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“Hello [Streamer] PogChamp”: The Language Variety on Twitch

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## **Abstract**

The present text is a research into the language usage in Computer-Mediated Communication, specifically on the online streaming platform Twitch.tv. The study will discuss Twitch's language variety with a focus on Twitch emotes and discourse characteristics of a Twitch chat log. Studying Twitch emotes is the underlying method of this research as the thesis will attempt to distinguish meaning from the top 5 most used emotes on Twitch and try to establish the context to which these emotes occur. The focus group of this thesis is from selected livestreams that average between 30-500 viewers, characterized as a "participatory community". Participatory communities are distinguished as communities that encourage openness and calls for its members to engage in shared activities, thus creating a shared identity and history online. With this focus group, the present study will conduct a qualitative survey regarding the participants' perception of Twitch emotes and a Computer-mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) of the chat logs in order to find emote context, how emotes affect the participatory community and discourse characteristics of a Twitch chat. Conducting research on online behavior is often anecdotal or speculative; however, the approach to answering the research questions in this thesis was done by combining the participants' perception of emotes and by analyzing and extracting a valuable answer from the chat log.

What the qualitative survey revealed was that the perception of emotes was varied, meaning it had more than just one mode of expression, yet its expressions were somewhat similar. By using the survey findings as framework for the chat log samples, the CMDA findings revealed that Twitch's discourse characteristics had the same features as any other online medium, the context to which emotes occurred correlated with the participants' perception of emotes, and that some emotes promoted others to respond whereas some emotes did not.

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## 1. Introduction

This thesis concerns Twitch.TV, a medium popular for its livestreaming of video game content on the Internet. Twitch combines the use of broadcasting software for live streaming and a live internet relay chat, thus creating an atmosphere for individuals to broadcast their entertainment with an audiovisual option for the viewers to relate through the chat. The platform Twitch where users engage in expressing themselves or discussing certain topics has given “birth to a language variety which only very remotely resembles any other specific way of communication” (Olejniczak 2015:329). The reason for Twitch’s peculiar language variety is due to the integration of emotes, Twitch’s version of emoticons, used to facilitate more transparent and quick expressions on the platform. The importance of studying linguistic features of Twitch can be due to the increasing growth of live streaming media consumption and Twitch’s unique language variety being expressed both within and outside its platform. Seeing as the chat is connected to an ongoing broadcast, it will be of interest to study the peculiar discourse of Twitch chat as it is quite context-dependent, abundant in neologisms, and integrated with a lot of specific emotes used to advance the conversation. Twitch sets a new distinction when it comes to entertainment as it can now replace the usual passive viewing of either television or streaming services like Netflix and HBO. Twitch has, in Smith et al’s study (2015), been called an interactive television, where the viewers can participate and shape the entertainment being broadcasted.

This encouragement for viewers to interact with the streamer and other viewers allows us to label some streams as participatory communities. The term “participatory community” is based on theories within sociology and focuses on the communities that are “characterized by its openness as well as means for and encouragement of members to engage in shared activities” (Hamilton et al. 2014:1315). Such communities are more apparent within streams where the viewer count is lower than 500 as it is difficult to keep up with an ongoing chat if it reaches a certain number of participants. The use of emoticons differs from other social media outlets like Facebook or Twitter, which use punctuation marks, letters and numbers to create pictorial faces displaying emotion or sentiment. Twitch calls them emotes and uses them to display pictorial faces, usually of humans, animals or cartoon characters. Emotes, however, only appear if one uses the correct code for them, consisting of upper-case and lower-case letters. One could argue

that the emote creates a wider range of emotion or sentiment to a sentence than a smiley-face on Facebook or Twitter would. The notion of Twitch being inviting to newcomers, fostering participatory communities along the way, and the unique language variety being expressed thus create the aim for this thesis to research the linguistic features of chatrooms in participatory communities.

Through qualitative surveys and a computer-mediated discourse from participatory communities, the research examines usage habits, the relationship between streamer and viewer, and linguistic features of the Twitch medium. First the thesis looks at the emotes with regard to semantics. When faced with emotes, people are met with the task to acquire meaning to said icon, yet the perceived meaning may not be the same with every individual. The context of the sentence might help to understand the emote, and the emote usage may differ from the types of sentences used. It is therefore instructive to conduct a survey to analyze emote usage in order to find meaning to emotes.

## **1.1 Research Questions**

The main purpose of this study is to create a better understanding of the language variety used on Twitch. To a newcomer the language variety might seem odd, even outlandish, yet the playful spirit and creativity of a chatroom can be seen as inviting. Through discourse analysis and surveys of viewers from Twitch, the linguistic features can be assessed and analyzed in order to understand the culture of a Twitch chatroom. For a popular and growing live streaming medium, the thesis has put the main research question as open and exploring:

*What is the meaning behind Twitch's top 5 most used emotes and in which contexts of conversation do they occur?*

The main aim is to gather insight into viewers' emote habits and to see if there is unison or anomaly to the meaning of the emotes. To find the top 5 most used emotes on Twitch, the thesis has chosen to use the statistics of StreamElements, a platform connected to streaming on Twitch. The stats are dated before the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2019, and the current emotes at the top were

Kappa, TriHard, PogChamp, LUL, and 4Head. In addition to the main research question, the thesis will look at what emotes can tell us about:

