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Fast Raising: Digital Fundraising as Interaction Rituals

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Twice a year, GamesDoneQuick hosts events that showcase the Speed Running Community, a sub-set of the Video Game Community. Since its inception in 2014 through 2021 GDQ has raised $25.7 million that has been distributed to the Prevent Cancer Foundation and Médecins Sans Frontiers (Doctors without Borders). This collection of studies analyzes the Awesome Games Done Quick 2020 event utilizing the Interaction Ritual Theory framework of Randall Collins to understand how ritualistic social action of this community has been leveraged by event organizers to promote successful crowd funding efforts that benefits organizations outside of the community. Further it expands on research into New Social Movements and Participatory Culture to frame and explain the motivations behind this communal process. This study provides evidence to show that interaction ritual chains are present, but failed to accurately identify the specific characteristics of the sacred objects present to link them to the success of rituals. Additionally, it failed to find a link between perceived identity markers of ritual performers with the amount of donations received at the event studied. Lastly, it takes steps to categorize parts of the social action present in the form of donation incentives and describes how those specific incentive types perform in relation to one another.

To Steve, Steven, and Stevens.

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INTRODUCTION

In January 2014, GamesDoneQuick (GDQ) achieved a significant milestone by raising over one million dollars during one of its events. What began as a humble gathering in Mike Uyama's living room, shared with a small online community, and initially raising approximately $10,000 in 2010, has since evolved into a bi-annual international event with 80-90,000 concurrent viewers, generating over $45 million for charitable organizations such as the Prevent Cancer Foundation, Médecins Sans Frontiers/Doctors Without Borders, and others (GamesDoneQuick 2023; Wikipedia 2021). Remarkably, this social phenomenon revolves around online video gaming, and this rapid growth is characteristic of GDQ's journey.

One notable example of pro-social behavior within the video gaming community is the crowdfunding activities conducted by GDQ (Baumgardner et al. 2017; Riedl 2013; Salido-Andres et al. 2021; Salido-Andrés et al. 2019). Crowdfunding can be categorized into reward-based and non-reward or Donation-based Crowdfunding (DCF), the latter involving donors supporting a cause without direct compensation (Salido-Andrés et al. 2019).

GDQ events resemble traditional telethons, offering incentives and programming to encourage voluntary donations (Longmore 2005; Reiley and Samek 2019; Weinryb and Turunen 2017). However, the unique format and success of GDQ events stem from digital technology and the communities that thrive in these digital spaces, sparking questions about leveraging digital communities for mass pro-social efforts with seemingly altruistic aims.

GDQ stands out as a charity gaming event due to its extraordinary success and innovative approach, using video gaming as a means to raise funds for other organizations. This dissertation offers insights into collective social action emerging from grassroots efforts, yielding significant success. By dissecting GDQ's development and format, this research contributes to the literature on digital communities, charity fundraising, and video gaming.

HISTORY OF GAMES DONE QUICK

GDQ, known as GDQ, traces its roots back to January 1st, 2010, with its first speedrunning event organized by members of the Speed Demos Archive (SDA) and SpeedRun Live (SRL) communities. Speedrunning involves completing video games or segments of games as quickly as possible. Mike Uyama, owner of the Speed Demos Archive, played a pivotal role in this endeavor. Initially held as Classic Games Done Quick (CGDQ), the event focused on 8-bit and 16-bit console games, raising just over $10,000 for CARE International. In the following year, it transformed into Awesome Games Done Quick (AGDQ), expanding to include newer games and raising $52,000 for the Prevent Cancer Foundation (PCF). AGDQ events have since continued to support PCF (GamesDoneQuick 2023; Wikipedia 2021).

In August 2011, Summer Games Done Quick (SGDQ) was introduced, initially held at a participant's home in Utah, raising funds for the Organization for Autism Research. In 2013, SGDQ moved to hotel conference centers in Denver, CO, shifting its focus to support Médecins Sans Frontiers/Doctors Without Borders (MSF/DWB). By 2016, SGDQ achieved parity with AGDQ in terms of fundraising efficiency. GDQ's bi-annual events are week-long charity marathons featuring live gameplay streamed via Twitch, with performances exceeding 120.

Viewership often reaches 75-80 thousand, surging to 150 thousand during peak hours (GamesDoneQuick 2023; Wikipedia 2021).

In 2015, Games Done Quick LLC was officially established by Mike Uyama, formalizing partnerships with PCF and MSF/DWB. Sponsorships from gaming and technology businesses, such as Humble Bundle and The Yetee, further supported the events. These partnerships transformed GDQ into the primary donor for both PCF and MSF/DWB. Utilizing technology and these partnerships, GDQ's fundraising has skyrocketed, with the 2022 AGDQ virtual event raising a record $3,442,033. Special marathons and events have demonstrated GDQ's commitment to social responsibility, supporting causes like disaster relief and inclusive gaming.

GAMING RITUALS

Expanding upon the concept of gaming rituals within the context of GDQ events, we delve into the intricate dynamics that shape the charitable giving behavior of participants and viewers. Randall Collins' Interaction Ritual (IR) theory (2004) offers a lens through which we can understand how these digital interactions create emotional energy (EE) and foster a sense of collective effervescence.

Collins' theory of interaction rituals (IR) and interaction ritual chains (IRC) has predominately been applied to face-to-face interactions and has been severely underapplied to digital interactions (Collins 2004, 2011). This in part may be due to Collins' (2011) own stance that interactions via new media communications are weaker than embodied interactions and therefore are more difficult to produce emotional energy (EE), and he predicts that if they do produce EE it is weaker. Despite this stance from the theory's originator, a small body of literature has developed in recent years to explore to what extant IR theory plays in the social

behavior of communities that exist totally in digital spaces. (DiMaggio et al. 2018; Liu 2018, 2021; Maloney 2013; Rizk and Hillier 2022). This collection of studies seeks to expand that body of literature by expanding research on digital collective action and applying it to areas of pro-social behavior.

The GDQ events share many characteristics with fundraising efforts that rely on the crowdfunding model. In particular they present very similar to charity sporting events (Filo, Funk, and O'Brien 2011; Goodwin et al. 2017; Webber 2004; Woolf, Heere, and Walker 2013), in which participants pay a fee to participate in sporting events and tournaments like golf, softball, disc golf, or bowling, and those entry fees go to benefit the target of the fundraiser. Participation in these events serves as an egoistic reward beyond the warm-feeling effect of giving. GDQ events however differ in the key aspect that donors are members of the audience and not direct participants (they aren't playing the games), additionally the fund raised do not directly benefit the organization collecting and instead go to a third-party cause providing an additional layer of separation from donor to recipient. This suggests an altruistic model utilizing attachment to the fundraising organization and not the beneficiary of the fundraising that target key components of identity and community are appropriate for understanding this case and others that are similar.

Randall Collins' (2004) theory of interaction rituals and interaction ritual chains utilizes the works of Goffman and Durkheim to build a micro-sociological theory of individual actions by placing them within the context of groups and the symbols and structures that are important or "sacred" to the group. Collins advances these positions in IR theory to argue that interactions are not singular events that occur in a vacuum, but instead are a continuum of interactions (chains) that are shaped by previous exchanges and will in turn impact future interactions. More

importantly to understanding GDQ events, successful interactions build emotional energy (EE), the driving force behind Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence (Durkheim 2008), that is derived from the rituals shared focus on "sacred" objects or symbols that fosters a sense of solidarity. With the accumulation of EE, Collins (2001:28) has demonstrated that individual altruistic giving to the group rises both from a bubbling over of EE, the tipping point of Durkheimian collective effervescence, and the accumulation and desire for more EE leads to "sacrificing materials goods for the group."

By analyzing GDQ events as a series of rituals, we can unravel the motivations behind the charitable giving behavior of the community members. The accumulation of emotional energy through shared focus on gaming achievements and charitable goals fosters a sense of solidarity within the digital community. When this solidarity reaches a tipping point, individuals become willing to sacrifice their resources for the greater good, as predicted by Collins.

In summary, GDQ events are more than just gaming marathons; they are elaborate and emotionally charged rituals that unite a global community of gamers and viewers. These rituals create a unique space where the boundaries between the digital and physical worlds blur, and a profound sense of connection emerges. Understanding these gaming rituals sheds light on the success of community-based charity events in the digital age and offers valuable insights into the potential of online interactions to drive pro-social behavior.

VIDEO GAMES

Beyond the micro-sociological focus of Interaction Rituals, this project overlaps multiple areas of interest and provides an opportunity to push forward research on crowdfunding via digital platforms, gamer identity, digital communities, and altruistic pro-social behaviors through

the lens of Collins via new media communications. Additionally, this project presents an opportunity to balance research about video games between anti- and prosocial behaviors.

Research on video games tends to highlight the negative impacts that can arise from use, or more frequently over-use of video games (Anderson, Gentile, and Dill 2012; Ferguson 2007). Research into this area tends to focus on the influence depictions and participation into simulated violence can have on players, specifically adolescent males; and the links to violent acts in other areas of their lives (Calvert et al. 2017; Gray, Buyukozturk, and Hill 2017; Greitemeyer 2019). Physical violence against peers, against romantic and/or domestic partners, and gun violence especially in school settings are frequently attributed in scholarly work, the news media, and the court of public opinions as a direct result of viewing and committing violent acts in a virtual setting.

Further research on video game consumption that negatively portrays the medium is concerned with addiction, highlighting the potential for excessive participation that has detrimental impacts on personal and professional relationships, as well as links to physical and mental health problems (Bean et al. 2017; Carbonell et al. 2016; Yilmaz, Griffiths, and Kan 2017). While these studies provide clear evidence to support video game addiction as a real issue, it is not necessarily something inherent to video games exclusively that makes them susceptible to addiction than other serotonin producing stimuli. Nor is the existence of such stimuli exclusively sufficient to cause addiction.

What is necessary to supplement the extant literature on video games to enhance a wholistic understanding of the medium is research that considers potential positive impacts of video games and gaming. Further this research needs to look beyond the content of games themselves and consider the role of users themselves as they engage with both the material and

one another. This avenue of research has the potential to address the mechanisms through which

individuals and groups come to create identities related to games and gaming, develop systems

of relationships and community through and around video gaming, and how those systems can

be leveraged for social action and social movements.

GAMER IDENTITY

Literature on video gaming beyond addiction and violence studies have focused on ways

in which video gaming represents a social space through which participants interact with the

medium and each other to create a "gamer" identity (Grooten and Kowert 2015; Martey and

Stromer-Galley 2007; Shaw 2010). This has become a diffuse and broadly defined social identity

as one who participates in the activity of gaming and incorporates that activity into an aspect of

the self, drawing upon both the self-categorization of the identity and the recognition and

affirmation of other "gamers" to establish legitimacy of the identity. The extent to which the

identity is incorporated into the self as well as the recognition of the identity by others, is often a

result of the capital one can demonstrate through cultural capital through knowledge of games,

technical capital, or ability to play games, and social capital from the commitment and

contribution to the video gaming community.

Despite having a broad definition of a "gamer" as one who participates in video gaming,

"gamer" as an identity then presents itself as a complex system of affiliations and attachments by

players to specific franchises, genres, platforms, and which inform the roles and social positions

of actors within the sphere of gaming. Merely playing video games may be sufficient to initiate

someone into the "gamer" identity, but the necessary conditions for acceptance or passing

amongst "gamers" as one of them is sufficient cultural and technical capital to differentiate

players of games from true "gamers" (Grooten and Kowert 2015). It is not merely enough to

engage with the video game medium, "gamers" must also self-identify as such and engage with the video gaming communities and culture, displaying an understanding of their normative social expectations and the underlying cultural traditions that shape them.

This aspect of the gamer identity is a path through which video gaming as a single player experience develops into video gaming communities. Communities, especially prior to the development of digital communications technologies, are often depicted as the social entities bound by physical place, in which the social space develops. This is the key component to Collins' own argument against the intensity of interaction rituals in digital spaces being intense enough to produce sufficient emotional energy for collective effervescence to occur (Collins 2011). However, work on digital communities continues to expand as the ease of use and accessibility to digital communication technologies improves (Correa, Hinsley, and de Zúñiga 2010; Duggan 2015; Liu 2018; Rizk and Hillier 2022; Seo, Buchanan-Oliver, and Fam 2015). This collection contributes two-fold to the literature on gaming identity and interaction rituals by exploring how this identity can be leveraged in digital spaces for socially responsible behavior.

GAMING COMMUNITIES

The concept of gaming communities is at the heart of the GDQ phenomenon, offering a fascinating lens through which to explore how these communities form, thrive, and evolve within digital spaces. These gaming communities represent a dynamic interplay between shared interests, social interactions, and the formation of collective identities.

Communities are a web of affect laden relationships among a group of individuals, relationships that often crisscross and reinforce one another with a measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms, and meanings, and a shared history and identity (Etzioni 2004).

Communities consist of interrelated members who attach socio-emotional meaning to the ties within the network. These ties elicit within community members levels of social integration or cohesion, in the form of socio-emotional or instrumental interdependence in response to the form and nature of those social bonds, in line with the classic Durkheimian types of solidarity (Durkheim 2008). In short, communities, through social action develop and maintain a particular culture.

GDQ events epitomize the power of gaming communities in driving pro-social behavior. The speedrunning community rallies around these bi-annual marathons, uniting under a common cause: raising funds for charitable organizations like the Prevent Cancer Foundation and Médecins Sans Frontiers/Doctors Without Borders.

The gaming community's collective identity is amplified during GDQ events. Viewers and participants alike identify as members of the GDQ community, distinct from their everyday gaming circles. This shift in identity is reinforced by the rituals and traditions specific to the community they create in their daily interactions. Some of these include the development of categories of play including Any% and all the way through to a full completion of all possible tasks in a game which is known as 100% as well as establishing rules for competition that include what constitutes intended gameplay versus unintended, including cheating. GDQ events capitalize on these to develop its own inclusion of these rituals such as the donation challenges, bid wars, and memorable moments that become part of GDQ lore.

One crucial aspect of gaming communities is their ability to mobilize collective action. GDQ leverages this by providing a platform where the gaming community can channel their

collective passion and energy toward a charitable goal. The act of donating during GDQ events becomes a symbol of solidarity with the community and a commitment to the shared cause.

The success of GDQ in fostering a sense of community and driving charitable giving highlights the potential of gaming communities to engage in pro-social activities. It demonstrates that gaming is not solely an individualistic hobby but a gateway to collective action and social responsibility.

Feenberg and Barney (2004) contend that successful digital communities require five essential attributes:

1. Shared symbols and rituals for identification.
2. Acceptance of common rules.
3. Mutual aid.
4. Mutual respect.
5. Authentic communication.

Attributes one and five facilitate relationship development and the establishment of shared values. Language plays a vital role in enabling communication and cultural transmission. Effective communication hinges on sincerity to avoid conflicts or community dissolution.

Attributes two, three, and four promote commitment to the community by embracing its values, norms, and social history. Higher commitment levels are demonstrated through conforming to group identity and engaging in actions that benefit the group altruistically or egoistically, thus enhancing group resources and achieving its goals.

Feenberg and Barney (2004) also emphasize that digital communication media must:

1. Allow for bounding, creating closed online groups.

2. Enable tracking of participants' engagement in discussions.

3. Support archiving of community discussions.

4. Ensure stable and genuine identities through warranting.

These features define the boundaries, presence, history, and identity verification within the digital space, facilitating community formation and maintenance.

In addition, Mynatt, O'Day, Adler, and Ito (1998) underscore the importance of technology affordances in shaping network communities. They identify five key affordances:

1. Persistence: Ensuring durability over time for both users and uses.

2. Periodicity: Structuring activities rhythmically and meaningfully over time.

3. Boundaries: Creating metaphorical spatial divisions to accommodate various social groupings.

4. Engagement: Allowing participants to establish diverse communication modes and forms.

5. Authoring: Empowering participants to configure their virtual spaces.

These affordances facilitate the transition from workgroups to meaningful network communities, emphasizing the role of technology in shaping social interactions.

Building off these models of physical and virtual communities, this body of research focuses on social organizations of video gamers within a community context. The work of Johan Huizinga (1944) in *Homo Ludens* early on points to the importance of play to human social

behavior and suggests that routine human interaction tied to specific games lead to social contracts and groupings that ensure its continuity. Play communities tend to become permanent even after the game is finished. These communities of interest have grown in popularity due to increase in utilization of the internet and forums of online communication, preferring the term virtual communities (Mayra 2015).

It then becomes analytically efficient to view video game communities as elective communities or communities of interest (Brint 2001), with the coinciding social relationships and culture being a result of shared participation in video game and video game related activities. These resulting social formations can be called "gaming communities". In summary, gaming communities arise from shared gaming interests, nurturing social bonds in digital spaces. GDQ exemplifies their pro-social potential by uniting the community for charitable purposes.

Understanding gaming communities sheds light on digital social dynamics and collective action's digital-age significance. GDQ as an organization has taken the lead within the speedrunning community through creating, organizing, and ongoing running of the Awesome and Summer Games Done Quick events and are the ideal subject of this line of research.

DISSERTATION OUTLINE AND SUMMARY

What this collection of studies provides is a deeper look at the role digital communities play in reshaping our understanding of collective action and it's applications to charitable giving and fundraising as well as literature on interaction ritual theory. Each of the three articles included in this dissertation take a slightly different approach at demonstrating the presence of interaction rituals and exploring factors that lead to successful ritual performances.

Article one is titled *If You Play It, they Will Come: Understanding the Content Factors in Successfully Organizing Charity Broadcast.* In this study we first sought to establish the presence of interaction ritual chains by demonstrating a link from individual interaction ritual to the subsequent interaction ritual. We found evidence to support our assumptions that interaction ritual chains are occurring, and then further sought to explore how specific attributes of the games being performed influence the success of rituals as the sacred objects of the community.

This body of research failed to find a connection between previously established measures of video game success as being predictors of ritual success, suggesting that other factors associated with the games being performed may be tied to sacredness within the group. It also suggests that an alternative approach to discovering and observing these factors may be a more appropriate avenue for future research.

Article two is titled *One of Us": Influence of Performer Representativeness on Ritual Success at Mass Fundraising Events.* In this study after having previously established the presence of interaction ritual chains sought to explore the role of specific perceived demographic characteristics of those visibly representing the community and performing the rituals as a determinate of success. This article utilized demographic characteristics of race, age, and gender tied to the stereotypical gamer identity of young, white male as a baseline for expected identity of performers.

This study did not find any evidence to support assumptions that the stereotypical gamer identity is important to the success of the interaction rituals examined. While previous research has shown that matching of characteristics of ritual participants is important, this study suggests that the components of identity that are salient and meaningful to the speed running community at these events are not tied to perceived race, age, or gender.

In the final article, titled *Can I Play Too? : Participatory Culture and Audience Ritual Participation at Large Scale Online Fundraising Events,* our goal was to examine aspects of the GDQ marathon that allow the larger audience to "actively" participate in the events, instead of being passive consumers. A rational choice perspective in combination with a participatory culture model helped to explain why audiences engage with various incentives offered during the event.

