior and interaction that could not be as readily observed through participant observation, such as interactions during large charity streams which had already occurred. Differences between chatroom interaction during live-streamed regular programming, outside of this regular programming, and during specialty events, such as charity streams were compared using these logs.

Finally, I engaged in participant observation in the Twitch channels of Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG as well as across associated social media feeds. I also participated and observed in person at the Twitch studios for both Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG to better understand organizational structures from within the organizations. Participant observation, whether conducted digitally or in person, was similar. In both cases I took notes on all I observed and participated in the activities happening around me. For online participation, participant observation meant typing in chat rooms, interacting with the Twitch streams, and interacting on other social media feeds. In person, participant observation meant being present at each company and taking structured notes on my observations, sometimes helping move set pieces, sometimes appearing on a show, and often communicating with staff about subjects related to the business.

Sample Strategy and Characteristics

Different sample strategies were used for different instruments and for different platforms. For participant observation, locations were chosen based on Team Hooman's social media presence and the organizations with which I partnered. The sampling strategy for surveys, however, was more nuanced. For instance, I posted the link to the survey in the Team Hooman Facebook group alongside a short explanation of the research study. I then updated the post when the survey reached a benchmark number of respondents (50, 100, 150) and warned Team Hooman when it was about to close. This was possible due to the format of Facebook, which allows for long posts that become archived and can reemerge at the top of a recent post list when they are updated or someone replies.

On Twitch, however, long posts explaining the survey were not possible. In addition, since I am a moderator for both channels on Twitch, I felt that personally posting a link to the survey would cause undue pressure on the audience to respond. I did not anyone to feel like they had to participate because a moderator, someone seen as an authority figure, asked them to do so. Instead, I created a bot command for both organizations, which explained that the link led to a survey being conducted in partnership with the organizations. After creating the command, I refused to use it, letting other moderators, audience members, and organizational staff share the command and promote the study.

On Facebook this problem was reduced because I am not a moderator of the Facebook group. I also do not post under my Twitch handle on Facebook, which may reduce the association between my Facebook posts and my Twitch moderator status, although I did make it clear who I was across social media for the purpose of this study. I should note that a large contingency of survey respondents did come from the Facebook group, so it is possible my attempts to diminish my power in recruitment were not successful. This might be due, however, to the archival nature of Facebook compared to the ephemeral nature of Twitch interaction.

This sampling strategy led to 196 survey respondents, almost twice my intended 100 respondents. In fact, within twenty-four hours of posting the survey I had already received 100 respondents. This may be because I chose to post the survey on International Tabletop Day 2016.

International Tabletop Day is a Saturday twenty-four-hour event which causes most hoomans to make an appearance online at some point in that period to watch their favorite Geek & Sundry hosts play games while playing games themselves. I chose to launch the survey on this day due to the increased number of hoomans who would be watching Geek & Sundry. The goal was to post the survey when there was a high number of people online to whom it related, reducing the chance of accidentally pressuring people to take the survey, such as posting the survey repeatedly in a small timeframe to a smaller audience (something Twitch audiences have expressed disdain for in the past), while increasing the chance of getting respondents. The survey was left open for three months to allow people who could not be there for International Tabletop Day to discover the survey and also to make sure a representative sample of hoomans who watch HyperRPG, not just Geek & Sundry, was present in the data.

Instrument Formulation

Prior to my research, it was not clear how Team Hooman members first collectively established meaning as an online group. I predicted that this information might be found through a thorough analysis of the material archives. This information was available in the earliest Team Hooman Facebook, Twitter, and website records. These materials, and the materials and instruments used to answer the research hypotheses and objectives, allowed me to better understand how Team Hooman establishes group meaning, connects that meaning to philanthropy, and facilitates group member philanthropy.

It was also important to note the organizational practices which may have inhibited philanthropy in Team Hooman. These practices either occurred within Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG, or were present within Team Hooman. I identified inhibiting practices from material, participant observation, and interview analysis. I also attempted to identify privileges which inhibit people from joining Team Hooman that are hidden. For instance, since Team Hooman is primarily an online group, access to the Internet is a requirement of membership. This is not an exclusion that hoomans identified during interviews when they explained what is required to be

hooman, but they are still characteristics that limit membership and exclude people. These privileges were primarily discovered during interviews and participant observation.

I conducted interviews as a way of collecting qualitative data. I created the survey to collect more surface information from a larger quantity of people. This allowed for a quick look at hooman philanthropy, interests, and demographic information that was not available before. The surveys also acted as a recruitment tool for interviewees. At the end of the survey I asked respondents to indicate if they were interested in participating in an interview as well and, if so, to include an email address for future correspondence. Interviews included fewer questions that were more focused on a narrative, than a clear answer. Interviews allowed people to talk about themselves, Team Hooman, and their ideals in much more detail than the survey could provide.

I also used participant observation to gather more qualitative data than could be found with the survey or document analysis. Unlike the interview instrument, participant observation allowed me to observe what people in Team Hooman actually do. When compared to the interviews, this allowed a thorough analysis of what hoomans think compared to how they act. It also allowed me to be present when organizational decisions were first announced to community members. This meant that I was able to observe initial reactions and feelings of hoomans about the organizational decisions without the filter of time. I was then able to gather data comparing how hoomans first reacted to organizational decisions, their response after some time, and any organizational decisions made in response to the community reactions.

Format of the Instruments

Format was extremely important for both the survey and interview instruments. For the survey, I wanted to start with less invasive questions that were easier to answer, before moving to more personal questions, such as age and tax bracket. After the informed consent form, the survey began with questions about which Twitch channels the respondents like to watch, if they consider themselves hoomans, and what shows they enjoy watching. Then the survey moves into more invasive questions, like if they participate in hooman or non-hooman related charity and approximately how much they have given to various charities. Continuing to more invasive

questions, the last section of the survey focuses on demographic and identifying information, such as gender and ethnicity. The final question on the survey worked as a recruiting question for the interview portion of this project. In this way, respondents were more likely, after signing the informed consent, to be willing to answer questions about themselves. The survey can be found in its entirety in Appendix A.

For the interviews, I was interested in gathering more qualitative, detailed information than I was able to gather through the survey. Towards this end, I formatted the interview questions to allow interviewees to tell me stories, rather than answer the questions quickly. For instance, it was important to me to ask how hoomans first became involved with Team Hooman, rather than focusing as much on when. The when would usually be answered when they shared their stories, but asking when first would have limited the information they shared. I also asked interviewees to share a story of a time when they acted as a hooman. This was specifically left vague to allow interviewees to choose if they wanted to tell a story directly related to Team Hooman or something completely separate. It also allowed interviewees to interpret what was meant by hooman, instead of having me constrain their answer by my own definition of hooman. The interview instrument can be found in its entirety in Appendix B.

I chose to distribute the survey through a link to a Qualtrics survey. Qualtrics allowed me to create questions, reorganize information, and customize the survey to my liking. Qualtrics also includes some initial analysis tools and graphing capabilities that allowed me to spot patterns and potential correlations in the responses prior to running the data through SPSS.

The interviews, however, needed to be more flexible. I chose to distribute the survey through a link to a Qualtrics survey. Qualtrics also includes some initial analysis tools and graphing capabilities that allowed me to spot patterns and potential correlations in the responses prior to running the data through SPSS. The interviews, however, needed to be more flexible, thus allowing respondents to choose the format with which they were most comfortable. Respondents either chose to have a voice-only interview through Skype, Google Hangouts, or Discord, or they opted to have a live chat interview without the use of a webcam or microphone. By incorporating a flexible interview method, more survey respondents were willing to be interviewed.

Participant Observation

For this study, participant observation played an instrumental role to understanding Team Hooman's online interactions. Participant observation allowed me to understand Team Hooman, Geek & Sundry, and HyperRPG from an insider perspective. As such, I utilized participant observation from two different perspectives; that of an audience/community member and that of a member of the organizations. Performing participant observation from these two differing perspectives did require different approaches, so each is discussed as a separate method in the following pages.

An Audience Perspective

To understand Team Hooman I utilized participant observation in several forms; live interaction, static interaction, and social media. First and foremost, I watched Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG's Twitch channels and interacted in the live chat. This meant that, Monday through Friday and during special weekend events, I was present in these two channels for a minimum of thirty minutes each day for ten months. I would often spend up to twelve hours at a time watching the event and participating in chat. Since Team Hooman is an international community, being present in chat for extended periods during these events allowed me to interact with members from all over the world and counter any timezone bias that may have been occurring (i.e. making sure I wasn't reporting on American Team Hooman culture as if it represents all members of the community without experiencing the community at times when there is a higher presence of international members).

In addition to the live chat present during live broadcasts on HyperRPG and Geek & Sundry, Team Hooman members also use a Facebook group and a forum website for interaction. I read posts from hoomans, commented on their posts, and posted my own messages in the Facebook group. This allowed me to observe Team Hooman separately from any organization, since Team Hooman considers itself a separate entity from both Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG. The Team Hooman forums were created during my research phase and, as a result, I chose to

incorporate the forums in my participant observation. However, these forums were not yet being utilized often by hoomans, so instead of checking the forums every day, as I did for the Twitch channels and Facebook group, I was able to check-in on the forums approximately once a month to understand forum interaction.

I also utilized participant observation by interacting with the social media of Team Hooman. Team Hooman maintains Twitter and Instagram accounts. I followed both accounts and set my notification settings to let me know when Team Hooman posted something new. This meant I did not need to check on the accounts every day, just when I received a notification. The Team Hooman Instagram does not actually seem to be used often, having zero posts and only following seven accounts. The Twitter account, however, is used almost daily and often multiple times a day. As such, I shifted my focus for participant observation to the Twitter account. In this case, I read through Team Hooman's Twitter posts and conversations, liked and replied to posts, and, in some cases, retweeted posts.

A Business Perspective

Participant observation of the business perspective was a more difficult task to accomplish. As a moderator for both organizations and a writer for Geek & Sundry, I did have access to behind-the-scenes information related to the business practices of both companies. However, I decided early on when constructing this research project that I would not reveal any information gathered from observing private online interactions, such as online staff meetings, or information shared in confidence. In order to conduct participant observation from the business perspective, I needed to physically visit these organizations. Any information included in this report that was originally told to me in confidence has only been included after the information was made public.

I had already visited Geek & Sundry's studio multiple times prior to begin this study. Therefore, I did not need extra time to understand the layout of the building or understand when the best times to be in the studio for observation would be. Given that information, I visited Geek & Sundry twice, two days each visit, to understand the physical, behind-the-scenes, practices

which influence their actions on Twitch. One of these visits occurred during a twenty-four-hour marathon anniversary stream, celebrating the channel's first year on Twitch. The marathon occurred from Friday afternoon to Saturday afternoon. I participated during over twenty hours of the event. The other visit did not coincide with a specialty event and, as such, my participation was reduced to six hours each day I was there. While I visited Geek & Sundry, I primarily observed from the studio, as the Twitch staff do not have a separate office from the studio. This allowed me to observe staff interactions and the live shows being broadcast concurrently. I also participated in various shows when invited by Twitch staff and hosts.

For HyperRPG, however, I had never been to the studio before. Due to this, I budgeted more time to spend at the studio to better understand the layout and keep from accidentally missing the best time to observe the organization. At the time I was conducting my research, HyperRPG had not yet expanded to a second Los Angeles studio. As such, I conducted my participant observation at their Seattle studio. I spent one week in Seattle in November, visiting the studio every weekday, for the entire workday, during my visit. HyperRPG does have separate work spaces for its staff, unlike Geek & Sundry. I primarily spent my time in one of the offices, which allowed me to observe how the staff worked and interacted. This office also had a direct feed to the shows that were being broadcast from the main studio space, so I was able to concurrently observe staff and their reactions to the shows. The space also seemed to be a good location for interacting with hosts before and after their shows because the hosts would stop to talk to the staff in this room on their way in and out. I also participated in various shows when invited by the staff and hosts.

Access to and Analysis of Archived Records

When this project began, Twitch did not save channel chat logs for public viewing. Approximately halfway through the research phase, Twitch upgraded to make chat logs viewable on archived videos. Still, this meant that chat logs were only publicly available through Twitch for fourteen days (standard VoD archive length) or sixty days (premium and partnered VoD archive length). However, several chat members had made it public knowledge that they kept

archived chat logs on their own machines. These members were predominantly channel moderators who used the logs to review contested timeouts and bans. For example, if someone is timed out, they can directly message a moderator if they think the timeout was in error. The moderator can then review the records to find out exactly why someone was timed out to determine if the time out was justified. These records are available when asked for so I was able to gather archived chat logs for HyperRPG and Geek & Sundry going back to each channel's Twitch launch date.

These archived records yielded millions of individual lines of chat for each channel. To make this more manageable, I searched through these archived records and separated out chat that occurred during charity and fundraising events. These logs were then color-coded for instances where Team Hooman and philanthropy were mentioned. I then analyzed how many times mentions of Team Hooman and philanthropy were connected (ex. "Good job, Team Hooman! We've raised 10k already!"). I also color-coded these logs for other patterns which seemed to relate to the philanthropic event or were meant to be interactions with the hosts of the live broadcasts. Messages from moderators and the channel account were also color-coded for a better understanding of how these two groups promoted their event and discussed the progress during the stream.

I also wanted to understand if people who identified with Team Hooman were connected to philanthropy outside of hooman-related fundraising events. To reach this goal, I searched for Team Hooman in the chat logs of both organizations (after separating the fundraising events from the main logs). In places where Team Hooman was mentioned outside of specific fundraising events, I searched for mentions of philanthropy, fundraising, charity, or other words related to altruism within the preceding and following five minutes. The most prevalent words used related to philanthropy were "donation" and "tip." Since these chat logs originally occurred live and acted like physical conversation, it was extremely rare for any person in the chat to bring up something someone else said more than five minutes prior, unless it was an ongoing conversation or argument, both of which could be discerned from analyzing the preceding and following five minutes. If I found ongoing conversations or arguments, I expanded my analysis to the beginning and end of the conversation. In almost all cases, however, five minutes before

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and after allowed for sufficient data collection of mentions of words associated with philanthropy outside of charity events.

In addition to the appearance of words associated with philanthropy, I also conducted a keyword search for words with positive or negative connotations being used in conjunction with Team Hooman and then attempted to cross-reference if this was a Team Hooman member or someone else. For instance, a comment such as "great job hoomans!" would be labelled positive while a response such as "don't drink the kool-aid" could be labelled negative. Team Hooman keeps a document on their Facebook group where members can post their Facebook names, their Twitch name, and their social media handles. This made it easier to double-check Twitch usernames when I was unsure if they were members of Team Hooman, but, in most cases, I was able to recognize Team Hooman members from the participant observation without having to check the Facebook group document.

Participant Surveys, Interviews, and Informed Consent

Surveys and interviews were central to data collection for this project. Both methods, along with participant observation, allowed me to gather most of the information used in the primary deliverable. In total, I collected 196 survey responses and conducted thirty interviews. For this study, surveys directly led to interviews, so the two methods are covered together in this section. Informed consent was necessary for both these data collection instruments and was first made available to survey respondents. As such, this section concludes with a discussion of how I achieved informed consent for respondents.

Surveys

The survey was created in Qualtrics and asked a range of questions (see Appendix B for the full survey) designed to analyze whether there are correlations between Team Hooman members, their philanthropy, and the channels they watch on Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG, as well as their participation in other Twitch channels and organizations. The survey also collected

demographic information to better understand the makeup of Team Hooman. At the beginning of this study, neither HyperRPG nor Geek & Sundry was receiving demographic information from Twitch regarding their audience. This section of the survey was included to provide this information and to help guarantee that interviews were conducted with a representative sample of survey respondents. I included questions regarding age, ethnicity, country of origin, yearly income, and others to understand the demographics of Team Hooman and to conduct interviews with a representative sample.

I promoted the survey in the Team Hooman Facebook group while moderators and staff promoted it in the chatrooms for HyperRPG and Geek & Sundry's Twitch channels. It is important to note that not every audience member for these channels is a member of Team Hooman. Of the 196 survey respondents, 150 self-identified as hoomans. Although an equal number of hoomans and non-hoomans would have been ideal, the forty-six non-hoomans who responded to the survey did allow for a comparative analysis to understand if hoomans differed from non-hoomans in terms of their philanthropic contributions.

To analyze the information provided in the survey responses, I exported the data to SPSS. I then utilized the Friedman test for differences between data groups based on an ordinal dependent variable. Chi-square was used to test categorical data to determine if any significant correlations were occurring between data groups. Basic mean, median, and mode were initially calculated in Qualtrics, but I recalculated these as part of the SPSS output.

Interviews

In addition to being their own data source, the surveys acted as a tool for recruiting interviewees. The final question on the survey asked those interested in being interviewed to leave their preferred form of contact. After closing the survey, demographic data was analyzed and a representative sample of thirty interviewees were contacted. I initially requested to conduct fifteen interviews. However, after analyzing the demographic information, I discovered that twenty-two separate countries were represented by participants. To be truly diverse in capturing different points of view, I needed to conduct more than fifteen interviews. Therefore, I increased

the number to thirty, allowing me to interview individuals from most of the countries represented (some respondents from different countries said they did not wish to be interviewed) who also paralleled the other demographic data (gender, age groupings, employment status, etc). Seven of these interviews occurred with people who did not identify as hoomans.

I conducted the interviews over two months in July and August 2016 over Google Hangouts, Skype, and Discord, depending on the preference of the interviewee. Interviews usually lasted approximately one hour, with the shortest lasting forty-five minutes and the longest lasting two hours. Interviews were recorded using Open Broadcasting Software (OBS) and a separate digital recorder for redundancy. During the interviews, I took notes on interviewee answers and noted any patterns I immediately noticed, such as similarities in how hoomans found the community. After the interviews were concluded, I transcribed each into a written document and coded the documents for important information, such as people mentioned in relation to Team Hooman or specific words mentioned when describing Team Hooman, such as "kind" or "good bunch of geeks". I then compared these coded documents within groups (Team Hooman and non-hooman as separate groups) for any similarities and between groups for any differences.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was asked for on the first page of the survey. All respondents were required to read and sign a consent form detailing their participation in the research (see Appendix A). The consent also stated that all participants were required to be eighteen or older to avoid consent issues with people considered minors in the United States. Since all interviewees were recruited from the survey, it was not necessary to have them sign the informed consent form a second time. However, all interviewees were given an explanation of the purpose of the interview and were asked if they were comfortable being recorded before the recording devices were turned on. The interviewees were asked if they were comfortable with being recorded again after the recorders were turned on to record their response for documentation.

Informed consent was not gathered for participant observation or analysis of the archived chat logs. This was, in large part, because the areas for participant observation from the audience perspective were public places on the Internet with little to no expectation of privacy. It had been well-documented that the chat logs for HyperRPG and Geek & Sundry were being archived by chat members and, after a Twitch upgrade, these chat logs were also public after the live-streams by viewing the archived video of the broadcast. In addition, prior to my trips to Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG, I informed the staff of both organizations when I intended to arrive and my intention to perform participant observation data collection. Any time I was introduced to someone who did not know why I was at the studio, I explained my research and purpose at the studio that day. In addition, I have not included any conversations that occurred during the business participant observation to keep from revealing sensitive information or information under a non-disclosure agreement (NDA). Similarly, I have altered names and handles of all audience members and hoomans observed to protect their identities. I also made it clear across all my social media accounts that I was performing this study and contact information if anyone had questions or concerns.

Age and the Internet

I did not survey or interview anyone under the age of eighteen due to ethical considerations. Although Team Hooman is an international community and, therefore, the accepted age of adulthood depends on each member's country of origin, I chose to keep this study to those who would be considered legal adults in California and most of the United States. Leaving out this younger age demographic could have skewed the results older. Indeed, I did find that respondents were older, on average, than the average age of Twitch viewers based on a general Twitch survey (for more information, see Section Three: Findings and Insights).

However, I do not think excluding people under eighteen had that great of an impact. If the community skewed younger, you would expect to see the average age of survey respondents to still be between eighteen and low twenties as this age range is logically closest in taste to those under eighteen. This was not the case and survey respondents were largely between twenty-eight

and thirty-three. In addition, there were no comments from hoomans sharing disappointment for not being able to participate in the study due to their age. Finally there have been moments where audience members post their ages in chat as some kind of information-sharing spree. When these moments happen, there have been a small number of under people under eighteen posting their age (mostly seventeen year olds), but these sprees are dominated by chatters stating they are in their thirties or older. Given this information, it is likely that Team Hooman does skew older than general Twitch.

Yet, none of this information indicates why it skews older. It is possible that Team Hooman skews older because the group started as fans of Felicia Day, who got her start on television in the early 2000s. People who are thirty-two or thirty-three now would have been teenagers when Felicia first appeared on television and, therefore, a core demographic for the shows on which she appeared. Another reason that the group is older could be because of the community's commitment to philanthropy. Generally, in order to contribute to charity drives, a person needs either time or money, of which single people in their thirties might have more. Further research could help explain exactly why this audience is older than the average Twitch viewer.

Findings and Insights

This chapter gathers the multiple findings and insights that resulted from the analysis phase of this research project. The chapter begins with findings related to the four primary research questions. Yet, these research questions did not encompass all findings and insights that were found. Furthermore, the findings related to the primary research questions did not greatly influence the main deliverable, the toolkit. Due to this, the second section of this chapter is concerned with findings and insights that did influence the toolkit. The third section is comprised of other findings and insights related to Team Hooman philanthropy.

Main Hypotheses

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I entered into this research project with four primary questions. Each question had an associated hypothesis which focused on the quantitative elements of the research question. In this section of the chapter, I reviewed each research question and its corresponding hypothesis. I then introduced evidence which led me to determine the validity of each hypothesis. In the case where the validity of the hypothesis is still undetermined, I propose further data that should be collected to determine their validity.

Research Question One

The first research question focused on how hoomans experience philanthropy. I posed that, when organizations promote philanthropy, philanthropic contributions increase (H1). This is true in the sense that, when either organization held a large charity drive, they were able to raise tens of thousands of dollars. However, neither organization ever raised funds for charity without promoting the charity drive, so I am unable to definitively conclude that the promotion increased philanthropic contributions. During my visits to the studios, the staff of both Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG, however, emphasized the importance of promoting charity and fundraising events during the events to maintain a constant stream of donations. This promotion, usually referred to

as "hyping" the event, occurred during every fundraising stream. If the on-air talent was not "hyping" enough, if they had gone too long without mentioning the fundraiser, the staff would appear on camera to emphasize the fundraiser's goal and encourage people to donate.

Both Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG utilized social media to promote their Twitch fundraising events, but to different degrees. Geek & Sundry focused primarily on tweeting about the event on Twitter and usually relied on the audience to continue the promotion across other social media platforms. HyperRPG, however, was more involved in its event promotion. They also tweeted about the event, but the company's community manager would also post information about the event in the Facebook group and on other platforms. HyperRPG also utilized a program called Thunderclap when hosting a charity event for the HALO Foundation. Thunderclap allows multiple people to sign up to spread a specific message on a specific day at a specific time. People could connect their Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr accounts to the Thunderclap. Below is an example of an image HyperRPG used in a Thunderclap to promote its first HALO Foundation charity event.

Image 3.1: A Thunderclap campaign image from HyperRPG promoting their first charity stream.

Research Question 2

The second research question involved how hoomans interact with each other and the organizations. My hypothesis was that when organizations promote Team Hooman, Team Hooman involvement increases, both within Team Hooman and with the organizations. I saw no membership increases in Team Hooman based on charity drives where either organization promoted Team Hooman. In short, these charity events did not lead to a significant increase to Team Hooman's Facebook group members or social media followers. In addition, at HyperRPG, mentioning and showing appreciation for Team Hooman in the initial charity drive and first weeks of programming did not lead to a Team Hooman presence in the chat room. Actually, there is data to show that, within a few months of launch, many hoomans abandoned the channel, despite verbal appreciation from the on-screen talent of HyperRPG (for more information on this, see Hooman versus Thumper section later in this chapter).