1. *The participatory community involved*
2. *The context to which the sentence is situated*
3. *The discourse characteristics of the participatory community*

Emoticons serve as an important part for people's everyday lives. In most cases, emoticons are used to express a user's emotion. For Twitch, creating definitions of meaning from users' own perception of the emotes opens the possibility for readers to acquire a more convincing meaning to a sentence. Seeing as the focus of this thesis is on participatory communities on Twitch, the thesis will not cover Twitch.tv as a whole but rather an integral part of Twitch. Participatory communities might also be easier to investigate in comparison to larger livestreams on Twitch since the influx of messages sent in the chatroom is lower in the former compared to the latter. The first sub-question seeks to explore the way emotes and participatory communities correlate with each other. The usage of the top 5 emotes may vary from participatory communities and there may be other emotes that are more prominent. The second sub-question seeks to analyze the context in sentences where the top 5 most used emotes occur. Analyzing context on Twitch may be easier than on any other medium since, in most cases, one can get a video on demand (VOD) that allows one to replay a livestream with timestamps of messages sent and one gets to see the reaction to the broadcaster of said messages. The last sub-question seeks to analyze discourse characteristics through a Computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) where the focus is on structure and meaning levels of language.

## **1.2 Twitch**

Watching other individuals play a game is not at all a new phenomenon. Ever since the creation of video games, one could easily watch others play arcade games at the mall or watch siblings play a game once a console has been brought home. However, once the video games reached computers and the opportunity arose to watch others play on the internet, the phenomenon had become odd to the non-consumer. Twitch represents a digitalized version of



spectating, with added opportunity for viewers to interact with the player. Twitch is not at all the first platform to introduce spectating games online. YouTube, for instance, has had people uploading “Let’s play” videos of themselves playing video games with added commentary almost since its creation. Providing gameplay and content is something that Twitch provides too, yet it distinguishes itself from “Let’s plays” with its live broadcasts and the opportunity to interact with the streamer. In different terms, Twitch is a communication platform with audiovisual content and live interaction. Twitch is not alone in livestreaming video games. Mediums like YouTube’s Live section and Microsoft’s Mixer are worthy competitors; however, Twitch reigns supreme with its large userbase and number of viewers it draws in. In 2014, Twitch was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in peak internet traffic in the US, only being beaten by Netflix, Google, and Apple (Maiberg 2014). The viewers daily average from 633,000 at the lowest to 1,866,000 at the highest, which opens up the opportunity for any viewer to socialize on the website (Twitchstats.net).

Originally, there was a website called Justin.tv, which allowed people to broadcast video content online. With its gained popularity, Justin.tv introduced a division for live streaming video games, called Twitch.tv, in June 2011. With Twitch’s increased popularity peaking in 2014, Justin.tv rebranded themselves as Twitch Interactive and eventually shut down Justin.tv in order to focus on its growing gaming community within Twitch.

To utilize Twitch beyond just spectating one must create an own account. Once an account has been created, the user is provided with a profile page where he can customize and write whatever he likes, but perhaps the most important aspect is the availability to chat in the chatrooms of other livestreams and the option to broadcast one's own content. To give a visual representation of livestreams in general, one is often seeing the gameplay of a specific game in addition to a small window in the corner displaying the broadcaster through a webcam. In most cases, the broadcaster will be equipped with a microphone to communicate with the live feedback from the viewers; if not, the streamer will either write in the chat or stay quiet. Twitch has for the longest time been connected to gaming categories in livestreaming, but over time the medium has branched out into broadcasts of music, podcasts, just chatting, and other creative activities. To give an idea of the types of people one finds in a chatroom one can distinguish four types of communicators. These consist of newcomers, regulars, moderators, and streamer.

The newcomers are in the first stage of creating an identity online. They are often set with different alternatives when they visit a livestream. If they like the content that is provided they can either choose to interact and become active participants or they can choose to stay silent and become what is called a ‘lurker’ of the stream. Labeling someone as a lurker is not to portray them as something negative, but rather as a person who enjoys the content without the chat, a passive viewer. Both active and passive newcomers can take the next step to become regulars of the stream, but the ‘lurker’ will most likely not be branded a regular by others due to his inactivity in the chat. A regular is often recognized by the other participants and broadcaster for his participation in the stream. The number of times one needs to interact with a livestream is not set in stone, but one will most likely become a regular once one has established a shared identity with the other viewers and broadcaster. If a participant manages to bond or create a good relationship with the streamer and the streamer is in need of regulation or administrative duties, one can be appointed as a moderator. The moderator can help with regulating the chat through the power of timing out viewers or banning them, create a text-command that holds information that viewers may be wondering about, and overall be inviting to the newcomers, regulars and streamer.

The streamer is the provider of entertainment for the participants. He is the sole proprietor of how his virtual community is created and he is set with the task of choosing what to broadcast, whether it is received as bad or good by his audience. It is by no means an easy feat to maintain popularity, as viewers that come to the stream all have different thoughts as to what good entertainment is. If a livestreaming channel succeeds at maintaining a certain viewer count, one can apply to Twitch for a partnership. If accepted by Twitch, one can look at a possible outcome of gaining money, due to the availability of supporting the stream through subscription. A subscription allows the viewers to acquire a different membership status through supporting the streamer with money amounts of 5, 10, and 25 American dollars a month. The types of people one finds in a stream are now also characterized through whether or not they are subscribed to the streamer. The non-subscribers are still the same, but the subscribers gain certain benefits. One benefit is the subscriber icon next to their name in the chat whenever they send a message. The second benefit involves the channel specific emotes that are unlocked with subscription. The third benefit is the option of converting the chat to subscriber mode, leaving non-subscribers out of the conversation. Some streamers also tend to do raffles where a lucky

viewer can receive an item or service from the streamer; these raffles can often favor subscribers over non-subscribers.