Examining the various incentive challenges offered by GDQ organizers, a basic typography of four incentive types was created across the nature of incentive reward and structure of the goal. Rewards were categorized as tangible or intangible based on if the item offered concretely impacted the nature or amount of gameplay being presented to the audience, while intangible rewards were purely cosmetic. The structure of the goal was categorized by whether it was wholly collaborative towards one goal or included any competition amongst multiple outcomes.

This study demonstrated the effectiveness of including incentives, in particular ones that provide tangible rewards to participants. However, it also demonstrated that the use of competitive rewards to engage the audience and intangible cosmetic rewards serve as an alternative to help with limitations in number of tangible rewards that can be offered at a single event.

Overall, this dissertation attempts to comprehensively explore the factors contributing to the success of charity broadcasts and fundraising events, including content strategies, performer representativeness, and the role of participatory culture. Each article contributes valuable insights to the broader understanding of how to effectively organize and engage audiences in charitable endeavors that includes ways that positive social impact can be incorporated into the rituals and practices of normative behavior within community gatherings, the changing role of digital

technology in community formation and interaction, and the influence of social identity in lifestyle communities.

CONCLUSION

In January 2020, AGDQ set the then current single event amount raised by the group with total of $3,164,002. At that point GDQ was already in the process of organizing the next event, SGDQ 2020 for early July. However, as we are all aware, a global pandemic quickly shutdown most of the world's plans for the next two summers. It is the strength of the format and very nature of digital communities that allowed GDQ to adapt and with only a minimal delay to August still be able to hold a virtual only version of the event. Further the event raised $2.35 million. The current highest amount raised set at AGDQ 2022 was also a virtual only event.

The ability of this organization to adapt to changing social circumstances and move quickly unironically mirrors the technique and skill of those that speed run games themselves. Many actions in games are tied to the speed of gameplay which can be fractions of a second, requiring split-second timing and decision making. In addition to quickly navigating a global pandemic, GDQ has also taken a lead in promoting equity and inclusion for all gamers regardless of age, sex, gender, or sexual identity due to rapidly changing social climates. Specifically, they have shown to be heavily opposed to forms of discrimination against marginalized peoples, including cancelling the in-person component of the AGDQ 2022 event set to be held in Orlando, FL in response to legislation negatively targeting the LGBTQ+ community signed by Governor Ronald DeSantis (Parrish 2022). It should be noted that despite this change, the event still raised $2.8 million for PCF after recouping the losses for venue, staffing, and equipment reservations.

Fast is the most appropriate word to use to sum up the rise of GDQ and the speedrunning community. In the non-profit world, roughly 30% of new organizations fail to make it to the ten-year mark. GQD on the other hand, has gone from a glorified sleepover to the single largest fundraiser for the Prevent Cancer Foundation and Médecins Sans Frontiers/Doctors Without Border in that time frame. Further, seven days to raise on average $2.5 to $3 million each event is also an incredibly fast timeline. With a motto of "Gotta Go Fast", a mascot named "Velocity", and a mountain of evidence attesting to the fact it is abundantly clear that GamesDoneQuick is the leader in "Fast-Raising."

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If You Play It, They Will Come: Interaction Rituals in Successfully Organized Charity

Broadcasts

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If You Play It, They Will Come: Interaction Rituals in Successfully Organized Charity Broadcasts.

Twice a year, GamesDoneQuick hosts joint live-streamed and in-person events that showcase the abilities and achievements of the Speed Running Community, a sub-set of the Video Game Community. From 2014 through 2021, GDQ raised $25.7 million that has been distributed to the Prevent Cancer Foundation and Médecins Sans Frontiers (Doctors without Borders). This study analyzes the Awesome Games Done Quick 2020 event utilizing the Interaction Ritual Theory framework of Randall Collins to understand how ritualistic social action of this community has been leveraged by event organizers to promote successful crowd funding efforts that benefits organizations outside of the community. This study provides evidence to show that interaction ritual chains are present, but failed to accurately identify the specific characteristics of the sacred objects present to link them to the success of rituals.

Keywords: Fundraising, Speed Running, Community, Interaction Rituals

If You Play It, They Will Come: Interaction Rituals in Successfully Organized Charity Broadcasts.

One recent example of pro-social behavior on the part of video gamers and video gaming communities is the crowdfunding (Baumgardner et al. 2017; Riedl 2013; Salido-Andrés et al. 2019) activities of an organization named GamesDoneQuick (GDQ). Crowdfunding (CF) utilizes the support of investors or donors to provide the funding for specific goals or outcomes of the organizing body. GDQ is a collection of members of the speed running video game community that have used online platforms, including Twitch.tv and Discord, to coordinate and host semi-annual events intended to raise money for Médecins Sans Frontiers (Doctors without Borders (MSF/DWB)) and The Prevent Cancer Foundation (PCF). As of 2021, because of GDQ's DCF efforts over $25.7 million has been raised across twenty-five events (Calvin and Editor 2021; Wikipedia 2021).

The GDQ events present remarkably like a traditional telethon model, in which programming and incentives are offered to an audience in exchange for voluntary or reward-based donations (Longmore 2005; Reiley and Samek 2019; Weinryb and Turunen 2017). However, key differences in the formatting of these events hinge on components of emerging digital technological frameworks, as well as the communities that are enabled and form within these digital spaces. This phenomenon raises strong questions of how digital communities can be leveraged to coordinate mass social efforts that do not necessarily benefit members directly, but instead are focused on pro-social goals that appear to be altruistic in nature.

Explanations of pro-social behaviors, including philanthropic giving, social activism, or providing assistance in emergency situations, generally fall into   two categories: egoistic self-interest (reward based) in which a transaction occurs where a donation is given in exchange for a

reward deemed valuable by the donor (Candelo, Oliveira, and Eckel 2019; Chao and Fisher 2021; Cialdini et al. 1987; Duncan 2002; Radu and McManus 2018) and altruistic (selfless giving) in which the act of giving is done merely for the sake of giving without being tied to a reward (Cialdini 1991; Cialdini et al. 1987; Lee and Lee 2010; Sargeant, West, and Jay 2007; Simpson and Willer 2008; Yi 2010). The efforts of fundraising campaigns to utilize (CF), collecting many small donations from multiple donors, can be as impactful as securing one large corporate donor. Further, the social action of donation-based crowdfunding (DCF) is often facilitated by altruistic motivations while corporate donations tend to be anchored in the self-interest of the organization, either as an effort of positive impression management to build social capital or financially motivated for tax write-offs (Havens and Schervish 2014; Naar 1981; Schervish 2003; Ulibarri 2000).

The GDQ events share many characteristics with fundraising efforts that rely on the crowdfunding model. They mimic charity sporting events (Filo et al. 2011; Goodwin et al. 2017; Webber 2004; Woolf et al. 2013), in which participants pay a fee to participate that goes to benefit the target of the fundraiser. Participation in these events serves as an egoistic reward beyond the warm-feeling effect of giving. GDQ events, however, differ in the key aspect that donors are members of the audience and not direct participants (they are not playing the games.) While not a perfect separation from all egoistic rewards, the funds raised do not directly benefit the organization collecting and instead go to a third-party cause, providing an additional layer of separation from donor to recipient. This suggests a more altruistic model, utilizing attachment to the fundraising organization and not the beneficiary of the fundraising that target key components of identity and community, are appropriate for understanding this case and others that are similar.

One such model is Randall Collins' theory of interaction rituals (IR) and interaction ritual chains (IRC) (2004) which has predominantly been applied to face-to-face interactions, not digital interactions. Collins' own stance is that interactions via new media communications are weaker than embodied interactions, and therefore find it more difficult to produce emotional energy (EE) and predicts that any produced EE in these situations is weaker (Collins 2011). Despite this stance from the theory's originator, this study explores to what extent IR theory plays out in the social behavior of communities that exist totally in digital spaces, lacking embodied interactions, and in which the requests of the group may not require massive amounts of EE to trigger individuals giving behaviors. Further it finds evidence to demonstrate that interaction ritual chains do operate at GDQ events and suggest that due to changing patterns of use digital technology use, that they are likely present in other spaces as well.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Speed Running Community and Group identity

The Speed Running Community is a massive and diverse collection of individuals who span various social categories, including age, race, ethnicity, gender, and nationality, who participate in video game culture as a subset of the gamer identity. They are united by a shared enjoyment of the completion of video games beyond the traditional scope or intention of game creators/publishers. Speed running is the activity that centers an identity, and what unites those with that identity into a community.

Literature on video gaming has focused on ways in which video gaming represents a social space through which participants interact with the medium and each other to create a gamer identity (Grooten and Kowert 2015; Martey and Stromer-Galley 2007; Shaw 2010). This

has become a diffuse and broadly defined social identity, as one who participates in the activity of gaming and incorporates that activity into an aspect of the self, drawing upon both the self-categorization of the identity and the recognition and affirmation of other "gamers" to establish legitimacy of the identity. The extent to which the identity is incorporated into the self, as well as the recognition of the identity by others, is often a result of the capital one can demonstrate, including cultural capital through knowledge of games, technical capital, or ability to play games, and social capital from the commitment and contribution to the video gaming community (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2001; Polletta and Jasper 2001).

Beyond the broad identity of gamer, more commonly there is a splintering into more narrowly focused sub-identities that denote a "gamer's" affiliation or specialization into one or more of the many sub-genres of the video gaming sphere. Despite having a broad definition of a "gamer" as one who participates in video gaming, "gamer" as an identity then presents itself through a complex system of affiliations and attachments by players to specific franchises, genres, platforms, and which inform the roles and social positions of actors within the sphere of gaming. Merely playing video games may be sufficient to initiate someone into the "gamer" identity, but the necessary conditions for acceptance or passing amongst "gamers" as one of them is sufficient cultural and technical capital to differentiate players of games from true "gamers" (Grooten and Kowert 2015). It is not merely enough to engage with the video game medium, "gamers" must also self-identify as such and engage with the video gaming communities and culture, displaying an understanding of their normative social expectations and the underlying cultural traditions that shape them.

This aspect of the gamer identity is a path through which video gaming as a single player experience develops into video gaming communities. Communities, especially prior to the development of digital communications technologies, are often depicted as the social entities bound by physical place, in which the social space develops. However, work on digital communities continues to expand as the ease of use and accessibility to digital communication technologies improves.

Within a community, varying parties have their own subjective understanding of the larger communities norms and values (Etzioni 2004; Feenberg and Barney 2004; Xue, Newman, and Du 2019). These groups at times may have competing understandings of the larger community goals, and work to achieve their goals over those of other factions, which can negatively impact group solidarity. Yet, at these GDQ events, the community is coming together to perform that identity en masse, building group solidarity, and simultaneously engaging in helping behaviors via donations. Randall Collins' Interaction Ritual Theory provides a framework for understanding how participating in these events builds emotional energy (EE) through successful completion of rituals (individual game performances) bounded by identity that are chained together into a week-long event (Collins 2001, 2004).

Interaction Ritual Chains

Collins' (2004) theory of interaction rituals and interaction ritual chains builds on micro-sociological theory of individual actions by placing them within the context of groups and the symbols and structures that are important or "sacred" to the group, which builds on the theoretical frameworks of Goffman and Durkheim. Durkheim argues that groups possess a level of solidarity that is built and maintained through the practice of rituals, or meaningful patterns of behavior centered around symbols and structures (sacred objects) that represent the values of the

group (Durkheim 2008). Goffman extended the concept of rituals by elaborating on how face-to-face interactions are shaped by the normative expectations of these rituals and demonstrating that successful interactions are determined by mutually agreed upon "definitions of the situation" (Blumer 1969; Goffman 1959, 1963), collaboration between actors (Goffman 1959), and agency of actors in strategic presentations of the self (Goffman 1959, 1963). Goffman notably does this by pointing to interactions where rituals are unsuccessful to contrast the often-overlooked nature of successful exchanges.

Collins uses these in IR theory to argue that interactions are not singular events that occur in a vacuum, but instead are a continuum of interactions (chains) that are shaped by previous exchanges and will in turn impact future interactions. Additionally, successful interactions build emotional energy (EE), the driving force behind Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence (Durkheim 2008), that is derived from the rituals' shared focus on "sacred" objects or symbols that fosters a sense of solidarity. Collins argues that there are four things necessary to interaction rituals to successfully generate emotional energy.

1. Group Assembly or Copresence –traditionally a bodily copresence, interaction of bodies enhances forms of communication that build upon one another.

2. Barriers to the outside – symbolic boundaries that are known by participants (e.g., setting, time constraints, mutually agreed upon definitions of the situation) and involvement in the interaction is based on clearly defined group norms of who is and is not permitted to participate.

3. Mutual focus of attention – the combined focus of those assembled ensures the similarity of action to unite in a common "goal" leading to a synergistic shared experience (enhanced by the group and greater than, not just the sum of, individuals).

4. Shared Mood – the experience of the ritual has a shared effect that causes an
   emotional reaction in participants.

While one and two are necessary components of the theory to produce emotional energy, it is through these interactions that three and four produce a feedback loop as a means to build collective effervescence, a boiling point of EE, that produces action amongst group members that reflects group solidarity, creates or maintains sacred objects and symbols, and reflects the "morality" or values of the group. What may appear to be "spontaneous" action by individuals is in fact the result of concentrated and often unspoken solidarity amongst the group that sparks a reaction, including "altruistic" behaviors like donating resources to the group. As Collins (2001:28) points out, the accumulation and desire for more EE leads to "sacrificing material goods for the group."

Within the context of GDQ, emotional energy is expressed through the language of its group members as hype. Regular expressions of hype including chanting, cheering, or repetition of memes (Börzsei 2013; Dawkins 1981; Shifman 2014) by the performers and physically present audience not only serve as markers that reinforce and signify when parts of the ritual have been successfully performed, but also as a call to the group to motivate the accumulation of emotional energy. Successful pieces of the ritual are hype, while the crowd experiencing positive emotional energy is hyped, and calls to get hyped are intended to build positive emotional energy.

It is then necessary to understand if and how the events organized by GDQ qualify as interaction rituals. In short, not only is each individual performance during a GDQ event an interaction ritual, but the cumulative runs at an event also demonstrate what Collins terms interaction ritual chains (2004), and the series of GDQ events over the last decade form a chain

of interaction ritual chains. Throughout the seven-day events, 85-100 performances of several types are presented in-person to roughly 500 attendees but reach a much larger audience of group members via digital communication media (Twitch.tv). Each subsequent performance during the event qualifies as a link in the interaction ritual chain, and IRC theory predicts that the success or failure of one interaction informs and shapes the following interaction. This provides us a basis for our first research question:

RQ1: What is the relationship between the performance measured by donations received between one performance and the preceding performance?

It can be theorized that a past appearance at GDQ events may also play a role in the subsequent performance of games at future events. One line of logic may follow that audiences want new, novel experiences and do not want to see the same content repeatedly. This would suggest that repeating games at events would decrease DPS. However, as Collins (2004) argues, successful rituals influence future rituals, and we can expect that games that were successful in eliciting donations in past events would also be successful in subsequent events. This provides us with a second research question.

RQ2: Is a game's status as one that previously appeared in a GDQ event a statistically significant influence on the performance of the ritual as measured by donations received?

GamesDoneQuick as Interaction Rituals

This format presents the biggest challenge to utilizing Collins' framework, as he has previously argued that physical copresence is necessary for building massive amounts of EE necessary for collective effervescence (Collins 2011; Durkheim 2008). However, this model has

previously been utilized to demonstrate that online interaction can produce EE and in sufficient quantities to initiate social action (Maloney 2013), as well as numerous studies showing the impacts of tele-copresence (DiMaggio et al. 2018; Feenberg and Barney 2004; Trub 2016; Zhao 2005). Additionally, there are specific pieces of the presentation of the event that serve as objects of mutual attention, which highlight and reinforce the sense of togetherness amongst group members.

Sacred objects.

The second goal of this piece of research is to place the understanding of the content of the digital media, presented within the context of rituals, as the object of mutual attention and the sacred objects and symbols of the group as an explanatory framework for why these events succeed (Collins 2004; Durkheim 2008; Goffman 1982). To that end, understanding what characteristics have been tied to video game popularity can help explain how those featured during GDQ directly leads to the success of the DCF efforts.

GDQ, as the organization hosting and planning these events, becomes the sole agent responsible for the choosing of which games and runners to include at each event. This position of authority within the community also extends to decisions of how to schedule the chosen games, which affects the overall performance of each event. Each game performance is an interaction ritual in which the game being performed serves as the object of mutual attention and group members across various roles engage in expected normative behaviors. The degree to which the games presented align with the group's values and attitudes contributes to the success of these rituals.

The traditional method of video game preferences utilized is to track quarterly, yearly, or total sales depending on the scope of the research study (Aziz et al. 2018; Cox 2014; Shaw 2010). However, simply viewing popularity by sales presents an incomplete picture of how normative preferences function. A more robust set of variables that have been tied to video game sales presents a more useful analytical strategy (Aziz et al. 2018; Cox 2014). Among the variables included in these studies were year of release, publisher, console, rating, sequel status, and genre. These variables represent various aspects of video games that reflect preferences amongst the video game community that are more likely to be "sacred" objects, reflective of the group's values and contribute to successful rituals (Collins 2004; Durkheim 2008; Goffman 1982). As these objects attract and maintain ritual participants, the degree to which they represent objects and symbols sacred to the group influences the success of the ritual in creating a shared mood amongst group members, which creates EE and leads to collective effervescence. Understanding the video game being performed as the sacred object of mutual attention provides our final research question.

RQ3: Are variables tied to video game popularity statistically significant predictors of the performance of the ritual as measured by donations received?

RQ3a: Is the age of the game, measured as time passed since the release of the game, a statistically significant predictor of the performance of the ritual as measured by donations received?

The direction of this variable in relation to the speed running community needs to be determined, as two competing explanations for how age may influence rituals exist. Older, "nostalgic" games may be more likely to be sacred to the group and entrenched in expectations

of upcoming rituals, while new games may present a desire for the group to experience novel performances.

RQ3b: Is the console or platform that the game is played on a statistically significant predictor of the performance of the ritual as measured by donations received?

Factioning amongst gamers may also take shape around the specific platform or gaming systems on which participants access their content. A popular rivalry amongst gamers is centered on stylistic and performative differences between the hardware of each system, in addition to system exclusive software, or games that only one or the other system may offer. Other subsets of gamers express a preference to PC gaming, or games accessed via personal computers and/or laptops.

RQ3c: Is the publisher of a video game a statistically significant predictor of the performance of the ritual as measured by donations received?

Video game publishers' scale serves as a reflection of the economic resources available in the production of those games. Mainstream or AAA publishers have resources that allow them to produce longer and more detailed games, as well as to extend advertisement revenue to reach larger audiences. The preference for AAA or indie titles within this group is unknown but would be further illuminated by this study.