Even though there was no direct increase in hoomans through charity events, Team Hooman has greatly increased in size over the last year. The community began in 2014 and, by February 2016, had approximately 1500 members in the Facebook group. As of May 2017, the Facebook group has just over 3500 members. Many newer members come from Geek & Sundry's regular Twitch streams. Since Geek & Sundry does not have a separate name for its community, new subscribers and followers to the channel are often welcomed to the community by hoomans or told "welcome to Team Hooman" when they join. New followers and subscribers, therefore, see Geek & Sundry's audience and Team Hooman as synonymic and join the Team Hooman Facebook group. As David, an interviewee and newer member to Team Hooman, stated, "Essentially, I feel like being a subscriber to both the YouTube and the Twitch channels (for Geek & Sundry) makes me a part of Team Hooman."

This is an opinion shared by non-hoomans. All non-hoomans interviewed as part of this project stated that Team Hooman is the fan base of Geek & Sundry, primarily its Twitch channel. This is not an opinion shared by hoomans who have been part of the community since the first month of Geek & Sundry streams (or earlier). These hoomans have posted in the Facebook group, more than once, that Team Hooman is separate from Geek & Sundry and, in fact, does not

belong to any one Twitch channel. Every hooman I interviewed who had been part of the community for a year or more stated the requirements of being a hooman were to be kind and foster a sense of positivity. They focused on personality and general traits when discussing requirements, rather than stating subscribing or following a certain Twitch channel earned someone admittance to the community.

Research Question 3

The third research theme was centered around meaning. Specifically, I was looking to understand what meaning hoomans associate with Team Hooman and what meanings organizations associate with Team Hooman. My hypothesis was that the stronger the bonds an individual has to Team Hooman, the more likely they were to donate to a Team Hooman-related charity. During the interviews, when I asked hoomans why they donated to certain charity drives, they cited the worthiness of the cause or their connection to the charity organization, rather than a connection to Team Hooman, as their primary motivator. This would indicate that hoomans are not donating to charity based on their connection to Team Hooman, but based on the perceived worthiness of the charity. However, this was contradicted by four chi-square tests.

The first three of these showed whether there was an association between being a hooman and donating to Team Hooman related charities (Geek & Sundry charity drives, 826LA, and other hooman charity drives). The reason for including Geek & Sundry and other hooman charity drives (drives that do not occur on Geek & Sundry or HyperRPG, but other channels frequented by hoomans) in the statistical analysis is obvious, as both are directly related to Team Hooman. Indeed, as seen in the table below, there is a significant association between self-labelling as a hooman and donating to Geek & Sundry, with X^2 (1, N=196) = 25.11, p<0.01. There was also a significant association with donating to other hooman charity drives, with X^2 (1, N=196) = 4.63, p=0.03. 826LA was called out as a particular charity because the largest show on Geek & Sundry Twitch, *Critical Role,* raises funds for this charity on a weekly basis and, indeed, there was an association here with X^2 (1, N=196) = 8.00, p<0.01. The fourth association tested was between being a hooman and having, or planning to, donate to a non-hooman associated charity in 2016.

As seen in the table below, there is no association between being hooman and donating to a non-hooman charity, with X^2 (1, N=196) = 1.76, p=0.13. This counteracts claims by hoomans that they donate to a charity based on the worthiness of the cause or because of a prior association with the charity.

Table 3.1 Correlations Between Hoomans and Donations

Correlation Tested	Chi Square (P) Value	Total Responses (N)	Result
Correlation Between Hoomans and Donating to Geek & Sundry Charity Drives	P=0.000 where p value of less than or equal to 0.05 is significant	N = 196	Significant Correlation
Correlation Between Hoomans and Donating to 826LA	P=0.005 where p value of less than or equal to 0.05 is significant	N = 196	Significant Correlation
Correlation Between Hoomans and Donating to Other Hooman Charity Drives	P=0.031 where p value of less than or equal to 0.05 is significant	N = 196	Significant Correlation
Correlation Between Hoomans and Donating to Non-Hooman Charities	P=0.128 where p value of less than or equal to 0.05 is significant	N = 196	Not a Significant Correlation

There are a few potential reasons for this discrepency. The first is that, despite believing they donate to a variety of charities, hoomans are more insular in their donations. Clearly, hoomans are donating to hooman charity drives, but are not donating to other charity drives in a

statistically significant way. This reason aligns with the statistical analysis, but does not explain the discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative data.

The next potential reason is that, by having the easy avenue of Geek & Sundry and other hooman charity drives available, hoomans immediately label such charity drives as worthy or "a good cause." There seems to be some evidence for this in the chat logs from charity streams. Occasionally during these streams a stranger to the channel would appear in chat and ask about the validity of the charity stream. These people wanted to know the name of the charity, the charity's goal, and asked for verification from Geek & Sundry to prove their donation was actually going to the cause. As one newcomer asked, "how do I know this is legit?" Hoomans, on the other hand, never questioned the validity of the charity or asked for verification from Geek & Sundry regarding their donations. The community seems to have an implicit trust in Geek & Sundry. In one hooman's words, "of course the donations are going to the charity." Another responded to the stranger's questions by stating, "I get why you would have questions, a lot of (channels on) Twitch says they're raising money for charity but keep it for themselves. G&S is good, though. They don't keep the money."

The third reason is that hoomans who may not regularly donate to charity make an exception during hooman charity drives due to peer pressure or some other motivating factor. During live-stream charity drives, rewards are often offered to incentive viewers to donate. During a charity stream on Geek & Sundry for Extra Life, they offered a $500 single-donation incentive. They allowed a donor to directly impact the story of the tabletop roleplaying game segment if they donated at least $500 in a single donation. Within thirty minutes the stream had raised an additional $2,000 just from moderator donations. During a charity stream for the HALO Foundation, HyperRPG incentivized their audience by announcing that a single donation of $1,500 would trigger someone at the studio getting a tattoo live on air. They received the donation within five minutes.

Clearly, incentivization impacts audience donations. Still, the effect of peer pressure should not be discounted. As one survey respondent explained, they donate because "G&S is very moving. Also, E pluribus unum. Oh, and just a touch of peer pressure, not because anyone applied pressure, but because I put it on myself seeing all the generosity." As this respondent

indicated, audience members do not point out others and apply direct pressure for donations, but there is still some pressure. This occurs through audience "hyping" of the charity drive, repeatedly mention how close the charity is to another goal, and make statements such as, "come on hoomans, we can do it!" This also occurs through the positive feedback donors receive. Donations are announced in chat and on screen so that audience members and hosts can immediately thank the donor, thus encouraging others to donate and receive the same feedback. As one respondent put it, they donate because they are, "inspired by all the other Hoomans' giving, being a part of the community, [and] knowing that a Hooman charity is a good cause."

Research Question 4

The fourth research question regarded how hoomans situationally identify themselves. My hypothesis was that, when Team Hooman is mentioned philanthropy is also mentioned, and vice versa, on Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG. I looked for this primarily in chat room interactions between audience members and during live-streamed charity events on each channel. When I looked at chat logs from HyperRPG and Geek & Sundry, I began to notice that Team Hooman is not often mentioned in chat, and, when mentioned, it is rarely directly connected to philanthropy. During on charity stream on Geek & Sundry, Team Hooman was not mentioned in chat until the very end of the stream, when one chatter posted, "Great job to all the Hoomans gandsHooman gandsHooman gandsHooman gandsHooman gandsHooman." "gandsHooman" is an emote command that does not transfer into text logs. The gandsHooman emote has been included below for reference.
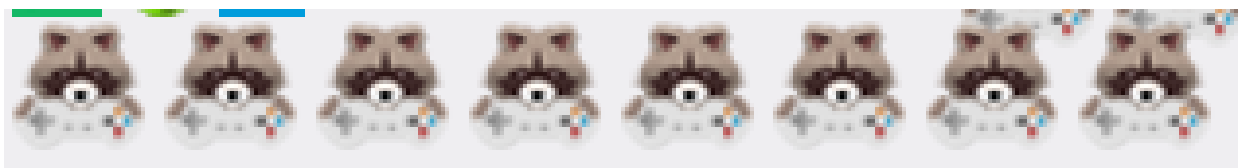
Image 3.2: A member of TeamHooman uses the gandsHooman emote repeatedly in Geek & Sundry's chat room. The emote depicts a raccoon holding a game controller.

Other than at the end of charity streams to congratulate each other on the successful fundraiser, hoomans normally only mentioned Team Hooman when it was mentioned on screen. Hosts and crew of Geek & Sundry would mention Team Hooman as an example of one of the great communities that makes up Geek & Sundry's audience-base. Rarely was Team Hooman mentioned alone, usually accompanied by the *Critical Role* fan community and vaguer references to "this wonderful community" (Geek & Sundry host, Extra Life Stream 2015). Usually hoomans would repeatedly post the gandsHooman emote (as seen above) when this occurred. If someone in chat asked what Team Hooman was, usually by posting "Team Hooman?" hoomans would explain that it is "an inclusive community of geeks who like to support each other and the channels of Felicia Day, Geek & Sundry" (multiple hoomans during a variety of Geek & Sundry Twitch streams) and, depending on who was answering the question, a variety of other Twitch streamers would be included. Hoomans did not promote their philanthropy to new people as the primary goal of the community.

It is possible that, despite philanthropy causing feelings of pride in hoomans who discussed Team Hooman with me, hoomans do not see philanthropy as the most important element to being a hooman. In multiple interviews, respondents associated Team Hooman with "acceptance and bonding" (Charles), "acceptance of people trying to do better" (Richard), and "amazing nerds who were all about kindness" (Martin). At the same time, hoomans usually mentioned philanthropy or altruism when I asked them to share a time they acted as a hooman. Charles said, "I know it's not a qualification or a requirement for anyone in the community, but I've always tried to do my part and donate when causes come up. I always give at least a little each charity stream."

Although many informants mentioned philanthropy when discussing Team Hooman in interviews, many also shared stories of hoomanism that were not dependent on money. Richard mentioned reading Felicia Day's book, *You're Never Weird on the Internet (Almost)*, and striking up a conversation with an English couple on the train in Paris.

> *"I was reading Never weird in the train (from the suburb to Paris) and a relatively*
> *old English couple asked me about the book because their son liked Felicia Day*
> *but didn't have the book! So they wanted to surprise him with it and one thing lead*

to another. I spent an hour and a half with them, taking them to the Champs

Elysées and being a guide as much as I could. So yeah. It's little things in every day

life I guess. Taking time to help others."

Two interviewees also specifically mentioned supporting friends who came out as transsexual while Richard followed up his Paris story with the story of how his friend came out to him as homosexual.

Based on these responses and the chatroom logs, it appears that hoomans primarily value kindness, inclusiveness, and acceptance when considering community values. Philanthropy, though present and important enough that hoomans have researched turning the community into a 501c(3) non-blondes, is secondary to these values. Rather than valuing members for their ability to donate time and money to a cause, hoomans appear to value behaviors, such as kindness, that would result in philanthropy, but do not focus on philanthropy as the predominant trait.

The Toolkit

The primary deliverable for this research project was a toolkit on the different elements that influence how a community starts, grows, and is maintained. The toolkit in its original format can be found in Appendix E at the end of this report. The following three sections discuss the findings which led to conclusions discussed in the toolkit. The first section is on forming a community and includes the origin story of Team Hooman as a community as well as stories from hoomans about how they joined the community. The second section is about maintaining a community and is focused on the communication and relationship between Team Hooman, Geek & Sundry, and HyperRPG. The third section is about growing a community, and centers around discussions of regulations used to maintain the integrity of Team Hooman.

Forming a Community

In September 2015, I interviewed a member of Team Hooman for a Geek & Sundry article celebrating the community's first anniversary. This community member was singled out because she has been a member of Team Hooman since its formation. She is also extremely involved in the community, taking on moderator responsibilities and volunteering for nearly every Team Hooman project. In fact, as I began the research phase of this project, more than one hooman asked if I had approached her to be a respondent and implied that she would be the most accurate and definitive source of data for this project. As such, I have chosen to include the transcript from our September 2015 interview where she explains how Team Hooman began and what the community means, in her own words.

> *"Like many cool things, Team Hooman arose when Felicia and Ryon were willing to take a risk and try something outside their comfort zone. Ryon had been a long-time fan of Twitch, and would often try and coax Felicia into trying video-game streaming. Back in September 2014, the siblings ended up being out of town at the same time, and on a whim, they setup an impromptu Twitch stream where they engaged in some on-the-air co-op hi-jinx. They immediately fell into a fantastic rhythm of including fans in their fun!*

Image 3.3: Ryon Day (left) and Felicia Day (right). Used in initial article.

After enjoying their first Twitch adventure they scheduled additional streams. And as they did, Felicia and Ryon interacted with the fans, and the fans also connected with one another. Each stream had a welcoming nature and the warm easy-going vibe of a gathering of friends. There was a charming grass-roots feel to it all. During one stream, Felicia and Ryon were <u>playing a horror game named 'Damned'</u>, where Ryon was playing a monster that was hunting down other player-controlled characters. As he was on the prowl, he'd amusingly call out, 'Oh Hoomans! Where are you?' And that funny little riff ended up becoming the adopted name for the fan-community!

The existence of our community owes so much to Felicia and Ryon being such down-to-Earth, warm, and caring people. Their genuine appreciation their audience created a fantastic atmosphere and the audience took that kernel of community spirit and grew it into an open and welcoming online group which focuses on being supportive.

The addition of the ambitious Geek & Sundry Twitch channel gave us a plethora of new content, along with a family of fantastic cast and crew. And this caused the Team Hooman community to increase even more. Since its humble beginnings, the community has continued to be a lovely beacon of fan positivity."

After reading through this interview during the analysis phase of the project, I was struck by the line, "The existence of our community owes so much to Felicia..." Out of thirty interviews, eighteen interviewees mentioned Felicia when recounting how they joined Team Hooman. Based on the prevelance of Felicia in these origin stories, I concluded that Felicia Day was the largest draw for new hoomans when they joined the community. New hoomans, those who had recently joined Team Hooman, were more likely to mention Geek & Sundry in their origin stories than members who had been involved for six months or more, suggesting that there may be a switch occurring. However, as Felicia Day is one of the founders of Geek & Sundry, it is questionable how many of these hoomans came to Geek & Sundry through being a fan of

Felicia Day. I have included eight of the responses in the infographic below highlighting the influence of Felicia Day on Team Hooman. The most telling response came from Thomas who, when asked how they became involved with Team Hooman, said, "Well, I won't be very original I guess but I have to go with "Felicia Day" here."

Image 3.4: Felicia Day is mentioned by most hoomans when asked "How did you become a hooman?"

Two respondents did mention Ryon Day as the reason they first joined Team Hooman. Noel clearly stated, "I got involved with Team Hooman first from Ryon Day's streams." Noel was a Twitch viewer who discovered Ryon streaming one day and enjoyed the entertainment and audience interaction enough to stay. The other respondent who mentioned Ryon was also a regular Twitch viewer before they discovered Team Hooman. While those who mentioned Felicia as the catalyst for their membership specifically mentioned her acting and creative works outside of Twitch as reasons they became fans of Felicia, the respondents who mentioned Ryon specifically mentioned his streams on Twitch. This indicates that most of Team Hooman came to Twitch because of Felicia Day and was not necessarily active on the site before Felicia and Ryon first started streaming together.

Insights

Based on the origin story of Team Hooman and the responses I received from hoomans about how they became personally involved with the community, I included four uniting concepts in my primary deliverable: premise, message, person, and place. The uniting premise of Team Hooman is that Team Hooman is built on a foundation of positivity, kindness, and acceptance. Although not usually pointed out as a characteristic during interviews, most respondents described themselves as "geeks" leading me to conclude that being a geek is part of the uniting premise of Team Hooman. The uniting message is more nuanced than the premise and gives the community its sense of purpose. Though hoomans focused on kindness when describing what it means to be hooman, they also specifically called out moments of philanthropy and altruism when discussing times they acted as hoomans. This led me to conclude that, while kindness may be part of the premise of Team Hooman, altruism and philanthropy are part of its uniting message.

The next section, a uniting person, became clear during the interviews. Overwhelmingly, Felicia Day was credited with getting hoomans involved in the community. The community started from watching Felicia and Ryon stream together on Twitch and, in conjunction with interviewee responses, it was clear that having a uniting person or persons was paramount to the formation of Team Hooman. The final uniting theme, a uniting place, was more subtly found in interviewee responses. Whether they just watch for hooman-related streams or were long-standing Twitch viewers, most hoomans watch Twitch content. The few hoomans who stated they do not watch Twitch are active in the community social media platforms, specifically the Facebook group. Many hoomans were fans of Felicia Day, but until they began watching her Twitch streams and interacting with other fans they were not part of Team Hooman. This led me to conclude that an online place, whether it be a Twitch chatroom or Facebook group, is necessary to the formation of an online community and can be considered uniting if it incorporates structures which allow members to communicate actively with each other, such as a live chatroom or by distributing alerts when a member adds a post.

The final section in this part of the toolkit focused on the art of organic creation. As evident in the origin story of Team Hooman, the community was not organized in a structured fashion. This community began as a group of fans who largely self-organized into a community. The community name came about organically, through a funny accent Ryon chose to do on a stream. Even the mascot of Team Hooman, the raccoon, came about organically. Felicia Day owns a sweater with raccoons on it, so the community chose to adopt that as their mascot.

Maintaining a Community

When I started this project, I partnered with Geek & Sundry, established as an organization watched by Team Hooman, and HyperRPG, an organization about to launch that was predicted to become part of Team Hooman's umbrella of entertainment. However, when HyperRPG launched, hoomans did not show up in large numbers. The channel launched with a forty-eight hour charity stream to benefit The HALO Foundation. Although Geek & Sundry charity drives had averaged 1,500 audience members or more, most of them hoomans, the launch of HyperRPG only received an average of 660 viewers. In addition, while the larger Geek & Sundry charity drives had each raised over $150,000, largely due to hooman contributions, the HyperRPG charity drive raised approximately $67,000, still a sizable contribution to charity, but a far cry from previous large-scale hooman charity streams.

At the time of the launch, staff believed that the numbers may have been a reflection of competition the channel had for viewers. HyperRPG launched the same weekend that the Pokemon Company International was streaming its 20th anniversary celebration on Twitch. Staff and HyperRPG's audience proposed that Pokemon's stream may have negatively impacted HyperRPG. As the weeks went on, though, it was clear that hoomans were just not showing up in large numbers. HyperRPG informed me that they now have data from other researchers (currently unpublished) showing that few hoomans joined the channel when it launched and, after an event where one of HyperRPG's staff members left the channel (for reasons not disclosed publicly), most of the hoomans who had joined left. These data also show that hoomans return to HyperRPG when something negative occurs in another organization they are

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aligned with, but quickly leave again after the negativity calms down, such as when Legendary Digital Network launched Alpha (for more on this, see Moving Away from Twitch).

Due to this, HyperRPG, unlike Geek & Sundry, formed its own online community. Geek & Sundry, though it saw the formation of the Critter Community due to its popular show, Critical Role, has always been supported by Team Hooman and, as such, never developed a community of its own. This has also meant that non-hoomans view Team Hooman as Geek & Sundry's community, rather than its own entity, as hoomans have stated they wish to be known. HyperRPG, however, never had strong Team Hooman support so, as its audience built organically, they developed their own identity of the thumpers. It is possible for a hooman to also be a thumper, but there is no significant association stating that if you are a thumper you are more likely to also be a hooman or vice versa, with X^2 (1, N=196) = 2.59, p=0.11. Thus, the thumpers have emerged as their own community, with their own mannerisms and patterns of behavior distinct from Team Hooman.

Table 3.2 Hoomans and Thumpers

Correlation Tested	Chi Square (P) Value	Total Responses (N)	Result
Correlation Between Being a Hooman and Being a Thumper	P=0.108 where p value of less than or equal to 0.05 is significant	N=196	Not a Significant Correlation

Organizational Structures

In addition to community differences, there are differences in how Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG are run as organizations. When I visited Geek & Sundry as part of my participant observation, I noted that the Twitch staff is separated from the rest of the company. Geek & Sundry shares its office space with the other subsidiary companies of Legendary Digital Network, Nerdist Industries and Amy Poehler's Smart Girls. The website and Youtube staff for

Geek & Sundry can predominantly be found on the main floor, across from the Nerdist staff. Twitch staff, however, do not have desks in this area or separate offices. They operate out of the connected studio space where Nerdist and Geek & Sundry film all of their content. There are two adjacent sets for Geek & Sundry Twitch. The Twitch staff can be found here, operating the production equipment. They work in this space before, during, and after shows and utilize a table that carries some of the production equipment as a work space. This gives the impression that the Twitch channel is auxiliary and separate from the rest of the company.

At HyperRPG, the Twitch channel is the primary focus. When I visited HyperRPG's office in Seattle, the CEO was working in the entrance room. Two of the employees, including the community manager, worked in a secondary room. Other side rooms were used for a single-streamer Twitch setup and for the board operator. The rooms where staff typically worked were all equipped with monitors so that the staff could watch the Twitch content in real time. The main studio space could be found at the back of the office, through a break room/kitchen area, and was the largest space in the office. When the company was housed in this space, the CEO lived across the street so that he would have easy access to the office. Since then, HyperRPG has moved into two separate studios. The Seattle programming continues at PennyArcade's studio while the Los Angeles programming occurs at a house in North Hollywood. The CEO lives in the house and has dedicated the main living room and two bedrooms to streaming, the garage for storage of streaming equipment, and has equipped the kitchen so that it is possible to stream content from that area as well. Although HyperRPG also has a website and produces Youtube content, it is clear that Twitch content is the focus of the company.

Since Geek & Sundry's Twitch channel is part of a subsidiary company owned by Legendary Digital Network, there are regulations placed on the staff and hosts that is not found at HyperRPG. The predominant difference is that HyperRPG is able to monetize content while Geek & Sundry, with a few exceptions, cannot. From the start of its Twitch channel, Geek & Sundry has been unable to accept donations from audience members. The company was informed by Legendary Digital Network that, as part of their corporation, it would not be acceptable to receive donations. Geek & Sundry's Twitch channel, therefore, primarily earned

money based on Twitch subscribers. Each subscriber pays $4.99 a month to the channel in exchange for emotes and other subscriber-only rewards.

In May 2017, Twitch introduced tiered subscriptions, letting people subscribe for $4.99, $9.99, or $24.99 a month with more rewards offered at the higher levels. In June 2016, Twitch introduced cheering. Viewers can now purchase "bits of cheer" or "bits" and give them to their favorite channels. Channels receiving bits would earn a percentage of their worth while Twitch receives the rest. Each bit is worth one cent. Legendary Digital Network allowed Geek & Sundry's Twitch channel to receive bits and the company has publicly stated that bits help to pay their hosts.