Before describing emotes in use, a list of terms should be explained in order to understand chat culture and emote culture. Even though the types of people in a livestream has already been established, it can also be useful to categorize these types further with how they can behave in a chat. The terms that will be addressed in this sub-section are spam, trolls/trolling, copy pastas, and bandwagoners. These terms mostly correlate with each other and are more apparent in larger streams. Once a stream reaches a certain viewer count, its chat might be experiencing what is called spam. Spam is when the chat receives an influx of messages. These spam messages are, in most cases, not meaningful for analysis but serve as a response to something surprising happening on screen or to troll the streamer. An internet troll is often the mediator of something negative to a stream. The troll will persist to spam negative messages to the stream in hope for attention or even attract other viewers to do the same. It is therefore the moderator's or streamer's duty to either regulate the trolls by timing out or banning them or to just ignore them and let them continue their spam. The larger the viewer count, the harder it is for moderators to regulate the influx of messages. A troll will often make use of copy pastas; these are large already crafted messages that one can copy and paste into the chat. If a copy pasta is successful, it will gain bandwagoners who will copy the troll's message and continue the spam of the chat.

### **1.3 Twitch Emotes**

Along with subscription emotes that one has to pay a monthly fee for, every Twitch user is equipped with global emotes. These emotes are made available for everyone to use and contain graphic icons of people, animals, cartoons, and objects. According to the stats shown on Stream Elements, the global Twitch emotes outrank most subscriber emotes in terms of frequency, with only one subscriber emote being in last place of the top 10 most used emotes (StreamElements.com). In this regard, frequency is correlated to the spam of a chat. There can be a lot of reasons for subscriber emotes being placed behind the global emotes. One reason can be because of the global emotes getting a head start, meaning that most global emotes have been

there since the creation of Twitch.tv while subscriber-specific emotes must first be created once the live streamer has reached a good audience and been approved by the Twitch partner program. The other reason could be due to the place where the emotes occur; a subscriber-specific emote may perhaps only be sent in the chat where it was created whereas a global emote has a rather free use across all livestreams. The third reason can be due to availability; if a Twitch user is satisfied with the global emotes, he might not see the subscriber emotes as necessary for him. Back to the emotes in question, this sub-section will try to describe the emotes through text. Here are the top 5 most used emotes

1.  : Kappa
2.  : TriHard
3.  : PogChamp
4.  : LUL
5.  : 4Head

It is also important to mention that, seeing as there is no definite answer to the meaning of Twitch emotes, a lot of websites have tried to convey what the emotes express to the public. Therefore, the meaning might be speculative, or it might be correct. This thesis will try to examine whether the meaning stays the same for every Twitch user.

The first emote is the global emote Kappa. The emote is a grey pictorial icon of Josh DeSeno, a former employee of Justin.TV. It depicts DeSeno with a closed mouth almost looking like he is smiling or appearing smug. According to the website KnowYourMeme, the emote is used to convey sarcasm whereas the website LazyThunk, a webpage made by DeSeno himself, claims the emote to imply that the sender is not being serious (KnowYourMeme, LazyThunk). With these perceived meanings to the Kappa emote, DeSeno deems the emote to be “a sort of patron saint of light hearted trolling among the gaming community” (LazyThunk). In an interview with Metro, DeSeno talks about his meteoric fame when attending the annual

Twitchcon, a convention for Twitch streamers and its viewers; “It’s the one time of year where I get to be like a celebrity for a couple of days. Or at least get a taste of what it might feel like” (Starkey 2017). An example of a Kappa sentence on Twitch could be “Nice gameplay Kappa”.

The second place in the top 5, and arguably the most controversial, is the emote TriHard. It is an emote of streamer Mychal Jefferson, streaming under the name trihex. The emote depicts the African-American man with an open-mouthed smile appearing to be expressing excitement. The controversy around TriHard is around the usage of the emote. For some, TriHard can be looked at through the terms of intended use and realized use. Originally, Jefferson maintains that the emote correlates with the action of trying hard, hence the pun of the emote. Within Jefferson’s own community, the emote is not a problem and it is used in a positive way (Destiny 2018, 1:45:00). However, for other Twitch streams and even the E-sports broadcast of the game Overwatch, the emote can be perceived as something negative, even racist at times. In fact, the Overwatch stream would experience firsthand the realized use whenever the host, an African American man, appeared on stream. The influx of TriHards being spammed in chat was so detrimental that the Overwatch stream banned the use altogether (Davis 2018). The use of TriHard raises awareness to toxic chat culture and questions how we should regulate emotes. The emote of Mychal Jefferson is not inherently racist itself but when the emote is spammed whenever a black man is shown on stream, it is not perceived as something positive. The question about negative emote usage is something that should be up for debate and it should be looked at in terms of culture and moderation.