RQ3d: Is game genre a statistically significant predictor of the performance of the ritual as measured by donations received?

Genre can be tied to the various factions and sub-communities within the gaming and speed running community. Some genres appear to be more popular than others, particularly broad genres like role playing games (RPGs), sports, first person shooters (FPS), and platformers

(Bowman 2018; Lafond 2018; Mayra 2015). Other niche genres like rhythm games, puzzle games, or casino games may have smaller following.

RQ3e: Is a video game's status as a sequel a statistically significant predictor of the performance of the ritual as measured by donations received?

Video games and gamers have a complicated history regarding sequels and games that are part of a larger sequence of games (Boluk and LeMieux 2017; Bowman 2018; Rudolf et al. 2020). Some sequels have been hailed both as successors and improvements to the original, while others have fared much worse and fail to capture the content that made the original a success. A game's sequel status will provide insight into the popularity of sequels within the speed running community, and the direction of this relationship within the data set serves to inform whether the community prefers established video game worlds, or novel, original experiences.

RQ3f: Is the ESRB rating of a game a statistically significant predictor of the performance of the ritual as measured by donations received?

The ESRB rating system of video games is intended to inform consumers about the content contained within a video game (Greitemeyer 2019; Yilmaz et al. 2017). This scale begins at E for Everyone, with no violence, adult language, or nudity. As these themes begin to appear at an increasing frequency and strength, the scale progresses through E10+ for everyone 10 years of age and older, T for Teen, and up to M for Mature. There are also additional content labels that describe the themes and imagery that warrant these labels. The least restrictive ratings are available and intended for larger audiences, but it may be shown that the group prefers more mature content.

METHODS

This study uses a secondary data analysis approach to understanding the collected donation data from GDQ events. The information collected from this source includes a record of all donations received by GDQ on behalf of both MSF(DWB) and PCF. In addition to the time stamped donation data, GDQ also maintains a record of the specific programming that was provided during each event. This donation data can then be matched within a data set to the programming being offered allowing multiple pieces of information to be extracted.

This study utilizes the donation data collected from one discrete occurrence of all GDQ events. The selection of the AGDQ event from January 2020, held in Orlando, Florida, was chosen as this is the current highest earning event for an in-person event prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, at $3,164,002. This strongly suggests that the mechanisms in place were fully formed and operating at the highest level of efficiency across events. The inclusion of events prior to January 2014 were excluded as the total donations were substantially lower, below $500,000. Events following the January 2020 AGDQ were also excluded from consideration due to the influence of Covid-19 forcing these events to be fully online, with no in-person component. The January 2020 AGDQ event provides a sample of 139 discrete video game performances.

Measuring Success

Within the frame of each event, the specific performance in donations received during each individual game is calculated by measuring the amount of donations received from the onset until the end of its airtime. Additionally, a measure of each game's performance can be calculated by measuring the average velocity of donations received per game, by taking the total donations divided by the length of each performance in seconds. This velocity value of Donations per Second (DPS), is an objective measure of the donations received which facilitates

the comparison of games of differing lengths of time, serving as the dependent variable of this study.

However, analysis of the incoming donations revealed the presence of several large irregular donations through the data set, from co-sponsors and partners affiliated with GDQ that are announced during broadcast, that did not reflect audience participation. A corrected donation amount for runs was calculated after removing these values from the affected runs. The dependent variable DPS (donation per second) was then calculated by dividing the corrected donation total per run, measured in dollars, by the length of the run, measured in seconds. This provided a measure of mean velocity of donation amounts per run that could be compared across cases of uneven lengths.

Independent Variables:

Immediate link performance.

Research question one of this study investigates a link between cases, to demonstrate the presence and role of interaction ritual chains within the scope of these charity marathons. A measure of this was created by including a value for the previous run or links performance measured by DPS for each case. We named this variable previous performance to avoid confusion with the dependent variable DPS. For unit 1, the first run of the event, a value for the donations received from the 30-minute pre-show was utilized. The presence of interaction ritual chains would be demonstrated by showing a direct relationship between the performance of one run and the subsequent run or link in the chain.

Past link performance.

Research question two seeks to discover if previously appearing in a GDQ event has a statistically significant effect on current donation performance. Each unit was cross checked at all previous GDQ event schedules to determine if it had previously been included. It was dichotomously recorded as 1 for yes.

Sacredness.

This study further captured data for each game identified as a unit for the AGDQ 2020 event, to reflect factors associated with popularity as an indicator of sacredness. This addresses research question three and determines if variables tied to popularity are statistically significant predictors of DPS.

This set of measures includes the following:

- Age of game
- Console
- Publisher
- Genre
- Sequel
- ESRB Rating

Age is a continuous variable that was measured in total months since the release of the game. The use of months instead of years allows for a more robust measure, in the event games included are less than one year old and would therefore have to be coded zero years.

The console variable describes the specific video game hardware that the game is played on. Each run was documented as having been performed on a specific console within the data set. A dichotomous variable was created that categorized gaming platform into console or PC and coded as 1 for console.

The coding of game publisher utilized a dichotomous measure of Mainstream (AAA) or independent (indie) as a measure that informs both game content and reach to gamers. The distinction between these two variables was based on a multifactor assessment involving sales, number of releases, and reputation within the video gaming space. This was dichotomously recorded as 1 for AAA and 0 for indie.

The primary listed genres for each game unit at this event were coded as a categorical variable. No more than two genres were recorded for any unit. This data was drawn directly from the official publisher site when available and supplemented with Wikipedia and video game journalism sites.

Video game status as a sequel was indicated by either numerical naming convention (Game #2) or as a subtitle to an existing video game franchise (Game: The Next Adventure). Status as a sequel was recorded dichotomously as yes or no and coded as 1 for yes.

The ESRB rating system of video games begins at E for Everyone and progresses up to M for Mature. This variable was measured as a scale variable beginning at zero for E and increasing by 1 for each subsequent level.

- E=0, E10+=1, T=2, M=3

Controls

The time at which a performance is presented to an audience can affect available or potential audience size. Prime time media hours represent hours in which media consumption is increased because larger audiences are available to and do consume media during these times (Esser 2010; Gitlin 1979; Riedl 2013; Salido-Andrés et al. 2019). To control for audience size,

we included a variable indicating whether a performance occurred during high volume audience times.

Primetime media hours for broadcast television are 8:00PM until 11:00PM local time and 8:00PM until 11:00PM Eastern time in the United States on Monday through Friday (Esser 2010; Gitlin 1979; Tiedge and Ksobiech 1987). GDQ bases their scheduling on Eastern Standard time (EST) or Eastern Daylight time (EDT) for corresponding events. The primetime hours that were utilized are 8:00PM to 11:00PM EST/EDT Monday through Saturday. Saturday is included as the events run Sunday through Saturday with the grand finale events taking place within the primetime hours on Saturday evenings. Games that occurred during prime time were dichotomously coded as 1 in the data set.

We further wished to control the effect of audience size by including a dichotomous variable denoting whether a performance occurred on the final day of the event. Finales tend to elicit a larger share of the audience and this measure was further included to determine if this was an influential factor on performance as measured by DPS. Runs that occurred on the final day of the event were dichotomously coded as 1.

RESULTS

Cleanup and maintenance were performed on the dataset to address missing data. Missing data was a concern only in the variable ESRB rating and was addressed by inputting the median value of 1 (E10+) for three cases. Descriptive statistics were run on the complete data set to assess for measures of central tendency, distribution, and variance. Visual representation of the independent variable revealed the presence of multiple outliers leading to a large right skew of 3.56. These cases were dropped to remove outliers that were three or more standard deviations

from the mean. The cases removed represented atypical spikes in DPS due to increased donation activity or artificially increased DPS due to small run times. However, analyses were repeated on the raw data set with outliers for comparison and checks of fidelity.

The dependent variable DPS remained non-normally distributed, but no longer suffered from the disruption of outliers. After removing outliers, the dependent variable of DPS for all cases was measured to have a mean value of $4.04/sec, with a range of $17.45/sec and a standard error (SE) of $0.34/sec. Graphical representation and a median of $2.41/sec showed a moderate right-tailed skew to this variable.

Descriptive statistics, including frequency for nominal and ordinal variables and measures of central tendency, distribution, and variance, were collected for the following independent variables that were expected to have a significant influence on the independent variable DPS.

- Previous Run's DPS
- Repeat Appearance
- Age of game in months
- Gaming Platform (PC or Console)
- Developer/Producer (AAA or Indie)
- Sequel
- ESRB Rating
- Genre
- Prime Time
- Final Day

The full list of values can be seen in Table 1 for the independent variable, DPS, and dependent variables, previous run's DPS and Age of Game. The full list of values for the remaining independent variables is listed in Table 2.

(Table 1)

AGDQ 2020 Donations and Game Performance Variables

N=129	**Corrected Donation Total/Run in Dollars**	**Duration/Run in Seconds**	**DPS (Donation per Second) in Dollars/Second)**	**Previous Performance (Dollars per second)**	**Age (Mos.)**
Mean	$11819.55	3180.23 sec	4.04 $/sec	5.14 $/sec	195.51
SE	$1531.47	348.72 sec	0.34 $/sec	0.67 $/sec	15.08
Median	$5250.00	1877 sec	2.41 $/sec	2.41 $/sec	201.00
Range	$107,495	32730 sec	17.45 $/sec	51.09 $/sec	1437

(Table 2)

AGDQ 2020 Game Performance by Variables

N=129	Frequency	Mean DPS ($/Sec)	SE ($/Sec)	Median ($/Sec)	Range ($/Sec)
Gaming Platform -					
- Console	95	4.25	0.42	2.56	17.26
- PC	34	3.46	0.58	1.99	13.22
Developer/Producer*** -					
- AAA	92	4.45	0.44	2.91	17.26
- Indie	37	3.04	0.48	1.80	12.81
Sequel*** -					
- No	58	3.20	0.42	1.83	13.23
- Yes	71	4.73	0.52	3.15	17.27`
Repeat –					
- No	82	3.66	0.39	2.28	14.87
- Yes	47	4.71	0.66	2.87	17.27
ESRB Rating –					
- E	65	4.27	0.53	2.87	17.45
- E10+	18	3.06	0.67	2.32	12.86
- T	24	3.97	0.76	2.26	12.59
- M	22	4.23	0.85	1.81	14.61
Genre –					
- Platform	49	3.97	0.43	2.34	17.44
- Action/Adventure	40	4.75	0.70	2.95	14.65
- FPS	15	3.83	0.92	2.08	12.59
- RPG	16	3.99	0.97	2.39	12.82
- Puzzle	10	4.48	1.17	4.00	13.69
- Sports	4	3.26	1.86	1.76	8.06
Prime Time* –					
- No	116	3.50	.32	2.26	14.75
- Yes	13	8.87	1.27	8.79	15.98
Final Day –					
- No	115	3.97	0.37	2.35	17.44
- Yes	14	4.62	0.98	3.08	11.76

*Difference in means significant at P<.0001

***Difference in means significant at P<.05

Table 3 –
Independent Samples t-test of Means of DPS by Game Variable

Variable (df=127)	*t*-stat	*P*
Final Day	-.586	.559
Prime Time	-5.109	<.001
Gaming Platform	-1.003	.318
Sequel	-2.232	.027
Repeat	-1.471	.144
Developer	1.859	.065

Bi-variate Analysis

Bi-variate analyses of Pearson's R correlations (Table 4) of the independent variables

with the dependent variable DPS were conducted to further test which of these variables could be

shown to have a statistically significant impact on DPS at an alpha of p=.05. The continuous

variable for previous performance showed a moderately strong positive correlation, r (127) =

.543, $p < .001$.

Independent samples t-tests of means (Table 3) were utilized for the dichotomous

variables Prime Time, Final Day, Publisher, Sequel, Repeat, and Gaming Platform. The t-test of

dependent variable prime time responses provided evidence to reject the null hypothesis that the

means are the same between prime time and non-prime time at a p<.001. Additionally,

independent samples t-tests provided evidence to reject the null hypothesis that the means are the

same for the variables Publisher and Sequel at an alpha of p<.05. The remaining dichotomous

dependent variables failed to provide statistically significant evidence at an alpha of .05 to reject

the null hypothesis that the means are the same.

For the nominal and ordinal variables, genre and ESRB rating, one-way ANOVA was

utilized to test if there is statistically significant evidence to suggest a difference in means

between any of the groups. For the variable genre there was a non-significant difference of

means across genres using ANOVA, $p=0.935$ F=0.259. ESRB also had a non-significant difference of means across rating levels using ANOVA, $p=0.709$ F=0.463.

Bi-variate analyses of Pearson's R correlations (Table 4) was utilized on all dependent variables, including those without statistically significant different means. However, as expected, those without statistically significant evidence to suggest the means were different, also failed to have statistically significant correlations. The variables with evidence to suggest a significant difference in means did return statistically significant correlations, except for Publisher. Prime Time was shown to have a moderate positive correlation with DPS, r (127)=.413, $p<.05$. Sequel had a statistically significant weak positive correlation with DPS, r (127)=.194, $p<.05$. Publisher had a small positive correlation (r (127)=.163) that was not significant at an alpha of .05.

(Table 4)

Bivariate Correlations (Pearson's R) of AGDQ 2020 Game Performance by Variable

Variables (n=129)	DPS (*r*)	*P*
Previous Performance*	0.543	<.001
Prime Time*	0.413	<.001
Final Day	0.052	.559
Age	0.108	.223
Publisher	0.163	.065
Sequel***	0.194	.027
Repeat	0.129	.144
Gaming platform	0.089	.318
Genre –		
- Platform	-0.015	0869
- Action/Adventure	0.121	.173
- FPS	-0.019	.827
- RPG	-0.005	.959
- Puzzle	0.033	.712
- Sports	-0.036	.689
ESRB -	-0.014	.876

*Correlation significant at P<.001
*** Correlation significant at P<.05

Regression Analysis

Drawing on the information gathered from the bi-variate analyses of the variables, a model building approach was utilized to further understand the relationship of this set of variables to the dependent variable DPS. Initial models included variables without statistically significant correlations, to explore potential relationships between independent variables and to look for practical significance. Prime Time was utilized as a control variable within the models predicting DPS, to account for increased audience sizes due to media consumption patterns.

A transformation of the dependent variable DPS was carried out by taking the natural log of those values, creating the variable Ln(DPS), to ensure that the dependent variable was normally distributed. These steps were necessary to help ensure that linear models met basic assumptions for homoscedasticity and that there was greater normality of residuals. A P-P plot of standardized residuals demonstrated a normal distribution of residuals; however, checks for homoscedasticity, including White's test (p=.570), showed that these steps were not sufficient. Therefore, robust standard errors were used in the model. Checks for multicollinearity provided VIF coefficients of 1.08 for both predictor variables.

Multiple iterations of proposed models demonstrated that only one independent and one control variable had statistically significant influence on the dependent variable DPS. Results of the final multiple linear regression (Table 5) indicated that there was a strong collective significant effect between Previous Performance, Prime Time, and Ln(DPS), (F(2, 126 =29.11, p<.001, R^2 =.316, R^2_{adj}= .305). Further examination indicated that Previous DPS (t=4.913, p<.001) and Prime Time (t=4.470, p<.001) were significant predictors in the model.

The equation for the resulting model is:

Ln(DPS) = 0.644 + 0.051 Previous Performance + 0.802 Prime Time + e.

Table 5

Regression Coefficients for Model Predicting DPS

Variables	Coefficient	RSE	p-value	t-stat
B	0.644	0.086	<.001	7.503
Previous Performance	0.051	0.010	<.001	4.913
Prime Time	0.802	0.179	<.001	4.470

$R^2 = .316$, $R^2_{adj} = .305$

Prime time runs show an estimated average increase of 123% more than non-prime time runs. After controlling the presence of larger audiences during prime time, our model gives us an estimate of an average 5.23% increase in DPS for every dollar increase in DPS of the previous run.

DISCUSSION

Examination of the data from the January 2020 AGDQ event provides us with evidence to suggest that the theoretical framework of interaction ritual chains is at work to explain the increasing success of online based fundraising events. Despite that lack of physical copresence, the interplay between those telecopresent during this event provides a mechanism through which emotional energy can be accumulated in sufficient quantity to result in group members contributing to the overall efforts of the group.

Interaction Ritual Chains

For this event, we considered each performance (run) to be an iteration of the interaction ritual or a link in the chain. Within the framework of interaction ritual chains, successful completion of the ritual not only has an immediate result, but also informs and shapes the next iteration of the ritual. For the interaction ritual chains framework to be upheld as a plausible

explanation, evidence would need to show a direct relationship that links the results of one chain to the next.

Results of this study provide evidence that the answer to research question one is that there is a moderate direct relationship between the results of one chain and the next. Analysis of the results of one link (DPS) to the prior link (Previous Performance) showed a strong positive correlation, r (127) = .543, $p < .001$. The success of a run is shown to have the direct relationship with the following run that our framework would predict to occur. Further, our regression analysis provides us with an estimated expected increase in DPS of 5.23% on the following ritual chain for every dollar increase in DPS from the previous run, from the constant of $1.90 after controlling for audience size. One limitation of this study is that DPS was measured at the group level due to not having actual measures of audience size. A deeper measure of DPS per person would add additional weight to arguments about successful interaction ritual chains.

However, a key point to make about this estimated expected increase is necessary due to the nature of the event as a whole and how the schedule is formatted. GDQ events begin at noon on Sunday and are scheduled to run though the Saturday night of the same week, though they frequently run into early Sunday morning. If the previous performance were a perfect estimator of DPS for the next run, we would see the lowest DPS run as the first run and the highest as the final run, and while there is a general trend that matches these expectations it is not perfectly linear.

The use of Prime Time to control larger audiences helps to explain part of this relationship. It may also indicate a cyclical relationship with the ability of the group to accumulate emotional energy. As the event runs continuously over a 7-day period, it appears that there may be fatigue points where hype has been building consistently and a shift in

programming, time of day for the bulk audience, or currently undetermined factors leads to an exhaustion of emotional energy and the beginning of a new cycle in which hype is reestablished. It is assumed that the makeup of the group is constantly in flux as people leave and join, and that no members are there for the entirety of the events without break. Prime time hours may signify the periods of time when sets of links in the chains have a chance to continuously build Hype from one run to the next before eventually hitting the drop off point.

The quantitative snapshot of this one event provides some evidence that supports the positive relationship between one iteration of the rituals to the next. However, a limitation of this study is that we assume the causal mechanism to be that of the accumulation of emotional energy, and subsequent donations to the group cause, as an expression of the individuals sense of belonging, the collective effervescence of the group to engage in the behavior of donating, and normative expectations that this is what the group does at these events. Further study of this phenomenon is then warranted to qualitatively attempt to measure the factors leading to the accumulation of emotional energy, to better draw the causal link to donating and supplemented by interview and focus group data to accurately describe the individual experiences in situ.