HyperRPG, however, is not owned by a larger corporation. They also accept bits and higher subscriber levels, but they monetize their content. At HyperRPG, the audience can tip to earn rewards and affect the show. On Vanquished, for instance, audience members use bits and tips to battle supervillains while the show is occurring. If the audience beats the supervillain during the show, a giveaway is unlocked and a random member of the audience is sent a gift, usually comic books from Valiant, since Vanquished takes place in Valiant's comic book universe. On Masters of the Metaverse, fans can prepurchase "buffs" for their favorite players for the week. Fans go to a special website that has been set up with the week's purchaseable and, using Paypal or a credit card, purchase whichever items they wish. The cast of the show are then informed what they receive prior to starting that week's game. I have included images of the website and some of the purchaseables below.
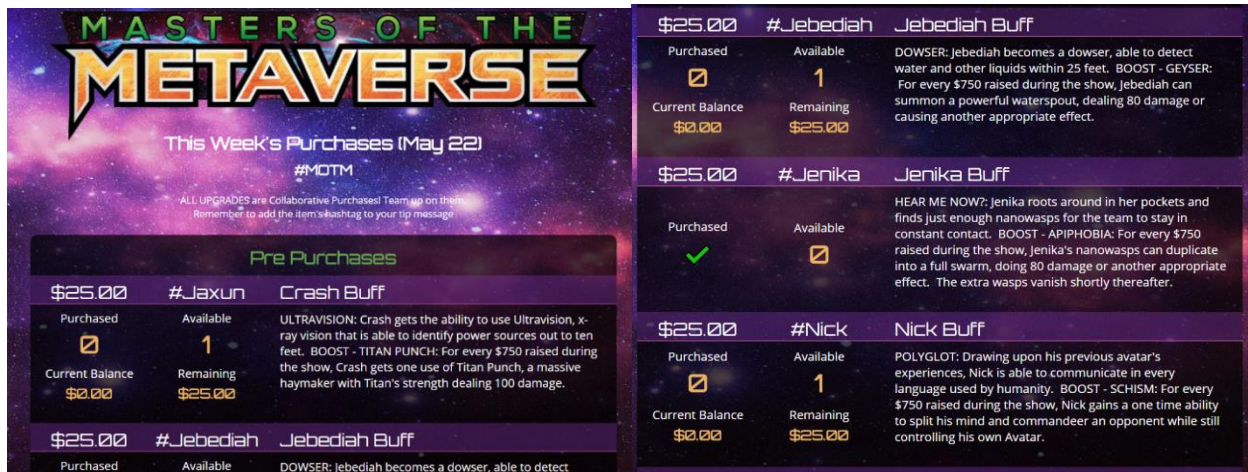
Images 3.5 and 3.6: Prepurchaseable Site for Masters of the Metaverse

Moving Away from Twitch

On September 28,2016 Legendary Digital Network announced a new pay-to-watch platform as a collaboration between Nerdist and Geek & Sundry. This platform, called Alpha, would include favorite Youtube content, like Wil Wheaton's Tabletop, bonus features on Twitch content, like a different overlay for Critical Role, and new content, such as Escape!, a show bringing together groups of geek celebrities to conquer different escape rooms. The platform announcement was received with mixed reviews; Nerdist fans seemed to be excited or willing to try the platform while most Geek & Sundry fans, most notably hoomans, were strongly opposed to the platform. This was obvious when looking at the Alpha announcement video. The same video was posted to Nerdist and Geek & Sundry's Youtube channels. On Nerdist, the video's likes and dislikes were pretty close; about 2% of viewers liked the video while about 1% disliked it (image below). On Geek & Sundry, 0.6% of people liked the video while 1,734 people, or about 3.4% of viewers, disliked it (image below).

Image 3.7: Geek & Sundry's Youtube announcement video for Alpha. People disliked the video over five times more than liked it.

Image 3.8: Nerdist's Youtube announcement video for Alpha. Although it is the same video, Nerdist fans were more positive towards the video than Geek & Sundry viewers.

This dislike was paralleled in the comments. On Nerdist, comments focused on the new content and most commentors stated they were willing to check out the platform. On Geek & Sundry, most commentors expressed dismay that Tabletop was being moved behind a paywall, pointed out that Felicia Day, Wil Wheaton, and Matt Mercer (the main host on Critical Role) all were fairly silent about the new platform. This was interpreted by hoomans to mean that none of them were supportive of the platform and, therefore, the audience should also not support it. Others identified themselves as hoomans or fans of the Twitch content and stated they would "never join Alpha" because it "ruined Twitch" (multiple Youtube commentors, 2017). Legendary Digital Network had moved all Twitch content on Geek & Sundry, except Critical Role, from 4pm-10pm Pacific to 12pm-6pm Pacific so as to not compete with their soon-to-

launch Alpha content. This caused the cancellation of multiple shows and caused their main audience-base, hoomans from the United States and Canada, to not be able to watch several shows they used to never miss.

Although one show, Gather Your Party, was brought back to the channel in its original timeslot after multiple hoomans complained, and another show, Concession Stand, found a new home at HyperRPG under the new title, Cineverse, hoomans were still displeased with Alpha. One hooman started the hashtag "#FuckALPHA" to share their displeasure with the platform. This hashtag would be posted repeatedly in Geek & Sundry's Twitch chat, used on Twitter to reply to Geek & Sundry messages, and was also posted in multiple reddit threads about the platform. The below image is a cross-section of tweets in response to Geek & Sundry about Alpha.
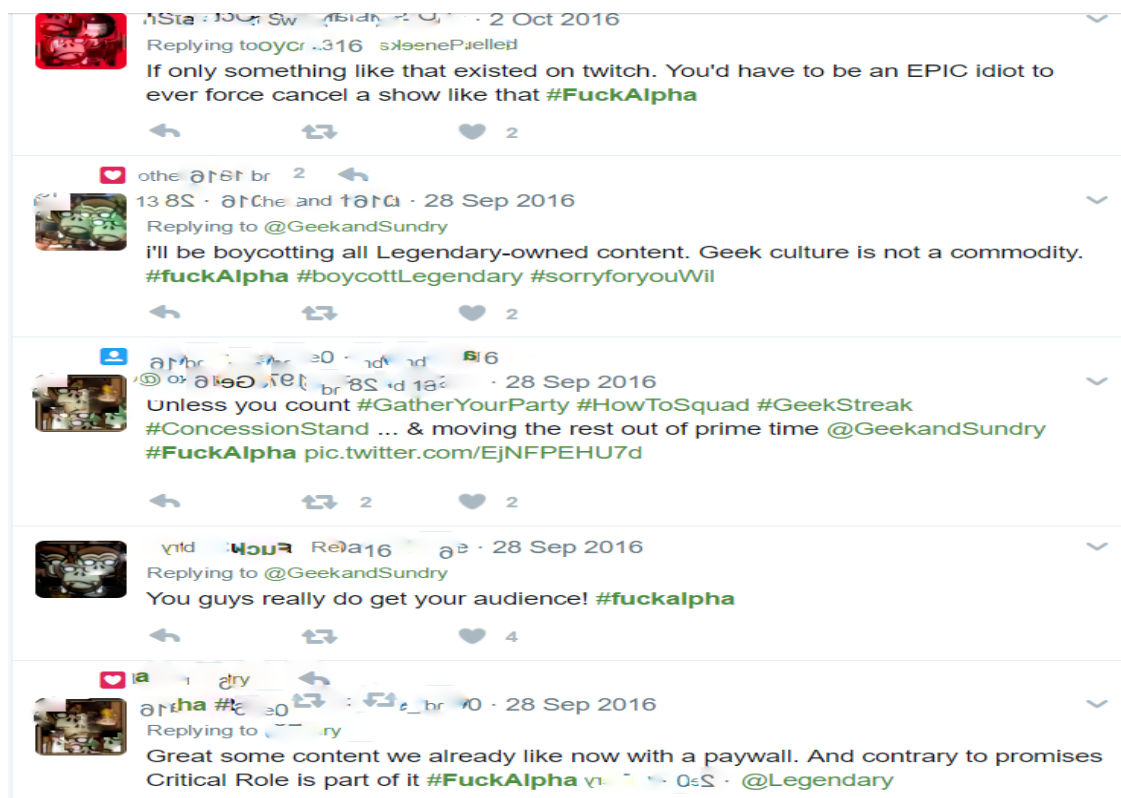
Image 3.9: Multiple people tweet at Geek & Sundry and Legendary Digital Network using #FuckAlpha.

The negativity Team Hooman feels for Alpha may be best explained through two Reddit posts by a hooman and former moderator of Geek & Sundry. The first post is her response to a Reddit AMA (stands for "ask me anything" and refers to a question and answer session on the site) Legendary Digital Network did about Alpha. The second is her own post on the Geek & Sundry subreddit, explaining why she quit moderating Geek & Sundry. The first post reads,

"*I've been a fan of Felicia since I met her at a con long time ago, finding The Guild and then Geek & Sundry because of her!*
I've been a member of the community since the Lupus Stream, #NightCrew and #TeamNoStream kept me company when I was feverish from chicken pox during the charity stream that launched the Geek & Sundry Twitch channel! I've been a subscriber on the G&S Twitch channel since day one on said charity stream!
I've had the honour of being a moderator since a few months into the channel's inception!
I have massive respect for Felicia, Ryon, Zac, I care about the Twitch Crew, Hosts, and I think the Vox Machina Cast are amazing people who all care about the community!
I <3 my fellow Hoomans, Critters, Thumpers, and many more nice communities that I have found on Twitch thanks to them!
I will NOT stand for Legendary taking all the things that made Geek & Sundry what it was and destroying them for profit, with no regard nor respect for the community that MADE G&S!
I will NOT support Alpha, and as of right now for the first time since the channel launched I am no longer a subscriber on G&S Twitch!
I WILL keep my support to the Crew, the Hosts, and the Vox Machina cast as much as I can in their individual endeavours as they have EARNED my respect and showed that they DO care about the community I <3 and care about!

I only have one question for the AMA: Did you really think you could take
something the community loved and gut it, cast it away for your shiny new toy
just for profit, take advantage of the community, and get away with it?"

The first three responses to this post were all from other moderators stating, "150%
agree," "AcommunityIsEarned," and, "IstandWith[The original poster]". These moderators, and
several others, also chose to quit moderating Geek & Sundry's Twitch channel. Out of twelve
responses, all supported the original posters comment, calling it "perfect" and typing comments
like "applause" and "Standing freaking ovation." No one from Legendary Digital Network
responded to the post. The second post is titled "Why I am unmodding myself from Geek &
Sundry" and reads,

"*I've been watching Geek & Sundry since it was just on Youtube, since before*
G&S Vloggers were still around and after they weren't anymore, I've been part
of this Twitch channel since day one, I've embraced G&S core values and it has
been an honour to be part of it as a moderator for so long, but I can't in all
conscience keep wielding the Mod Sword anymore.
This channel has always been about its people the community, the hosts, the
crew; for me they were like a second family who has helped me through rough
times and who I hope I was able to help too even if just a little bit.
Unfortunately this hasn't been the case anymore, when the people in charge of
LDN clearly have no respect nor care about their community or employees and
only care about exploiting them all for profit, that's where I draw a line.
I've always been ready to help anyone in whatever capacity I could, but I cannot
keep helping someone/something who has no ethic, someone/something who
doesn't care for helping others and charity, someone/something that is ready to
use and abuse the community I love, someone/something who thinks they can just
keep telling lies about their intentions with the assumption that their community

won't see through all the lies, empty promises and business talk with no real

substance, someone/something that mistreats their employees!

This decision has not been an easy one for me, but LDN has made that easier

with their actions, I have no remorse over this because the channel I don't want

to be a moderator of it's not the channel I agreed to start being a moderator on

nor a channel I can in all conscience support anymore!

NotMyG&S"

This post received fifty-two comments and ninety-two upvotes. According to Reddit, the post was upvoted 97% of the time, indicating that the Geek & Sundry audience on Reddit, many of whom are hoomans, agree with the former moderator's assessment of the situation. The comments on this post make it clear that many hoomans blame Alpha and Legendary Digital Network for changes they consider negative at Geek & Sundry. As one responder wrote, "I was wondering why everyone I loved from G&S was now at HyperRPG, except Critical Role, and I thought it was because Legendary was straight ruining and fucking up everything left and right. Now I know, it's because Legendary is ruining and fucking up everything left and right." Again, no one from Legendary Digital Network responded to this post.

Connecting to the Toolkit

Based on my knowledge of Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG's different organizational structures and the explosive outcome of Alpha's launch, I concluded that there are several important elements to maintaining a community. These elements, in no particular order, are: staying on message, performing quality customer service, communication, understanding patterns of use, and the importance of finances. From the start of Team Hooman, Felicia and Ryon Day supported a highly interactive, "we're all in this together" mentality. Fans of Geek & Sundry point to its early days as a collaborative network and specifically cite the origins of Tabletop as being anathema to its place on Alpha. Wil Wheaton has stated he wanted Tabletop to be a way to share his love of tabletop games with others, to get more people playing games

(WilWheaton.Net 2016). His sign-off on Tabletop has always been, "play more games." Fans reference this sign-off and point out that, by putting the show behind a paywall where new players are less likely to access the content, Legendary is going against the original message and purpose of the show.

At the same time, there is an argument for Alpha. With Alpha, Legendary Digital Network does not split part of their subscriber profit with Twitch. In theory, this allows them to pay hosts more or bring fans more content than they could previously. It is important, therefore, to temper one's actions between completely catering to the demands of an audience, otherwise known as committing fan service, and keeping an audience happy with proper customer service. For Team Hooman, proper customer service could have been achieved by introducing Alpha in a different way. Here is where communication comes into play. Team Hooman, used to open communication from Felicia Day, Ryon Day, Matt Mercer, and Zac Eubank (who, at the time, was the Geek & Sundry Twitch Producer), was suddenly seeing changes to the content they enjoyed, its schedule, and the launch of a new platform without any communication from the people they trusted. As far as Team Hooman was concerned, these changes were being made by people who did not know them and did not care about them beyond how much money they could give.

In the toolkit, I referenced patterns of use, those patterns having to due with cyclical changes in viewership due to normal ebb and flow, compared to differences caused by schedule changes. After the Alpha video launched on Geek & Sundry's Youtube, the Youtube channel lost over one hundred subscribers in an hour and ended the day at a net loss. This was the first time in months that Geek & Sundry had not ended a day on Youtube at a net gain. A small net loss may be a minor issue that will resolve itself, but the large net-loss was obviously due to the Alpha announcement.

Based on conversations in the Team Hooman Facebook group, multiple comments on the Geek & Sundry Reddit, and a video series by one hooman, Team Hooman assumed that part of the reason for launching Alpha was to create a platform that Legendary Digital Network could monetize without sharing profits. Company representatives said that, by paywalling this content, it would allow them to financially support all of the content fans were looking for. Despite Team

Hooman and other fans not accepting this explanation and concluding that Legendary Digital Network was just interested in more money from them, it does lead to an insight about financial maintenance. It is important to not be too dependent on a small population for income online. There is only so much money an individual is willing to give and, if you launch a new pay-to-view platform, the population may decide you are taking advantage of them and withdraw their support. At HyperRPG, this accusation occurs less often because, although they have monetized their content, none of it is locked behind a paywall. In HyperRPG's chatroom it is rare that a subscriber or follower of the channel will complain that HyperRPG monetizes their content. Usually, such complaints come from new people, unfamiliar with the channel or its structure. After the launch of Alpha, however, Geek & Sundry followers, subscribers, and moderators would complain about monetization every time Alpha was advertised on the Twitch channel.

Growing a Community

The final section of the toolkit focused on growing a community. In this toolkit section, I discussed issues of inclusivity versus exclusivity, the role of positive communication in online platforms, the availability of safe spaces, the role of moderators, gatekeepers versus stakeholders, and the complex problem of discoverability. In general, this toolkit section centered around discussions of regulations used to maintain the integrity of Team Hooman. This section of the report introduces language choices hoomans make when talking about themselves, language when talking about non-hoomans, and the issue of proper attribution during charity events.

<u>Language</u>

There is an odd mentality in hoomans that relates to philanthropic actions. Many hoomans who could not donate in large numbers or were not contributing in other ways to the charities (other than sharing the charity information across social media) stated that they were "just" a hooman or "just" a fan. By using this language, hoomans portray themselves as humble. Hoomans referred to themselves as "just" a hooman when they did not identify as a role of power within the organization (ex. Moderator, host, staff, or crew for either organization) or as a

high contributor (ex. A top donor or someone contributing high quality work that is acknowledged by either organization repeatedly). Overall, 11.3% of all survey respondents labeled themselves as "just" something when identifying their role in the community.

At the same time, however, these hoomans were making posts about other people doing philanthropic work, giving back to their communities, and stating that these people were hoomans who "didn't know it yet." Hoomans would make these posts about kickstarters they found, celebrities doing something good, and quite a number of news articles focused on people doing something for someone else. Going along with a sentiment shared by hoomans in interviews, that one only need to be a good person and follow Wheaton's Law to be a hooman, this paints a picture that Team Hooman is not just a group. Instead, this gives the impression that hoomanism is a higher calling in life; something to identify as central to one's core, the same way one might label themselves pansexual or buddhist. Or, perhaps more accurately, that hoomans see hoomanism as such, ignoring the concept that these do-gooders probably have never heard of Team Hooman and, even if they had, may not wish to be identified as hoomans. As one interviewee stated when asked what being hooman means to them, "I see it as a state of mind more than an action." When prodded, this interviewee explained that hoomanism is not about self-labeling as a geek or liking a specific type of show; being hooman is found through the way one approaches the world. Therefore, when hoomans see non-hoomans approaching the world in a similar way to them, they label it "hoomanist."

On the surface, labeling others' actions as hooman seems harmless. Hoomans are primarily doing this in their private Facebook group where only other hoomans would see. However, this does become an issue when a hooman congratulates the group for a successful fundraiser that did not depend on hooman donations. As discussed previously, there is no correlation between being a hooman and supporting HyperRPG. Yet, after a HyperRPG fundraiser a hooman who was supporting the charity drive posted in the Team Hooman Facebook group, "Amazing job hoomans! We managed to raise enough to support forty-eight kids for the next year! <3." This person did not post a similar message to the HyperRPG Thumper Facebook group.

This individual did not seem to make a distinction between the HyperRPG audience and Team Hooman since they are a hooman and viewer of HyperRPG and, so, when HyperRPG raises money for charity, they see it as a Team Hooman fundraiser. This brings into question other reports of fundraisers in the Team Hooman Facebook group. Although Team Hooman is publicly considered the major backer of charity drives on Geek & Sundry, it is not clear how many donors identify as hooman. Donors are able to type whatever name they wish when donating, so there are numerous anonymous donations every fundraiser. Although, as seen in the following section, Other Findings, hoomans are clearly focused on philanthropy, their philanthropic contributions may not be as great as hoomans believe.

Insights

This possessive language towards philanthropic acts while, at the same time, de-emphasizing any importance in being a member of the community, informed my writing on the issue of inclusivity versus exclusivity, the role of positive communication in online platforms, and gatekeepers versus stakeholders. In essence, hoomans who label non-hoomans as community members are acting as gatekeepers. They are holding the gate wide open and pushing others inside. This works well to increase group size, and Team Hooman has increased with 2,000 new Facebook group members in the last year, but does not foster a sense of communitas in the group. Hoomans focus on inclusivity when they discuss Team Hooman and the requirements of membership, specifically stating that "anyone can be a hooman."

However, being too inclusive can cause a community to lose its uniting themes and fracture. Some of this fracturing has begun; some hoomans who have been around longer have begun to push back against the wide open gates, trying to make the group more exclusive and publicly speaking out against newer members. Most commonly, these members make comments like, "I have been around since the first Felicia stream so I think I know what Team Hooman is better than you." The inclusive members are quick to retaliate when they see this happen, usually saying something to the effect of, "there's no need to lash out; we're all hooman here." Currently, the inclusive members are greater in number so the exclusive members are quickly silenced. This

power-struggle could lead to a fracture in the community in the future, especially if Team Hooman continues to grow at its current rate and if the community strays too far from its original ideals. As evidenced in the previous section, hoomans who have been around for a while, who feel a supreme sense of loyalty to Felicia Day and the original Geek & Sundry talent and shows do not respond well when they feel that original spirit of Team Hooman is threatened.

Other Findings

One of the primary reasons I chose to work with Team Hooman for this research project was their dedication to philanthropy. Team Hooman has been involved in fundraisers for everything from helping other hoomans with projects to large charity drives for The Lupus Foundation and Extra Life. As a group, Team Hooman has contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to charity every year since its inception. There is no question that the community has a dedication to philanthropy, but I wanted to better understand why the group was so dedicated to philanthropy.

As might be expected, Team Hooman's philanthropic dedication is not because hoomans are just somehow more charitable than other people. There are a few reasons for the philanthropy, but the largest is Felicia and Ryon Day's dedication to philanthropy. When Felicia and Ryon became partnered with Twitch, they decided that any subscription payments they received would be passed on to charity. Felicia has also sold Team Hooman merchandise with all proceeds going to charity. In addition, the first charity drive on Geek & Sundry's Twitch channel heavily featured Felicia and other celebrities from television shows and entertainment genres that Team Hooman (and other geek groups) follow (see image below). The presence of Felicia at this event, especially during key moments at the beginning and end of the stream, helped inspire audience members to donate, leading to a total donated amount of over $160,000 over a period of forty-eight hours. With one exception, Geek & Sundry's charity streams that did not feature Felicia resulted in $20,000 total raised (or less).

Image 3.10: Felicia Day (left) wears a wig while playing Just Dance with J. August Richards (center; actor on Angel and Agents of Shield)

When hoomans discuss what it means to be hooman, they focus on qualities like kindness. This came through in their stories of hoomanism, when interviewees would mention supporting and accepting lgbt friends or helping tourists in a new city. Stories of charity were also common, though. Brian and Alexa both mentioned ways they financially help others. According to Brian, "I know its not a qualification or a requirement for anyone in the community. but I've always tried to do my part and donate when causes come up. I always give at least a little each charity stream." Alexa chose to discuss financial philanthropy outside of charity streams. She listed, "paying for [the] car behind you at starbucks in the morning, listening to others, little favors, smiles and a simple "hello" to a stranger, not getting bitchy if something around you goes wrong" when discussing moments of hoomanism. Bradley, on the other hand, mentioned how Team Hooman helps others, rather than his own specific actions. In Bradley's words, an example of hoomanism is, "this year alone we raised over $30k for Kaboom during ITTD (International Tabletop Day), even though our original goal was only $20k, I believe."

Bradley did not come up with another example, stating, "nothing else specific comes to mind, but the level of charity alone that we're able to generate just from having people watch other people playing games over the Internet should be impressive enough." For Bradley, what makes Team Hooman impressive is the large donation drives to which they contribute. For Mark, Team Hooman is not about large financial donations. When finishing his story of hoomanism, Mark concluded, "We shared a moment of genuine kindness and interest, and I guess that's what Team Hooman is about. Knowing we have people to listen to us, to support us, no matter what."

Donation Shaming and Economics

Although Team Hooman contributes to charity and promotes kindness, that does not mean the group is free from negativity towards donors. Actually, two major cases of donation shaming occurred over the course of this research project. At the first charity drive on Geek & Sundry, one individual donated a large sum of money, contributing several times over the forty-eight-hour stream and, ultimately, being named as the largest single donor. Unfortunately, other audience members decided that this person should not be contributing as much as they were and took it upon themselves to tell the donor such. Some of the members who participated in the donation shaming also claimed to be hoomans, leading the donor to withdraw from the community and from having an active presence in Geek & Sundry's chat room.

Donation shaming was not limited to Geek & Sundry's first charity drive. On HyperRPG the channel monetizes its shows with games and activities for audience members to influence what is happening. These monetizations are generally seen as entertaining and accepted by the audience. This was evident when a new person, not familiar with the channel, would comment in chat about the monetization and accuse HyperRPG of "just money-grubbing," a phrase repeated so often by newcomers (who usually would quickly break channel rules and be timed out by a moderator) that it briefly became an inside joke between HyperRPG's CEO and the regular audience. When HyperRPG was accused of money-grubbing, multiple subscribers and followers would counter the new person's argument, either by explaining why Hyper monetizes their content or by calling the person a troll. However, more than once HyperRPG has had to remind

its audience that these are games and that all donations go to support the channel so they should not attack others because of it. In the case of a game created to support one of HyperRPG's roleplaying shows, subscribers to the channel could join different factions and donate in that factions name, giving the faction more power to influence the on-screen RPG or perform fun actions. One person, in particular, enjoyed supporting the channel and their faction and would donate in large numbers every week. Members of other factions became frustrated that they could not perform as many interesting actions as the donor's faction and began complaining, messaging the donor to reduce their donations to the faction, messaging HyperRPG to reduce the donor's donations, and publicly announcing that they thought the person should stop donating.