PogChamp is the third most used emote on Twitch and also appears in the headline of this thesis. The emote depicts Ryan ‘gootecks’ Gutierrez, co-founder of the YouTube channel CrossCounterTV, doing a facial expression of surprise. The emote often occurs after something amazing happens on stream, when greeting people and to express disbelief. Originally, the name refers to a skit on CrossCounter’s YouTube channel where they are trying to become champions of the game Pog, which was popular in the 1990’s.

Coming fourth in this list is the emote LUL. It portrays YouTube creator John Bain, under the alias of Total Biscuit, laughing. The emote name plays on the abbreviation LOL, meaning “laughing out loud”, and is typically used to express something funny. Total Biscuit’s original emote started out as a subscriber-emote but was taken down by the photographer who

had the copyright. The emote then resurfaced through BetterTwitchTV (BTTV), an extension to the internet browser that allows one to see other emotes than Twitch's own. The popularity of the BTTV emote led to Twitch altering the protected emote to look more cartoony and adding it to the global emote pool. Expressing something funny can be in the form of ridiculing the streamer for doing something out of the ordinary, laughing at the content, or even mocking the viewer's message in chat.

4Head is the last emote in the top 5 and it features the streamer Josh 'Cadburry' Meyer. It shows Cadburry smiling to the camera and the usage often occurs when a viewer tries to joke in a chat. One could argue that 4Head is a more light hearted version of LUL due to the emote being more of a grin where LUL can be perceived as mocking.

Now, why would a look at emote usage be worth studying more in-depth? Online language is a representation of a language that is forever evolving, and as such, a study on Twitch can help create a common ground for the ever-changing media. Studying Twitch directly correlates with studying online behavior and core elements of virtual communities. Jacob Woodsey, vice president of product design on Twitch, even stated to Mashable that "If you understand the meaning of [a specific] emote, you are now part of the community. That is important" (Magdaleno 2014). With emotes being a gateway to a community, what more can emotes bring to the table? This is what the thesis will try to find out.

## **2. Literature Review and Theoretical Chapter**

The background for writing a thesis on the language of an internet multimedia site like Twitch, as in this case, revolves mostly around articles found in conference proceedings, journals, and on websites. One could argue that the literature reviewed in this thesis is strongly theoretical, thus creating an opportunity to combine the Literature Review with the theoretical chapter. The current chapter is divided into five sections of different topic focus. Each chapter section has research that is related to the topic and with this the approaches and critical concepts of each section are explored. Concepts that are instrumental to the thesis will be explained further in each section. Most of the articles that deal with Twitch as the main topic stand as the basis for the theoretical chapter due to their key concepts that can be explored further in this thesis. In order to establish an understanding of Twitch as a whole, the chapter has been divided into different sections with regard to research on language, community and spectating. The section on language is put first to create a common ground and to remind the reader of the research aim to exploring a language variety found on the internet. Once an insight to language has been made, the chapter explores sociological theories of community in order to reflect on how people create personal connections online, looks at the appeal of spectating in order to understand viewers of Twitch, and looks at how one can analyze chats by discourse analysis.

The first section looks at the different research done on the language variety of Twitch and computer-mediated communication (CMC). Apart from the fourth section, the first section stands as the basis for looking at the linguistic characteristics of Twitch. Next up is the section on participatory communities. The reasoning for participatory communities coming second is due to the need for understanding the concept as well as constructing an idea of what scope will be used in looking at the CMC medium of Twitch. The third section oversees the appeal of spectating E-sports, livestreams and learning effects. The section explores what makes Twitch appealing to the younger audiences. The fourth section deals with the approach that the thesis will use in order to understand the online behavior of Twitch. The way to answer the research question accurately is primarily through the qualitative survey, yet the thesis' aim to analyze the chatlogs of its participatory communities will mainly be looked through the lens of computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA). Susan C. Herring's chapter on CMDA (2004) is the cornerstone of the fourth section, and she examines the approach thoroughly with regard to forming a research

question, data sampling techniques, and levels of language to analyze. The last section summarizes the whole chapter with important keywords for each section explored.

## **2.1 Language Variety**

The purpose of conducting a study on Twitch is to study language, not just any language, a language attached to the internet and its global network of users. Moreover, in order to understand the language of computer-mediated communication (CMC), a key component is to know the features of a chat, how the language is conveyed from a creator to a recipient. Oliver M. Traxel's study (2017) is instrumental with regard to creating a common ground of the features within a chat. Even though Traxel's focus is on the orthographic and graphemic features, the study is applicable for those studying discourse. Although the chat in Traxel's study is from a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG), the same features and perhaps even additional features can be found in the chatrooms of Twitch. By creating a model which depicts the processes to which a phrase is linked, one can analyze the utterances by relating them to way of expression, type of expression, and level of recognizability in order for a better understanding of the way language is expressed on different media platforms. Traxel's Creator-Recipient Model will hopefully serve as a template for the Internet Relay Chat used on Twitch.