Regarding research question two, this study failed to find any evidence linking previous appearance at a GDQ event to performance at this event. There is no statistically significant evidence to suggest that individual links from previous iterations of the interaction ritual chain have a direct impact on subsequent chains but does leave room for further study across events to see if there are unexplored relationships. The overall increase in money raised from inception of the event to the current events suggests that there is a relationship, but this data points to it being at a different level of unit of analysis.

Content as Predictors

The content of the rituals themselves, the games being performed per run, was thought to be part of those undetermined factors that explained the relationship between runs and the accumulation of hype. This study examined a set of six factors previously demonstrated to have significant relationships with video game sales, a proxy measure of popularity. Successful rituals incorporate the normative behaviors of the group and reflect the affective disposition of the group towards the sacred or profane objects that might be present. The underlying assumption informing this choice is that as gamers, the speed running community would have a positive disposition to popular games and therefore influence the accumulation of hype based on the popularity of the game being performed.

Research question three guided the analysis of this event to look at age, gaming platform, publisher, game genre, sequel status and ESRB rating. Previous research demonstrated that these variables, tied to video game popularity, could have been statistically significant predictors of the performance of the ritual as measured by donations received. Comparison of the variables at the bi-variate level failed to show significant variance between the cases for all variables except sequel, which itself was only weakly correlated with DPS, r (127)=.194, $p<.05$. Further, none of the variables addressing popularity characteristics, including sequel, in any iteration of the predictive model failed to be practical or statistically significant estimators. This study found no evidence to support these variables as predictors of performance at GDQ events.

This leaves us with two competing explanations for the games being run and presented to the group as sacred objects. The first is that the games themselves do not matter, and that the experience alone of coming together as a group is sufficient to encourage donations. While this may be more plausible for those attending in-person, it becomes increasingly unlikely for

telecopresent audiences. This would require a different theoretical explanation for the same behavior, itself being increasingly unlikely.

The competing and more parsimonious explanation is that all the games matter and are sacred objects but not for the same reasons that video games are popular. The lack of variance among games suggests a type of selection bias and, further, points to a preference for specific games that is unique to the speed running community. The source of this bias is readily identified. Game choices for each iteration of the GDQ events are done by a selection committee composed of community members. This committee includes those who have been long time members of the group and hold positions of authority within the community.

These positions allow the committee members to not only keep current on the group's preferences, but also to shape them. The inclusion or exclusion of specific games serves as a reinforcer and shaper of the group's norms. The role of selection committee member becomes vital to ensuring that new and emerging trends within the community are monitored, while maintaining a reverence for established normative preferences, especially as the group grows and becomes more diverse. This avenue provides an opportunity for further study utilizing a qualitative approach to explore how these committee members work to establish, maintain, and adjust the boundaries of the group in a way that promotes the sense of belonging and successful interaction rituals, resulting in charitable giving.

CONCLUSION

Randall Collins argued that virtual interaction rituals would be unable to sustain the intensity of interconnectedness of group members due to a lack of physical copresence (2011). However, the role of the internet and digital connectedness in our everyday lives has shown itself

to be heavily integrated into the western world. Not only have the social networks of the modern internet facilitated the ability of others to seek out and connect with like-minded individuals, but it has also made it increasingly easy for new groups to form, leading to multiple sets of people engaged in specific activities, ideologies, and interests. This study helps demonstrate a case where interaction rituals are present and function in a digital space.

While this study failed to identify the specific variables connected to the sacred objects upon which interaction rituals are focused to enable the accumulation of emotional energy, it does assist future research by highlighting the need to consider other variables or when able solicit data directly from community members for a greater subjective understanding of these rituals. Further it highlights the importance of this work to areas including sociological studies of digital communities, organizational research on effective fundraising strategies, and social psychological research into charitable giving.

The modern-day speed running community initially started as a series of smaller groups including Speed Demos Archive, Speed Runners Live, and GamesDoneQuick. The ability of these groups to recognize that they shared a common interest and were able to aggregate into one larger community is a feat that not every collection of groups devoted to specific interests or ideologies is able to do. The benefits of communal action in the Speed Running Community have allowed them to work collaboratively on projects, like the GDQ marathons, to raise millions of dollars over a relatively brief period of time. While often being described as less intense, the social interaction among digital citizens can be as equally powerful as the impact of a small group of physically co-present individuals. By engaging its members in ritualistic behaviors that align with the values and normative preferences of the group, GDQ has shown that it has a winning strategy and a place in the high scores of charitable organizations.

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One of "Us": Influence of Performer Stereotype Representativeness on Ritual Success at Mass

Fundraising Events

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One of "Us": Influence of Performer Stereotype Representativeness on Ritual Success at Mass Fundraising Events

Abstract: GamesDoneQuick (GDQ) has taken a leadership role within the Speed Running Community of Video Gamers over the last 14 years, raising nearly $45 million and to reshape the perceptions surrounding video gamers as a social identity. This study examines the relationships between fundraising efforts of GDQ at the Awesome Games Done Quick 2020 Charity Speedrunning Marathon and the perceived characteristics of performers presented during individual runs at the marathon to determine if the stereotypical gamer characteristics of young, white, and male influence the success of performances. Randall Collins Interaction Ritual Theory and literature on New Social Movements is utilized to frame successful fundraising as a result of maintaining identity boundaries shaped by the stereotypical gamer identity observed in past research. This study found no evidence to link the perceived characteristics of performers to the success of individual runs and makes space for future discussion on how GDQ has been able to reshape conceptions of gamer identity to build an inclusive and productive community

Keywords: Fundraising, Speed Running, Community, New Social Movements, Identity, Gamers

One of "Us": Influence of Performer Stereotype Representativeness on Ritual Success at Mass Fundraising Events

The term "gamer" has been known to conjure stereotypical images of white, teenage boys wasting away their afternoons; or worse, as past research has shown, it is connected to online harassment and offline violence (Calvert et al. 2017; Gray et al. 2017; Greitemeyer 2019). This is understandable, given that even among those who game, or engage in activities that self-identified gamers participate in, those stereotypes and misconceptions are present (Grooten and Kowert 2015; Paaßen, Morgenroth, and Stratemeyer 2017). That these factors are parts of the gamer identity story makes the efforts and success of the speed running community, a subset of gamers, to raise over 35 million dollars since 2010 a sociologically interesting phenomenon.

Outward physical characteristics and other visible aspects of individuals, such as age, race, and gender, carry weighted social meanings that are incorporated into identities, which can be used to unite or divide groups of people. That given, it is important to understand how the speed running community (a subset of the gaming community) has been navigating and shaping the "gamer" identity in order to unite. Specifically, over its 10-year history, the aspects of inclusivity, diversity, and representation that are presented at Games Done Quick charity marathons have expanded and evolved. GamesDoneQuick maintains a major role in shaping the identity and handling the maintenance of the presentation of that identity, and does so by being purposefully inclusive and not exclusive.

Randall Collins' Interaction Ritual (IR) framework can be used to explain the charitable giving of the speed running community as being the result of an increased sense of solidarity and willingness to support the goals of the community, following successful ritual interactions (2001, 2004). A critical piece of interaction rituals are boundaries, including who may or may not

participate, which are determined by assessing whether one matches the characteristics of the group's identity. Drawing on the literature of New Social Movements (NSMs), which place great importance on identity in influencing the social action of groups, Collins' IR framework provides a process by which identity within NSMs can be leveraged to increase participation of community members towards group goals. For the GDQ events and the speed running community, these goals focus on raising charitable donations for Prevent Cancer Foundation (PCF) and Doctors without Borders (MSF/DWB).

New social movements break from traditional social movements, moving away from economic redistribution of wealth and working-class struggles, to concerns over quality of life or life-style issues that arise from a post-industrial and post-modern society (Pichardo 1997). New social movements also distance themselves from early forms of social movements by rebuking structural notions of representative authorities, and instead advocate for direct participation as well as cooperative, inclusive forms of social organization. New social movements are frequently small in scale (at least in formative stages), decentralized from existing ideological institutions, and encourage democratic participation by members (Huesca 2001). Ideologically, new social movements are based on the values of autonomy and identity (Offe 2019). Speed running is a leisure activity that has coalesced into a community, which has incorporated charitable giving into its identity and group behavior, with the GDQ events serving as the largest demonstration and displays of this identity.

Research on diversity and inclusivity in the areas of learning environments, social movements, and business environments all highlight the importance of acknowledging structural inequalities between varying social groups while increasing representation and participation of marginalized peoples (Berg et al. 2020; O'Leary et al. 2020; Pichardo 1997; Schuelka,

Johnstone, and Thomas 2019). Research on group identity and social similarities has been shown to play a strong role in explaining helping behaviors (Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994; Klandermans 2002; Radu and McManus 2018). By opening space for traditionally underrepresented peoples in group settings, it creates a place where participants can build community and focus on coordinated social action. Time and resources spent creating and enforcing boundaries may serve to strengthen the group in a classically Durkheimian sense (Durkheim 2014; Evans and Jarvis 1980; Friedkin 2004). However, when that boundary is inclusive and not exclusive it allows for a wider body of membership to participate.

Further, if we can break down how groups leverage their identities to facilitate this cooperation, we can provide direction for future pro-social behaviors and social action. By exploring the importance of identity as a marker of boundaries in group activities through the lens of Collins' Interaction Ritual Chain theory (2001, 2004), we can begin to isolate the role identity plays in strengthening or weakening the collective action of the group towards a shared goal, and the impact it may have on the outcome of the group's goals. The gamer stereotype is known to influence the identity of gamers (Grooten and Kowert 2015; Paaßen et al. 2017); however in this study it was not shown to have an impact on the collective action of this group at this event.

LITERATURE REVIEW

New Social Movements

New social movements have become a response to the perceived inability or unwillingness of existing social structures to address the concerns of an ever-growing population of global citizens. Both local grassroots organizations and a wider network of dispersed participants

enabled by communication technology (Castells 2010) that focuses on human action and participation (Flacks 1993; Huesca 2001) have resulted in a new type of activism. NSMs represent an agentic approach to collective action; however, the focus on identity construction and maintenance becomes the vector through which micro and macro linkages are accomplished.

Two differing branches of work on the identity process of NSMs conceptualize how identity shapes the social action of individual actors. One branch focuses on relatively stable symbolic constructions of identities for the entire cast of actors within the field of interaction, and utilizes "identity frames" and schemas to interpret social action. Identity of self and those co-present become antecedents of behavior and outcomes, and engages a cybernetic feedback for the evaluation of identity and performance for subsequent behaviors (Benford and Snow 2000; Habermas 1981; Huesca 2001; Hunt et al. 1994).

However, the alternate branch of research on identity within NSMs argues that this "static" approach to understanding NSMs fails to recognize the importance of interactional processes. Further, they argue that identity is not only an antecedent to behavior, but also inseparably tied to social action at all stages. This group of researchers argue that it is necessary to not only understand identities as a finished product, but at all stages of identity formation understand the process and construction of identities tied to NSM and explain the causal mechanisms of social action tied to those identities (Hellman 1994; Huesca 2001; Stern 2000).

The focus on lifestyle and identity of NSMs can be tied to the source of group affiliation. Marxist social movements are often tied to ascribed characteristics, while NSM scholars have pointed to achieved characteristics being a source of many of the emerging identities that shape NSMs (Hunt et al. 1994; Jasper 2004, 2011; Klandermans 1984; Polletta and Jasper 2001). It is this point that allows the broadening in scope of the application of NSMs beyond groups that

formed in response to specific issues. It allows us to include groups, particularly communities of

interest, which incorporate social change into a part of the identity as a process and not a goal.

Specific examples of this include outdoor recreation-oriented groups including rafting, kayakers,

and other water-based activities as well as disc golfers demonstrating a focus on environmental

conservation (Arnould and Price 1993; Salafsky and Wollenberg 2000; Woods 2018).

The speed running community can be conceptualized in the same manner as an NSM. Over

the course of its development, the speed running community has grown from a loosely

connected handful of video game players into a multi-faceted network of audiences, participants,

performers, and organizers. It contains a set of roles inter-related to the central interest of the

community, built on how those roles and relationships are derived from the social identity of a

"gamer". The GDQ events have become part of who the community is and what it does, both as

a group that comes together for these events to celebrate itself and as a group who raises

substantial amounts of money for PCF and MSF/DWB. The community utilizes its position as an

NSM to promote gaming as a positive lifestyle, countering many of the negative stereotypes and

critiques of video gaming (Anderson et al. 2012; Ferguson 2007; Paaßen et al. 2017), and

inseparable from its charitable work.

Collins Interaction Ritual Framework

Randall Collins' Interaction Ritual (IR) framework (2004) is based on both the work of

Erving Goffman on ritual performance (1982) as well as the work on social solidarity of Emile

Durkheim (2008, 2014). Durkheim's distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity

suggests a line of reasoning that not only is the ritual itself important, but so should be

characteristics of the participants themselves in how they fit the frame of the group identity.

Goffman extends the concept of rituals by elaborating on how face-to-face interactions are

shaped by the normative expectations of these rituals, and demonstrating that successful interactions are determined by mutually agreed upon "definitions of the situation" (Blumer 1969; Goffman 1959, 1963), collaboration between actors (Goffman 1959), and agency of actors in strategic presentations of the self (Goffman 1959, 1963).

Collins uses these positions as the building block for IR theory to argue that interactions are not singular events that occur in a vacuum, but instead are a continuum of interactions (chains) that are shaped by previous exchanges and will in turn impact future interactions. Additionally, successful interactions build emotional energy (EE), the driving force behind Durkheim's concept of collective effervescence (Durkheim 2008), that is derived from the rituals' shared focus on "sacred" objects or symbols that foster a sense of solidarity. Accumulation of emotional energy in sufficient amounts can cause individual social action, and when the source of that EE is tied to the group, Collins (2004) argues that this can result in social action that benefits the group goals.

Within the IR framework, identity defines boundaries of who is and who isn't a part of the group, who can and cannot participate in the ritual. If outsiders are perceived by the group to be present, it can be seen as a profaning of the ritual, leading to a weakened effort or total failure (Collins 2004). As long as participants are perceived as belonging to the group, the ritual proceeds as expected, and accumulation of emotional energy occurs. Repeated iterations of the interaction rituals, or interaction ritual chains, can then explain greater levels of involvement and increased likelihood of the accumulation of EE leading to increased sharing of resources from individuals to the group.

The explanation of group aid within interaction ritual chains also falls in line with other bodies of research on helping behaviors, which have regularly pointed to identity as a key

component of helping behaviors. Social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel and Turner 1979; J. Turner 1975) and self-categorization theory (SCT) (Hornsey 2008; Tajfel 1981) demonstrate that similarities between those being asked to provide aid and the recipient (Brockner et al. 1984; Drezner 2018; Radu and McManus 2018; Salido-Andrés et al. 2019) increase the likelihood of receiving aid. Additional research also points to increased success in requests for aid when there is social matching between the donor and an intermediary requesting aid who is not the recipient (Brooks 2004; Coffman 2017; Lindahl and Conley 2002). Many perspectives point to the identity of both giver and receiver of aid as playing a key role, but interaction ritual theory provides us a mechanism for explaining giving within the context of group activity as the source of willingness to give and bounded by a sameness tied to the group identity.

While data on the donors to the GDQ events isn't readily available to directly link to the donations received during performances, there is still room for an argument that when the characteristics of the performers match the dominant identity, which holds widely held stereotypical traits of a "gamer", it will increase buildup of emotional energy (EE). Similarly when characteristics deviate from those traits it could be viewed as profaning the ritual and decrease EE accumulation (Collins 2001, 2004; Durkheim 2008). By understanding the GDQ events as a series of rituals, we can explain the charitable giving of the community members as an accumulation of EE that builds group solidarity and helps community members become willing to give resources to the group, when the ritual boundaries are maintained.

Gamer Identity and Communities

Video gaming represents a social space through which participants interact with the medium and each other to create a "gamer" identity (Grooten and Kowert 2015; Martey and Stromer-Galley 2007; Shaw 2010, 2012). This has become a diffuse and broadly defined social identity as

one who participates in the activity of gaming, and incorporates that activity into an aspect of the self, drawing upon both the self-categorization of the identity and the recognition and affirmation of other "gamers" to establish legitimacy of the identity. The extent to which the identity is incorporated into the self, as well as the recognition of the identity by others, is often a result of the capital one can demonstrate through cultural capital (knowledge of games), technical capital (ability to play games), and social capital (commitment and contribution to the video gaming community.)

Despite having a broad definition of a "gamer" as one who participates in video gaming, gamer as an identity then presents itself as a complex system of affiliations and attachments by players to specific franchises, genres, platforms, which inform the roles and social positions of actors within the sphere of gaming. Merely playing video games may be sufficient to initiate someone into the gamer identity, but the necessary conditions for acceptance or passing amongst gamers as one of them is sufficient cultural and technical capital to differentiate players of games from true gamers (Grooten and Kowert 2015). It is not merely enough to engage with the video game medium, gamers must also self-identify as such and engage with the video gaming communities and culture, displaying an understanding of their normative social expectations and the underlying cultural traditions that shape them.

This aspect of the gamer identity is a path through which video gaming as a single player experience develops into video gaming communities. Communities, especially prior to the development of digital communications technologies, are often depicted as the social entities bound by physical space, in which the social space develops. However, work on digital communities continues to expand as the ease of use and accessibility to digital communication technologies improves. The components of communication technology that allow interaction in

the utilitarian sense (Lee Sproull and Sara Kiesler 1991), also become the tools that lead to social

bonds and meaningful social patterns that lead to community (Etzioni 2004; Feenberg and

Barney 2004; Mynatt et al. 1998).

Communities are defined as social entities having two elements (Etzioni 2004):

1.   A web of affect laden relationships among a group of individuals, relationships that often

crisscross and reinforce one another.

Communities consist of interrelated members who attach socio-emotional meaning to the ties

within the network. These ties elicit, within community members, levels of social integration or

cohesion, in the form of socio-emotional or instrumental interdependence in response to the form

and nature of those social bonds, in line with the classic Durkheimian types of solidarity.

Organically solid communities in nature are more frequently linked to instrumentally laden ties,

effective for meeting goals. The ties amongst organically solid communities relate to community

members' ability to contribute to the group, as well as a performative component to their actual

contributions to the community. Cohesion amongst organic communities becomes a product, not

only of available social/technical/scientific capital amongst group members, but effective

deployment of that capital.

2.   A measure of commitment to a set of shared values, norms, and meanings, and a shared

history and identity.

In short, communities, through social action, develop and maintain a particular culture. The

commitment of members to the community both influence and are influenced by the culture of

the community, and are expressed through performing the group identity. Both the process of

consensus and opposition to the shared values and subsequent normative behavior of the

community can either unite the members, increasing commitment, or divide and decrease commitment, leading to an exodus of members or total dissolution.