This donation shaming was addressed by HyperRPG, which publicly stated they would never force someone to give less money to the channel, especially since the company depends on those donations to continue operating. Although HyperRPG made this announcement and other audience members took to shaming the act of donation shaming, this donor eventually stopped donating to their faction. In fact, this person mentioned to me that most of their donations now occur anonymously to avoid more shaming messages. Despite this and HyperRPG's public statement against it, donation shaming occurred again after the donor left their faction, simply moving on to the next faction with a high-profile donor. HyperRPG had to repeat their stance against donation shaming again. This donor received less pressure and shaming because of HyperRPG's quick and public responses, and they kept donating to their faction until HyperRPG retired the game.

A final case of donation shaming at HyperRPG was less targeted. The HyperRPG show Pencils and Parsecs, a Star Wars roleplaying game, used to have a monetization system that pitted the light side and the dark side of The Force against each other. Viewers could donate with either #light or #dark and, at a certain time whichever side was winning would trigger an event related to their side of The Force. Viewers quickly began complaining that the system made chat "toxic" and that it needed to be changed. HyperRPG changed the system to be less competitive and viewership and donations went down. Prior to changing the system, the show generally had between five hundred and one thousand viewers. Now the show is averaging three hundred viewers and less than $500 in donations, which is unsustainable given its cost of production,

though part of this change may be due to the show losing its best-known host. When HyperRPG looked back and analyzed their chat logs, they saw that the audience rarely became toxic as a result of the metagame system. In addition, the viewers who complained were primarily non-donors.

Ultimately, it does appear that the root of this donation shaming comes from people frustrated they cannot give as much as the donor or frustrated that they receive fewer acknowledgments than the donor. When I analyzed the chat logs of HyperRPG, the number one thing donation shamers mentioned was that "it's not fair to those of us who can't donate." At HyperRPG, particularly because donations contributed to a competition between factions and, by association, between community members, people felt more empowered to be open about their donation shaming. It mattered less to them that all donations went to support the channel and the top donors were helping keep the entertainment they enjoyed on the air than it did that they felt the game was unfair because of their inability to donate as much. In the case of Geek & Sundry, the top donor was given public acknowledgments, a thank-you phone call from Felicia Day, and was thanked again in a video recap of the charity drive at a later date. This attention and announcement that the top donor would get, specifically from Felicia, gamified the act of donating and may have contributed to audience members choosing to donation shame the top donor.

At the same time that donation shaming was occurring due to an inability of some donors to contribute as much as they might like, I found that economic status had no real impact on the amount of money donated to charity. There was absolutely no correlation among survey respondents' self-identified tax bracket and money donated in 2015 or 2016. Yes, there were some outliers in higher tax brackets donating large sums of money ($1,000+), but these were outliers. Most hoomans actually fit into the three lowest United States tax brackets and the amount of money they donated depended less on the money they earned than the cause their donation could support. Although they were few and far between, a majority of respondents who identified in a higher tax bracket (six figures or more earned in a year) actually donated $100 or less in 2015 to charity and did not plan to outpace this number in 2016. This can be seen in the following two tables.

Table 3.3 Hooman Income

		My Estimated Yearly Income (in USD) is						Total
		Up to $9,225	$9,226 to $37,450	$37,451 to $90,750	$90,751 to $189,300	$189,301 to $411,500	$411,501 to $413,200	
I consider myself to be a (choose as many as apply) - Selected Choice Hooman	0 Count	11	5	7	1	2	0	26
	Expected Count	7.1	9.4	7.4	1.4	.5	.2	26.0
	Residual	3.9	-4.4	-.4	-.4	1.5	-.2	
	1 Count	29	48	35	7	1	1	121
	Expected Count	32.9	43.6	34.6	6.6	2.5	.8	121.0
	Residual	-3.9	4.4	.4	.4	-1.5	.2	
Total	Count	40	53	42	8	3	1	147
	Expected Count	40.0	53.0	42.0	8.0	3.0	1.0	147.0

Table 3.4 Hooman Donations to Hooman Charities

		Please estimate the average (in USD) you donated to Team Hooman sponsored charities in 2015. - Selected Choice									Total
		$0	$1-19	$20-49	$50-99	$100-199	$200-499	$500-999	$1000+	I give in other ways (please explain)	
I consider myself to be a (choose as many as apply) - Selected Choice Hooman	0 Count	13	1	1	2	2	3	1	0	0	23
	Expected Count	6.0	1.6	3.6	2.8	3.2	2.7	1.1	1.1	.9	23.0
	Residual	7.0	-.6	-2.6	-.8	-1.2	.3	-.1	-1.1	-.9	
	1 Count	25	9	22	16	18	14	6	7	6	123
	Expected Count	32.0	8.4	19.4	15.2	16.8	14.3	5.9	5.9	5.1	123.0
	Residual	-7.0	.6	2.6	.8	1.2	-.3	.1	1.1	.9	
Total	Count	38	10	23	18	20	17	7	7	6	146
	Expected Count	38.0	10.0	23.0	18.0	20.0	17.0	7.0	7.0	6.0	146.0

As evident in these two tables, few hoomans self-report as members of the upper three tax brackets. Out of 121 hooman responses to this question, only nine have a gross yearly income of $90,751 or more. A full 112 hoomans make five figures or less a year, with twenty-nine hoomans earning less than $9,226 a year. Yet, when asked to estimate how much they had donated in 2015 to hooman charities, there was a shift. Although twenty-nine hoomans are earning a gross income qualifying them for the lowest tax bracket, most hoomans have given at least one dollar to charity. The most common response was giving nothing to charity, but the twenty-five people who answered that they gave nothing was below the expected count of thirty-two (based on a standard spread). Out of 123 responses, 99 gave something to charity and forty-five gave $100 or more. A full seven people gave $1000 or more in 2015 and, as stated previously, respondents in the higher tax brackets are not necessarily the largest donors.

It is possible that many hoomans are living far below their means, even given their current tax bracket, and so are able to contribute large sums of money to these charity drives. A large group of hoomans identified as single people working for a living, so this might align with that scenario. However, one of the largest groups of hoomans identified as students, so not all hoomans are employed people living below their means with few expenses in their own lives. It is likely, then, especially given how few people contributed large donations, that large donations are outliers and most donations are smaller, but coming from a larger number of people.

Looking Ahead

Although many of these findings and insights influenced the primary deliverable, the toolkit, others did not fit its theme as an instructional guide for organizations. These findings and insights were presented in other deliverables to Geek & Sundry, HyperRPG, and Team Hooman. In particular, the findings and insights related to the primary research questions were discussed, along with any findings and insights that the specific organization asked for. In the following chapter, I discussed these deliverables as well as the reactions each organization had to my findings and insights.

Deliverable Design and Presentation

As this project involved Team Hooman, Geek & Sundry, and HyperRPG, several deliverables were designed to disseminate findings to the groups involved. The deliverables for this project were many and varied, ranging from a toolkit explaining how communities are formed, managed, and grow, to live-streamed interviews and presentations regarding my findings. In this chapter, I discuss the design and presentation of each deliverable. The first deliverable mentioned is the primary deliverable, the toolkit. This deliverable was made available to Team Hooman and both organizations, and is posted publicly so that other interested parties have access to its contents. The next deliverables I discussed were two live-streams conducted on my own Twitch channel and later uploaded to Youtube so they could be viewed long after Twitch deleted the files. This chapter continues with an analysis of how the community and organizations took my findings and incorporated them, or not, into decisions they made. In addition to deliverables to Geek & Sundry, HyperRPG, and Team Hooman, I also presented work based on this research at Southwestern Anthropology Association's 88th Annual Conference in April 2017. This chapter concludes with a discussion of these presentations. The chart below lists each deliverable, the audience for the deliverable, and the deliverable's intended objective.

Table 4.1 Deliverables

Deliverable	Audience	Objective
The Toolkit	Team Hooman, Geek & Sundry, HyperRPG, Other Organizations with an Interest in Starting Online Communities	This written deliverable was designed to explain the unifying devices that helped form Team Hooman, as well as the elements necessary to manage and grow the community. The deliverable was written in such a manner that it could be read and utilized by other organizations when forming their own communities.

Table 4.1 Deliverables Continued

Preliminary Findings Twitch Stream	Team Hooman	Held during Team Hooman's second anniversary, this stream was a check-in with the community. It was used to discuss my preliminary findings and insights with the community while also allowing them to question the insights and offer alternative explanations.
Final Community Twitch Stream	Team Hooman	Held March 12th 2017, this stream allowed me to inform Team Hooman of my final conclusions and insights after incorporating their feedback. Hoomans also took it as an opportunity to ask questions about the data collection and analysis, as well as my future intentions with the work.
Geek & Sundry Twitch Stream Interview	Team Hooman, Other Members of the Geek & Sundry Audience, Geek & Sundry Hosts and Staff	This stream intended to inform the Geek & Sundry audience about this project and provide avenues for interested audience members to obtain the toolkit and project report. The interviewer also used it as an opportunity to ask about anthropological research and how interested audience members might enter the field.
Geek & Sundry Debriefing	Geek & Sundry Staff	This meeting was held after the interview Twitch stream and was used to briefly review elements of the project and discuss future intentions with the work. A portion of this debriefing included a discussion with the staff regarding writing an article about the project for their website.
HyperRPG Debriefing(s)	HyperRPG Staff	The first meeting was held after a fifty-hour charity stream. The primary purpose was to discuss my insights with the CEO and other staff and volunteers for the company. The main theme of this discussion was differences between Team Hooman and the HyperRPG audience (Thumpers). The intent was to understand these differences and how they might inform future HyperRPG business decisions. Other debriefings were held with staff before and after the official meeting. The first of these occurred on the first day of the charity stream and centered around the methods of the research, how it relates to staff research interests, and future potential presentations and publications related to the research. The final debriefing occurred with staff the day after the charity stream. This discussion centered around unpredicted statistically significant correlations and differing explanations for why these correlations occurred.

Designing the Toolkit

The primary deliverable for this research project was a forty-nine page toolkit focused on the starting, managing, and growing of an online community. When deciding how to construct the toolkit, there were a few preferences I wanted to factor in. The toolkit was conceived as the main deliverable for Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG, so writing it with the interests of the organizations in mind was paramount. In addition, since the toolkit would be available publicly, I wanted to construct it for other organizations who would be interested in forming their own community. As such, it was important to me that the toolkit focus on the findings of my research that would be most interesting and relevant to an outside organization. For these reasons I decided to focus on the creation and growth of an online community.

Ultimately, I decided that the toolkit should be organized in three parts: one to discuss the initial formation of an online community, one for managing the community once it is created, and one to discuss growing that community. By organizing the toolkit in such a way, it became optimized for any organization with an online community, whether they were just starting out or already have an established community. Since I was creating the toolkit with many organizations in mind, I continued the more general theme in the way I discussed my findings. Obviously, my research primarily involved the online community Team Hooman. However, I wanted this toolkit to work for organizations with no direct connection to Team Hooman. This led me to include examples from my research that I felt were relatable to organizations with no knowledge of Team Hooman. Since I was approaching the toolkit from a more general perspective, I ultimately decided to include a geek word glossary to explain how specific terms were being used within the context of the toolkit and define any terms that might not be easily understood by non-geeks.

Live and Archived Video Deliverables

Since this research project was primarily conducted over the livestream platform Twitch and focused on a community that started on Twitch, it felt appropriate to conduct Twitch streams as part of the deliverables. I chose to conduct two Twitch streams on my own channel and used

these as the primary deliverable for Team Hooman, although they also were given access to the toolkit. The first of these Twitch streams acted as a check-in with the community. I held the stream in September 2016, as close as possible to September 26th, Team Hooman's anniversary. During the stream, I discussed some of my preliminary findings, including the demographic data related to the community. The stream was hosted by HyperRPG and Geek & Sundry, resulting in a large audience of over one hundred.

Many hoomans and audience members asked questions, shared their opinions on the information I was providing, and wanted to know what I planned to do next and how this research project could be used to help others. Some of the questions I received were meant to be funny, such as "what is the meaning of life?" and "how many slots is this toolkit? Is it larger than a hexweave bag?". Other questions indicated that some of the audience members were not familiar with either myself or my research. These questions included "what level of thesis was this for?" and "what can you do with this?". One audience member seemed to have no knowledge of the research project or Team Hooman, choosing to ask me if I play games and what I normally do on my channel, instead of anything about the project. Since this was a livestream on Twitch and I did not recognize their handle, I believe this was someone unconnected to Team Hooman, Geek & Sundry, or HyperRPG who happened to stumble on the presentation and chose to stay. There were also a few questions revolving around filling out the survey, including "how many responses did you get on the survey? Did anyone misuse the form?" and "were many of your respondents on the survey moderators?." One audience member identified themselves as a survey respondent when they specifically asked what to do if they could not remember the names of the charities to which they donated in the past year. Most of the questions, however, were based around either learning more from the data I had presented or were retrospective inquiries. The retrospective inquiries were either concerned with my next steps, primarily on ways I could expand the research or get in touch with organizations who could benefit from the research, or they were about my own emotions related to the research; audience members were curious to learn if any responses had made me emotional and what I enjoyed learning from the survey responses.

Before the stream, more than ten hoomans approached me, disappointed because they could not make the livestream due to timing issues. As a result, I scheduled a second livestream the next day to go over the same information, which was attended by approximately twenty-six people. Since there were other hoomans still upset they were going to miss both livestreams, I scheduled a third for the day after the second, which had a smaller audience of approximately ten people. All three livestreams have been recorded and uploaded to my Youtube channel as part of a digital archive of this project.

The second Twitch stream presentation occurred on March 12th, 2017. This stream was an hour long presentation of findings in which hoomans explicitly expressed an interest, such as specifics of how I conducted my research and general demographic information, other aspects that I considered important to mention, such as insights related to gender and age in the community, and my plans for continuing this research and producing more material in the future. Unfortunately, this stream was not hosted by either organization, due to a miscommunication, so the numbers were lower, with approximately twenty people present and actively engaged during the entire stream. Chatters were, once again, quite active, asking questions throughout and offering input on the findings I shared.

Both of these streams occurred on Twitch, but unfortunately, Twitch streams are not archived indefinitely. In order to preserve the presentations, I have uploaded them to Youtube. At the request of the chatters, I have included the chat transcript in the second video so that the questions and discussion are apparent for anyone who chooses to view the video. Since the chatters during the first presentation did not request or give permission to have the chat posted along with the video, that chat has not been included.

Responses to Deliverables

The following section reviews presentations, interviews, and conversations I had with Team Hooman, Geek & Sundry, and HyperRPG after releasing the toolkit as a final dissemination of results and discussion of how those results were received by the groups involved. At Geek & Sundry, discussion of my results primarily occurred in a live-streamed

interview during the Twitch channel's two year anniversary stream. For Team Hooman, I hosted a presentation and discussion about my research on my own Twitch channel. Lastly, I visited HyperRPG to help with a forty-eight hour charity stream and discuss my research with their staff and hosts. Each of these instances of results dissemination involved different presentation styles and led to different actions taken by each group.

Geek & Sundry

Geek & Sundry responded positively to my research. I sent the Twitch Producer the full toolkit and a shorter synopsis for interview purposes. At 6:30 am on March 11th, I beamed into a robot named "chappie" to interview on Geek & Sundry's Twitch stream. The chappie robot is a mechanical robot equipped with a screen. People with the password are able to beam into the robot, at which point they are able to control its movement and their face is shown on the robot's screen. The organization was livestreaming for twenty-five hours to celebrate their second year operating on Twitch and the producer felt that having me beam into the robot would be more engaging for the audience than a simple Skype video conference.

Image 4.1: During the Geek & Sundry anniversary stream, I beamed into a robot for an interview. Pictured from left to right: Molly, Alex (Interviewer), Ailea (Interviewee-on screen)

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Once I beamed into the robot I had a live interview with one of Geek & Sundry's hosts to discuss my research while the community watched. The interview itself was short, about ten minutes, and was designed to briefly go over my research and entertain questions from the audience, many of whom were hoomans. After the interview, I spent some time debriefing with the Twitch Producer and discussing potential articles based on my research for Geek & Sundry's website with the Twitch Producer and Geek & Sundry's Lead Editor. Afterwards, I exited the robot and returned to Geek & Sundry's Twitch chatroom to receive feedback from the audience. At the time of the interview, the audience was approximately nine-hundred people and, indeed, I spent approximately thirty minutes in the chatroom after the interview discussing my research, answering questions, and explaining that I would be hosting a longer presentation on my research the very next day.

Overall, Geek & Sundry staff showed excitement for my research, thanking me for conducting the study, making plans for future collaborations based on the research deliverables, and encouraging others to read the primary deliverable. One of the channel's hosts made a point to bring up the research at Wondercon, a comic book convention, after the interview. However, I did get the impression that not many present had read the primary deliverable or did not see a need to incorporate the research in future business decisions, as the interview focused more on what I did and my advice for future researchers of online communities and Twitch culture rather than the ways in which my research could be applied to Geek & Sundry. I was not surprised at most of the staff not reading the toolkit, as running a Twitch stream does not leave much time for additional reading and work.

Team Hooman

On March 12, 2017, I held a live presentation on my Twitch channel so that members of Team Hooman would be able to discuss my research and ask questions in a more detailed manner than possible when presenting on either Geek & Sundry or HyperRPG's Twitch channels. I also held this session so that members would have more instant feedback than available when discussing my research in the Team Hooman Facebook group. Over the course of

the presentation, there were at least twenty participants active in the chatroom. Many more hoomans informed me later that they either had a conflict at that time or had simply forgotten until the presentation was over. Although unfortunate, the audience members who were there were active and engaged, making the presentation still a worthwhile venture.

The presentation itself lasted one hour and, since I was speaking to Team Hooman, I chose to focus on aspects of my research that hoomans stated they wanted to hear. I posted about the presentation twice in the Team Hooman Facebook group, both as a way to advertise the presentation and to gather information on what hoomans were particularly interested in hearing about. I collected so much data and had so many findings and areas of further inquiry, that I felt the presentation would lose its focus or run much longer than was acceptable without Team Hooman to help focus the presentation on what they considered to be the most salient topics. I have uploaded the presentation to my Youtube channel and included a link in the appendices so that it may be viewed at any time. Per the request of the participants in chat, I have also included the chat log in the Youtube version, so that at any time the person watching has context for the conversation and questions I was answering.

The audience members demonstrated more interest in the content of the research than Geek & Sundry, overall. They asked specific questions, wanted to know how the research could apply to different topics, and were curious about some of the failings of the community that I mentioned during the presentation without becoming offended at the idea that the community might have some failings. So far, there have not been any changes within the community based on the research. I plan to stay in contact with Team Hooman after the publishing of this report so that, if changes do occur, I can make note of them for later publications.

HyperRPG

On April 7, 2017, I drove to Los Angeles, CA to discuss my findings with HyperRPG. HyperRPG was hosting a forty-eight hour charity stream benefiting The HALO Foundation, so it felt like an appropriate time to both discuss my research and help with a philanthropic event. I arrived at nine in the morning and spoke with one of the hosts about my research project. She

had performed research into the different types of gamers, so we spent some time comparing and contrasting our work. Soon after our conversation, the charity stream launched, so we did not get another moment to discuss my research until Sunday night, after the stream ended.

On Sunday night, a group of the volunteers and staff of HyperRPG went out to dinner to decompress after the, by the time it actually ended, fifty hour charity stream. At dinner, the CEO and I began discussing my research. He was particularly interested in differences I saw between Team Hooman and the HyperRPG communities since, as I found out, these two communities are not interchangeable. He seemed the most interested in how my findings could be incorporated into Hyper's business model and made plans for policy changes based on our discussion, which were implemented over the next week. During this conversation, we also discussed my research with another volunteer who was working on survey data related to subscriber choices and show preferences at HyperRPG and were able to see where our two surveys corroborated or differed from each other, leading to a longer discussion on why these differences might be present.

On my final day at the studio, I discussed my research with another staff member. He was also interested in my work and what it could mean for HyperRPG, as well as if I planned to expand on this research for future projects that could be helpful to the organization. This staff member did not always agree with the conclusions the CEO drew about my findings, and wanted to explore my areas of further inquiry (located in the next chapter) in further detail. In particular, this staff member seemed interested in why identifying as a critter (fan of Critical Role on Geek & Sundry) would have a significant correlation with watching Shadowrun: Corporate SINs on HyperRPG when there was no correlation between being a critter and watching HyperRPG in general. In their opinion, this correlation may have been due to Shadowrun and Dungeons & Dragons (the game Critical Role plays) being longstanding tabletop roleplaying games. The CEO, on the other hand, focused more on similar show dynamics, rather than game system used, to explain the correlation. Overall, each person associated with HyperRPG with whom I discussed this research was highly engaged in our conversations, interested in the potential implications of the results, and asked questions towards potential future research inquiries.

HyperRPG's staff were the most interested and engaged in my research, as they were the only connected group to implement changes related to my findings. There are several reasons

that this might have occurred. I expect that HyperRPG was partially more willing to implement policy based on my research because HyperRPG is not a subsidiary company, unlike Geek & Sundry. Geek & Sundry is owned by Legendary Digital Network, so any major policy changes need to be approved by the parent company first. Another reason that HyperRPG might have been more willing to implement changes is simply that it is a newer company with less subscribers and less of a presence than Geek & Sundry. The company is less than two years old and is working to increase its audience size and visibility, so they are more open to changes than a company that has been around for years and has over thirty thousand subscribers to their Twitch channel alone.

Other Deliverables

In April 2017 I presented papers based on this study at the Southwestern Anthropological Association's 88th Annual Conference. The first of these presentations was centered around the methodology for this study. This presentation was part of a roundtable discussion on the intersection of anthropology and gaming culture. Twitch, although the largest website provider of gaming content, is not conducive to longitudinal research that requires archived content. Most Twitch content is performed live and recordings of these live performances are only kept for a short period of time on Twitch (ranging between fourteen days and three months). For this reason, I chose to discuss how I collected data from Twitch despite these limitations.

The second presentation was a retrospective look at some of the ethical complications that arose during the research. This presentation was a more traditional paper presentation, lasting fifteen minutes and followed by a question and answer session. The paper went through three events that occurred during the research. The first event occurred before the research phase had begun and involved an offer to view private letters. I rejected the offer and did not include information from these letters in this research project. The second involved a gift offer from one of the organizations for being a moderator. Though the gift was offered to all moderators, I felt it could be misinterpreted in my case. I chose to decline the gift rather than invite potential accusations that receiving a gift affected the objectivity of this research project. The third event

actually related to the research design and how I created a system of checks and balances to increase objectivity of the analysis and deliverables. This situation is discussed in detail in Section Five: Reflections.

<center>**Reflections**</center>

At the conclusion of this research project, I have found it prudent to reflect back on both the actions I have taken and those I wish I took. As such, this chapter is dedicated to reflecting on the actions I took to avoid ethical complications and remain objective, as well as briefly discussing areas of interest that I was not able to analyze completely over the course of this study, but that might be of interest for further research. The chapter starts with a discussion of the complications I faced while researching when hooman. The second half of the chapter is dedicated to the various trends I noted, but was unable to fully analyze. These trends may be considered for further research in the future.

Researching when Hooman

For the first section of this chapter, I wanted to focus on difficulties I faced conducting this research as a member of Team Hooman, a freelance writer for Geek & Sundry, and a moderator for both Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG. There were valid concerns regarding my objectivity before I started this project that my advisor and I tried to mitigate through the planning, implementation, and review of this project. Despite extensively planning, there were still ethical complications that arose. The following sections discuss how concerns of objectivity were mitigated and my responses to the various ethical complications that arose.