The key concepts of Traxel's model include netspeak, leet, regular correct, regular incorrect, and automatic conversion as distinguishing types of expressions in an MMORPG. These types of expressions will most likely appear in an online chatroom like Twitch. Regular correct is when the phrases are used correctly with no deviations from the standard spelling. When a phrase is classified as regular incorrect, it is because the phrase is a deviation from the standard spelling. The reasons behind a regular incorrect phrase can be due to being used in the wrong spelling, typing too fast on a keyboard, etymologically related words being quite similar in spelling, and the keyboard omitting, substituting or adding a character. Netspeak is a type of expression heavily related to the gaming community and the internet. Netspeak differs itself from regular incorrect as the phrases are often deliberately spelled in the manner they appear. Critical features of netspeak include shortening of words, words that acquire new meanings in gaming contexts, initialisms, acronyms, the omission of characters in words, and omission of



entire words. With relation to MMORPGs, Traxel maintains that “rapid message processing is of the utmost importance” when communicating online, netspeak is then a viable option for relaying a message (Traxel 2017: 283). Leet is the advanced and adapted version of netspeak, created initially for modes of encryptions. Key features here involve substituting letters with numbers or symbols and transposition of letters.

Automatic conversion is the instance where you connect with the system or program by using commands. In an MMORPG, these commands do not appear in the final output as they are converted automatically. Automatic conversion is used to change text channels or make your avatar in an MMORPG perform a specific command. These five types of expressions can all appear in a chatroom of Twitch and are often used to create a meaningful, playful or serious conversation. The automatic conversion that Traxel mentions in his study works differently on Twitch, as the automatic conversions on Twitch also have the options to convert the commands into emotes. Now, an emote on Twitch does not appear if miswritten, it has to be written with the right upper-case and lower-case letters for the emote to appear. The emote PogChamp will not automatically be converted into an emote if written like ‘pogchamp’ or ‘POGCHAMP.’ Much like the necessity of rapid message processing in an MMORPG, regular incorrect, netspeak or automatic conversion will often appear in the chat of Twitch as the viewers are all experiencing a live broadcast where feedback or comments on surprising events are sure to occur.

Looking at the use of emoticons, the predecessor of Twitch’s emotes, through the lens of pragmatics, Eli Dresner and Susan C. Herring (2010) investigate emoticons through their functions in sentences. Emoticons have always been categorized as indicating emotion, however, Dresner and Herring argue that the meaning of emoticons are “sometimes more closely tied to language than what is allowed by their construal as emoticon icons” (Dresner & Herring 2010: 253). Dresner and Herring, thus, map emoticons through speech acts and its pragmatic force. By looking at J.L Austin’s theory of the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts (1962), and also Searle’s taxonomy of illocutionary acts (1979), Dresner and Herring’s study is equipped with theories as to how emoticons not only express facial expression but mitigate a different meaning to an utterance. Although emoticons are predecessors to Twitch’s global emotes, the same method of examination can be used in order to understand meaning to an emote. Austin’s

theory of speech act (1962) and Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary force (1979) will be explored further in the methodology chapter.

In exploring the language variety on Twitch, a few researchers come to mind. Jędrzej Olejniczak's study (2015) looks at the different 'natures' of each individual stream on Twitch regarding how they differed in sentence length, message uptime, and emoticon density. The corpus-based approach of measuring sentence length, message uptime, and emoticon density to distinguish differences in streams varying from 1,000 -150,000 viewers serves as a background for why a linguistic study on emotes on Twitch can be relevant. Olejniczak showed that when the viewer count was at the highest (150,000), it resulted in lower sentence length, a higher density of emoticons, and lesser uptime for messages. In the 1,000 viewer-group, the emoticon density consisted of only 3%, yet message uptime and message length increased. With results like these in mind, one can imagine what the chats of the participants involved in the survey will look like, as the participants are part of participatory communities. This will be explained further in another topic, but it is essentially a Twitch stream where the viewer count ranges from 30-500 viewers on average. Interestingly, Olejniczak also found out that the density of emoticons was not that different from 1,000 to 10,000, indicating that emoticons are used evenly both for commenting on gameplay for bigger events and wholesome discussions at a lower viewer count. Olejniczak also mentions how the popular Twitch emotes escape the medium and become neologisms outside of the website, even though the emotes only have visual representations within the website itself.

Francesco Barbieri, Luis Espinosa-Anke and Miguel Ballesteros (2017) went with a different study on Twitch, with a focus on understanding gaming audiences by modeling the Twitch emotes through different usage patterns. Research like this, with a vast amount of emotes shown and many systems to distinguish different emote patterns, is mostly used for analytical purposes and not for linguistic purposes. Reading Barbieri et al's study in search of something purposeful in the linguistic field comes through when they claim that reading a language variety like Twitch can be difficult as it contains many references to gaming lingo, internet memes, and slang. These references along with emotes must not be disregarded as they represent core elements in interpreting the intended meaning of the message sent in the chat. Mehdi Kaytoue, Arlei Silva, Loïc Cerf, and Wagner Meira Jr. (2012) examined in their research the concept of

video game live streaming and modeling the popularity of top streamers. Barbieri et al., with background information from Kaytoue et al., claim that “properly analyzing the content of Twitch chat messages can be useful for understanding the opinion of the community towards any industry product or stakeholder...” (Barbieri et al. 2017: 11), showing one more important factor of how the Twitch chat affects others.

In interpreting emoticon style on Twitter, Jaram Park, Clay Fink, Vladimir Barash, and Meeyoung Cha (2013) look at how the emoticon changes within geography and culture. Emoticons on Twitter take the use of alphanumerics, punctuations and other characters to create sentences with an easier approach to understand the meaning of the sentence. Park et al’s (2013) findings show that emoticons are used in positive and light contexts, emoticons continuously expand, and new meanings are appointed to them, language impacts the way emoticons are used. The study also found that Asian countries tended to use emoticons horizontally while in America vertical was the most used option. European countries tended to use both styles. The difference in emoticon style is also due to easterners tending to interpret facial expression through looking at the eyes while westerners interpreted the mouth. The importance of emoticons, as well as Twitch emotes, is that they “help interpret the nuance of meaning, attitude of a conversational partner, and the emotion not captured by language elements alone” (Park et al. 2013:466).