Feenberg and Barney (2004) further elaborate that in order for communities to succeed in digital spaces, the medium through which communication and interaction occurs must allow for warranting, or the maintenance of stable and genuine identities. Warranting becomes a process through which community members confirm or deny the performances of identity amongst themselves. Both the social structure of the community and technical structure of the communication media allow for varying methods of addressing identity performance. Acceptance or denial of the group identity by community members or community leaders leads to forms of social control in-line with those performances. Those who perform admirably may receive higher levels of status while those who fail to perform the group identity may be sanctioned to "correct" their performances, or denied access to the community entirely.

Building off these models of physical and virtual communities, this body of research focuses on social organizations of video gamers within a community context. The work of Johan Huizinga (1944) in *Homo Ludens* early on points to the importance of play to human social behavior and suggests that routine human interaction tied to specific games lead to social contracts and groupings that ensure its continuity. Play communities tend to become permanent even after the game is finished. Communities of interest that have grown in popularity due to increase in the use of the internet and forums of online communication, prefer the term virtual communities (Mayra 2015). It then becomes analytically efficient to operationalize video game communities as elective communities or communities of interest (Brint 2001), with the coinciding social relationships and culture being a result of shared participation in video game

and video game related activities. These resulting social formations can be called "gaming communities".

GDQ as an organization has taken a strong lead within the speed running community through the creating, organizing, and ongoing running of the Awesome and Summer Games Done Quick events. These events themselves present an interesting case of community based DCF, as the proceeds of the event do not directly benefit the community or the members contributing resources. Instead, GDQs funds go directly to PCF and MSF/DWB. While a weak argument could be made that members of the speed running community may have or know people affected by cancer, the bulk of MSF/DWB's work (pre-Covid-19) was done internationally. This suggests that sociological forces of group solidarity in the speed running community can lead to participating and donating to an event where the manifest benefits are not directly going to the community as a whole or even specific members, but instead to a target of the groups' shared goals and values.

Community, Identity, and Ritual

The success of these events in raising funds for the PCF and MSF/DWB has developed into a key component of identity for this community, not through any direct ties of members but instead through the importance of the events themselves, as a celebration and showcase of the community. Removing barriers, and addressing the issues of inclusivity and diversity to broaden the gamer identity, has enabled GDQ to continually control and shape identity as well as create a welcoming and open community, which in turn has enabled them to demonstrate increasing levels of success in fundraising that potentially transcends other social identities (Koziel 2019; Woods 2019).

Understanding the speed running community (a subset of the gamer identity) through the lens of NSMs provides an opportunity to explore the possibility that the normative expectations attached to the speed runner identity may override the effects of other identities, explained by SIT and SCT, including race, age, and gender. Within the context of GDQ events, the recipients of the donations being solicited are transnational NGOs without specific persons to social match with. Further, a two tailed independent samples t-test of donations received for both charities shows no statistically significant evidence to suggest that there is a difference between the two charities (Wikipedia 2021). The *t*-value is -0.34213. The *p*-value is .736703. The result is *not* significant at $p < .05$. It is not the recipient of the donations that influences the giving behavior, but an aspect of who is giving and the context of what they are doing together that explains this behavior.

Past research on the gamer identity as a social identity or self-assigned category has sought to test the validity of stereotypes about the identity. Specifically, the stereotypical gamer is characterized as being male, white, and between the ages of 13-21 (Howe, Livingston, and Lee 2019; Paaßen et al. 2017; Shaw 2012; Williams, Yee, and Caplan 2008). Market research and social surveys have provided more concrete evidence to both disprove parts of these stereotypes, and partially confirm others.

The Entertainment Software Association (2021) compiles an annual report detailing who plays video games, highlighting that there is roughly an equal number of men (55%) and women (45%) among the total Americans that report playing video games. Further while video games are played by people of all ages, the largest group falls into the age range of 18-35, with a mean age of 31 years old. Studies on the gamer identity do, however, add some additional insights into who is self-identifying as a gamer.

While self-reports of playing video games are relatively equal between male and female subjects in these studies, the predominant finding is that men self-report being a gamer at a much higher frequency than women. Roughly only 10% of women who play video games self-identify as a gamer, while 60-70% of men who play video games identify as a gamer (Ćwil and Howe 2020; Howe et al. 2019; Shaw 2012). Self-reporters were also statistically significantly younger than those who do not, and while the ESA report does not provide any data about the race of video game players, the research discussed here has demonstrated no statistically significant relationship between race and self-identifying as a gamer.

Based on past research it becomes clear that, while not the only demographic among gamers, the young white male is a dominant demographic identity and strongly influences perceptions of that identity among other gamers. From this body of research, we draw assumptions about how the stereotypical gamer identity is operating, to understand within the interaction ritual framework what delineates the boundary of group membership and the success or failure of the ritual if these are upheld or violated. From that we derive our alternative hypothesis that performances containing only members who match the dominant identity of the stereotypical gamer will receive more donations than those who do not.

H1. The presence of outsiders or those who do not match the stereotypical gamer identity will negatively impact the success of rituals as measured by DPS.

    a. Performances in which all performers match on race (White) will receive more donations per second than performances where non-matching performers are present..

    b. Performances in which all performers match on gender (Male) will receive more donations per second than performances where non-matching performers are present..

   c. Performances in which all performers match on age (close approximation to 25 years old or younger) will receive more donations per second than performances where non-matching performers are present..

Evidence that contradicts these relationships may provide evidence to demonstrate that these social category traits of performers are insufficient in explaining contributions to the group. This finding could potentially be explained by the salience of the identity as a result of the event itself, the power of the ritual itself within Collins' IR framework, or other potential reasons that would need to be explored in a qualitative manner and/or with donor data.

METHODS

This study utilizes the donation data collected from one discrete occurrence of all GDQ events. The selection of the AGDQ event from January 2020, held in Orlando, Florida, was chosen as this is the current highest earning event for an in-person event prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, at $3,164,002. This strongly suggests that the mechanisms in place were fully formed and operating at the highest level of efficiency across events. The inclusion of events prior to January 2014 were excluded as the total donations were substantially lower, below $500,000. Events following the January 2020 AGDQ were also excluded from consideration due to the influence of Covid-19 forcing these events to be fully online, with no in-person component. The January 2020 AGDQ event provides a sample of 139 discrete video game performances.

Measuring Success

Within the frame of each event, the specific performance in donations received during each individual game was calculated by measuring the amount of donations received from the onset until the ending of its airtime. Additionally, a measure of each game's performance can be

calculated by measuring the average velocity of donations received per game by taking the total donations divided by the length of each performance in seconds. This velocity value of Donations per Second (DPS), is as an objective measure of the donations received as a result of successful EE accumulation and group solidarity, which facilitates the comparison of games of differing lengths of time, serving as the dependent variable of this study.

However, analysis of the incoming donations revealed the presence of several large irregular donations through the data set from co-sponsors and partners affiliated with GDQ that did not reflect audience participation. A corrected donation amount for runs was calculated after removing these values from the affected runs. The independent variable DPS was then calculated by dividing the corrected donation total per run, measured in dollars, by the length of the run, measured in seconds. This provided a measure of mean velocity of donation amounts per run that could be compared across cases of uneven lengths.

Independent Variables

The content analysis tool and codebook for this study included measures of the following independent variables.

- Perceived Race

- Perceived Gender

- Perceived Age

Each performance, as identified by a unique game being played, was coded and assigned individual IDs. Within the frame of each performance, the number of performers for each performance unit was recorded by observing the total number of visible performers. Performers were defined as person(s) playing the game, others sitting in close proximity to the runner(s)

providing support or commentary, host or announcer that appeared on camera, or any non-audience member. A clearly visible demarcation between the "stage" or performance area and the audience, as delineated by a break in seating, was utilized to determine this final piece of criteria.

Checks for reliability of coding were conducted with the use of an additional coder and checks for intercoder reliability. An additional coder was trained in the codebook and coding process and assigned thirty random cases to code. A 93% score agreement was achieved followed by a debriefing and discussion of disagreements of cases. This revealed that these cases had ambiguous individuals or difficult to see within the video data.

Perceived race.

The perceived racial characteristics of those performing the gameplay was recorded as a binary variable measuring the presence of a PoC (Neuendorf 2002; Riffe, Lacy, and Frederick Fico 2005). Specifically, if one person of color was present alone or in a group, the unit was coded as 1. This was intended to test if violations of the stereotype of gamer as being a white identity and the presence of an "outsider" disrupts the interaction ritual.

Specific limitations of coding racial identity are the subjective perceptions of the coders in determination of skin tone as the manifest measure of "race", as well as additional components of ethnicity, as race is a complex social construct that is framed by mediated messages (Chandra 2006; Gunter 2000; Monk, Esposito, and Lee 2021; Nelson Laird 2011). However, there is no evidence to suggest that the perceptions of those viewing these events are wildly different than researchers, utilizing standardized criteria for race and ethnicity of White (Caucasian)/non-

Hispanic as non-persons of color, which aligns with the demographic literature utilized to capture the gamer identity and most pieces of survey research.

Perceived gender.

The perceived gender diversity of those performing the gameplay was a binary variable measuring the presence of non-males including female and other non-binary individuals playing the specific game (Neuendorf 2002; Riffe et al. 2005) by observing the number of people perceived to be presenting as non-male in each performance. Specifically, if one person presenting as non-male was present alone or in a group, the unit was coded as 1. This was intended to test if violations of the stereotype of gamer as being a male identity and the presence of an "outsider" disrupts the interaction ritual.

Similar to race, this variable also runs into limitations in measurement that rely on subjective perceptions of coders, but it also provides no reasonable suggestion that there would be massive differences between the average viewer and researcher. This is also addressed by the use of triangulating additional information. This variable was further informed by completing biographical research on all named or identifiable individuals included in these counts when possible. This step and the use of a second coder to perform inter-coder reliability checks served to test the validity and reliability of this measure.

Perceived age.

The perceived age diversity of those performing the gameplay was recorded as a binary variable indicating the presence of an older performer (Neuendorf 2002; Riffe et al. 2005), by observing the perceived number of older adults in each unit For this study, a dichotomous break between young and old performers was established at a perceived age of 25 years old that was

informed by past research by Brewer and Lui (1989) and further informed by the larger body of gamer stereotype research, which demonstrates a biased belief that gamers are mostly teenagers and young adults.

Specifically, if one person presented as an older gamer was present alone or in a group, the unit was coded as 1. This was intended to test if violations of the stereotype of gamer as being a youth identity and the presence of an "outsider" disrupts the interaction ritual. Like the previous dependent variables, perceived characteristics are subjective and vulnerable to individual biases. For this reason, coding was further informed by completing biographical research on all named or identifiable individuals included in these counts, but was only utilized in a handful of ambiguous cases, and enhanced by the use of a second coder to perform inter-coder reliability checks to test the validity and reliability of this measure.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were run on the complete data set to assess for measures of central tendency, distribution, and variance. Visual representation of the dependent variable revealed the presence of multiple outliers. These cases were dropped to remove outliers that were three or more standard deviations from the mean. The cases removed represented atypical spikes in DPS due to increased donation activity or artificially increased DPS due to small run times. However, all analyses were repeated on the raw data set with outliers for comparison and checks of fidelity.

The dependent variable, DPS, remained non-normally distributed, but no longer suffered from the disruption of outliers. After removing outliers, the independent variable of DPS for all cases was measured to have a mean value of $4.04/sec with a range of $17.45/sec and a standard

error (SE) of $0.34/sec. Graphical representation and a median of $2.41/sec showed a moderate right-tailed skew to this variable.

Descriptive statistics of frequency by count and percentage were collected for the following independent variables that were expected to have a significant influence on the dependent variable DPS.

- Number of Performers visible during a performance

- People of Color present during a performance

- People presenting as non-male present during a performance.

- Presence of performers presenting as older adults.

The full list of values can be seen in Table 1 for the independent variable DPS and for the dependent variables in Table 2.

(Table 1)
Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Variable DPS and Number of Performers

N=129	Corrected Donation Total/Run in Dollars	Duration/Run in Seconds	DPS (Donation per Second) in Dollars/Second)	# of Performers
Mean	$11819.55	3180.23 sec	4.04 $/sec	4.22
SE	$1531.47	348.72 sec	0.34 $/sec	0.137
Median	$5250.00	1877 sec	2.41 $/sec	4.00
Range	$107,495	32730 sec	17.45 $/sec	8.00

(Table 2)
Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables Measuring Perceived Performer Characteristics

N=128	Frequency	Percent of Cases
People of Color		
- Units Present	46	35.9
- Not Present	82	64.1
Non-Males		
- Units Present	33	25.8
- Not Present	95	74.2
Older Performers		
- Units Present	104	80.6
- Not Present	24	19.4

Bi-variate Analyses

Bi-variate analyses of the dependent variables with the independent variable DPS were conducted to further test which of these variables could be shown to have a statistically significant impact on DPS at an alpha of p=.05. The observed Pearson correlations for all variables were at or below the very weak level, with the addition of none of the independent variables identified in this study being shown to have a statistically significant correlation to the dependent variable at an alpha of 0.05.

(Table 3)
Bivariate Correlations (Pearson's R) of DPS with Performer Characteristics

Variables (n=129)	DPS (*r*)	*p*
# of Performers	0.101	0.259
People of Color		
- Present	-0.046	0.608
Non-Males		
- Present	-0.125	0.159
Older Performers		
- Present	0.050	0.577

Regression Analysis:

Through demonstration by the information gathered from the bi-variate analyses of the variables showing no statistically significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables, it was deemed unnecessary to follow through with building and testing a model to further understand the relationship of this set of variables to the independent variable DPS, to elaborate on the nature of any existing practical relationships.

DISCUSSION

Examination of the data from the January 2020 AGDQ event provides no evidence to suggest that these measures for the presence of perceived diversity amongst performers have any statistically or practical significance on the amount of donations that are raised throughout this event. Without evidence to support the existence of a relationship between the presence of perceived diversity from the gamer stereotype, we accept the null hypothesis for this study, that perceived diversity from the gamer stereotype has no impact on the amount of donations group members will provide to the group cause. This is inclusive of accepting the null hypothesis for each sub-hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c.

However, this still provides us with an important piece of information in understanding the link between group identity and altruistic giving within the framework of interaction rituals. Interaction ritual chain theory points to the importance of boundary making, and maintenance of those boundaries, in the success of rituals that create and utilize emotional energy that leads to individual action towards group goals. The presence of outsiders can become the focus of the group and may lead to group solidarity directed toward defending the group from a perceived threat instead of the original goal. When those boundaries are violated, rituals fail, and can create

negative affect towards those not conforming to the identity, towards the group if being perceived as allowing those violations, and ultimately the failure of goals.

Further, the creation, maintenance, and recreation of a group identity as boundary lines are key factors in building and maintaining group solidarity towards a common goal, a necessary component of group interaction ritual chains. Without the group identity allowing individuals to operate in the shared space, there is greater difficulty in coordinating group activity without disrupting processes to review and decide the "correct" actions, and further can lead to splintering or dissension of the group when not guided by the group identity. With the identity in place, members of the group know what to expect from others and what is expected of them. They are able to focus on the ritual and build emotional energy that reinforces the group solidarity and primes members for future iterations of the ritual.

What we expected to find, from past research, is that if characteristics like race, gender, and age are important pieces of the gamer identity to the speed running community, then there would be a negative relationship between the presence of non-matching performers based on perceived race, gender, and age of those performing the rituals with the amounts of donations being received. These expectations also fall in line with other lines of research on helping or altruistic behaviors like social matching, in which we are more likely and to greater lengths help those with perceived similar characteristics, and the larger body of work on in-group/out-group dynamics and biases that favor our in-groups.

What this study has demonstrated is that at this event there is no evidence to suggest that perceived race, perceived gender, and perceived age and the presence performers who do not match the stereotypical gamer identity of young, white male have no negative impact on the overall amount of donations received at the group level. Yet in the general public, and amongst

gamers, the stereotypical gamer identity of young, white male has continued to dominate the narrative of who is a gamer, even amongst those who game and do not meet that stereotype, especially women of color. This suggests that for this identity, adherence to the stereotypical young white male gamer trope does not matter in relation to ritual success at these events, and leaves open the avenue to explore if the shared interest of the group is what unites and brings them together and may supersede these other characteristics that are frequently germane to other groups. Additionally, as these characteristics are not a sorting mechanism for winnowing potential group size, it enhances the ability of the group to engage in recruitment. It follows that from a larger pool of contributors, the group may be able to raise more money, even if the individual contributions are smaller.

This is an important piece of information in understanding how group identities can be shaped and leveraged for prosocial behaviors by formal leaders and charismatic authority figures within the group, to enhance cooperation and acceptance of diverse membership along multiple individual level characteristics. Influential members of groups frequently have an innate ability to capitalize on this phenomenon. For goals that require high total participation and low individual effort, being able to unite larger groups of people together under a superordinate identity is a process that needs to be further studied.

Additionally, the results of this study provide evidence that another avenue for further examination is needed, to understand the perceptions of group members of one another, and how that informs their interactions in virtual or hybrid settings like this event. Coming at the formation and maintenance of a community identity from an individual perspective through qualitative methods can provide an insight into the mechanisms through which individuals process the meaning of group membership, by looking at how one develops and filters between

multiple social identities. Some of those identities are ascribed, while others are achieved or chosen, and some can be activated or deactivated based on the context of the situation. Within the context of virtual events aimed at having a pro-social impact, it is important to understand to what extent group members are aware of their role in that process, how they perceive what is occurring, and how those perceptions shape participation.

CONCLUSION

Past research has repeatedly demonstrated that identities, real and perceived, of both those giving aid and those receiving assistance play key roles in influencing whether aid is rendered and to what extent. The ways in which identity is formed, performed, and perceived vary across different identities. Further compounding these processes is the presence of multiple layers of identities that individuals who comprise groups bring into shared space, and which are constantly being activated or deactivated based on situational contexts. This aspect of identities, and the ability of groups to highlight specific ones and downplay others to encourage or discourage social action, is not a new or understudied phenomenon.

Where this piece of literature expands the current body of work is by reexamining this process in virtual communities, under the lens of interaction ritual chain theory. Both the originator of this framework, Randall Collins, and early scholars in the area originally believed that the ability of groups to engage in significantly meaningful ways, at sufficient intensity to accumulate the emotional energy necessary for spontaneous altruistic behaviors was not possible in digital spaces due to lack of physical copresence (Collins 2011). What has changed in the decade plus since these claims were stated is the role of the internet and online social interaction in the daily lives of much of the Western world. Where once online interactions may have been too diffuse to sufficiently build the emotional energy needed for interaction ritual chains to form

and have meaningful impact on larger groups, we now constantly and easily can see very strong

social interactions across the internet on a regular basis.

What this study further demonstrates is that, for the speed running community, there is no

evidence to suggest that common pieces of identity tied to manifest physical and social

characteristics, like race, age, and gender, have any meaningful impact on how the gamer

identity is performed by the avatar(s) of the group (the performer(s) on stage), nor perceived by

the audience in a way that that inhibits the ability of the group to accumulate emotional energy in

sufficient quantities to encourage the contribution of individual resources to the group goals.