Keeping Objective When a Member of the Community

As mentioned previously, I consider myself to be a hooman. Being a hooman and studying hoomans complicated this study. To make sure I was not unduly favoring Team Hooman, I put several fail-safes in place. The first involved carefully planning the study to be as objective as possible. This required using multiple methods of data collection and a mixed-methods approach. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, I was able to achieve nuanced and detailed answers that were supported by statistical tests for significance, helping to

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remove overt bias from my insights. Another aspect was creating research questions and areas of inquiry which did not have bias. This meant that I was framing my questions around the activities performed by hoomans and their consequences, rather than labelling these actions as either positive or negative. I believe that, by doing so, I have been able to pinpoint positive patterns in Team Hooman that can be replicated by other communities, negative aspects that should not be replicated, and areas where Team Hooman may wish to improve, as addressed previously.

Another check came into play while writing and planning the deliverables. All written deliverables were edited in part by an individual who once considered themselves a member of Team Hooman, but left for a myriad of reasons, including noticing the negative aspects of the community. This individual read through my work critically and questioned my biases. They were willing to call out sections of my writing that were not fully explained by the data I presented or where I seemed to be focusing too heavily on positive aspects of the community. This outside source helped to keep the written and dissemination of results phase from being overly influenced by my personal bias. Another individual, completely unconnected to Team Hooman or either organization with which I partnered, also looked through the work to provide the perspective of someone completely outside the cultural norms of the online community. These two people have also looked through this report for similar reasons.

Ethical Complications and Resolutions

Following is one story of ethical complications that arose over the course of my research and my response to the complication. The scenario I discussed arose prior to starting the research phase. As a moderator and writer, I had access to private information to fulfill my responsibilities for both of these roles. In this scenario, I analyzed why I chose to not include this private information in my data collection and analysis.

Leaving Specific Online Platforms Out of It

As a moderator for both Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG, and a writer for Geek & Sundry, I have access to private forums and chatrooms for both organizations. These forums and chatrooms are necessary for both companies as they allow moderators and writers to communicate with each other, their supervisors and editors, and work on things for the organization prior to those things going public. One effect of having access to these rooms was having access to private information or information that was meant to be private under a contractual agreement. Revealing this private information would have created problems for the organizations, other moderators and writers, and would have destroyed the work relationship that I had cultivated with these organizations over the course of this study.

To protect this private information and to assure those present in the private rooms I had access to, I chose to publicly and repeatedly state that I would not use any information found in these rooms. Although no one approached me with concerns about my using this private information in my research, I considered this as a sign of trust in me rather than permission to use the information. By stating repeatedly that I would not include information from these private rooms, usually in an adapted version of "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas," I made it clear that business could continue as usual in these spaces, even while I was conducting research in more public settings associated with the organizations. Personally, I feel that making it clear I was restricting myself to more public settings also helped me to gather more objective data than if I had recorded data from these private rooms. Had I stated I was recording data from private forums and chatrooms, there was a strong possibility that information would have been left out of these rooms, especially information protected by legal contracts. Recording this incomplete information would have led to an incomplete picture and would have made work more difficult for the organizations. By leaving the private rooms out of the research, both organizations were able to continue their regular practices, without altering how they interacted in private rooms.

Future Deliverables

Over the course of this research, other deliverables have been proposed and planned, but are not yet complete. Some of these deliverables were planned for at the onset of this project, while others have come up more recently. At the start of this project, I planned to write articles for *Practicing Anthropology*, the anthropology journal. I also planned to submit an article to the *Committee on the Anthropology of Science, Technology, and Computing*'s blog. Both articles are planned for the near future.

There are also deliverables planned that were either proposed during the dissemination of results or approved during this time. One such deliverable is an article for Geek & Sundry's website. This is something I planned for early on during this project, and I received confirmation that such an article would be approved during my dissemination of results to Geek & Sundry. This article should be available by July 2017.

While disseminating results to HyperRPG, other potential deliverables were discussed. In particular, one of the hosts of HyperRPG and I discussed potential collaborations of our work. This host received her Master's in Game Design from University of Southern California and worked on a project to reclassify gamers based on their behavior when interacting with games, rather than on demographic information. The host is planning a presentation for Game Developers' Conference and a book based on her research and asked me to become a collaborator. HyperRPG is also interested in having me expand this research into further studies that could help their channel.

A film submission has also been proposed for EPIC 2017. A paper on Team Hooman has also been submitted to the American Anthropological Association's annual meeting for 2017. There are also conferences unrelated to anthropology where this research might be of interest. These will be explored in the future.

There were also unplanned deliverable requests that emerged over the course of this project. For instance, Microsoft has requested my toolkit and graduate report be added to their archives so the company can use the research to inform future projects. I have also received a request from the non-profit Braven to present my research and help them establish a strong

online community for their alumni members. Finally, I have been approached to present this research as part of a lecture series for Mozilla, though a date for this presentation has yet to be set.

Areas of Further Inquiry

For the second half of this chapter, I decided to consider future areas of interest. The first area of further inquiry, the role of women in Team Hooman, was not something I originally considered as part of this study. However, over the course of the study it became clear that analyzing the place of women in Team Hooman as compared to the rest of Twitch would be a fruitful avenue for future research. The second section is a more general discussion, centering around a few key statistical outputs that have not yet been explored in any real detail, but that could be explored further in the future.

The Role of Women on Twitch and in Geek Culture

Although not a central finding in this research, I did note that there is a trend within Team Hooman related to gender. Compared to Twitch in general, a high number of survey respondents were female for this study, a trend which continued with Team Hooman-only survey respondents. It is not immediately clear why HyperRPG and Geek & Sundry attract more women than Twitch overall, though there could be several reasons for the difference. The most immediate cause that comes to mind is that Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG both make it clear that they want to be a welcoming place for women and minorities. They have strict rules for audience members that keep them from objectifying the hosts, many of whom are women. Potentially, the establishment of these rules and positive treatment of women on these channels makes them feel more welcoming for women.

One example of this behavior is the use of the term "grills" being frowned upon in both organizations. As the legend was told to me by one Thumper, grills became a term for women on Twitch after a prolific Twitch streamer misspoke during a stream. The chatroom found it

hilarious and adopted it as a joke, which quickly spread throughout Twitch. Although some chat members have mentioned they have no issue with grills as a term, specifically citing this origin story, many women have expressed being uncomfortable with being called a grill. Because of this discomfort and the implicit objectification of women that the term seems to suggest, Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG have both informed their moderators to dissuade people from using the term, going so far as to create a bot command stating that there are no "grills" present.

Another possibility is that women are more willing to state their gender in these channels. There has been some research into how women in gaming either hide their gender or exaggerate masculine mannerisms in their gaming interactions as a way to not be victimized by male gamers Rellstab 2007). It is possible that there are more women on Twitch than the general survey indicated, but that these women are hiding their gender for various reasons, principally to reduce harassment they experience. In some interviews, female interviewees expressed that they felt safer and more comfortable in the chatrooms of Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG than in other Twitch channels. Five women specifically mentioned they felt safer to declare their gender in Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG than in other Twitch chatrooms. Further research is needed to understand whether one of these explanations, another explanation, or a combination of factors is responsible for the higher percentage of women present in these organizations.

Other Areas of Inquiry

There are many other possible areas of further inquiry that have been suggested through this research. I discovered many of these areas through statistical analysis of the survey data. For instance, some of the chi-square results showed correlations that seem common sense; identifying as a critter, someone who identifies as a fan of Critical Role, correlates to watching Critical Role. However, some of these correlations had less obvious reasons. For instance, being a critter had no significant correlation to watching HyperRPG, but it did have a significant correlation with watching Shadowrun: Corporate Sins, one of HyperRPG's shows. The reasons for these correlations could better be brought out through follow-up interviews with survey respondents who identified as critters.

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The statistical analysis phase of this project initially led to thousands of pages of output. Although many of these results did not show significance, a surprising number did. Due to time and length constraints, the number of statistical tests with significant results included in this report has been greatly reduced and targeted to the specific research questions and initial points of inquiry expressed in the proposal and main deliverable of this project. It is my intention to fully explore these statistical results at a later date, potentially using them as a basis for more qualitative work with Team Hooman, Geek & Sundry, and HyperRPG.

Another area of inquiry that was not explored through this work is that of the interaction of businesses that share community members with each other. While I observed business practices of HyperRPG and Geek & Sundry in relation to how those practices impacted Team Hooman, I did not analyze how these choices potentially impact each other. Although some audience members treated the two organizations as rivals for a period of time, both organizations, HyperRPG through their CEO and Geek & Sundry through their Twitch Producer, have stated there is no "bad blood" between the two and they prefer to support the other organization's Twitch channel, rather than try to compete. The CEO of HyperRPG has stated multiple times on the channel that Twitch is big enough that a competitive spirit is unnecessary. According to him, streamers should be supporting each other, a sentiment echoed by the current Twitch Producer for HyperRPG. The organizations do share some of their audience, have overlapping show schedules, and, now that HyperRPG has opened a second studio in Los Angeles, share a number of their on-screen talent. Therefore, the scheduling of special events, shows, and talent by one organization inevitably impacts the other. This interaction could be more closely observed through structured observation and interviews with the employees of both organizations in future work.

Finally, although I observed Team Hooman activities on their social media accounts, Facebook group, and website, I limited Twitch observations to the channels of Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG. Yet, Team Hooman started on the Twitch channels of Felicia and Ryon Day. Furthermore, a number of the hosts for Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG also operate their own, individual, Twitch channels. Although I asked survey respondents if they were members of other

Twitch communities, I did not conduct participant observation in these channels so I am unaware if hoomans behave differently on Twitch outside of Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG.

Future Implications of Key Questions

At the onset of this project, I had four key questions regarding what I was trying to understand about Team Hooman. Although I discussed my insights and findings related to these questions in detail in Section Three: Findings and Insights, there is still more to learn regarding the implications of these insights to other organizations and future work. In this final section of the report, I went through each of the initial research questions and their future implications. This section concludes with a reflection on what I have learned from this project regarding the field of applied anthropology.

The ways hoomans experience philanthropy represents larger trends in fundraising. In addition to donations to charities representing their own interests (ex. a hooman whose sister had lupus states they are more likely to donate to The Lupus Foundation than a charity to which they have no connection), hoomans are more likely to donate when a celebrity in the community asks them to. They are also more likely to donate when they receive something, tangible or not, for the monetary donation. At HyperRPG's charity drive for The HALO Foundation in April 2017 they had physical giveaways, steam key giveaways, and monetized donations to affect what was happening on screen. At one point, HyperRPG told the community that if one person donated fifteen hundred USD that someone at the studio would get a tattoo of Pillow Zac (an anime-style drawing of HyperRPG's CEO) live on air (they had a tattoo artist standing by with his equipment). They received the donation before the CEO had finished making his announcement.

Image 5.1: Rachel (middle left) and Felicia Day (middle right) hold up artistic renderings of Zac (far right) and his tabletop roleplaying game character, Snugglelord, as Sam looks on (far left)

This mirrors a growing trend in digital philanthropy. Increasingly, people rely on crowdfunding campaigns, many of which offer rewards based on donation size, to support their business and artistic pursuits or charities. Charities are also publicly being connected to celebrities online, especially on Prizeo.com, where hanging out with celebrities (or their parents) are often the grand prizes for fundraising campaigns. Although people are being incentivized to "enter a drawing" to win the grand prize, there are also smaller tier rewards. Depending on how much a person is willing to pay, they can receive anything from a thank you message and one hundred entries (ten dollars) to a personalized video message from the celebrity and one hundred thousand entries (ten thousand dollars).

Image 5.2: A Prizeo campaign featuring a grand prize of watching Hamilton with its creator's parents while also supporting CODE2040 and the Latino Community Foundation

In essence, crowdfund campaigns are exactly to what Team Hooman is contributing. On Prizeo, the grand prize and rewards are emphasized while on Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG, the charity is emphasized, but both forms of fundraising depend on people donating to charity in exchange for something, whether that something be a thank you from a celebrity or making hosts from the channel dance to Single Ladies by Beyonce while wearing black body suits (pictured below). Incentivization for charitable donations has proven successful on Twitch and, as the many crowdfunding and reward-based fundraising sites prove, is not unique to Twitch. Crowdfunding with incentives is not going away and may become the predominant method of philanthropy in the future. Understanding what incentivizes people to donate is, therefore, necessary for organizations dedicated to philanthropy.

Image 5.3: Geek & Sundry staff dance to Single Ladies after the audience met the incentive goal

My second inquiry was towards how hoomans interact with each other, Geek & Sundry, and HyperRPG. Of these interactions, the way Team Hooman interacted with the organizations was the most compelling for future research. Social media platforms, such as Twitter, allow for unparalleled access to celebrities, CEO's, and powerful individuals. This is also true on Twitch, where the audience can interact with channel hosts in real time during live streams. One side effect of this is that Twitch businesses and streamers are open about their business decisions with their communities. Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG both began their channels with an open policy, hosting Question and Answer sessions weekly. When a company is so open in their communication and then announces a business decision without prior communication, the community lashes back. This was the case with ALPHA. Future research on how social media has opened organizations to new forms of communication and interaction with their followers could prove beneficial to organizations looking to avoid community backlash.

There is also a trend found in hooman to hooman interaction that thwarts traditional safety values. Since the mid-twentieth century, children, especially in North America and the United Kingdom, have seen a reduction in their freedom as a result of the Stranger Danger campaigns. Stranger Danger is meant to emphasize the dangers of speaking to or going somewhere with an unknown person. The goal is to reduce crime committed against someone by

a person they do not know. Although data has shown more crime against a person is committed by someone they know than by someone they do not, the phrase and what it teaches is still popular and sees widespread use.

Yet, many hoomans have planned get-togethers when a distant hooman visits their region. Some hoomans have even offered their homes as places to stay for other hoomans, despite never having met these hoomans in person. This is not that unusual in the digital age. People take to social media to find a place to stay or a roommate to split the hotel cost on trips. We are encouraged to share our homes and automobiles by companies like AirBnB, Uber, and Lyft. Despite the widespread use of Stranger Danger to teach children to be safe, we are living in a world where we increasingly rely on and interact with strangers on a daily basis. Even in my own research, I relied on strangers. When I visited HyperRPG's Seattle studio, I stayed with a fellow hooman and thumper who was kind enough to offer their home to me. I had never met this person before, other than in online chat rooms, but I never questioned my safety in staying with them. Future research on this new way of relying on strangers would be beneficial to organizations relying on stranger interaction as part of their business model. This would also be beneficial to better understand how traditional rules of safety apply to digital communities.

Finally, I also strove to understand the meanings hoomans associate with Team Hooman and how hoomans situationally identify themselves. In pursuit of these questions, I discovered that hoomans will label anyone "doing good" as a hooman, with or without that person's knowledge. This was most often seen in the Facebook group, where hoomans would post news stories and crowdfund campaigns and state that the person doing good was "a hooman and they don't even know it." This seems to indicate that hoomans see membership as a state of being. Instead of voluntarily joining the group, anyone who espouses the values of Team Hooman or exhibits hooman-like behavior is part of the movement, whether they want to be or not. It is unclear if other online communities exhibit this same behavior, so future studies with psychological components would prove beneficial.

Moving Forward

At the onset of this study I underestimated the complexity of the questions I was asking, as well as the complexity of Team Hooman as an online community. As such, it was difficult to limit this paper to the original scope of the research project. Though Team Hooman, Geek & Sundry, and HyperRPG reacted positively to the work I conducted, I do not feel that research on Team Hooman is complete. Hoomans also were interested in future places this research could go, so I do think future research is possible, especially in the field of applied anthropology.

As an applied anthropologist, I have learned that my research interests may be exponentially larger than the scope of a project. Yet, when conducting research in partnership with organizations and communities, it is important to keep the original goal of the research in mind as well as the original timeline. My training as an applied anthropologist has increased my social awareness, allowing me to collaborate more fluidly with organizations and communities for research and projects. Despite the complexities, this project has instilled in me a passion for digital research that I plan to continue through a career in digital platforms with an interest in mobilizing digital interaction for monetization, especially with philanthropic intent.

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REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

TITLE OF THE STUDY

A Study in Hoomanism: Understanding Meaning in Geek Cyberanthropology

NAME OF THE RESEARCHER

Primary Investigator: Ailea Grace Merriam-Pigg Scheffler, San Jose State University graduate student.

Others Affiliated: Dr. Jan English-Lueck, Faculty Supervisor.

PURPOSE

The objective of this proposed research is to investigate the online group known as Team Hooman and the collective motivations which have inspired the group to establish a strong philanthropic presence. Team Hooman raised over $300,000 in 2015 for various charities and plans to exceed that number in 2016. However, Team Hooman was not established as a philanthropic organization, but as a group of fans of the actress Felicia Day and her brother, Ryon. The fanbase has expanded to include the companies Geek & Sundry and Hyper Rabbit Media LLC. This research intends to discover why Team Hooman members, known as "hoomans," have dedicated themselves to philanthropy and how other organizations might inspire similar in their members

PROCEDURES

Participants will be asked to fill out an online questionnaire at their leisure on or following 4/30/16. Participants who indicate that they are willing to be interviewed may be contacted for a follow-up online interview to take place between 4/30/16-09/25/16 based on their availability. Questionnaires should take approximately 30 minutes to complete while interviews will be approximately one hour.

POTENTIAL RISKS

The associated risks of this study for participants include the potential for shame and embarrassment. The intention is to reduce this risk through the use of aliases to protect the identities of participants.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

By providing an analysis of the motivating factors that lead Team Hooman members to contribute to philanthropic organizations, my research may facilitate Geek & Sundry and Team Hooman to create more successful philanthropic projects for Team Hooman members. Stakeholders will be informed throughout the data collection process at all stages of this research. Since there will be two case studies, this project It is an objective of this study to inform other organizations similar to Geek & Sundry with an interest in philanthropy potential ways to motivate their members through academic and nonacademic articles and media outreach. By understanding the online philanthropic environment of Team Hooman, this study will be able to contribute to the research on philanthropy, geek culture, and cyberanthropology.

COMPENSATION

There is no compensation for participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The names of participants will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. Other identifying information (age, sex, ethnicity, etc) may be collected but will only be compiled to indicate general patterns in the Team Hooman group. All such identifying information will be removed from reported data as to protect the identities of participants.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative

effect on your relations with San Jose State University, Geek & Sundry, or Team Hooman. You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer. This consent form is not a contract. It is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to participate. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to participate, and there is no penalty for stopping your participation in the study.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.
- For further information about the study, please contact Ailea Scheffler – Ailea.Merriam@gmail.com.
- Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Roberto Gonzalez – Roberto.Gonzalez@sjsu.edu.
- For questions about participants' rights or if you feel you have been harmed in any way by your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Pamela Stacks, Associate Vice President of the Office of Research, San Jose State University, at 408-924-2479.

SIGNATURES

Your electronic signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to be a part of the study, that the details of the study have been explained to you, that you have been given time to read this document, and that your questions have been answered. Please retain a copy of this consent form for your records.

Name and date below.

☐

Are you at least 18 years old? All participants for this study must be 18 or older. If you are under 18, thank you for your interest, but please do not continue with this questionnaire.
- ○ Yes I'm 18+
- ○ I am under 18 years old

I consider myself to be a (choose as many as apply)
- ☐ Hooman

- ☐ Critter
- ☐ Thumper
- ☐ Chummer
- ☐ Dumb Dumb
- ☐ Other (please specify) [_____]
- ☐ None of These Apply

On Twitch, I like to watch

- ☐ Felicia's Channel
- ☐ Ryon's Channel
- ☐ Geek & Sundry
- ☐ HyperRPG
- ☐ Other (please specify) [_____]
- ☐ I don't watch Twitch.

On Twitch, I am subscribed to

- ☐ Felicia's Channel
- ☐ Ryon's Channel
- ☐ Geek & Sundry
- ☐ HyperRPG
- ☐ Other (please specify) [_____]
- ☐ I don't watch Twitch.

If you watch Geek & Sundry, which shows do you watch?

- ☐ MASSIVE
- ☐ Game Together
- ☐ No Survivors
- ☐ AXYB
- ☐ Drama Club Heroes
- ☐ Jo-Verwatch
- ☐ Back to School
- ☐ The Concession Stand
- ☐ Game the Game

- ☐ Critical Role
- ☐ Group Hug
- ☐ Gather Your Party
- ☐ Other (please specify) [_____]

If you watch HyperRPG, which shows do you watch?
- ☐ Full Tilt
- ☐ Rabbit Stew
- ☐ WTF is This?
- ☐ Trivia Hops
- ☐ Starr Mazer TV
- ☐ Future/Retro
- ☐ Colony News
- ☐ Death From Above
- ☐ Easter Eggs
- ☐ Watching Paint Dry
- ☐ Corporate News
- ☐ Shadowrun Corporate SINS
- ☐ Honesty Hour
- ☐ Too Many Guilds
- ☐ Grab Bag
- ☐ Weekly Affirmations
- ☐ Other (please specify) [_____]

I have donated to
- ☐ Geek & Sundry Charity Drives (please specify) [_____]
- ☐ HyperRPG Charity Drives (please specify) [_____]
- ☐ 826LA
- ☐ Other Team Hooman Charity Drives (please specify) [_____]
- ☐ I do not participate in Team Hooman Charity Events

Please estimate the average (in USD) you donated to Team Hooman sponsored charities in 2015.

- ○ $0
- ○ $1-19
- ○ $20-49
- ○ $50-99
- ○ $100-199
- ○ $200-499
- ○ $500-999
- ○ $1000+
- ○ I give in other ways (please explain) [ ]

If you donated to a Team Hooman sponsored charity in 2015, please explain what moved you to donate.

[ ]

I donate to charities not sponsored by Team Hooman.
- ○ Yes (please specify) [ ]
- ○ No

Please estimate the average (in USD) you donated to other charities in 2015.
- ○ $0
- ○ $1-19
- ○ $20-49
- ○ $50-99
- ○ $100-199
- ○ $200-499
- ○ $500-9999
- ○ $1000+
- ○ I give in other ways (please explain) [ ]

If you donated to another charity in 2015, please explain what moved you to donate.

[ ]

Have you or are you planning to donate to a charity associated with Team Hooman or another charity in 2016?

- ☐ Yes, I have/plan to donate to a charity associated with Team Hooman. (please specify) ▢
- ☐ Yes, I have/plan to donate to a charity not associated with Team Hooman. (please specify) ▢
- ☐ No, I do not plan to donate to a charity.

I am a

☐ Moderator for Geek & Sundry	☐ Host for HyperRPG
☐ Host for Geek & Sundry	☐ Crew for HyperRPG
☐ Crew for Geek & Sundry	☐ Employee of HyperRPG
☐ Employee of Geek & Sundry	☐ Other (please specify) ▢
☐ Moderator for HyperRPG	

I am

- ○ Female
- ○ Male
- ○ Non-binary
- ○ Trans
- ○ Decline to State
- ○ Other (please specify) ▢

I am (age)

▢

In which country do you reside?

▢

What is your ethnicity?

- ☐ European/White

- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ African American/Black
- ☐ Native American/American Indian
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other (please specify) ⬚
- ☐ Prefer Not to Answer

What is your highest level of education?