For a more detailed article about the linguistic and sociolinguistic research done with CMC as focus, Lauren Squires (2016) gives an excellent overview of how it relates to writing. Lauren Squires maintains that writing is still “a technology, but it is now a quite taken-for-granted one, even as it has been transferred to more media” (Squires 2016: 471). Squires also distances CMC writing from writing on paper with a prevalence of new keywords that do not work that well on paper. Among the prevalence of CMC are the hashtag, emoticons, and fonts. Emoticons work with writing on paper, yet the availability of emoticons is more apparent on the internet. Hashtags symbolized with the character symbol # can also be written on paper, however, if the character symbol is connected to a lexical word, the connotation to that word refers more to a topic indication or evaluative sentiment. The use of fonts also distances itself from writing on paper as the availability to change typographic form and size is more prevalent on a computer. With the article of Lauren Squires, one is introduced to a variety of significant research, among them Vivian Cook (2004) and Brenda Danet (2001).

Vivian Cook (2004) brings forth the concepts of sound-based writing and meaning-based writing to distinguish how we acquire meaning to a word. We either find meaning by assigning the word through sound or relation to symbols. Cook exemplifies this by using ‘dollar’ and ‘\$’ both meaning the same thing, yet one finds the first through sound and the second through relation to symbols (Cook 2004:3-10). Meaning-based writing is essential to the understanding of phrases on Twitch, which involve the use of emotes as the emotes can bring new meaning to an otherwise normal sentence. Brenda Danet examines digital writing by presenting nine common features of digital writing. The nine common features of digital writing proposed by Danet can serve as ways of classifying the sentence uttered. With relation to Traxel’s study (2017), these common features are arguably all in the netspeak type of expression, yet they are a great addition to categorize the different sentences used on the internet. The concepts of Squires, Cook, and Danet will be explored further with relation to Twitch.

Once the computer was made available for the public, a new communication tool arrived. However, researching the language of new communication tools meant questioning the orthodoxies, creating new ways of how language is distinguished. With internet communication, Angela Goddard (2015) provides an article with historical perspectives of how terms like for instance ‘chat’ and ‘mail’ change with the internet, she compares the digital communication to the everyday culture and highlights the role of creative play connected to identity and gender. Goddard maintains that we “are all now permanently in a state of language acquisition as we move from one technology to the next” (Goddard 2015: 368). The claim thus creates importance to research how one not only acquires language through CMC but expressing how one's identity, gender, and language choices are conveyed through creative play. As being a part of a Twitch community is heavily connected to one’s own identity, self-expression and creativity, and the thesis focus is to explore the communities of Twitch, Goddard recommends “a qualitative, discourse-analytics method might suit research involving the interactivity between participants...” (Goddard 2015: 379). Goddard also emphasizes that reading a chatlog must not be seen as a self-sufficient text made by a single author, but it is a result of a conversation between several people, what is left behind (Goddard 2015: 380). Research focusing on the creativity within ‘leet speak’, a language primarily associated with gamers is done by Blashki & Nicol (2005). Leet speak will primarily be explored in the analysis of the Twitch discourse.

With this thriving digital age of communication, Nancy K. Baym (2010) writes about the personal connections humans make with the CMC and how they differ from personal connections in the real life. Thinking critically about the new role media has is something that Baym provides a framework for and it is an instructive read for those studying sociology, media, and communication. Baym distinguishes two modes of communication, asynchronous and synchronous, and compares the latter to everyday face-to-face communication. Online synchronous communication, being the active conversation mode, is similar to face-to-face communication yet lacks the physical social cues one gets in real life communications. That is not to say that synchronous communications lack social cues, however, the amount is sparse in comparison. Baym, in 2002, asked people to share general thoughts about communication on the phone, face-to-face, and on the internet, and found the Internet to be the least personal. Being the least personal was due to lack of hearing voice, seeing reaction and vocal satisfaction. Baym thus deemed mediated communication as “a diminished form of face to face conversation” (Baym 2010:51). With an inferior mode of communicating, Baym expands how people appropriate the CMC with possibilities “to convey social cues, create immediacy, entertain, and show off for one another, they build identities for themselves, build interpersonal relationships, and create social contexts” (Baym 2010). One could argue that emotes are social cues put to text and thus help create meaning and context for this thesis with regard to analysis.

## **2.2 Participatory Communities**

It is important to note that the thesis at hand does not cover the entirety of the Twitch chat due to the limitations of a master thesis and the abundance of Twitch broadcasters and viewers. The thesis will, instead, look through the scope of what Hamilton, Garretson, and Kerne (2014) characterize as participatory communities. These communities are shaped around streams that encourage openness and engagement through shared activity between broadcaster and viewer. Not every channel on Twitch can be characterized as a participatory community due to their viewer count, type of entertainment and interaction. One could participate in a tournament stream on Twitch, with 20,000 to 50,000 viewers, by saying “Go go go!”, but the message will most likely drown in the influx of messages, and the interaction between broadcaster and viewer will disappear. It is, therefore, an obvious reason to focus on streams averaging viewers from 30-

500 where interaction, message uptime, and type of entertainment tend to stay the same. It is the focus of communities online where members continue to be themselves while also creating a shared identity with the other members. Hamilton et al. 's article establishes a common ground in distinguishing the participatory communities for a linguistic approach. Hamilton et al. introduce McMillan and Chavis' theory about a sense of community (1986) and Ray Oldenburg's concept of 'third places' (1999).