For organizations and groups who wish to utilize similar fundraising strategies, by not

limiting membership to the group by factors like race, age, and gender, and being able to draw

together a larger pool of individual donors, even if they may be limited in the amount of

resources, they have available to share with the group, large amounts of resources can be

directed towards pro-social group goals. In providing a format where there is ease of access,

highlighting the shared interest that unites the community, and defines its identity, the group can

build hype (EE), raise money, and have fun doing it.

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Can I Play Too? Participatory Culture and Audience Ritual Participation at Large Scale

Online Fundraising Events

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Can I Play Too? Participatory Culture and Audience Ritual Participation at Large Scale Online

Fundraising Events

The use of activities, especially sports and other lifestyle activities is commonly used as a draw to recruit participants to charity fundraising events. Additional strategies for increasing donations at these events include the use of incentives, either direct rewards for specific donations or the opportunity for larger rewards as part of a raffle or competition. The GamesDoneQuick charity marathons similarly utilize incentives at their events in a way to elicit additional donations from their audience. This study examines the four distinct types of incentives used by GDQ and places them within the frameworks of rational choice theory and participatory culture. While traditional rational choice incentives are shown to be the most effective at these events, the use of incentives that draw on strategies from participatory culture are shown to be useful as complimentary incentives to traditional ones.

Can I Play Too? Participatory Culture and Audience Ritual Participation at Large Scale Online

Fundraising Events.

Research on the philanthropic giving of monetary donations is generally split between large scale corporate based giving (Havens and Schervish 2014; Rogers 2015; Schervish and Havens 2001) and individual donors (Baumgardner et al. 2017; Brockner et al. 1984; Nichols 2004; Schervish 2003; Zhang et al. 2020). For smaller or informal organizations, the use of crowdfunding (CF), collecting many small donations from multiple donors, can be as impactful as securing one large corporate donor. Frequently, the social action of donation-based crowdfunding (DCF) is facilitated by altruistic motivations while corporate donations tend to be anchored in self-interest of the organization, either as an effort of positive impression management to build social capital or financially motivated for tax write-offs which is reflected in the strategies used by these groups to elicit funds from donors (Havens and Schervish 2014; Naar 1981; Schervish 2003; Ulibarri 2000). However, in the case of nascent organizations springing up from grassroots efforts, the transition from an informal collection of fundraisers into a formalized fundraising organization presents interesting challenges in how those campaigns are structured to maintain a connection to the group while addressing access to resources.

One recent example of pro-social behavior on the part of video gamers and video gaming communities is the crowd-funding (Baumgardner et al. 2017; Riedl 2013; Salido-Andrés et al. 2019) activities of an organization named GamesDoneQuick (GDQ). Crowdfunding (CF) utilizes the support of investors or donors to provide the funding for specific goals or outcomes by the organizing body. It can be classified into reward-based CF and non-reward or Donation based Crowdfunding (DCF), in which those give to support the cause but receive no direct compensation or benefit for doing so (Salido-Andrés et al. 2019). GDQ and their charity gaming

marathons represent a blend of reward-based and donation-based crowdfunding, as both are present.

This organization (GDQ) is a collection of members of the speed running video game community that have used online platforms including Twitch.tv and Discord to coordinate and host semi-annual events intended to raise money for Médecins Sans Frontiers (Doctors without Borders (MSF/DWB)) and The Prevent Cancer Foundation (PCF). To date, as a result of GDQ's DCF efforts over $43 million has been raised across 41 events (Calvin and Editor 2021; Wikipedia 2021).

These events differ from traditional charity sports events in a number of ways. First, charity sporting events reward participants with participation in playing the sport for raising money; at GDQ events a select few are chosen by a committee to perform the game. Secondly, the money raised by participants in charity sporting events come from third parties whom participants have solicited donations (or the promise of a donation) from, while at GDQ the donations come from an audience (Filo, Fechner, and Inoue 2020b, 2020a; Filo et al. 2011). Yet, GDQ has found ways to structure their event to mimic some aspects of charity sporting events and move beyond a straight telethon model. One strategy utilized by the GDQ organizations during these events is to offer incentives which they have branded as *Bids* or *Bid Wars*. Within this structure, the audience and other participants are able to direct donations towards specific goals or choices to be made throughout the event. These bids include additional content, changing aspects of the game, or otherwise influencing the performances being presented.

For some of these incentives, there is a straight transactional link between donation and reward in which the group working together towards a goal is rewarded with a tangible prize of additional content. However, due to resource constraints specifically tied to available time, the

ability of GDQ to offer unlimited incentives that add additional content is capped by the one-week time frame of the event. GDQ has structured their incentive bid wars in a way that accounts for this limitation, and offers a mix of incentives that provide the tangible reward of additional content as well as symbolic changes to the event that do not "cost" the organization time out of the schedule. Further, initial review of the incentives offered at these events show that some are collaborative, in which everyone is working towards the same goal, while others are competitive, in which subgroups vie for their preference to be selected. In a community of 'gamers," competition itself can be construed as a reward.

Past research on fundraisers and crowdfunding have shown that donors are either intrinsically motivated either out of genuine altruistic charitability or a desire for the "warm glow" feeling of giving, or extrinsically motivated by tangible rewards of giving (Haruvey and Popkowski Leszczyc 2022). When an incentive is offered, whether it be tangible or symbolic, it becomes difficult to truly assess whether an altruistic or egoistic motivation is operating without direct access to the donors. However, in the case of GDQ we are offered an opportunity to further explore differences among the formatting of incentives that demonstrate how an organization can utilize the values and preferences of its members to effectively navigate growth in an organization and address resource limitations while remaining authentic within the communities that contributes to the group's cause. Furthermore, it is important to examine how effective these additional types of incentives are in comparison to more traditional tangible reward-based incentives.

BACKGROUND

GDQ has shown remarkable growth over a relatively brief period of time (10 years), developing from a grassroots movement to a more formal organization. These two types of

groups often utilize sperate strategies for drawing in donations to their identified causes. Grassroots movements often rely on donation-based crowdfunding through platforms like GoFundMe to elicit funds from those looking to make altruistic donations based on need (Baumgardner et al. 2017; Riedl 2013; Salido-Andrés et al. 2019) while formal organizations often engage in philanthropic behavior often tied to self-serving actions that enhance their image or profit margins and are designed to maximize returns and minimizing expenditures (Havens and Schervish 2014; Naar 1981; Schervish 2003; Ulibarri 2000).

However, while being a formal organization, GDQ is a nascent entity at 10 years old in January of 2020. Additionally, it sprung as a grassroots effort from connected members of the larger speed running community, later getting backing from PCF, MSF/DWB, and various other sponsors as it grew more successful. Utilizing this information, it is possible that GDQ as a group is less rigid than more long term and formalized organizations like corporations. Early review of the donation incentives shows that not all of them are as straightforward as donating X amount of dollars and receive Y reward. The first goal of this paper is to outline the incentive types utilized and demonstrate their categorical differences.

GamesDoneQuick Incentives

GDQ formatting and fundraising structure utilizes four categorically distinct types of incentives that are grounded in the type of reward provided and the structure of how those rewards are achieved.

Structure and reward.

The first categorical difference among types of incentives is based on how audience participation towards a "goal" is structured. Incentives in which the audience pools their

donations together to unlock additional content towards one option (i.e., additional games or extra levels, etc.) represent a collaborative effort in fulfilling the goal (Filo et al. 2020b, 2020a; Haruvey and Popkowski Leszczyc 2022; Van Den Besselaar, Hemlin, and Van Der Weijden 2012). However, other incentives feature multiple options with only one being able to be chosen as the outcome and represent a divisive strategy where not all participants are guaranteed their choice upon completion of the process. In these incentives, sub-groups within the larger community may be vying for their particular preferences over that of other sub-groups. These types of incentives are competitive in nature (Filo et al. 2020b, 2020a; Haruvey and Popkowski Leszczyc 2022; Wemyss et al. 2016) The nature of the incentive is tied to the structure of the process and not the outcome. Incentives with the opportunity for competition, even if everyone is picking the same option, are considered competitive because there exists the option to choose differently.

In addition to the nature of the format of the incentives, it is also alternatively possible to categorize incentives based strictly on the reward or outcome that is offered at the resolution of the incentive. The nature of the incentive can in part be tied to the cost of the reward being offered by GDQ. Many rewards require GDQ to adjust the flow of performances during the one week's schedule to add additional content, while some rewards do not. By looking at what the reward actually provides or accomplishes and how this is accomplished, there are again two alternative dichotomous categories of incentives.

Tangible rewards represent ones that have a concrete effect on the performance. These may change the game being played entirely, add additional content, or otherwise change the mode of play for the gamer. Tangible rewards extend the length of performances or otherwise increase the gameplay by giving the audience something not originally expected. Additionally,

these require an expenditure of resources by GDQ to enact, typically additional time in the

marathon schedule to accommodate the changes or additional content.

Other incentives offer non-tangible or symbolic rewards that represent outcomes which

indirectly change the games being played, but not in a way that impacts the game other than that

unique choice, nor do they require an expenditure of resources by GDQ. These choices include

costumes, soundtracks, language, character names, etc. These choices change the impact that

specific piece of the game only and in no other way change nor prolong the experience.

Types

The overlap of categories based on rewards and structure leads us to four distinct types

of incentives.

Type one Incentives: Rationalist.

Collaborative, tangible reward: GDQ offers to the audience an opportunity to add

additional content that will in some manner extend or enhance the originally expected

performance. GDQ sets a predetermined dollar mount to be raised by a specific point in time and

if that amount is raised then the additional content is unlocked. It relies on the group working

together towards a high extrinsic value reward. The group is working together towards a group

goal making it more likely to succeed in attaining a concrete reward for donating but frequency

of these rewards is limited by GDQs ability to offer additional time in the schedule.

Type two incentives: Communal.

Collaborative, intangible reward: In this type the audience is working toward a common

goal while the reward for donating is drawn from participation and involvement in shaping the

performance through expression of a group norm or preference that reinforces the group structure, without requiring GDQ to expend additional resources. Once again, GDQ sets a predetermined dollar mount to be raised by a specific point in time and if that amount is raised then the cosmetic or symbolic change is made to the content without requiring GDQ to expend resources. The collaboration presents as a strategy promoting a higher likelihood of reward being achieved without the cost to GDQ of taking time from what is available.

Type Three Incentives: Sectarian.

Competitive, tangible reward: GDQ creates an opportunity for the audience to decide the route or direction of the performance from a set of outcomes by directing donations to their choice until a specific point in time when the choice with the highest amount raised will be selected. This type of incentive reveals differences amongst the larger group, or presence and preferences of sub-groups. Donations come from those with preferences for rewards that reflect what their sub-set of the community values. GDQ needs to utilize resources to provide the end result reward, but audience may also draw additional reward through the process of competing and shaping the event performance. This type of reward offers both the tangible reward of additional content and the aspects of participation or agency that the audience derives from directing the performance. However, audiences may be less likely to donate if there isn't a strong enough preference among audience members or a specific preference has a dominating lead in the competition, where there are no competing sub-groups in the audience, or one choice has an insurmountable lead and no chance for a competing choice to succeed.

Type four incentives: Individualist.

Competitive, intangible reward: GDQ creates an opportunity for the audience to decide a symbolic or stylistic outcome of the performance by directing donations to their choice until a specific point in time when the choice with the highest amount raised will be selected. Competition is among subgroups or individual members of the community, and the magnitude of the impact is small. This requires no additional expenditure of resources by GDQ. Competition makes the outcome of selection uncertain, with no guarantee that specific choices will be selected. The reward is contributing to the performance of the group and having a role in producing media instead of consuming media, where even if their choice fails to succeed they were able to be involved. Donations likely come in because they allow group members not directly participating in playing games or providing commentary to be individually rewarded by being an active participant in the event.

Table 1 - GamesDoneQuick Incentive Types with Examples

Structure Reward	Collaborative	Competitive
Tangible	**Type 1 – Rationalist** BONUS GAME 2: Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!! **Goal: $75,000** If goal is met, the Bonus Game 2 will be played.	**Type 3 – Sectarian** Kill or Save the Animals **Path Choice: Amount:** Save $144,992.41 Kill $107,725.21
Symbolic/Participation	**Type 2 - Communal** Play in glorious CGA – **Goal: $7,500** Mega Man 3 (DOS) can be played in either EGA or CGA. EGA is a sensible, reasonably colorful 16 color mode, while CGA is a 4-color mode where the colors are Black, White, Cyan, and Magenta. If you want to see the game in all its horrific CGA glory, this one is for you.	**Type 4 – Individualist** Main Character's Name– **Name Choice: Amount:** RunnrsChoice $1,699.00 MyDude! $205.00 JohnCena $200.00 Marnie $185.00 Badger $101.00 ORB $100.00

LITERATURE

On the surface, understanding how incentivizing donations works is a fairly straightforward concept; and one that extensive economic, marketing, and philanthropic research has focused on. From a strictly transactional standpoint, donors are provided X reward in exchange for Y donation. This is a purely rational choice explanation for the behavior in which donors perform a mental calculus to decide if the value of the reward is at least equivalent to the required cost (donation). However, where this sometimes becomes unclear is when the reward is symbolic, or the extrinsic value to the tangible reward is unknown to an outsider. GDQ offers

both tangible rewards that are overt (i.e., money for more content) but also intangible rewards or symbolic changes to the event that seemingly have no value to the uninitiated.

Rational Choice Theory

As an economic framework, rational choice and self-interest goes back to Adam Smith and his 1776 work *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, while from a sociological standpoint George Homans extends this framework to understand social interaction through exchange theory and social interactions as transactional (Homans 1958; Kanazawa 1997; Lawler, Thye, and Yoon 2008; Nord 1973). This line of reasoning elaborates that individuals and by extension organizations and entities that are led by individuals engage in cost-benefit calculations as part of decision-making maximizes their rewards while minimizing the costs within the scope of achieving goals or rewards that the individual deems valuable (Fehr and Gintis 2007; Kanazawa 1997; Kroneberg and Kalter 2012; Neumayr and Handy 2019). While these processes are rational, having a clear logic, the goals of individuals themselves are neither rational or irrational, merely a reflection of what the individual or group deems important based upon its values or needs.

Above we outlined the four types of incentives over the course of their 7-Day event. These *bids* or *bid wars*, the branding used by GDQ for their incentives, are not automatic and donors need to opt into when making their donations. When this occurs, donors are deciding about what potential reward they may receive as well as the cost associated with participating. This internal calculus of cost and benefit are influenced by the structure of the incentive as well as the nature of the reward offered (Duncan 2002; Neumayr and Handy 2019; Ulibarri 2000).

Some of the rewards offered appear more tangible than others. The reward of additional content prolonging the experience or the opportunity to witness an exceptional performance of a game they might not have the opportunity to see otherwise present as highly tangible rewards. Other rewards are merely cosmetic, and do not add any time to the event or otherwise alter the games being performed in a substantial way. From an outsider perspective, those rewards offered at the AGDQ events might not appear to be valuable enough to elicit a monetary donation. But for the group, these rewards are likely meaningful, and if sufficiently meaningful enough, can elicit donations from the audience to fulfil them (Bekkers and Wiepking 2010; Chao and Fisher 2021; Neumayr and Handy 2019).

As an organization, GDQ in the structuring of the incentives they offer needs to understand this choice process among audience within the limitations of the resources they have on hand to offer rewards, most notably time in the schedule to offer additional content. As a result, the choices of incentives need to be deliberate in offering rewards that are most likely to elicit donations and are aligned with the preferences of the audience. In order to accomplish this, GDQ has been able to offer rewards that do not carry a resource cost, but are still desirable to audience in order to elicit donations. The use of symbolic rewards in the above identified Communal and Individualist incentive types accomplishes this for GDQ allowing them to increase the number of incentives offered without incurring a cost to organization.

Where this process requires elaboration is when the link between the reward and the cost to donors is unclear, especially to an outside audience. It is necessary to compliment the rational choice perspective with an additional theoretical framework to help explain symbolic rewards and/or the uncertainty of competitive incentives. Understanding the importance of engagement

and participation among "gamers" allows us to apply the lens of a participatory culture framework in understanding why these symbolic rewards are valuable to these donors.

Participatory Culture

Participatory culture as a theoretical framework is used to describe social spaces that delineates between producers of media in interactive spaces from static sources where an audience consumes media. As a result of the increasing modes of interaction enabled by Web 2.0 technologies (Murugesan 2007), digital spaces accessed via the web moved beyond repositories of information to social spaces that allowed those "present" to engage, create, reproduce, and share content (Jenkins 2009). At its core, participatory culture is about collection, reflection, and contribution (Mackley 2013) of knowledge that values the agentic aspect of individuals while positioning them within a larger community structure (Li 2010; McShane 2011; Waldron et al. 2018).

In participatory culture, group members are both enabled and frequently encouraged to contribute to the content collection. Most notably, Wikipedia represents this aspect of participatory culture by encouraging user contributed and curated knowledge to build its web-based encyclopedia (Wilkinson and Huberman 2007). Within the Speed running community, this plays out in a paradoxical manner. Speed running as an activity is understood as an individual endeavor with a competitive goal being to establish or break existing records for completion of video games. However, what we frequently see is collaborative efforts on behalf of Speed Runners approaching a community effort to see achievement for the community as equally important as individual accomplishment (Koziel 2019), with many attempts to achieve new records being shared in real-time to a live audience, who can offer support, guidance, and occasionally distraction.

The lens of participatory culture provides insight in understanding the fundraising success of GDQ when intangible rewards are offered by uncovering the interactions between performers and the audience and the role this plays as a reward itself. Participation is inherent in the format of the event, where the interaction and contribution of the audience becomes equally important to the performance in several ways. Unlike traditional fundraisers, particularly telethons (Longmore 2005; Reiley and Samek 2019; Weinryb and Turunen 2017), GDQ provides multiple modes of interaction for the audience and to facilitate donations. Direct incentives in which multiple options are presented allow the audience to have the appearance of autonomy in deciding the outcome of an event which can be itself a symbolic but powerful reward. Each GDQ marathon becomes an independent production from previous marathons as the object of fundraising efforts, an access point for new members to the community, and a solidarity building event for existing members.

These incentives differ from a concrete transactional argument, that people will donate money in return for a tangible reward (material objects additional content, novel experiences) in multiple ways. Primarily, there is no guarantee of a payoff or that the reward is substantial enough to warrant taking a chance on the opportunity of a reward. Brian Duncan (2002) points out that raffles or a chance for a prize are an effective way of increasing donations received in comparison to voluntary giving without a reward, however the prize needs to be of a significant value to exceed the level of risk-aversion of donors, and even more interestingly not exceed a maximum value. A goldilocks zone of prize value exists when utilizing a raffle strategy. A participatory culture explanation of the potential to be a part of shaping a GDQ serves as plausible reward within the context of the gamer ethos, if this is what the group truly values over more tangible rewards, and as challenge is reflective of gaming itself. Utilizing these four

types of incentives, this paper seeks to understand how these incentives differ at a live event influencing the donations received from audience members.