- ○ No Schooling Completed
- ○ Primary School to 8th grade
- ○ Some High School, No Diploma
- ○ High School Graduate, Diploma or Equivalent
- ○ Some College Credit, No Degree
- ○ Trade/Technical/Vocational Training
- ○ Associate's Degree
- ○ Bachelor's Degree
- ○ Master's Degree
- ○ Professional Degree
- ○ Doctorate Degree

I am

- ○ Single, Never Married
- ○ Married or in a Domestic Partnership
- ○ Widowed
- ○ Divorced
- ○ Separated

I am currently

- ○ Employed for Wages
- ○ Self-Employed
- ○ Out of Work and Looking
- ○ Out of Work but Not Currently Looking
- ○ A Homemaker

- ○ A Student
- ○ Military
- ○ Retired
- ○ Unable to Work

My Estimated Yearly Income (in USD) is
- ○ Up to $9,225
- ○ $9,226 to $37,450
- ○ $37,451 to $90,750
- ○ $90,751 to $189,300
- ○ $189,301 to $411,500
- ○ $411,501 to $413,200
- ○ $413,201 or more

You're almost there! What brought you to the survey today?
- ○ Geek & Sundry Twitch
- ○ Geek & Sundry Other (please specify) [_____]
- ○ HyperRPG Twitch
- ○ HyperRPG Other (please specify) [_____]
- ○ Team Hooman Facebook
- ○ Team Hooman Twitter
- ○ Other (please specify) [_____]

Would you be interested in participating in a one-on-one follow-up interview?
- ○ Yes, my email is [_____]
- ○ No

Finally, the results of this questionnaire are anonymous. Please provide up to 10 pseudonyms (separated by commas) you would like to appear instead of your name for this study. Please do not choose a name previously associated with you (e.g. nicknames, online handles). Thank you for participating in this study!
[_____]

A Study in Hoomanism: Understanding Meaning in Geek Philanthropy and Cyberanthropology

Interview Guidelines

Ailea Grace Merriam-Pigg Scheffler and Jan English-Lueck

Purpose. The objectives of this interview are to:

- obtain a deep, rich description of the interviewee's philanthropic experiences
- obtain general background information about the interviewee's interaction with Team Hooman
- ascertain the interviewee's perspective on Team Hooman; its meaning and place in their life
- and identify how the interviewee situationally identifies him/her self.

Place. The interview is conducted over the internet as Team Hooman is primarily an online group and is geographically widely disbursed.

Materials

1. Pen and notebook
2. Computer with webcam
3. Digital audio, and spare batteries
4. watch

Before the interview begins, ask the interviewee if they consent to be recorded both prior to and directly following turning on the recording device. All interviewees will be recruited through the initial questionnaire and will have signed the online Consent Form as a result.

Interview Prologue:

[Introduce yourself and the project] This is a project to learn about how meaning develops in online groups, especially regarding geek culture and philanthropy. In this study I am

trying to learn more about Team Hooman, and how people think about and conduct philanthropy through Team Hooman. I will ask you about your experiences related to Team Hooman—and how other people and organizations connect to your experiences. I will be asking you to tell me about a time you acted as a hooman and the people, places, and activities that relate to a hooman act. Finally, I will be asking you what you believe it means to be a hooman, and how you think that other organizations can inspire hoomanism in their members.

[Informed consent] Discuss the consent forms with the interviewee. Tell them that since we are documenting very specific activities and organizational relationships, so that while we will be careful with the information, we are using information and the identities of organizations, although we will be masking the identities of people named in the interviews. . Interviews will be transcribed, and transcription can be shared with them.

Interview Questions:

Question 1: How did you get involved with Team Hooman ?

Probe: What people got you involved with Team Hooman?

Probe What organizations got you involved with Team Hooman?

Probe: How involved are you with Team Hooman?

Probe: How much time do you spend conversing with other hoomans?

Probe: How long have you been involved with Team Hooman?

Probe: Do you perform any responsibilities for Team Hooman? (act as a moderator, group administrator, make t-shirt designs, etc)

Question 2: What, in your opinion, does it mean to be a hooman?

Probe: List the characteristics of a hooman.

Probe: Do hoomans have any specific skills?

Probe: Are there any specific qualifications a person needs to be labelled a hooman?

Question 3: Now please tell me about a time where you acted as a hooman.

Probe: Did anyone help you during this time? Who were they? How did they help?

Probe: Did any organizations help or get involved? Which ones? How?

Probe: Did this act occur online or in a physical place? Where?

Probe: What activities did you perform that made this a hooman act?

Question 4: Is there anything you would like to add that I have not asked?

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me.

*The following is the text of the primary deliverable. The fully formatted deliverable may be found here.

Starting, Managing, and Growing an Online Community

Acknowledgements

Writing this paper and doing this research would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of several people. First and foremost, I would like to thank each and every member of Team Hooman for allowing me to do this research in the first place. Without their participation and passion this project could not exist. In fact, joining Team Hooman myself is what inspired me to pursue my interests in understanding online groups and geek culture from an academic standpoint. For all of this and more, thank you Team Hooman.

I would also like to thank Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG for being willing to work with me on this project. When I first approached the General Manager of Geek & Sundry about this project I was nervous about his response. Turns out, I shouldn't have been as he was enthusiastically on board and immediately set me up with the Twitch channel producer to work out the logistics. Similarly, when I approached HyperRPG they were immediately on board. Furthermore, several employees and freelancers in each organization were extremely enthusiastic and supportive about my research, wanting to discuss my progress, any thoughts I had during the analysis stage, or offering as much support as possible. The interest shown by these people was more helpful than I could ever put into words.

Finally, I would like to thank my advisor, every faculty member and person who helped me complete this project, and San Jose State University for presenting me with the opportunity to perform this research. Thank you, my fellow students, for struggling with me and all the support you have given me as I moved through each stage of this project. To all those who listened to me as I struggled to create research tools that would show Team Hooman in the most objective light possible so as to not let my position as a member of Team Hooman jeopardize the project; to all those who read through my IRB, MOU, proposal, and toolkit for the thousandth time at my request to make sure I didn't misspell a word or forget punctuation; to those who had faith in me to not only handle this project, but create something truly exceptional, thank you. I couldn't have done this without you.

There were many times I wasn't sure how I wanted to take the next step during this project and every time my advisor was there to talk with me and help me figure out the path I wanted to follow. Furthermore, thank you so much my advisor, Professor Jan English-Lueck, for listening to this crazy graduate student when she spoke about wanting to study a group of people on a livestream platform and helping me figure out how to make it the best project it could be while still being true to myself as a researcher and person. You are always excited to learn new things,

see how technology and people are pushing the envelope, and figure out how anthropology can be used in these endeavors. Your passion and spirit inspire me.

Also, thank you to my family. Mom and Dad, you may not understand my research or research interests, but thank you for listening to every update I gave. Thank you for listening as I read through papers and proposals or told you what I planned to do (which was really a way for me to procrastinate on my work without freaking out, sorry). Thank you for supporting me by understanding that, even if my work isn't your passion, it is mine. And thank you my sister, Lydia, who is probably my closest relative who understands social science research and is always willing to discuss methodology with me. Thank you for being a role model and someone with whom I could rant about people misusing statistical terminology.

To all those who were participants in this research project, those who helped me create it, those who inspired me, and those who gave me a kick in the pants when I needed it, thank you.

About this Toolkit

Almost a year ago I began researching a group called Team Hooman to better understand how online communities form and are influenced by connected organizations. Team Hooman happens to be a group strongly connected to philanthropy and I was interested in understanding how this happened and how the passion Team Hooman has for "doing good" could be replicated in other groups. Over the last year I've surveyed, interviewed hoomans and participated in their online activities.

This participation, of course, came easily to me, as I have considered myself a hooman since March 2014. It was easy to talk to hoomans, to watch the same shows and discuss the same topics, because I am a hooman too. Being hooman and conducting research on Team Hooman comes with its disadvantages, though. I am prone to think Team Hooman is all sunshine and rainbows, but in truth no group I have ever heard about, interacted with, or been a part of has existed without drama or tension occurring at some time. This is also true of Team Hooman. This project, therefore, was not about explaining how amazing Team Hooman is, but understanding what can be learned from this online community. This means learning the good things that can be taken and used by other groups as well as the things that should not be repeated by other groups if at all possible.

I also faced a double-edged sword because of the organizations I partnered with for this project. I am a moderator for both companies and a freelance writer for one of them, so it was important to me to design a project that was as objective as possible. I believe I have produced work that does not praise either organization or Team Hooman unduly and have taken measures and counter-measures to ensure that that objectivity is expressed in this toolkit.

However, I did not want the objectivity of this toolkit to be expressed through my written style. I want this toolkit to be something that can be used and, ideally, that people actually want to and

enjoy reading. Since I am a freelance writer for various organizations, including a partner for this project, I've decided to write this work with a more conversational tone. Let's be honest, very few people who read this will care that I first researched the different theoretical frameworks that could apply to digital ethnography, or even that my research is considered digital ethnography. As such, the denser writing, the writing where I cover the theoretical frameworks, place my work in context of previous digital research, and discuss my methodology in depth will appear in a more academic work. If you are interested in the dense discussion, that work will be made available at a later date.

For now, almost a year of research and analysis and over a year of literary review and dense-thinking has led to the creation of this toolkit. This toolkit is the culmination of all my research and should serve as a useful document for organizations looking to start, maintain, or grow their own online communities. Though the toolkit is written in a more generic sense, so that it can be useful to multiple organizations, I have included stories of Team Hooman within its pages as to help contextualize my findings. I have also included an appendix which explains the demographics of Team Hooman as compared to the general audience of Twitch, the website where Team Hooman was first formed.

Introduction

In 2012, a study of 115,000 nonprofits found that giving totals provided by online fundraising processors rose 14% from 2011 to 2.1 billion USD. This is a much sharper growth than the overall rise in donations of 1.5% (after accounting for inflation) in 2012. The conclusion is that online fundraising and philanthropy is expanding at a much faster rate than other philanthropic means. Some of this is due to online communities which have dedicated themselves to altruism and philanthropy. I partnered with one such group, Team Hooman, and two associated organizations, Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG, to understand how such communities are established and operate online.

Team Hooman was born on the Internet in September, 2014. Felicia Day, one of the stars of Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and a well-known character in the "geeky" areas of the Internet, and her brother, Ryon Day, a long-time fan of the live streaming game platform Twitch, were out of town at the same time and decided to stream something together. The stream quickly incorporated fan commentary, as Twitch allows viewers to chat while watching a channel and the Day siblings could not help but interact with the chatters. The stream was a success, leading the siblings to schedule more Twitch streams together. The Day sibling streams always had an easy-going nature to them and strove to create a welcoming environment which was extremely popular with fans. Fans would regularly flock to Felicia and Ryon's channels, making connections with each other as well as the siblings.

The community prides itself on being inclusive and using friendliness and acceptance as its standard for community membership. Many self-described hoomans have stated that being a member of the community is all about following Wheaton's Law. This refers to Wil Wheaton's

general rule for interaction on the Internet, which he describes as, "don't be a dick" and has mentioned multiple times across the Internet. Basically, if you are a fan of either of the Day siblings, Geek & Sundry, or HyperRPG and are not a jerk, you are a member of the community.

That is not to say that everyone who watches Geek & Sundry or HyperRPG is a hooman. Although Team Hooman is the predominant community in Geek & Sundry's channel there are also other groups, such as the Critters, which formed out of a love for a particular show or host of the channel. Although Geek & Sundry does not have an umbrella term for its fans, HyperRPG fans are called Thumpers and are the dominant group present during HyperRPG shows. Membership in any one of these groups does not preclude membership in another. Indeed, many Critters and Thumpers are also hooman, but there is not so much overlap that it is possible to say all Critters and Thumpers are also hooman or vice versa. As a result, even though this project was primarily focused on the interactions of hoomans, non-hoomans who frequent the channels of Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG were also participants.

Since its beginnings in 2014, the Team Hooman community has grown, with over 1500 Facebook group members and over 1600 Twitter followers. These group members have transcended their online community through friendliness, by scheduling in-person meetups at events, buying tangible gifts for each other, and forming new gaming groups (Merriam-Pigg 2015). The community quickly extended its friendly atmosphere to philanthropic concerns as well, and, in 2015, raised over $300,000 for various charities including The Lupus Foundation and Extra Life, a charity that raises money through gaming for children's hospitals.

My project included conducting surveys and interviews, reading through chat logs and social media, and getting to the root of the Team Hooman community. At its core this research was really about understanding how online communities form, grow, and operate, and how organizations are able to influence and be influenced by these communities. This has led to the creation of this toolkit, designed for organizations attempting to form, maintain, and grow their own online communities, whether they are interested in philanthropy and altruism or not.

The following work is divided into three parts. In part one I discuss what it takes to form an online community, including some of the struggles you will face when attempting to do so. In part two I discuss some of what is required to maintain an online community. Once an online community is formed, after all, keeping it thriving is the next hardest step. Finally, in part three, I discuss what it takes to grow a community beyond its initial members, especially when the strength of your organization is directly related to your online community. This toolkit concludes with several appendices, including a breakdown of the Team Hooman community by demographic information, several worksheets to help your organization plan their work with online communities, and a geek word glossary. As most members of Team Hooman consider themselves geeks, I realized that many of the stories I have included from the community include multiple references to geek culture which may be difficult to understand without prior knowledge. This glossary should help.

Forming a Community

It can be difficult for an organization to establish a loyal following, especially in a digital space. If an organization wants to build a following there are several things they can do to interest people in their organization. For groups focused on entertainment on the internet, especially on live platforms like Twitch, having a loyal audience that is able to interact with each other is essential. One of the foundations of Twitch livestreams is the presence of chat rooms so that an audience can interact with each other as well as the host. Due to this, having an audience that can get along and presenting material that helps foster a sense of community with that group can often be the difference between success and failure on Twitch. There are several ways to unify a group of people online including: a uniting premise, a uniting person, a uniting place, and a uniting message or mission. However, many groups form a sense of community without deliberate intervention by an organization. This section will examine the different elements that help a community form online.

A Uniting Premise

Communities do not form from nothing. There must be some kind of unifying hobby, talent, pastime, or philosophy to bring people together. Even in cases where there is a unifying premise, it is still difficult to foster a sense of communitas, which helps the community to form. In the case of Team Hooman, there seem to be two main unifiers; attitude and label. Hoomans are interested in "safe spaces" on the internet as well as having positive experiences in those spaces and consider themselves to be geeks.

One theme brought up again and again in interviews with hoomans was that Team Hooman is built on a foundation of positivity and is a safe space for its members to interact and be themselves. As one hooman explained, "hoomans thrive on positivity. They feed off others' positivity and support to try the make the world around them a better place. It's a safe place for everyone to just be themselves and not worry about the negativity that goes on elsewhere." It is a common thought in Team Hooman that many areas of the internet are filled with negativity and interactions that are seen as not beneficial to the health and well-being of participants. Internet trolls, people who interact online to spread chaos and negativity, are commonly mentioned as adversaries to the Team Hooman community. Because of this, all hoomans I spoke with throughout the course of this study seemed to take great pride in being part of the community.

Hoomans typically label themselves as geeks. Members of Team Hooman regularly discuss topics considered geeky in the Facebook group, Twitch chats, and on Twitter. Almost every interviewee stated that hoomans are geeks or that hoomans tend to be geeks, but this is not a requirement of membership. Indeed, conversations that I observed between hoomans often rotated around what most people would label "geek talk". These topics included tabletop gaming, roleplaying games, video games, comic books, superhero television shows, comic book conventions, and entertainment platforms related to these topics, including podcasts, youtube shows, and the current channel's shows.

That is not to say that hoomans all have the same interests or agree about those interests. The Facebook group is rife with discussions about geeky topics and disagreements about these topics. From my observations, such disagreements rarely rise from friendly discussion to attacking each other, but, when this did occur, moderators were quick to step in to defuse the situation and, in the case of the Facebook group and Team Hooman forums, delete the original post when necessary. Recently, for instance, there was a post in the Team Hooman Facebook asking for hoomans to discuss whether or not Darth Vader was ever really a Sith since he was trained by Jedi. Some hoomans believed he was a Sith, while some said he was merely a corrupted Jedi. I chose to get involved with the conversation by stating I believe he was never truly a Jedi, which started a brand new discussion and debate. Not once did anyone become so passionate about their stance that they attacked someone who thought differently, despite the fact that several people created posts thousands of words in length to argue their point, citing specific examples from the Star Wars extended universe.

What does this show us? It shows us that people are more likely to join groups and stay in groups when they feel a connection with other members. Now, this connection doesn't need to be complete agreement about a topic and it doesn't need to be limited to one subject. Although the Sith/Jedi discussion pulled in many hoomans, many more did not participate. Not all hoomans like Star Wars and that is ok. It's not a Star Wars group. However, the discussions that occur often fall within the umbrella of geek culture and occur regularly enough that hoomans will often find a topic to their liking, thus ensuring their continued participation in the group. Furthermore, by uniting under an umbrella topic, such as geek culture, rather than a more niche fandom, like a movie or television show, the group is opening itself up to gaining more members and has seen fairly consistent growth over the past two years.

A Uniting Message

Although this may seem the same as a uniting premise, there is a difference here. The uniting premise of a group is the general topic and interest that brings people together. A uniting message is more nuanced. The message is usually created by the organization or the unifying person and gives an online community its purpose. This purpose can be as simple as discussing and debating the group's premise. This usually occurs with groups that are formed around specific television shows, movies, or franchises, though, the uniting message of a community can be unrelated to the premise of the group.

For Team Hooman, the uniting message is found in how hoomans explain what it is to be hooman. Overwhelmingly, hoomans state that being hooman has nothing to do with being a geek, fan of Felicia, viewer of any Twitch channel, or supporter of any organization. For hoomans, being hooman is all about striving to do something for others, to make someone else's life better, and to perform acts of altruism. They state they are a community of people who are trying to maintain a positive place on the internet in a sea of negativity trolls.

Related to these statements about what Team Hooman is from hoomans are their philanthropic actions. Although most hoomans will state donating to charity is not necessary to be a hooman, many will readily list it as one of the virtues of the community as a whole. In fact, in 2015, Team Hooman helped raise over $300,000 for various charities, including The Lupus Foundation, Extra Life, and The Halo Foundation. The philanthropy of Team Hooman has been so consistent and ingrained since the community was formed that several members of the community have looked into having it be officially labeled a 501c(3) tax-exempt non-profit on the basis of being a charitable organization. To date, no official paperwork has been filed to start this process.

But how did Team Hooman, a group of geeks, end up making philanthropy one of the uniting messages of their community? As it turns out, this altruism is largely due to Felicia and Ryon Day. On Twitch, certain channels are popular enough that they are allowed a subscriber button whereby viewers can choose to pay a monthly fee to the channel in exchange for access to emotes and various other "sub only" exclusives. Felicia and Ryon, both with subscriber buttons enabled, chose to donate all money earned through subscriptions to different charities. This commitment to philanthropy from the initial unifiers of Team Hooman helped to instill the connection between Team Hooman and altruism while also attracting members who were interested in philanthropy. This connection to philanthropy was continued by both Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG as both channels launched with massive charity drives.

Therefore, an organization should understand what they want from a community and include these desires as part of a unifying message as the community forms. This will create a bond between the community and the message that will continue beyond the initial formation of the community. In addition, it will keep members from becoming disillusioned with the community or leaving when the community isn't what they thought it was. This can also help keep a community from changing and turning on an organization.

A Uniting Person

Sometimes, all it takes to get a community together is one person. This person is someone that all or most of the others involved recognize as a leader or someone to respect. Sometimes, the person is a spokesperson for the organization. Often, these spokespeople already have a large following that trust them, while other times they are quickly identified by the audience as a trusted person within the organization. It should be noted, though, that uniting people do not always originate within the organizations that are trying to form the community. Sometimes, they are members of the audience who believe in the message of the organization and take initiative to unite everyone as a group. Uniting people who come from the audience usually become moderators, gatekeepers, or stakeholders. These types of community members are discussed in further detail in Part 3: Growing a Community.

In the case of Team Hooman, nearly every hooman interviewed stated they first heard of and joined the group because of one person, Felicia Day. Felicia is an entertainer who was quick to adopt online platforms for her projects, earning her the nickname Queen of the Internet by her

followers and the tabloids. Her popularity online helped interest people in watching when she and her brother, Ryon Day, chose to begin livestreaming together. Out of that audience grew Team Hooman and, when Geek & Sundry launched its Twitch branch, Team Hooman was quick to begin following their channel, largely because Geek & Sundry was a company started by Felicia.

By the time Geek & Sundry began its Twitch branch Felicia had sold the company to Legendary Digital Network and taken on a smaller role within the company. Though she was present for the launch of the channel and has attended multiple streams, she was not a regular presence on the channel. As a result, the Twitch Producer became the within-organization leader who helped motivate Team Hooman in regards to that channel. After 10 months as Twitch Producer for Geek & Sundry, he left to start his own company. Team Hooman, in large part, did not follow. In fact, there was a marked difference in support in terms of donations to the initial charity drive and subscription numbers and viewers from hoomans on HyperRPG as compared with Geek & Sundry.

Observations such as these are why more than one non-hooman believes Team Hooman refers to the audience of Geek & Sundry. I have found that, despite the multiple protestations by hoomans that one needs not be anything more than a good person to become a hooman, almost all hoomans are primarily loyal to Felicia Day. Leaving Geek & Sundry, a company started by Felicia, and beginning a company not started by Felicia created a perception in the minds of many hoomans that HyperRPG was not for them, despite covering similar content. Therefore, it is important to understand, when forming a community, that if you choose to use a person as a leader to help unite the group, sometimes the community becomes more loyal to that person than the premise of the organization.

This does not mean that having a unifying person is not useful when starting a community. Indeed, most hoomans I spoke with have indicated that the community would not be what it is without one hooman in particular. This hooman is not famous like Felicia or associated with any organization, but they are unequivocally one of the most respected hoomans. They joined in on Felicia and Ryon's livestreams very early on and volunteered for tasks that helped the community form, such as keeping a list of audience members who wished to keep interacting with each other after the shows were over. Now she acts as a volunteer community manager and moderator for the various platforms Team Hooman uses to interact. She is extremely respected and seen as a role model for hoomans everywhere. In fact, she is one of the first hoomans I discussed my project with because I knew that her opinion of the work could make or break community participation.

Therefore, a person can be a wonderful unifier of a group into a community, if they are passionate for the ideals of the organization and the goals of the community. However, switching who that leader is for an organization can fracture the community, either internally or from the organization as that initial loyalty does not diminish. Although a famous person who is trusted and has a strong online following can help form a community more quickly, often they will not

be able to perform all of the tasks needed to transition from having a group to a community. In these cases, a leader or leaders from within the group who are passionate about the premise and willing to do the grunt work will help solidify the community as something potentially sustainable.

A Uniting Place

Sometimes, a sense of community identity can be created through a unified space. Building a community based solely on the location of a group of people is extremely difficult and may create a community that does not support your organization or goals the way you want. For example, for every online community based on location, such as redditors, there are many more websites that have no unified namesake or sense of communitas. Furthermore, whether true of these groups or not, sites like Reddit which have a named group (i.e. redditors) often have negative reputations. Pocket groups of redditors, however, do experience positive connections and a sense of communitas when interacting on the sub-groups of reddit which cater to their particular interests. Therefore, creating an online community based solely on platform could be detrimental to your long-term goals.

That being said, trying to form a community without a place for that community to meet is a recipe for disaster and having too many places for a community to meet can be just as dangerous. In the case of Team Hooman, this was a group of people who met on Twitch, specifically in the chat rooms of Felicia and Ryon Day's channels. The community formed out of chat interactions with the Day siblings and each other, which would not have been possible on a platform without integrated chat rooms. Having a place where your audience can meet and interact not only with your organization, but with each other, is essential to building a strong, interactive community, rather than just a follower base.

Team Hooman no longer operates solely on Twitch and some hoomans surveyed even stated they do not watch Twitch at all. Recently, one member of the hooman Facebook group asked about the origin of the name hooman, the obsession with raccoons, and if they actually needed to be a follower and fan of Felicia to be a member. They were invited to join the group by a friend several months prior to this post and had spent that time enjoying the posts, but not understanding exactly what a hooman was. They were informed by several hoomans that they didn't need to be a fan of Felicia to continue being a member of the group. They were told to just keep being an awesome person and that seemed to be the end of the discussion. This anecdote shows that a community has potential to grow beyond its initial platform and initial unifiers, though a clear message of purpose should probably be employed by such groups to reduce confusion in new members.