Participatory communities are, as we can see by the introduced concepts, connected to sociology. The concept of 'third places' is arguably the foundation for Hamilton et al. 's study, laying the possibility for the article to further the concept to a 'digital third place.' Sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1999) first introduced 'third places' to distinguish public places outside from work or home that "host the regular, voluntary, informal and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals" (Oldenburg 1999:16). Oldenburg defined these places as coffee bars, bars and such. From Oldenburg's 'third place', Hamilton et al. enhanced the concept in order to "discuss the genesis and evolution of stream communities" (Hamilton et al. 2014:1316). With a 'third place' and a 'digital third place', its community members will be related to its analog and digital characteristics. The first contender is the regulars, distinguished as the ones "whose mood and manner provide the infectious and contagious style of interaction and whose acceptance of new faces is crucial" (Oldenburg 1999:34). The digital version would be a regular viewer or moderator of a chatroom. Moderators are viewers who are appointed opportunities to regulate the chatroom for rude behaviors and help the broadcast out with changing stream titles and such. In a participatory community on Twitch, a regular would strive to create conversation or comment on the happenings of the broadcast. A regular would, in most cases, not be hostile but inviting.

For a newcomer to become a regular, he needs to participate long enough in order to gain familiarity, recognition and shared history with the other members of the community. Unlike the analog 'third place', the 'digital third place' has an essential focus to greet the host, because it is the streamer who brings the content and hosts the participatory community. In a café or pub of a 'third place', the host is primarily a supplier of food and drink whereas "the welcome and acceptance extended on the other side of the bar-counter invites the newcomer to the world of third place association" (Oldenburg 1999:34). A key factor for Oldenburg's 'third place', which can also be assigned to the 'digital third place', is the mood. The mood of a participatory

community or a bar has to be an inviting one, and one has to think that every speaker of the community has the “potential trapeze for the exercise and display of wit” (Oldenburg 1999:37). The room for a playful spirit is crucial and opens up for joy and acceptance among the members, instead of anxiety and alienation. ‘The playful spirit’, mainly created by regulars and the host, opens up the opportunity for newcomers to be included in the play and grants them a form of association with the community. For a streaming broadcast, a playful spirit is often linked to the ephemeral-in-game events. When something unexpected and surprising happens to the streamer, the regulars and newcomers are quick to express their feelings through the chat, reminding “everyone that they are part of a unique group of people that saw something special as it happened“ (Hamilton et al. 2014:1321).

Hamilton et al. further the concept of the ‘digital third place’ by implementing McMillan and Chavis’s sense of community: a concept to which four criteria are set for the human to gain a community identity. The first criterion is the membership status, one is either in or out of the community. The second criterion revolves around influence, the ability to impact the social atmosphere of the chatroom and participation of stream activities. The third criterion is the fulfillment of needs. Community fills that criterion when “emotional rewards such as sociability, status of membership, and success of the communities” are rewarded (Hamilton et al. 2014:1318). The last criterion is about the emotional connection the member has to the streamer and viewers through shared history and identity. With McMillan and Chavis’ four criteria for a sense of community and Oldenburg’s concept of third places, the foundation of how a participatory community is built is set. It is a task for the regulars and streamer to enforce a positive atmosphere, building a community, encouraging participation, and accepting the newcomers and their input. Later on in the article, Hamilton et al. explain what happens to a participatory community once the viewer count numbers increase, leading the chat to go from valuable discussion to a chat with little to no message uptime. It is up to the streamer to decide whether to have it this way or to regulate the chat through a subscriber-only mode. This is a mode which sets the chat behind a paywall and most likely ruins the openness and inclusion of newcomers to the participatory community.

## 2.3 Audience of Gameplay

Watching a live stream has connotations to spectating, being in the audience of an activity, experiencing something live while not directly impacting the game. Gifford Cheung and Jeff Huang (2011) look at the spectatorship of video game tournaments, trying to understand the spectator's reason for watching something as looked down upon as Starcraft e-Sports.<sup>1</sup> For an understanding of what makes spectating appealing, Cheung and Huang introduce concepts such as Johan Huizinga's study of play (1955) and Salen and Zimmerman's 'magic' circle (2003). Johan Huizinga had a concept that players of a game had an existence 'outside' of the ordinary life where spectators could be just as immersed as the players who directly impacted the game. Salen and Zimmerman referred to Huizinga's concept as a 'magic circle' where you were either in or out of the circle (Cheung & Huang 2011:764). Cheung and Huang maintain that there are three themes to a spectator, commitment to the in-game values, investment in the tension of play, and the vicarious relationship between players and spectators. The reason, however, for spectating an e-Sport event can be different from a baseball match. Cheung & Huang proposed that spectators consist of nine separate personae, in order to understand why they spectated. Among the personae were the ones uninformed, uninvested, curious, inspired, pupils, unsatisfied, entertained, assistants, commentators, creating a system for defining the people of the audience. Starcraft was a peculiar spectating event due to the ability to withhold information, creating suspense and unexpected strategies.