METHODS

Data was collected from the GDQ donations tracker page for the AGDQ 2020 event. Donation incentives were separately listed on a table labeled *View Bids*. This provided a list of all donation incentives, game run incentive applies to, description of incentive, amount raised, and goal when pertinent to the incentive for this event. This data was transposed into a data set for coding and analysis. Each incentive was counted as a separate unit for analysis.

Categorical coding of the data set was completed by reviewing the wording of the incentive listed on the data set under *description of incentive* for each unit. Each unit was then processed through two step coding criteria. Step one directed the coder to decide if the incentive was collaborative or competitive. Collaborative incentives had one choice or goal that all bids went towards reaching or completing, while competitive had two or more choices that split the donor pool of bids. Upon identification of incentive as collaborative or competitive, the coder was directed to move onto step two for each incentive.

The second step of coding directed the coder to decide if each incentive in both categories had a tangible or intangible reward. Tangible rewards were defined as rewards that changed the gameplay in a manner that created additional gameplay, was technically harder, or otherwise different than the base gameplay rules stated in the schedule of events. This included rewards of character selection, difficulty level, route, or path through the game (stage selections, etc.…), mode of play, and/or version of game. Intangible rewards were defined as items that did not change the actual play of the game or result in additional time or content . Intangible rewards

include choices of soundtrack/music, character names, file names, language, or other audio/visual changes to the game not affecting gameplay mechanics.

This two-stage coding process resulted in assignment of all incentives into one of four typographical groups based on the combination of participation structure and rewards. Group type assignment is the independent variable of this study.

Type 1 – Rationalist: Collaborative, tangible reward

Type 2 – Communal: Collaborative, intangible reward

Type 3 – Sectarian: Competitive, tangible reward

Type 4 – Individualist: Competitive, intangible reward

The total amount of money raised by each incentive is the dependent variable of this study. This value was listed and taken from the *View Bids* page for the AGDQ 2020 event on the GDQ website. Data analysis was then performed on the data set to understand the nature of any relationships between incentive type by group with the amount of money an incentive raised.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics were compiled on the aggregate data of the donation incentives and then again by incentive type. A total of 1.86 million dollars at this event was directed at the 84 incentives offered by the GDQ organizers. The mean amount directed at donation incentives was $22,183.52 with a heavy right tailed skew due to the presence of two significant outliers. The incentive to add an additional run of *The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening* during the prime-time hours of the final day brought in just over 407 thousand dollars. The incentive to decide the

fate of non-playable characters that is a consistent high earning incentive at every event in which *Super Metroid* has been included brought in roughly 253 thousand dollars.

Of the 84 incentives offered for the 2020 AGDQ event, the largest group by frequency and donations received was Rationalist, collaborative with tangible reward incentives. The smallest group by frequency and amount raised was Communal, collaborative with intangible reward incentives. Sectarian, competitive with tangible rewards, raised more donations than Individualist, competitive with intangible rewards, but had one third of the frequency of incentives offered. A detailed breakdown of the incentive data by type is located in Table 2.

Table 2 – Descriptive Statistics for GDQ 2020 Incentives by Type

Incentive Type	N= 84	Total ($)	Mean Amt ($)	SE ($)	Median ($)	Range ($)	SD ($)
All Incentives	84	1,863,415.87	22,183.52	6,309.75	5,027.67	406,909.31	57,829.88
Rationalist	43	1,444,663.82	33,655.23	10,659.11	10,092.41	404,598.45	69,896.45
Communal	1	7,794.62	7,794.62	NA	7,794.62	0	NA
Sectarian	10	296,098.17	29,629.82	24,861.84	3,656.12	252,517.62	78,620.04
Individualist	30	111,695.4	3,738.28	383.25	3,273.33	7,119.89	2,099.15

Kruskal-Wallis Test

The Kruskal-Wallis H test was utilized to compare the values of amount raised per incentive across the categories on incentive type. This non-parametric test was chosen due to non-normal distributions and small sample sizes. The Communal incentive group was removed from this analysis as there was only one available case. Outliers were left in the analysis as the Kruskal-Wallis H test is insensitive to outliers being a test of ranks and not values. Results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test and post-hoc tests are presented in Table 3.

The Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that there is a significant difference in the distribution of *dollars raised* between the separate groups, $H = 26.46$, $p < .001$, with a mean rank score of 55.05 for Rationalist incentives, 31.7 for Sectarian incentives, and 26.73 for Individualist incentives. This test is only able to provide information about the distribution and mean rank of each incentive type due to unequal distributions of the groups.

The post-hoc Dunn's test using a Bonferroni corrected alpha of 0.017 indicated that the mean ranks of the following pairs are significantly different: Rationalist incentives compared to Sectarian incentives, and Rationalist incentives compared to Individualist incentives. Rationalist incentives overall are more likely to bring in more donations than either of the competitive incentives. Incentives that are collaborative and have a tangible reward including additional gameplay or other significant change to the game being played that affects the performance are the most successful incentive type. A visual representation of these results is presented in Diagram 1.

Table 3 – Kruskal Wallis H Test with Dunn test Post-hoc for GDQ 2020 Incentives by Type

	Kruskal Wallis	Dunn test: Groups 1 - 3	Dunn test: Groups 1 - 4	Dunn test: Groups 3 - 4
N	83			
Degrees of Freedom	2			
Test Statistic	$H = 26.458$	2.759	4.938	0.564
P	<.001	0.006	<.001	0.573
Rank Mean Difference		23.347	28.313	4.967

Diagram 1- Pairwise Comparisons of Incentive Types

Pairwise Comparisons of Type
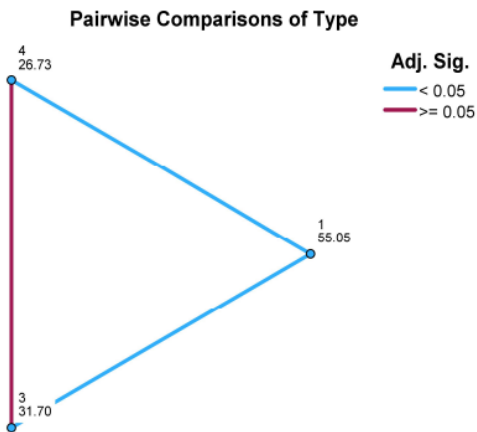
DISCUSSION

The results of our study demonstrate one specific type of incentive as being significantly more likely than at least two other incentive types to elicit more donations. The Rationalist incentives, collaborative with tangible rewards, was demonstrated through non-parametric testing to elicit larger amounts of donations than both competitive types of incentives with a small additional advantage over intangible rewards. Communal incentives had insufficient data to be able to draw any specific conclusions about how they perform individually or in relation to any other types.

Rationalist Incentives

Rationalist incentives allow the group to work together towards a common goal. Upon completion of that goal, the group is rewarded with additional content, extending the duration of existing content, or being able to experience something new or rare versions of a performance. Common examples of this at the AGDQ 2020 event were the daily bonus runs offered if a collaborative goal amount is reached prior to the time slotted for that run. Less common

examples of this type of incentive included a blindfolded run of *Mike Tyson's Punch Out* played

by two people sharing one controller and a performance of the *Metal Gear Solid 3 Snake Eater*

theme by a community member during the opening credits of the game.

From a rational choice perspective this type of incentive provided a straightforward way

to entice community members and others in the audience to contribute to the ultimate goal of the

event, raising money for PCF or MSF/DWB. On the surface, working collaboratively at both the

group and individual level, the goal is the same. Everyone is working together to hit a

predetermined donation total that will unlock the reward. The reward carries additional weight in

that it is tangible or otherwise impactful to the whole group.

By collaborating, the group has an overall greater chance of meeting the goal set forth in

the incentive. Since the group is working together towards the same goal, there is no splitting of

resources and therefore has a higher chance of success of meeting the group's goal than

competitive type incentives where multiple sub-groups are working towards different goals. An

additional trend in the format of these types of incentives, especially for the bonus games, is an

increase in the goal amount that marries to the schedule of events with lower goals at the

beginning of the event and the largest goals at the end. Working collaboratively allows the group

a greater chance of succeeding in these increasingly higher donation goals.

At the AGDQ 2020 event, rationalist incentives were the most successful type of

incentive offered. For organizations like GDQ, it is an effective strategy to maximize the number

of incentives of this type to increase the amount of donations received. However, these groups

are limited by the available resources, especially time that can be added to the event, and is

therefore important to be strategic in selecting the additional content that is provided as a reward.

Ultimately, this body of research does very little in the realm of rational choice theory beyond

reaffirming an understanding that donors can be enticed to donate for sufficient rewards (Chao and Fisher 2021; Duncan 2002; Filo et al. 2011; Neumayr and Handy 2019). However, what it also reemphasizes is the importance of understanding what donors value as a reward to elicit those donations.

For organizers to be successful in deploying this technique to solicit resources, they must know what offerings are valued by the audience. For GDQ, offering to show anything other than video games being played would be an absolute non-draw, and it would be reasonable to predict that even the type of gameplay being shown would be impactful. It could be reasonably inferred that competitive game play like team-based combat would fail to elicit donations for failing to match the expected types of gameplay expected at these events.

These differences in tastes and how they need to be managed by the organizers provides an opportunity for further study. By looking at how the organizers are able to capture the attention of the audience by offering a favored reward versus an undesirable one, we can further enhance the ability of event organizers to be successful in meeting their fundraising goals. For GDQ this process may be the result of trial and error, and looking back at previous events might provide a sufficient explanation. However, it seems more likely that direct input from community members via a selection committee might provide a stronger avenue for providing detail about what makes the process successful for this group and potentially others.

Sectarian and Individualist Incentives

This study demonstrates how rewards based in a participatory culture serve as a successful strategy for raising money by allowing GDQ to offer incentives that provide additional rewards other than additional content. In participatory culture, being a part of shaping

the event through available channels is the reward. The competitive component of Sectarian and Individualist incentives is the play that the audience is engaged in, and the result of that play is the finished product. For participatory culture to be the more effective strategy than offering tangible rewards, Sectarian and Individualist incentives needed to elicit similar or greater amounts of donations than type one. This study demonstrated that this was not the case.

From this study it appears that audiences are donating to incentives that have a higher likelihood of success and include a tangible reward over competitive incentives that carry a reduced likelihood of being met regardless of if that reward is tangible or symbolic. The difference between Rationalist and the two competitive incentive types was slightly higher for symbolic rewards over tangible, but the differences between Sectarian and Individualist was not statistical significantly different even though the amount raised by Sectarian incentives was roughly triple that of Individualist with one third the number of incentives. This was the result of one exceptionally large outlier in type three, but as analysis was done to compare median donations and their ranks using non-parametric tests the presence of outliers was non-impactful on the tests performed.

However, the outlier itself presents an interesting case for further study. This one Sectarian incentive also outraised nearly all of the other incentives, except for one Rationalist incentive on the final day with a 400-thousand-dollar goal. An incentive to decide the fate of a set of non-playable character animals at the end of a run of *Super Metroid* for the Super Nintendo has been a staple of the GDQ events since 2011. The choice to *Save or Kill the Animals* has only been absent at 2 events since 2011, brought in $252,717 at this event, and has been bringing in similar amounts since 2012.

This case represents an instance when participatory culture is flourishing (Chau 2010; Laurelle Lennox 2017), and understanding the context and meaning behind what leads the group members to social action in this instance as opposed to the others is a valuable opportunity. In this case the group is highly engaged as the number of donations and the overall amount of money raised reflects this. Observing the changes in the "score" for each choice over the course of the event also shows a back and forth battle, and in close battles we might expect to see "sniping" of the choice by influential donations at the last minute or second to swing the choice to the other side. Understanding what meaning and value the group places on this competition over others can help us to further understand how to encourage that type of audience participation in future events.

One key contribution this paper makes to the research literature on participatory culture and charitable fundraising events is highlighting the role that involvement plays in influencing donor behavior. Participatory culture is often highlighted for its role in education (Li 2010; Waldron et al. 2018), yet research into the role of participatory culture in an economic setting has lagged behind. It is clear from previous studies that program design that incorporates participatory culture can increase engagement and involvement (Jenkins 2009, Li 2010; McShane 2011; Waldron et al. 2018), which in a workplace setting or as demonstrated in this study can be leveraged towards goal attainment by various groups or organizations.

Comparing Types

As a whole, competitive type incentives drew in significantly less donations than collaborative donations. In terms of raw numbers, even though there was roughly the same number of incentives offered for both categories, collaborative incentives raised roughly 3.5 times more dollars than competitive. One limitation of this study was the removal of Communal

incentives from the analysis due to low sample size. Yet we still see that Rationalist incentives, as the only collaborative type, received roughly 3.5 times more dollars than Sectarian and Individualist combined. However, this does not mean that competitive type incentives are not "successful". Sectarian and Individualist incentives at the 2020 AGDQ event did elicit just over 400 thousand dollars over a 7 day stretch.

The collaborative incentives have some advantages over competitive incentives that may help to explain the differences that were observed in this data set. The initial advantage is the pooling of shared resources among the entire group, or at least the potential for pooling of resources that may influence donor willingness to contribute. Donors may be more likely to contribute to a "sure thing". However, this is only a partial advantage. Theoretically, if everyone is participating, even if one half donates to one choice and the rest to another, the cumulative amount raised could still be the same as the whole group putting their resources to one choice, and the organization reaps all the benefit.

Instead, this points to the nature of competitive versus collaborative incentives as being important to determining participation. One potential explanation is that the group is united in a common goal and engaged in communal activity which fosters a collaborative environment. Another limitation of this study is that we are drawing inferences, albeit informed by past research on the values of this specific group. Further qualitative discovery would be necessary to observe and interview attendees and participants in these events to ask for firsthand experiences and to uncover the meaning and subjective experiences of the community members.

Another explanation for participation resulting from the nature of competitive and collaborative incentives is tied to the structure of the incentives themselves. One stark difference between competitive and collaborative is the resolution of those incentives. Collaborative

incentives resolve with a goal amount. Once that goal amount is reached, the reward is earned and there is no further need to contribute resources. Competitive goals however end at a set time, and the resolution is the choice with the largest amount attached to it at that point in time.

It is potentially possible that competitive incentives should bring in more money as there is no fixed stop point. However, this assumes that participants have infinite resources to contribute until the time limit is reached, which is not a valid assumption. Additionally, some choices may be favored by a majority of the group and take an early commanding lead. This takes the actual competition out of the incentive and there is no need to "waste" resources on a secured winner or towards a guaranteed "loser".

Additionally, the nature of resolution of collaborative goals also contributes to larger amounts raised than competitive. The unequal nature of where goals are set influences the amount of money a specific donation raises. At the AGDQ 2020 event, one quarter of type one incentives failed to reach the listed goal amount and be met. For this reason, comparing the median amount raised by type one incentives is strongly tied to the median amounts for the type one incentive goals. Yet despite increasingly higher goals through the event, those goals are met in most cases.

The success of these incentives is tied to the intersection of collaborative nature of the group working towards a goal and the tangible reward being offered as a valued good, but the amount being raised is tied to the decision of the planning team in setting a goal amount. A case of Rationalist incentives that were not met included petting a cat in a run of *Katana Zero* with a goal of $30,000. This incentive only raised $8,000 towards that goal.

Goals that are not providing a valued reward in relation to the goal amount required to unlock amount necessary therefore have an opportunity to perform less successfully than competitive type incentives, as long as what is offered is valued and/or especially in the case of *Save or Kill the Animals*, when it has become an integral part of the event itself., making those choices by the organizer critical.

CONCLUSION

Understanding why people choose to donate money towards specific causes is not an understudied research question, and a wide body of literature exists that includes multiple complementary and competing explanations. However, as time carries on and the spaces in which these forms of social action occur change, it is necessary to revisit and reexamine those previous models to assess how organizations meet the changing environment. From an applied perspective it is critical for those planning and carrying out these events to understand how this strategy is effective in reaching fundraising goals.

Both collaborative and competitive type incentives were shown to be potential strategies for eliciting donations from the audience of this online fundraising event. However, in the case of AGDQ 2020, collaborative type incentives were demonstrated to be a more effective strategy based on dollars raised with potential explanations being the pooling of resources towards one choice, having a clear goal amount directing how much needs to be raised, but also dependent upon what the reward is being offered and its value. That value being drawn from the tastes and preferences of the group participating. The drawback being the limitation on how many of these can be offered without expanding the event outside of its limited time constraints.

Competitive incentives are a successful strategies for eliciting donations in addition to the straight tangible reward of additional content. They just were not as successful as collaborative incentives with tangible rewards. This is presumed to be related to the nature of the incentive resolution and how the incentive plays out as a competition, but again still tied to what does those who are participating value. For *Save or Kill the Animals*, an incentive nearly as old as the GDQ events themselves, massive participation suggests that this is extremely meaningful to the group and points to the need for gathering information directly from those involved to better understand what is occurring.

What this study has reaffirmed is that offering rewards to fundraiser participants continues to be an effective strategy for eliciting donations. What this study has added to that body of work is to show how organizations can adapt the incentives offered to address limited resources, and point to a need for further study to understand how organizations can translate the values of a group into incentives and rewards in order to promote successful fundraising. Whether they are collaborative or competitive and the reward is tangible or symbolic, there is meaning attached to both the process and the outcome that needs greater study.

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Games Done Quick One Hundred Percent Run, No Skips

CONCLUSION

A Celebration of the Group

The story of GamesDoneQuick (GDQ) is centered around the power of community. Sociological, psychological, anthropological, theological, political, and economic scholars have studied and elaborated on the phenomena of community for decades (Brint 2001; Creamer et al. 2018; Durkheim 2008, 2014; Elias and Scotson 1965; Feenberg and Barney 2004; Talò, Mannarini, and Rochira 2014; Weber 1964). Where the story of GDQ differs from previous tales revolving around the theme of community is the characters, setting, and the plot. Further, these changes highlight the ways in which the societies where these stories are set have changed and adapted in ways that have led to the remarkable positive social action that serves as the data for this study.

The GamesDoneQuick events are a celebration of the group, where in coming together the group can reaffirm itself, both its purposes and its boundaries. The rituals that occur at these gatherings tie the members together and carry the individual members through to the next event because of the successful positive interactions that occur at these events. The evidence from the first two parts of this study demonstrate that Randall Collins' interaction rituals are present and occur successfully to form interaction ritual chains (Collins 2001, 2004; DiMaggio et al. 2018). However, the presence of interaction rituals does not guarantee that the outcome will be positive, for in cases where the interaction is negative, the interaction creates or reinforces negative affect towards the subject and primes future interactions to continue in that direction (Stein 2017).