Another issue with spreading a community out across multiple platforms is the difficulty in understanding the size and scope of the community. As of January 2017, Team Hooman has 3,542 followers on Twitter, 2,803 group members on Facebook, and 144 registered members on a community forum launched within the last month. Yet, some hoomans have stated on Twitch

that they do not use Facebook, Twitter, or other social media platforms. Which of these numbers, therefore, represents the actual size of Team Hooman? In actuality, it is impossible to know how many people consider themselves to be hooman. The best way to avoid this issue is to utilize a platform that meets the expected needs of your future community that also has the capacity to be changed as new needs arise. Allowing social media groups and a Twitter account makes sense to increase reach, but these places should never become central to the activities of the community if your organization wants to know the exact size and scope of the group.

The Art of Organic Creation

Many people believe the formation of a community, fandom, or any online group is an organic process. Indeed, with Team Hooman, the formation was largely organic. The name came from a bad accent during a livestream, the mascot from a shirt covered in raccoons that became an inside joke for the regulars in the audience. Team Hooman's philanthropic spirit even seems to have occurred organically, the result of the Day siblings committing their subscriber money to charity and choosing to raise money for different charities during their streams. The story of Team Hooman, on the surface, seems to indicate that online communities with such dedication must occur organically.

This is not the case. Over the course of this research, I was fortunate to be allowed to observe the launch of one of my partner organizations. From these observations and my work as a moderator for various Twitch channels, I have found that even most communities that seem to have been formed organically often take a lot of planning and dedicated people in the background making it happen. The role of community and social media managers should not be minimized. These are the hardworking people who need to figure out the proper way to keep a community feeling safe and fun for members while also open and inviting so that their brand can grow.

Communities attached to organizations fall in a strange realm. Most of these communities need to appear organic, and organic initiative from community members that falls in line with the organization's goals should be encouraged, but they also need to be highly managed, especially during their creation. For this, an organization needs to determine what their message is, their general premise, and how they want the community to interact with the organization before launching campaigns to form the community.

Once an organization is ready to launch their brand and build a community, it can be useful to include a social media manager and a community manager who understand the tools used to reach an audience and begin building a sense of communitas. Most importantly, those who act as community and social media managers must both believe in the message of the organization and understand how to communicate effectively with the audience. In most cases, the people filling these roles will have the most communication with the fans, audience, and community members. If they are not trusted or do not believe in the message of the organization, it will eventually lead to issues in the community.

For instance, one of the organizations hired a social media manager who tended to focus on the Youtube content and often ignored the Twitch content. This caused multiple audience members and members of Team Hooman to state that they felt the Twitch branch of the organization was a separate entity, cut off from the rest of the company. Ultimately, this caused some members to conclude that the organization cared less about its Twitch content than its other content and, as Team Hooman was formed on Twitch, made them more loyal and protective to the Twitch branch while reducing their discussion of the Youtube content. A different social media manager later increased the attention given to the Twitch branch, helping to diminish some of the resentment that was fostered in the community, but the opinion that the Twitch branch is the least-favored child in this organization has not completely disappeared even after several months.

Maintaining the Community

Ok, your community has formed and even has a name. Awesome job! Now comes the hard part, you've got to keep that community going. The internet is littered with the remains of communities and organizations that just didn't make it. In internet speak, these places are dead. Once a group stops communicating regularly or an organization stops being visited and updated regularly it is declared dead. Communities slowly disappear as members leave for new pastures. This is something no organization wants to happen to their community. They want their community to continue on, being active and thriving. But how are you going to do that? How are you going to keep the community members interacting and contributing to your organization day after day? This section covers how to maintain a community, including common problems such as drifting from the original message, and changing popularity of platforms. This section also covers the difference between meeting a community's needs and catering to them, as well as the importance of communication. Finally, this section discusses certain difficulties that occur in philanthropic and altruistic groups, primarily focusing on the difficulties of maintaining financial contributions.

Stay on Message

One of the best ways to unite a group into a community is to give them a unifying message. There are potential challenges to having a unifying message. If a community forms around a unifying message and an organization later moves away from that message, community members may leave. Since an online community is largely built upon the digital interactions members have with each other, they rarely go quietly or alone. For this reason, staying on message is necessary when maintaining a community.

For example, when Legendary Digital Network launched Alpha, a collaboration between its subsidiary companies, primarily Nerdist and Geek & Sundry, the two subsidiary companies had rather different reactions from their audiences. Despite releasing the exact same introductory video for Alpha on both companies' Youtube channels, the resulting comments on the videos were extremely different. Those responding on Nerdist commented about how some of the shows

sounded cool, talking about what they were looking forward to, and overall being optimistic about the new platform. Yet, on Geek & Sundry it is one of their most downvoted videos. Comments on the Geek & Sundry side ranged from being upset that shows were being locked completely behind a paywall to claiming that LDN and Alpha would result in the destruction of the company. In fact, following the release of the video, Geek & Sundry lost over 100 subscribers on Youtube, showing a net loss each hour for several hours following the release, a marked difference from the net gain it had experienced every hour for days prior to the video's release.

Why was there such a difference in reactions? Both companies are owned by LDN, cater to people who consider themselves geeks, and showed the exact same video so, in theory, responses should have been similar. However, the way Nerdist and Geek & Sundry have organized their companies and interacted with their audience is quite different. Nerdist has not really focused on making a community or stating that they depend on their audience. Geek & Sundry, conversely, built a community from its audience with the message of positivity and inclusivity. They were known for having the higher ups of the company, including Felicia Day, interacting with community members, creating a "we're all in this together" mentality. Chris Hardwick, the founder of Nerdist, took a different approach and is known as a supremely busy individual, so the audience does not expect interaction with him (or even to see him on any regular show).

At its core, this difference created an expectation among most fans of Geek & Sundry that the company would be a place that anyone could find a home. Putting material on a platform that requires people to pay to view anything, in the words of many fans, is the antithesis of what Geek & Sundry originally stood for. There was no expectation of this inclusivity among Nerdist fans, so they were much less upset about the announcement of a pay-to-view platform. This may indicate that an organization should strive to not turn its viewers into a community, but this is not the case. Geek & Sundry has a much higher number of subscribers and supporters on Twitch, though it did decrease after the launch of Alpha. By mobilizing the majority of their fans into a community, Geek & Sundry has found success on Twitch, but the launch of a program that appeared to divert from the original message that created the group led to negative side effects. Therefore, consider the message you use as an organization when forming a community and make sure it is something your organization plans to continue long-term. And, if your company needs to launch a program that moves away from that initial message, carefully consider how you present this change to your community.

Fan Service or Customer Service?

This does not mean an organization need always cater to the whims of their community. Catering to what a group wants instead of doing what is best for the organization could take an organization in a dangerous direction. Unfortunately, it isn't always a clear cut distinction between fulfilling the needs of the community as an organization and hurting your brand by giving them whatever they want. This brings us to our next discussion; the difference between fan service and customer service when maintaining a community.

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Fan service is a term that originated in regards to television writers taking the show down a path to please the fans, rather than staying true to the story's intent. Many shows are accused of trading in fan service, creating relationships, killing off characters, or bringing characters back for no reason other than a loud group of fans demanded it. An organization which doesn't primarily produce entertainment media can still partake in fan service by giving customers everything they say they want without taking into account the actual functionality of doing so. These products are easily noticeable as confusing devices with too many special features, clothing designs with way too much going on to still be considered fashionable, and specialty tools that answer a need that never really existed. When an organization is committing fan service, you almost always know it when you see it.

Customer service, on the other hand, involves answering the questions and concerns of your audience without losing the core purpose of your product. In some cases, it involves moving a good suggestion up the chain of command, but often it involves explaining why a suggestion might not work for the organization while still maintaining a positive correspondence. Customer service is more difficult than fan service, since it requires someone making a judgment call on suggestions from the community while still keeping the community happy and tied to the organization.

One of the ways an organization can reduce the demand for fan service and maintain customer service is to be forthright with its goals and changes that occur within the organization. One should note that this strategy can backfire. For instance, every week the CEO of HyperRPG hosts a show called Honesty Hour where he discusses the health of the company with viewers. In his opinion, the audience members are like shareholders and have a right to know what's going on. This has reduced complaints when the organization has had to do something the community wouldn't like to keep the organization successful, such as adding commercials to their channel. Commercials are generally something people complain about on Twitch, but, after the CEO explained why he was going to add them, there were very few complaints. In addition, those who missed his explanation and complained about the commercials were informed by other viewers who saw his explanation why they were added. This caused more than one person to change from complaining to state the commercials were ok.

By telling the viewers that he considers them shareholders, there has been an increase in suggestions being made from the viewers. Some of these suggestions are helpful and something the organization can implement, but many either don't work for the organization's goals or aren't currently feasible. This influx of suggestions can put a greater strain on the community manager, who often is the first point of contact for such discussions. Consider the workload of the members of your organization who are typically contacted by your community before trying to make a change that might increase their workload. If the choice is between fan service and customer service, choose the option that will ensure the continued health of your company and happiness of your community.

Communication

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Of course, neither fan service nor customer service is possible without communication. Communication is the cornerstone of online communities. Without adequate communication, both with each other and with their host organization, community members would drift apart and the community would crumble. But there are multiple ways to communicate with and within a community. How do you know the right communication method for you and your community?

Well, what kind of communication does your community partake in? Are they primarily focused on immediate interaction or does their discussion of a subject take place over several hours, days, or weeks? Usually, the answer is a mix between these two extremes, but online communities do tend to lean towards one or the other. Team Hooman, for instance, primarily prefers the communication style offered by their Facebook group.

Facebook groups allow for communication to occur over time and keeps a record of different conversations in one place, but without the structure of a forum. The discussions with the most recent posts are moved to the most visible spot in the feed. This keeps popular discussions and the newest discussions near the top of a user's feed, but there are some downsides. Since all discussion posts occur in one thread, when a community is large even fairly recent posts can become buried. In addition, there is no search feature for Facebook group posts, so if a member wants to find a particular discussion or discussions about a specific topic, they are out of luck. For this reason, some hoomans have recently launched an official Team Hooman forum.

Forums are websites or sections of websites that are highly organized, searchable, and archived. They allow users to post new discussions and organize these discussions by topic. Users can then view and respond to whichever discussions interest them. The new Team Hooman forums, for instance, are separated into two main categories: Forum and Geek Stuff. These are further broken into topics, such as Announcements, Tabletop Games, and Other Geekery. Opening one of these topics leads to the posts in that area, which can then be opened to read and respond to other users. For instance, clicking on "Announcements" and then "St. Jude gift donations on behalf of Felicia's baby to be" leads one to a thread with two comments by the same person. The first comment explains that, in lieu of gifts, hoomans are encouraged to donate to St. Jude's to celebrate Felicia Day's new baby, including a link of where to donate, and a second comment updating that hooman donations to St. Jude's are now over $8000. Forums can be useful for international communities because they allow people from multiple timezones to have a discussion, but they are slower and, if a group is not highly active on them or changes are made that most users find unfavorable, they are in danger of breaking down as a communication method. Team Hooman previously used the Geek & Sundry forums but, due to changes in the website during a transition stage, the forums stopped being used and were declared dead by Team Hooman.

This brings us to more immediate methods of communication, primarily chat rooms. As Team Hooman was born on Twitch and a staple of Twitch channels is their live chatrooms, many hoomans can be found in chat rooms at the same time. Chat rooms are wonderful for quick discussion that more closely mirror conversations one would have when hanging out with friends

or for discussing something happening in the moment, such as the show currently on the channel where the chat room is located, but, unless someone is personally archiving the chat log or someone watches past shows to view the chat that occurred during that show, it is impossible to see what was being discussed after the fact. Furthermore, even with access to a chat log, it is impossible to partake in the conversation once the live show and live chat are over. Therefore, while live chat can be useful for making online interactions feel more social, they are not ideal as the only communication method for an online community.

One method many Twitch communities and groups have turned to is chat programs. These software programs allow for live chat which is archived and searchable, making it easier to refer back to a previous conversation. Furthermore, one channel can have multiple chat rooms in these programs, allowing for discussion to be separated based on topic of interest. The most popular of these softwares, such as Slack and Discord, also allow for voice chat, making online interactions have an even greater sense of social interaction. Discord, in particular, seems to be a favorite among Twitch users as it allows for Twitch integration, including the use of chatroom-specific emoticons. Discord also allows direct messages between users, which can be helpful if community members use it to communicate with an organization's community manager, but can become an issue if members use it to contact multiple staff multiple times a day. Usually a simple conversation asking members to contact one person first will curb, though not completely diminish, this behavior in almost all members of the community.

Patterns of Use

Even with the most active online community, you'll probably notice that certain times are better for conversation and getting things done than others. This could come down to the time of day or even the time of year. It can be scary to work hard on growing an online community and one day seeing conversation much lower than it typically is, but this is not always a cause to fear. Sometimes, it's simply due to regular fluctuation in community interaction. For this reason, part of maintaining a community comes down to recognizing patterns of use that will cause fluctuation in interactions and differentiating these fluctuations from more serious discrepancies.

Some of understanding the patterns of use of your community comes down to understanding who the members of your community are. Are they mostly students? Are they mostly United States citizens? Are most of them employed and working during the day? What are their hobbies and interests? Getting to know the answers to these, and other questions will help you understand whether it's time to panic.

When a community is primarily composed of college students, for example, there will be times they may be less likely to participate online. Because students often have highly variable class schedules, it is hard to determine if a time of day is more likely to have lower interaction. It is easier to determine fluctuations in interaction based on the time of year. Most students have several weeks to months free from classes for summer and winter break and another week off for spring break. If your organization is not school-related, you may see an uptick in interactions

from students during these times. However, during midterm and final seasons, it is reasonable to prepare for a drop in interaction.

Another thing to consider is if your community is from a particular timezone or cluster of timezones as this will affect interaction fluctuation during the day. For instance, although approximately 10.4 million unique users visited Twitch between November and December in 2016, 8.4 million of them came from the United States. Due to this, channels that broadcast during late or early hours for United States timezones usually receive less traffic than those which operate during the late afternoon and evening hours. For similar reasons, if a community is primarily clustered in a couple of timezones and most members hold 9 to 5 jobs, trying to hold an online event at 3:00 in the afternoon on a Tuesday will probably have a smaller turnout than one occurring at the same time on a Saturday.

Finally, what are the group's hobbies and interests? Ideally, these relate to your organization and the community you have formed, thus strengthening member connection to the community and online interaction, but people are multi-faceted. They probably have interests that lie outside the community. If those interests require their physical presence, you'll probably see a reduction in interaction during events related to those interests. For instance, most hoomans, as geeks, are interested in attending fan and comic book conventions. During the largest of these, San Diego Comic Con, online interaction of group members decreases overall, and members attending the convention either interact sporadically during the convention or only return to online interaction with the community after the convention has ended.

As shown in the previous examples, there are many reasons that online interaction may decrease for a period of time in your community. If you notice communication decreasing without an associated cause, or interaction does not increase after a supposed cause has ended, it may be time to reassess the health of your community and your communication platforms. Consider whether your organization or the creators of your platforms have changed anything recently which may be causing the interactions to decrease. If you pinpoint the cause, do what you can to fix the issue quickly. Letting an issue linger could kill your community.

Financial Maintenance

Ok, you've formed a community and understand how to maintain it, but one of the messages you formed the community around was being philanthropic. You have a great community of people who are willing to contribute financially to charity or your organization. Or maybe you have formed an online community which organizes ways for members to contribute to causes without spending money. Either way, you've formed the community around the idea of giving back, so now you need to figure out how to maintain that spirit without having members burn out.

Burnout is a bigger problem than you might think. It can happen in anyone and can occur from a member giving too much of their energy to a community to a member overextending their bank account a bit too far in support of a community. When burnout occurs, the best solution that can

occur is a member takes some time away from the group and comes back, but, in many cases, the member won't return. Or, if the member never took time away from the community, they could suffer extremely negative consequences further down the road, including impacts to their mental and physical well-being.

Therefore, considering the well-being of your community is essential to keep an online community from crumbling. A balance must be reached between asking members to give, whether financially or through other means, and allowing members not to give without any negative impact. One of the easiest ways for a charitable group to monitor this and prevent burnout is for the organization to organize charity drives and activities for the community. Spacing charity drives far enough apart will allow time for members to recover financially and not negatively impact their own lives by donating. Creating activities that either occur far apart in time or space, or concern different areas of interest within the community, may also help keep the same members from volunteering for every activity and eventually burning out.

That being said, some organizations depend on contributions from their communities to keep the lights on. In such situations, the staff of the organization need to carefully consider their expenses, the size and breakdown of their community, and their ability to grow that community and increase their financial support. If an organization has a relatively small, but highly dedicated, community, they may see large donations, especially during specific events to raise money or at the start of a project, but these donations will not continue in such a manner every day. One of the organizations I work with has found that, though they depend on financial contributions from their audience, they were experiencing a decline in contributions which, if allowed to continue without finding another source of funding, would have meant the end of the organization in a few short months. The organization managed to find alternative revenue streams to reduce the strain on the community, reduce burnout of community members, and keep their lights on.

Therefore, a dedicated but small community can, and does, help their organizations start to succeed, but they won't be able to do it alone. Without growth or alternative revenue streams, organizations will most likely fail depending solely on their communities. Similarly, without growth, constant charity drives or activities will cause a decrease in contributions even in communities that were formed around the message of being philanthropic or altruistic. Helping a community reach a balance between its dedication to such projects and members' health is key to maintaining a philanthropic online community.

Growing the Community

Alright, you've mastered how to create and maintain a community. Perfect! Now, how do you get your community to keep growing after that initial creation? Furthermore, how do you grow your community while reducing growing pains for already established members? One of the organizations I worked with experienced a problem with growing their brand for quite some time. It's a pretty common problem, actually, that communities initially form but never move

beyond the initial recruits. No matter the loyalty of these original members, this is often a death certificate for the online community as, for one reason or another, members will need to take breaks or leave their online group. This section covers how to avoid this stagnation and foster growth of the community. This includes discussing appearances of inclusivity versus exclusivity to outsiders, the use of positive communication in online platforms, and the availability of safe spaces, especially for marginalized groups. This section also covers the role of moderators in keeping your community healthy and growing as well as the role of Gatekeepers and Stakeholders. Finally, this section concludes with a discussion on one of the hardest obstacles to overcome on the World Wide Web, discoverability of your organization and community.

Inclusive or Exclusive?

When growing a community, the initial thought might be to be as inclusive as possible. It makes sense that being exclusive limits who will be allowed and who will even want to join the community. Even so, being too inclusive can produce just as much risk to the community. Focusing solely on inclusivity has the danger of diffusing the elements that formed the community in the first place until the bonds that connect the group together break and the community dissolves.

In Team Hooman, group members state that the focus is on inclusivity. Hoomans don't believe that their group puts requirements on membership, other than wanting to create positive experiences for others. Outsiders, however, often identify Team Hooman as the audience of Geek & Sundry or a group of fans of Felicia Day. Even hoomans recognize that most, if not all, of their members identify as geeks. Due to this, it is obvious that, even in groups that purport to be completely inclusive, there are still restrictions on membership that either exclude or hinder others from joining. These characteristics, although they do exclude certain people from being able or wanting to join the community, are also what helps unify a group as a community.

On the other hand, an organization that places too many restrictions on its fans may see community members leave and the community dissolve. This is especially true if these restrictions did not previously exist for the community. In these cases, community members state that they have felt pushed out, or that the organization that they first followed is "not the same" as what it has become, with the subtext that this change has removed their wish to support the organization. For instance, on Twitch, viewers can watch any channel, whether they subscribe to that channel or not. When Geek & Sundry launched a platform that required members to pay to view content, Team Hooman revolted. Months after the launch of this platform, it still has not attracted a large, stable audience. In addition, the launch of this platform has caused more than one hooman to stop subscribing to the Twitch channel, believing the launch of a platform with monetary restrictions is indicative of the direction the company will be taken by LDN.

For many hoomans, the release of this pay-to-view platform was too restrictive. Several hoomans have stated that Geek & Sundry, just like Team Hooman, was started, in their minds, as a company to unite geeks. It was, to them, a safe space for all geeks to embrace their weirdness

and find like-minded people. The addition of a pay-to-view platform, though not the only branch of Geek & Sundry, was seen as completely changing the company from one that promotes inclusivity to a company of exclusionary practices. Since most hoomans state Team Hooman was created as an inclusive community, this put the organization at odds with the group and caused many hoomans to remove financial support.

Therefore, in order for an organization to grow their community they must strike a balance between inviting everyone to join and putting too many restrictions on membership. In addition, an organization should understand the uniting message of its community and that any actions taken by the organization which are perceived to go against that message will cause discontent within the community and, possibly, the removal of support of the organization by either some members or the entire community.

Positive Communication in Online Platforms

There are places you don't go on the internet if you don't want to interact with trolls. Online writers and content creators are continuously told to never read the comments. It's generally accepted that, if you're going to watch someone play League of Legends on Twitch, you avoid the channel's chatroom like the plague. Others will tell you never to visit 4chan, describing an environment so toxic one might believe it is likely to come out of your computer's screen and melt your face off. Even on large platforms with millions of daily users, like Twitter, it is generally accepted that people could write something horrible to you at any moment. People who visit sites that allow them to interact with strangers often talk about visiting these sites as if they are mentally prepared for war, just because of the negative interactions that exist on these sites.

No matter the presence of trolls and toxicity on the internet, I have found in my interactions that most people will not tell you to shut up and die the second they start talking to you. Even if the voices that spew toxicity are not the majority, they are quite loud. Given the volume of their hate, many people are looking for places where they can communicate online without constantly being on guard. Therefore, an organization looking to grow its community should also consider the value of positive interaction as an attractive feature for recruitment.

One of Team Hoomans goals is to foster safe spaces and positive communication for its members. Similarly, the main channels hoomans watch; Geek & Sundry, HyperRPG, Felicia Day, Ryon Day, and the various channels of hosts from these main four, set restrictions for interaction in their chat rooms that help promote positive communication. The number one rule of Geek & Sundry's chat room is Wheaton's Law* and the number two rule is that "Racism, misogyny, misandry, homophobia, or any other hatred will not be tolerated." The number one rule of HyperRPG's chat room is "Be excellent to each other, the hosts, and the guests." The second and third rules of HyperRPG are also focused on positive communication, by stating hate speech is not allowed and that "We are real people. With real feelings. Be kind."

Rules such as these set clear parameters for discourse, but they are not always followed. Even with a vigilant team of moderators helping to enforce the rules, things get through. On Geek & Sundry, this happens most often on Thursday nights during its most popular Twitch show, Critical Role. During this time there is often 20,000 or more viewers and the speed of chat often becomes too much for the moderators to catch rule breaking. Several hoomans have stated that they close chat Thursday nights specifically because of the toxicity that occurs during this show.

On HyperRPG, issues with positive communication are often because of the overzealousness of the audience. When a rule is broken on HyperRPG and a moderator tries to enforce that rule, often the regular viewers in chat do one of two things; most often they gang up and attack the person who broke the rule, but sometimes they attack the moderator for "abusing their power." In either case, this creates an unwelcome environment. Either the user who initially broke a rule will go away and not come back, their interest in joining the community broken by being attacked, or the moderator will interact with the community less, trying to reduce the amount they are attacked. Either scenario is not good for the growth of a community or an organization.

Therefore, it is important to understand that, though rules need to be enforced in order to allow a community to foster positive relationships and create an inviting space for new members, there also needs to be some leeway for new users who are not familiar with the rules. If at all possible, an organization should endorse when their community members positively let someone know they are breaking the rules while also letting them know that attacking someone for breaking the rules can be just as bad as what the initial rule breaker did. However, as Critical Role shows us, even with the best regulations, a positive community will still have moments of negative interaction and times of toxicity. It is up to the organization and the community to figure out how to curb these moments or create alternative spaces for community members trying to get away from the toxic moments.

Availability of Safe Spaces

This leads us to the availability of safe spaces. It is difficult to create a completely safe environment for people, especially when trying to grow a community, as evidenced in the previous section. One way to help create a safe space is by enforcing rules that foster positive communication, but these rules do not always stop negative comments, especially as new people find the group and begin interacting before learning the rules. As an organization, there are several things that can be done to promote the idea that your community is a safe space.

For instance, on Twitch there is a phenomenon of calling women grills. This started from a typo in a popular channel's chatroom and spiraled into a site-wide joke. Often, when seeing women onscreen, a viewer will come in and say something about the "grills." Almost all the women I have spoken with over the course of this project, primarily from Team Hooman, who watch

Twitch channels state this makes them feel uncomfortable and objectified. They find it demeaning, though most who use this term believe that it is just a joke and does no harm.

On Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG, using that term to refer to women is frowned upon. Since it is so prevalent across Twitch, the channel's staff encourage moderators and chatters to kindly inform new viewers who use this term that we don't like it in our chatroom. Doing so in a kind manner is more likely to get the new viewers to stop while continuing to view the channel and leaves the door open for them to become members of the community. Conversely, if the chat reacts negatively to this person for using the term, responds unkindly, or the person who uses it becomes argumentative, they are less likely to continue watching the channel and even less likely to ever join the community.

Therefore, when creating safe spaces while trying to grow a community, it is important to understand that those who do something to make the space feel less safe for others often do not understand that's what they're doing. In their minds, they are often just joking or interacting the way they've viewed others interact in other online spaces. It is important to educate them about how their actions can be harmful to others without alienating them.

Of course, there are people who say harmful things fully understanding what they are doing is wrong. These are the trolls who tell others to commit suicide, find a person's home address or phone number, and use very clear hate speech. In almost a year of observing chat rooms on Twitch, I have never seen someone who tells others to hurt themselves, or uses any kind of clear hate speech, see the error of their ways and become members of the community. These are people setting out to hurt others and, when the offense is clearly above and beyond what might be considered acceptable, it is up to the organization to enforce their rules and maintain the safe space.

The Role of Moderators

The next element of growing a community is the utilization of moderators. Moderators are not always necessary for online communities, but as the community grows they become more necessary to continue positive interactions and ensure your platform feels safe for the members of your community. Even the best community and social media managers need to sleep at some point and, with an online community, where members may be in the same town as your organization's headquarters or could be halfway across the world, 24/7 coverage becomes necessary. When that happens, moderators can step in to keep your community functioning.

That said, you do not want the community to feel like moderators diminish their worth as community members. If, for example, your organization started the community by having a leader in the organization communicate with the group often, getting rid of this communication in favor of having community members only interact with moderators will create issues for your community members. For this reason, it is sometimes a good idea to add moderators slowly over time. Moderators should never outnumber community members, for instance. At the same time,

you do not want your moderators to be so outnumbered that they feel overwhelmed and unable to perform their duties. Thus, adding moderators slowly, seeing what kind of commitment your current moderators are able to give, and constantly being aware of changes to this coverage, will help keep the community from feeling devalued and your moderators from feeling overwhelmed.

In addition, assigning someone the role of moderator is something that shouldn't be taken lightly. Moderators are responsible for enforcing the rules, but they are also responsible for fostering positive feelings in the community. Moderators that are too heavy-handed when punishing people for breaking the rules will stir feelings of animosity in the community. Moderators who brag about their moderator status as if it makes them better than others in the community will also cause feelings of malcontent. Finally, moderators must be careful about how they communicate with community members in their day-to-day interaction. Even though the community, and often the moderators, do not want to consider moderators as more important than them, often moderators are seen as representatives of the organization. Therefore, their communications are seen as representative of the company as well. Any moderator can have a bad day, but allowing moderators to step back when they are having a bad day will help decrease the community members being offended by moderator comments and reduce any potential negativity from being associated with the organization.

At the end of the day, moderators can be a great help with keeping a community happy and safe while also inviting new members to join the group. This is only possible when the community views the moderators as an asset and when moderators are at their best. An organization can keep moderators at their best by being selective about who they make a moderator, choosing someone who is a respected and humble community member, and encouraging moderators to take time away from the community when they need it. Doing so will help keep a moderator team strong and a positive community happy and growing.

Gatekeepers or Stakeholders?

An organization looking to grow a community also needs to consider the role of gatekeepers and stakeholders within the community. These are not terms that a community member voluntarily picks up or ones that can be assigned. Instead, the placement of a community member as a gatekeeper or stakeholder often occurs organically. Let's look at stakeholders first.

A stakeholder is a person with a strong stake in the organization or community. They are a person who will check on activities occurring in the community. They are passionate to a fault about the message of the community and dedicated to helping the community thrive. They are often willing to help out with whatever they can in order to keep their community functioning and growing. Often, stakeholders contribute more than other community members, though not always financially. Their role is often not seen as one of leadership, but as just a very dedicated member of the community. They are respected, but not always looked to for guidance by the other members.

Gatekeepers, for lack of a better term, on the other hand, are considered to be leaders in the community. This is not to be mistaken with a common usage of gatekeeper within geek culture, which refers to someone who tries to decide who is a legitimate geek, keep those they don't consider worthy from accessing something, and is primarily viewed as a negative figure. The gatekeepers we are discussing here often volunteer to do menial tasks that help the community survive and are usually the first people to answer a question from another community member or a new potential member. Often, gatekeepers have contact with leaders in an organization that other community members do not. Due to their authority, getting on the bad side of a gatekeeper can cause someone to be attacked by community members or discouraged from joining the group. Getting on their good side, conversely, can open doors and opportunities within the community for a member.

Most online organizations have both stakeholders and gatekeepers and, sometimes, these labels apply to the same person. Both stakeholders and gatekeepers, after all, usually volunteer to do work for the organization or community whenever it's needed. Nevertheless, these terms are not interchangeable. For example, there are multiple people who perform volunteer work for Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG. These people are highly invested in the organizations and always willing to volunteer when the organizations need the help. They are all stakeholders, but not all of them are looked to as leaders in the community or have the ability to influence members' opinions on different topics. Similarly, there are members of Team Hooman who support Geek & Sundry and HyperRPG in other ways that don't require volunteer work. There are multiple hoomans who have multiple accounts on Twitch so that they may subscribe more than once to these organizations, thus increasing the organization's profit. Others outright donate money consistently or purchase gifts and supplies for the organizations or the hosts. Doing these activities proves that these people are stakeholders, but it is not enough to make them gatekeepers.

Being a gatekeeper does not mean one needs to spend money or perform manual labor. Gatekeepers sometimes merely take on responsibilities within a community, such as compiling a list of members or making a platform where members can communicate. Many gatekeepers become such because they were either around since the beginning of a community and have publicly taken on responsibilities which help the community or because a leader of the associated organization has made it clear that the person is trusted or listened to by members of the organization. Stakeholders can become stakeholders without ever publicly discussing their role. Most gatekeepers, on the other hand, are known publicly and are recognized as leaders in the community.

Now, why is it important to understand the role of gatekeepers and stakeholders in a community if you're trying to grow that user base? Simply put, gatekeepers are listened to by the community. If they ask community members to increase the organization's visibility, more members would participate than if someone not recognized as a leader were to ask. Stakeholders should be recognized, as they are often the first who will volunteer to help and are likely to keep performing the task far longer than other members. Identifying the community members who fit

into these categories and using their abilities within the community correctly can greatly improve an organization's chances of motivating and growing their community.

Discoverability

Finally, nothing you do to mobilize your community to accept new members matters if new people can't find your organization and community. Discoverability is the most important thing an organization needs to consider when trying to grow a community, especially if the organization has created its own platform for the community to interact on. This section will cover different ways an organization can increase its discoverability as well as some of the pitfalls that can occur when trying to increase your reach.

Although you do not usually want to have your community spread across multiple social media platforms as it makes it more difficult to communicate with and understand your community, having various social media accounts can be essential to growing an online community. Twitter is a quick way to get in contact with people and possibly grow your community. Tweets focused on activities and events performed by your organization, especially if those events are online, are useful for catching the eyes of potential members. In order for these people to ever see your tweets, it is important to utilize the proper hashtags which will allow people to find your tweets. A good social media manager knows how to utilize hashtags and construct tweets that will lead to followers and new community members.

If your organization has not created a custom platform for the community, reaching out to the creators of the platform may help your community get in front of more eyes. On Twitch, getting in the good graces of Twitch's staff, especially those who decide which channels get on the front page, is priceless for building a community and increasing the legitimacy of your organization. For instance, Critical Role, the most watched show on Geek & Sundry, did not reach its popularity on its own. Though it is an entertaining show, almost no one who wasn't already familiar with Geek & Sundry or the hosts of the show would have started watching without Twitch's support. Several Twitch staff enjoyed the show and placed it in the Hero spot of front page. This means that, whenever a user loaded the Twitch website Thursday nights, they would immediately see Critical Role and nothing else. Months of having this spot every week was one of the main contributing factors that led to the popularity of the show and an influx of subscribers to the channel.

It is important to not venture out onto social media without an experienced social media manager or marketer in your organization. It is very easy to fall into traps that will cost an organization money and, sometimes, members. Most marketers and social media managers will be able to lead organizations away from paying for followers on social media, since these "followers" are often fake accounts which never lead to actual growth of the community, but without proper communication and an understanding of the community, even the most experienced person can negatively impact an organization through social media.

For instance, when one of the organizations frequented by Team Hooman announced a new program, there was little public communication about the program for several months. Hoomans started to note that changes were being made that negatively impacted the preexisting content of the organization and concluded, whether true or not, that it was being caused by the new program. The person who eventually was given the task of answering questions about the new program did not know everything about the program and was not familiar with the community's concerns, so they chose to jokingly answer some of the questions. Many hoomans saw this as brushing aside their concerns and publicly stated their opposition to this program and, in many cases, withdrew their support from the organization. Now, two of the front page search results for this organization navigate to hoomans explaining why they do not support this program, which negatively impacts the chance of new viewers giving it a chance.

Now I've Got It! I Think…

In summary, starting, managing, and growing an online community is no easy feat. Many organizations try and fail to ignite that spark of communitas which transitions a group to a community. Many more fail to provide the maintenance necessary for a community to keep going more than a few months. Some never manage to inspire after the initial spark and their communities die from lack of growth. It is exceedingly difficult to create a healthy online community that can continuously attract new members, but, when done right, the payoff is worth the effort.

In 2015, Geek & Sundry, primarily through Team Hooman, raised over $300,000 for charity. This is actually a low estimate, as their two largest charity drives raised over $150,000 each. In 2016, the launch of HyperRPG raised over $60,000 for The Halo Foundation, largely contributed by members of Team Hooman. Whether organizing the fundraisers independently or having an organization or Felicia Day organize the fundraisers, hoomans take part in dozens of charity drives every single year, many of which raise thousands of dollars for their designated cause. Most recently, hoomans took to raising money for St. Jude's Children's Hospitals in honor of Felicia Day announcing her pregnancy 3 weeks before her due date. In less than 3 days hoomans donated over $10,000 to the drive and aren't done yet.

Through my work with Team Hooman I have found that anyone can join the community if they agree with the uniting message of the group. Although I admire the philanthropic efforts of this community, I do not believe that hoomans are so different from other people. With the proper tools and understanding of online interactions, any organization can create an altruistic online community. There is one rule, though, that has yet to be explicitly stated which is central to the health of an online community. This is the rule of caring.

Team Hooman started because Felicia and Ryon Day put in the effort to communicate in a friendly manner with their audience. The moments of contention that have occurred can usually be traced back to a break from the unifying concepts, like the unifying message, of Team Hooman. When an organization breaks from these unifying concepts, the community will often

interpret it as the organization not caring about the community and trying to use or abuse them. This may not be the case, but without proper communication, any break from the unifying concepts will cause negative reactions. By following the advice laid out in this toolkit, organizations can reduce negative occurrences and maintain the health of their communities.

That is not to say this is an exhaustive list that creates the perfect formula for all online communities. Just as with people, each online community is unique. The techniques that work in one may need to be altered or changed completely for another. The information provided in this toolkit should cover most issues an organization will face when forming, maintaining, and growing their online community. If this toolkit is used successfully, organizations should be able to learn what additional techniques their community requires without accidentally destroying the community in the process.

To all people reading this trying to create an online community, do not be afraid of making mistakes. The organizations I worked with for this project both made mistakes that negatively affected their audiences and Team Hooman. To date, both organizations are still standing. Team Hooman is still standing and members are still watching the shows and attending the events of the organizations. Making a mistake is not the end of the world and, hopefully, this kit will help you correct any mistakes you do make. For now, I'll leave you with the advice Team Hooman has imparted on me; be kind and thrive.
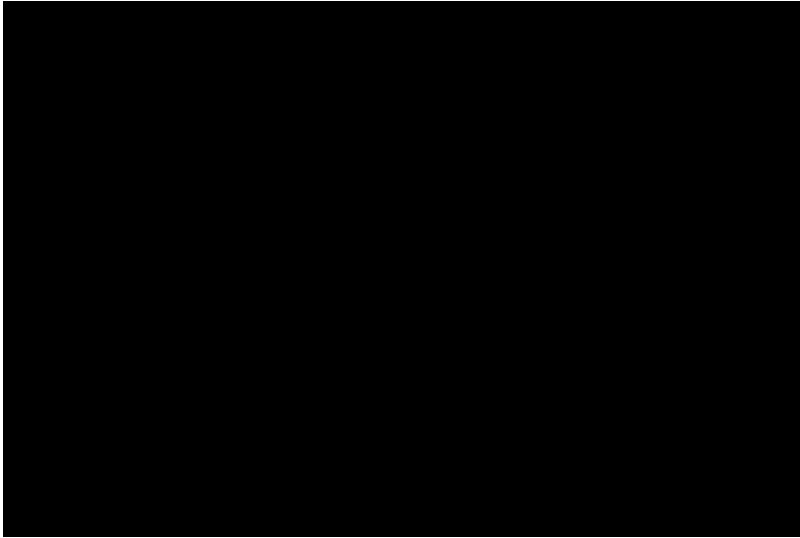
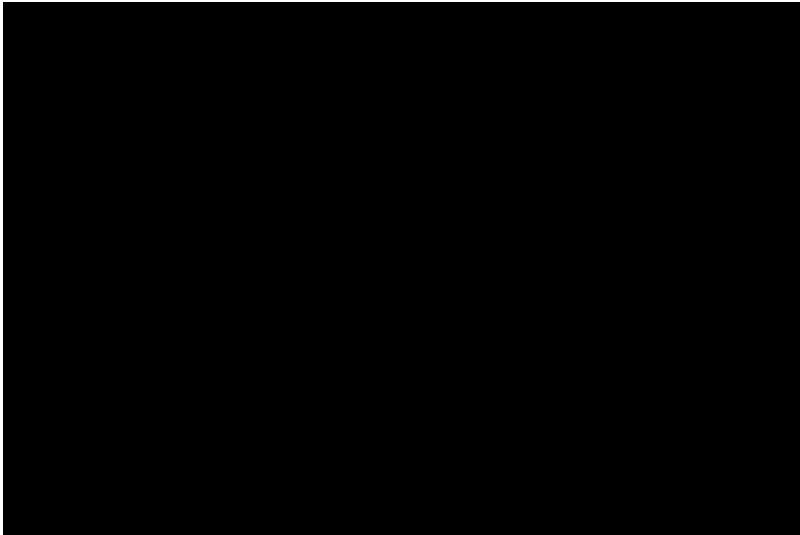APPENDIX D: VIDEO DELIVERABLES

Team Hooman Initial Findings Stream #1
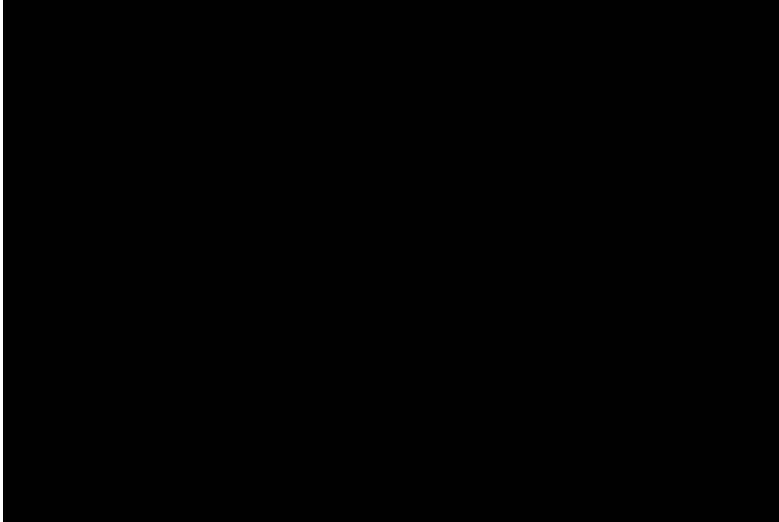
Team Hooman Initial Findings Stream #2
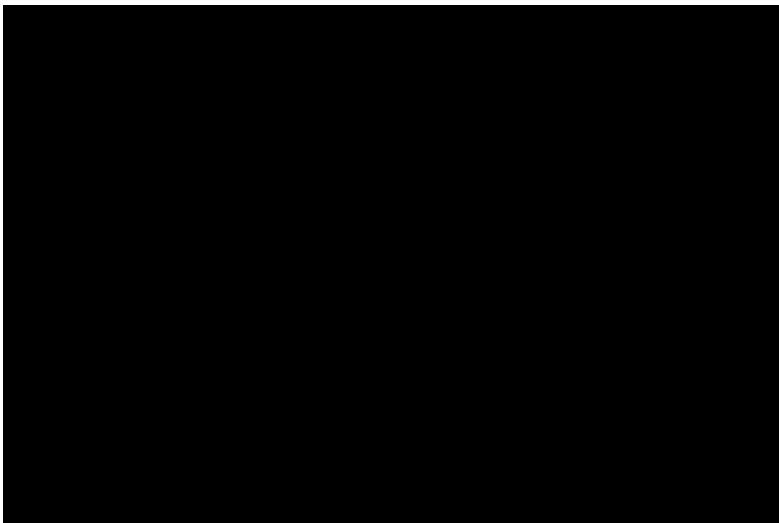
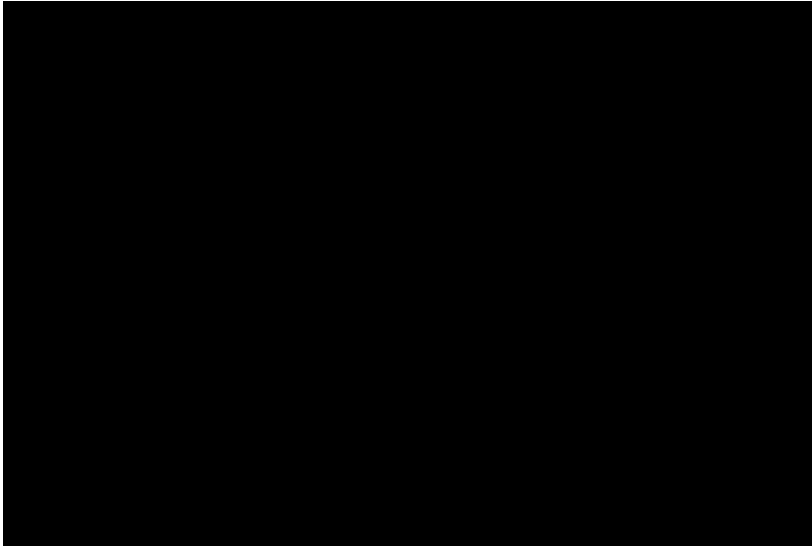**Team Hooman Initial Findings Stream #3**
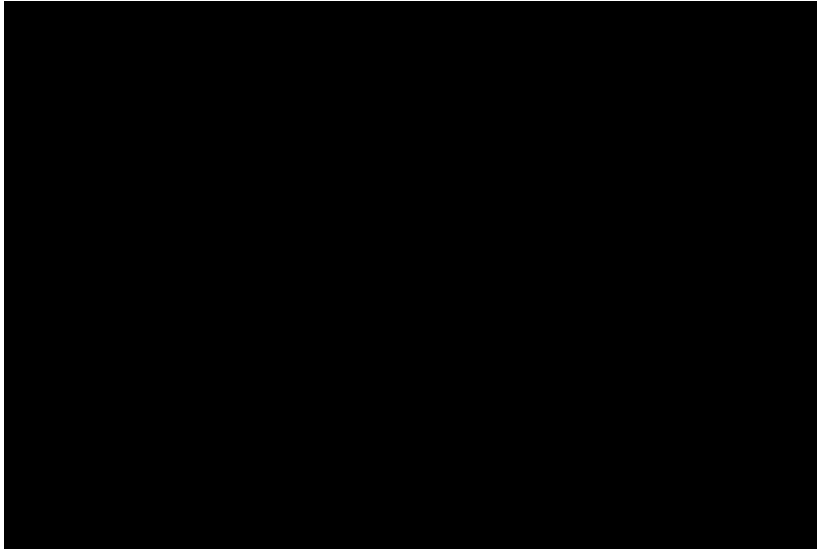
Geek & Sundry Streamed Interview

Team Hooman Final Insights Stream

APPENDIX E: OTHER DELIVERABLES

*Two presentations occurred at SWAA 2017 related to this project. One of these presentations, a discussion on the intersection of game culture and anthropological research, was recorded and is included here.

SWAA 2017 Salon Session

APPENDIX F: GEEK WORD GLOSSARY

Emotes/Emoticons/Emoji

An emoji is a small digital image used to express ideas, emotions, or other concepts. Although emotes and emoticons are traditionally created through punctuation, such as :), these terms are generally interchangeable with emoji

Fan

Fan is short for fanatic and refers to someone who enjoys a specific work or person. For example, one can be a fan of Felicia Day or a fan of tabletop roleplaying games.

Fandom

There are a few meanings for fandom. It may refer to the condition of being a fan of something (ex. My decades long obsession with the Harry Potter fandom has yet to prepare me for attending magic school) or it can refer to the fans of a specific subject collectively (ex. The Supernatural fandom came out to support Jared Padalecki when he discussed his struggles with his mental health).

Jedi

One of the "good" guys in Star Wars who have access to the light side of the Force and fight using lightsabers. Due to the popularity of the franchise, fans began adopting the rules of the Jedi in their regular lives, even claiming Jedi as their religion.

Redditors

People who frequent the internet site Reddit to the point that it becomes part of their identity. Reddit has many communities as it operates as a forum database for whatever topic users wish to discuss, but these community members, when viewed together, are considered redditors.

Sith

One of the "bad" guys in Star Wars who have access to the dark side of the Force and fight using lightsabers.

Stream/Streamer/Streaming

A stream is a live broadcast. A streamer is someone who does live broadcasts, usually on their own channel. Streaming is a term used on Twitch to refer to the action of performing a live broadcast.

Sub

A sub is a subscriber to a particular channel on Twitch or Youtube. On Youtube, subscribers do not pay money while on Twitch, they pay a monthly fee and gain access to perks, such as channel-specific emoji. A Twitch follower, one who gets notifications about when a channel is live, but receives no other perks, is more closely related to a Youtube subscriber.

Troll

A person who interacts on the internet with the intent of causing chaos or upsetting people. Some people use the term troll to refer to people who make light-hearted jokes at someone else's expense. These trolls differ from malevolent trolls by bringing the target of the joke in as a commiserator. They are willing to stop making jokes if someone starts to become upset. Malevolent trolls are attempting to hurt people with their comments and will not stop because someone is upset. At their worst, malevolent trolls will find addresses and phone numbers for their victims and their victims' families and attempt to continue the verbal abuse offline through this information.