The outcomes of the social action tied to the GDQ events are not merely the result of a defense mechanism to protect the group or a way to enrich the group or individuals egoistically (Evans and Jarvis 1980; Tajfel and Turner 1986). It is through a celebration of the group that is tied to doing "good" for others, the group becomes fulfilled in a way that does not necessitate competition for resources, but merely a redistribution of them. The success of that celebration is tied in multiple ways to the ability of the group's leaders to know and understand what is important to the group, and leverage those values, beliefs, and attitudes in a way that simultaneously strengthen the group without excluding (Berg et al. 2020; Carley 1991; Hirsch 1990; Tajfel and Turner 1986). By fostering an inclusive community of individuals that share a common interest, and the meanings, nostalgia, and emotion tied to that interest, GDQ leaders have created a social event for this community that sprung from a living room couch and expanded to convention centers and the homes of hundreds of thousands of telecopresent members.

Group Rituals, Individual Giving

What the leadership of GDQ has been able to do in growing these events over the last 13 years is to capitalize on the values of the speed running and larger gaming community. Certainly, the inclusion of games into charitable fundraising is not a new idea, where one merely needs to look at sporting-based fundraisers or other participation opportunities as a method of making fundraising fun. (Gallagher, Gilmore, and Stolz 2012; Webber 2004; Won, Park, and Turner 2010; Woolf, Heere, and Walker 2013). Where this body of work has strived to expand research into charitable giving and fundraising is to demonstrate the role of ritual and community in explaining how group level activities influence individual members and, in this case, can be leveraged for positive social action.

Where GDQ presents an expansion of this idea is as a reflection of what they are already doing to gaming as a reflection of the values of the community towards gaming itself. The GDQ events present as a series of rituals in which the fundraising itself isn't the pure focus. Fundraising is merely a mechanism for the group to interact allowing them to express and fulfill their *raison d'etre*, the common bond that unites them and gives meaning to the group (Evans and Jarvis 1980; Spears 2011; Thye et al. 2014), which on a massive level produces historically increasing totals raised and setting a new high score for the group (Collins 2001, 2004).

Speed running is a meta-version of gaming, where merely playing and beating the game isn't the goal but a means towards a level of competition above the base game (Boluk and LeMieux 2017; Love 2014). Instead of merely attempting to complete the game in line with the intended structure created by the developers and producers of the game, speed runners add a level of competition above the base game where the goal becomes to beat the game or accomplish another specific in game goal within the quickest time. The GDQ events serve as an exhibition of the shared symbols and ritual practices tied to speed running, effectively becoming a celebration whose goal is the share and revel in the culture speed runners have created.

The rituals of speed running include mutually negotiated and agreed upon parameters of the competition and the systems of knowledge/cultural capital tied to the group are the foundations of a community as laid out by Feenberg and Barney (2004). These represent a focus for identification with shared symbols and ritual practices as well as acceptance of common rules that are created, negotiated, and are maintained through authentic communication of group members. These rituals are the result of years of reoccurring group levels processes in which community members create and recreate normative behavior and expectations for the community and has led to the development of an increasingly formalized set of categories and criteria for

running of games. One example is competitions that range from purely fastest time without guidelines which is referred to as Any% and all the way through to a full completion of all possible tasks in a game which is known as 100%. Within those boundaries are multiple other categories that are enabled by the mechanics and programming of the software and mutually agreed upon by the participants in the community.

This study allowed for the examination of those rituals under a variety of lenses. The predominate lens of interaction rituals which is supported by the limited findings of study one, demonstrate that the success of one ritual as measured by donations per second (DPS) was tied to the success of the following ritual. Progression from one successful ritual to another had a positive influencing trend. However, in this same study we were unable to identify which aspects of the ritual related to the games themselves as sacred objects influenced success.

This merely highlighted a limitation of the study as the collection of aggregate data, and not measuring individual level responses. Further, the reliance on the use of previous measures of popularity of games among a general audience did not translate to this sub-group at this event as determining success of rituals. However, this does remove possibly explanatory variables from future study allowing us to focus on explore additional variables that community members value within these rituals.

Study two allowed us to consider these rituals under the added dimensions of race, age, and gender as they relate to a dominant stereotype for identity amongst gaming communities. While it has been firmly established that there are higher levels of actual diversity amongst people who play video games than is assumed or believed, the perception that video gamers are young, white males continues to shape expectations around who is or isn't a gamer as a self-categorized identity especially amongst those who do not fit that stereotype. Through the lens of

interaction rituals and specifically boundaries, our tests for an effect of race, age, and gender as markers of a violation of those boundaries failed to find evidence that they impacted donations received.

While previous research has shown that the profaning of rituals by outsiders can negatively impact ritual success, the lack of finding of a significant difference suggests that for this community and their identity, failing to match race, age, or gender to the stereotypical gamer does not impact the ritual. This highlights further the need to study this community through a deeper subjective method in order to glean insight into how members define themselves and maintain membership boundaries.

The final study allowed us to examine additional pieces of the ritual process and helps to demonstrate the role of community members outside of those directly performing rituals. Further, it also pushed forward our understanding of concepts that are important to the community members that can influence these rituals. The use of incentives during rituals that are tied to the games being performed allow the larger audience to participate beyond being a strict transaction of consuming content being provided and paying a transactional fee, donation, for that experience.

This point provides a plausible explanation for contradicting Collins' assertion that digital communications lack sufficient opportunity to accumulate the emotional energy needed to sustain interaction ritual chains. In combination with the sense of belonging surrounding the rituals themselves, the feeling of involvement may provide a sense of "being there" that allows individuals to experience the "hype" of the event and be drawn into the process.

Fundraising and setting new donation records are not the focus of the GDQ events, it is merely an avenue for the expression of the group and its communal identity that is enabled through the vehicle of fundraising (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 2001; Howe, Livingston, and Lee 2019; Spears 2011). Engagement and authoring as affordances enable the community to perform the rituals that allow community members to fulfil the goals of the community, or it's shared purpose (Feenberg and Barney 2004). In the same way speedrunning is not about beating the game but doing so the fastest or under a specific set of criteria, so too are the fundraising events not specifically about the funds raised but doing so in a way that reflects who the community truly is. Which becomes a cornerstone of why this group has been able to successfully reach the dollar amounts raised over their decade plus of fundraising efforts.

Know Your Audience, Know Yourself

What the studies included in this work have demonstrated is that the fundraising accomplished at GDQ events can be explained through the lenses of Collins' interaction ritual chains (2004) with an underlying understanding of communities and group processes of formation and identity maintenance (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1999; Hornsey 2008; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Spears 2011), even in digital and blended social spaces beyond strictly in-person or face-to-face interactions (Gómez and Ardévol 2010; Trub 2016; Zhao 2005). In part this is due to changing social norms surrounding the use of digital spaces, both functionally and symbolically (Correa, Hinsley, and de Zúñiga 2010; Olson and Olson 2003; Villanti et al. 2017). However, it merely represents a locational shift in these processes and not a paradigmatic one. Therefore, it makes sense that strategies that promote effective group cooperation and growth would also be effective in digital spaces. This allows us to chart out pathways for future study to further understand how this group formed and shapes those group identities and rituals.

The growth of GDQ events is likely the result of decisions by group leadership, in particular Mike Uyama at the outset, not necessarily with the intention of raising the most money but in ensuring the group is enjoying the process together. Successful events are the result of successful interaction rituals (Collins 2001, 2004), but in order to accomplish that feat, leadership has to decide which rituals to include to ensure the opportunity to be successful. As the data in these included studies has shown, success in raising funds is tied to successful rituals, yet what it was unable to accomplish was to demonstrate which aspects of the rituals examined in studies one and two are responsible for that success. The factors associated with video game sales that previous studies have utilized as a measure of popularity did not translate into measures of what this community values as sacred (Durkheim 2008). The question remaining to be answered is what does the community find sacred?

Study two did demonstrate some aspects that success is not tied to, including perceived race, gender, and age (Shaw 2012). The setting of boundaries and boundary work are vital in the creation and maintenance of community as a social identity (Ellemers et al. 2001; Hornsey 2008; Spears 2011) and those boundaries frame successful interaction rituals (Collins 2001, 2004; Hausmann, Jonason, and Summers-Effler 2011). Race, age, and gender are three main components of the stereotypical gamer identity (Howe et al. 2019; Paaßen, Morgenroth, and Stratemeyer 2017; Shaw 2012), but did not influence the success of the rituals as measured by donations raised that was examined in these studies. This does not mean that those parts of identity do not influence who becomes a speed runner, but it highlights a need to explore limiting factors in who can be a member of the speed running community. This directs us to seek out self-identifying speed runners and ask them how they define who a speed runner is, to understand that identity on a foundational level.

Study three's exploration of the incentives leads us in a clearer direction towards process over substance in the understanding of what the speed running community truly values. The inclusion of incentives and providing the opportunity for the larger community to participate in these events beyond flat donations is shown to be an effective strategy for GDQ leadership. Particularly for incentives that combined participation and tangible rewards, not only was the community able to play along, but also received a tangible reward for doing so. This continues to suggest that the Gaming is more important than game to the speed running community.

One additional avenue for research in this area would entail expanding the number of cases to multiple events in order to compare categorically how incentives have changed longitudinally, and what this author has picked up in the background research is a developing dissatisfaction amongst a vocal minority for the increasing goals for rationalist incentives, where a reward is offered, and the group works towards unlocking that goal for a set donation total. While we found this type to be the most effective, it suggests there are limits to the inclusion of these incentives beyond the time and resources needed to include them we have already acknowledged that remain to be explored.

A deeper understanding of the community and its values, attitudes, and beliefs is more likely to be required to fully explain why specific rituals succeed or fail. However, it is far easier to recognize failure of a ritual than it is success. Notable examples of this have come in the form of games far exceeding expected time estimates, vulgarity or other moral infractions, and cheating. As Goffman pointed out (1959, 1963, 1982), normative behavior is expected and often only highlighted by violations of that behavior. It is highly probable that the type of understanding needed to academically explain the success of these rituals is beyond the scope of

this studies design. A more grounded or ethnographic approach could provide a deeper understanding of factors that lead to successful interactions (Caliandro 2014; Garcia et al. 2009).

However, for GDQ leadership there are opportunities to maintain active participation in the community that allows them affordances to remain connected to and aware of the preferences and values of the group. The selection process for games or runs to be included in GDQ events is conducted by a committee of community members including GDQ leaders. This has evolved from a committee of one, Mike Uyama, saying yes or no to those who volunteer to perform at these events. Community members who actively create and recreate community culture (Bion 1991; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Carley 1991) are those responsible for deciding what pieces of the culture to present at GDQ events. It is there understanding of the zeitgeist of the speed running community at that point in time that factors into the decision-making process.

Leadership utilizes a combination made from aspects of subjective experiences with community involvement and objective measures of popularity to engage participants in group activity that allows them to express the values of the group. This presents as a workable strategy for those wishing to reproduce the fundraising model for activity or lifestyle-based communities. By providing the community with an avenue to celebrate itself, leadership is able to capitalize on the positive energy of the group and direct it towards charitable social action. In fact, we see examples of these lifestyle-based communities holding fundraising events and can apply the interaction ritual chains lens to explaining why they persist (Filo, Funk, and O'Brien 2011; Goodwin et al. 2017; Webber 2004; Won et al. 2010; Woods 2018; Woolf et al. 2013). Examples of these include charity sporting events like bowling tournaments, "Chili" Bowl disc golf tournament events held nationwide by disc golfers, or "Poker Runs" held by motorcycle enthusiasts.

Participants engage with the events because they are interested in the activity and not necessarily the explicit intention of raising funds (Filo et al. 2011; Goodwin et al. 2017). For many, the fundraising is secondary or even a cost associated with taking part in the event. To ensure that participants enjoy themselves, the activity needs to be authentic and align with values and preferences of the group and not due to how much money they raised. If they enjoyed doing it, then they are more likely to take part the next time an event is held, and fundraising will continue to occur organically.

Everyone Gets to Play

A final theme that emerged from these studies is the inclusivity of the community. Both the data explored in these studies and background research on the speed running community demonstrate that there are very few barriers to who can participate (Bion 1991; Carley 1991; Evans and Jarvis 1980). The main criterion for involvement is whether one is interested in playing or watching others play video games at a high rate of speed, with great technical ability, or both. Further, these are not skills one must excel at to be included. However, the ability to manage a large community and maintain harmony amongst a diverse group presents a challenge for organizers.

This can be a difficult task to manage for groups and their leaders depending on the makeup and purpose of the group (Horne 2004; Manning and Harris 2016; Polletta and Jasper 2001). Groups that are highly exclusive or based on very specific membership criteria may benefit from that exclusion naturally restricting group size (Sakurai 1975; Stein 2017; Thye et al. 2014), or to reinforce a Durkheimian mechanical solidarity (Durkheim 2008, 2014). Unfortunately, we also observe that highly exclusionary groups also frequently exhibit xenophobic attitudes and discrimination towards non-members as an expression of attribution

biases and in-group-out-group dynamics as described by Turner (1975), Tajfel (Tajfel 1982; Tajfel and Turner 1979, 1986), and other group scholars (Curşeu, Janssen, and Raab 2012; Kelley and Michela 1980; Lewin 1997; Sakurai 1975).

Where GDQ and the speed running community have been able to overcome these challenges of collective action amongst large groups is by cultivating the group identity to build solidarity with a focus on an achieved characteristic, as opposed to an ascribed characteristic like race, age, or biological sex (Berg et al. 2020; Woods 2018). The group identity is formed around the shared activity of speed running, membership in the community is dependent on do you have an interest in speed running or not. GDQ has been able to leverage the speed running identity to increase participation at their events, in conjunction with efforts to ensure that the rituals performed align with community values, to produce significant emotional energy in many people to elicit donations of a small amount. This circumvents one of the barriers to collective action as group size increases.

However, another challenge that groups face as they increases in size is maintaining cohesion (Evans and Jarvis 1980; Friedkin 2004; Thye et al. 2014), because identities do not operate in a vacuum (Brenner, Serpe, and Stryker 2014; Callero 1985; Hornsey 2008; Spears 2011). For an inclusive community like speed runners, where the only criteria is participation in the activity, many different members of the community bring with them additional identities and the potential for conflict that arises from those identities (de Almeida et al. 2014; Klemm Verbos and Humphries 2012; Tajfel and Turner 1979, 1986). This presents a delicate balance that the GDQ leadership needs to contend with to prevent conflict between toxic identities often associated with the stereotypical gamer and the targets of that toxicity that add diversity to the speed running community.

The stereotypical gamer identity of young, white, males is present in the larger gaming community and in some cases has been shown to have a toxic influence on other gamers (Gray, Buyukozturk, and Hill 2017; Paaßen et al. 2017; Shaw 2012). Our findings in study two give us evidence that matching of the perceived race, age, and gender to the stereotypical gamer does not influence donations raised and gives us sufficient reason to further examine what that identity is tied to. In this case, GDQ leaders have done an exceptional job in the policing and social control of these spaces to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion by removing these toxic influences. Academically it is an example of not allowing poor gamesmanship to ruin the game. Protecting these spaces from those who would spoil it, serves to ensure that those present maintain a positive affect towards the rest of the group and the activities they are engaging in.

GDQ leadership has shown a strong commitment to shaping and protecting the speed runner identity in a few ways. The first is by fostering inclusivity across various social demographics. GDQ does not discriminate participation by any protected or non-protected social classes or characteristics. It regularly features participants across social categories that often don't get recognition or space on other formats including Twitch, YouTube, or other game streaming sites (Berg et al. 2020; Christiansen 2017) and creating specific events, like Flame/Frost/Fleet Fatales to highlight women and non-binary peoples in the speed running community. The speed running community also has multiple highly visible individuals who are Transgender. One notable members of the community includes Narcissa Wright, who holds a significant role in GDQ history as having performed the finale at GDQ events prior to revealing their trans-identity and performing in prime-time slots after sharing their true self.

GDQ has also enacted several policies surrounding the event to ensure that toxicity does not exclude members of the community who abide by the guidelines. This has included limiting

mature and sensitive game content to late night hours and restricting profanity during live performances. In the event studied here, AGDQ 2020, the runner for Fallout 4 displays the username TomatoAngus. However, outside of this event that is not his regular username which differs by the inclusion of the letter g. This user, in explaining to the community why his name was different shared that he had submitted to GDQ on six separate occasions and was not accepted as a participant until it was explained that he needed to use a different username.

GDQ has especially demonstrated that it is willing to take a strong stance to remain inclusive and stand up for disenfranchised community members, especially Trans members of the community. In 2023, GDQ announced they would not feature any *Harry Potter* games in response to J.K. Rowling's Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist (TERF) rhetoric. Even more significantly, GDQ leaders made the decision to cancel the in-person event and hold a virtual only AGDQ in 2022 to protest Florida's anti-transgender legislation (Parrish 2023). They have since added to that decision by relocating the 2023 event out of Orlando, Florida and into Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

These actions on the part of GDQ leadership help to maintain harmony among an especially large and diverse community by removing toxicity and ensuring that participants can enjoy the activities that unite them without fear of being targeted or persecuted for other aspects of their identities. It allows for community members to feel welcome and safe and permits the altruistic giving from interaction rituals to occur on a larger scale (Collins 2001). This is a strategy that is especially important for other organizations who wish to replicate the type of growth GDQ has been able to accomplish. For the audience of this body of work, perhaps the biggest key takeaway for future applied work is a recognition that while it can be effective to limit group size and membership for some tasks and goals, it can also be myopic of communities

and organizations to limit themselves from future growth by excluding possible assets to those communities because of ascribed characteristics.

New High Score, Enter Initials

GDQ has experienced a level of growth in the fundraising world that is very infrequently observed. Within seven years, they had become an organization able to regularly raise more than $1 million dollars at a single charity event. In thirteen years, the organization has raised over $45 Million for multiple charities, and secured its position as the single largest donors for both Prevent Cancer Foundation and Médecins sans Frontiers/Doctors without Borders.

This growth is due to GDQ and its leadership remaining authentic to who the speed running community is, and allowing its members an opportunity to come together and celebrate that shared identity. GDQ happens because gamers want to game, and while they are collected together for that reason, fundraising occurs. In true gamer fashion, they have also turned fundraising into a game. The excitement and accomplishment that can be observed when GDQ events reach milestones and/or set new fundraising records is readily apparent that the community is engrossed in an activity that allows them to reaffirm their communal identities, creates and reinforces positive affect about their selves and the group, and primes future interactions.

A hallmark of the speed running community, despite the competition of setting the best time, is the collaboration between community members to do so. Knowledge and strategies are shared among members because it is seen as a community win when new records are set for games. In this same spirit, the speed running community would want to share the strategies needed to set new records in fundraising for other communities, but it is important to recognize

for any organizations wishing to replicate this model that authenticity is key. The true success of

GDQ lies within engaging community members in rituals that reflect who the community is as a

whole and engaging them in authentic experiences that allow them to celebrate their shared

identity.

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