In exploring the phenomenon of live streaming, Thomas P.B Smith, Marianna Obrist and Peter Wright (2015) look at why spectating mediums like Twitch, Youtube, and OnLive are so appealing. Spectating live streaming is mostly passive, yet through what Smith et al. name "interactive television", it has an element of activity to it (Smith et al. 2015:131). The article also gives insight into several aspects of live-streaming, with a focus on e-Sports, Speedrunning, and the Let's Play community. Speedrunning is something that has gained popularity through Twitch live streaming. The objective of speedrunning is to complete a game as quickly as possible, through different game mechanics, bugs and glitches. Smith et al. mention Jared Rea's

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<sup>1</sup> StarCraft is an online Real-Time strategy game (RTS) where two players go head to head with their alien army in order to defeat the other as fast as possible. The StarCraft eSport scene is especially big in South Korea.



quote, the community manager of Twitch, when he said the appeal of watching a speedrun was because “it humanizes inhuman abilities” (Smith et al. 2015:132). A Let’s Play community is a community where people watch a broadcaster play a game, either live or on video. In a Let’s Play community the appeal is on the creator and the content he provides. A Let’s Play community distances itself from a participatory community because the focus is on content, not with chat nor community. Smith et.al also distinguish YouTube from Twitch, as a more apparent medium for recorded video whereas Twitch dominates live streaming with they video game-specific features.

Much like understanding the spectating personae of Cheung and Huang’s study (2011), Katherine Payne, Mark J. Keith, Ryan M. Schuetzler, and Justin Scott Giboney (2017) look at the learning effects a viewer can have over live streaming video game instruction on Twitch. Twitch was, at the start, a live streaming website with a focus on video games but has now become a more varied live streaming website with additional categories for people just chatting, podcasts, and music. Payne et al. examine the different pedagogical effects that Twitch can enable. Although most instruction from the broadcaster on Twitch is gaming related, learning effects still occur. Payne et al. mention that the split attention effect by Sweller (1994) is further improved on Twitch. The split attention effect is the theory where learning occurs through visuals and text, Twitch improves this with the ongoing chat along with visual content. Sweller’s worked example effect (1988) is also something Payne et al. mention Twitch to be a great mediator of. A worked example effect is, for instance, useful for viewers going to livestreams of speedrunners asking them for help on a specific trick in a game. The speedrunner will then, hopefully, go through the trick step-by-step, recall the steps required to do the trick and also go through how each step can be done without error.

## **2.4 Computer-mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA)**

As the thesis will conduct an analysis of extracts from chatlogs in participatory communities, a computer-mediated discourse analysis will be instructive to understand the online behaviors. Susan C. Herring’s study (2004) stands out as the primary source for conducting this analysis. Herring maintains that CMDA serves as an approach rather than a theory or method

(Herring 2004:4). Be that as it may, the CMDA approach looks at online behavior through language use and the linguistic perspective, with relation to methodological paradigms like conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, and interactional sociolinguistics. One should be aware of the fact that a lot of research on online behavior is “anecdotal and speculative, rather than empirically grounded” (Herring 2004:1). The textual trace that a person leaves behind online can only tell what the person does and not what they really think or feel internally, it is therefore sufficient to add a survey or interview in order to get a more broad interpretation of one’s behavior online. In addition to giving an approach to CMDA, Herring provides an informative way to frame a CMDA related research question and also brings forth the conflict of using ‘community’ to describe interacting online groups.

When framing one’s research question in a CMDA way, Herring maintains the four characteristics to be empirically answerable from the data, non-trivial questions, motivated by a hypothesis, and if it is open ended (Herring 2004:7). One could argue that the research question of finding meaning behind the top five emotes fits all the criterias. The question can be answered through the textual evidence, interpreted data, and logical reasoning. It is also of interest to those who are curious about online behavior on Twitch and the motivation behind comes from the curiosity in finding if there is unison or anomaly in understanding emotes. Herring explains that the problem of using the term ‘community’ comes from the concern of pragmatics, where the meaning of community is rendered meaningless as the virtual community has a fluid membership, reduced social accountability and lack of shared geographical space. It is therefore difficult for some to say that there can exist virtual communities, however, Herring says it is the researcher’s task to then assess whether or not the virtual online group can be classified as a community. How the pragmatic use of the abstract term ‘community’ affects us, comes from our focus on participatory communities. Later on in Herring’s study, through the use of her literature, a solution emerges where she defines six sets of criteria of a virtual community.

The criteria share some characteristics explained back in the Participatory Community section. The first criterion relates to the active participation with regular participants, a key factor for a virtual third place. The second and third criterion revolve around the shared history, culture, solidarity, and support, to which a Twitch community can gain through the first criterion. Fourth and fifth is the openness for criticism, conflict, and resolution as well as the self-awareness of the

group that it is in. Both are regulated by the last criterion: the emergence of roles, the hierarchy and governance of a chat. A good harmony of a participatory community on Twitch is when all these aforementioned criteria are met with a functional hierarchy and governance from the moderators and streamer. The CMDA approach has four levels of language that it can study. Herring defines them as structure, meaning, interaction, and social behavior. A study of Twitch chat will most likely appeal to more than one language level, yet the primary focus will be on the meaning level, followed by a structural level. A meaning level analysis would be the study of what the speaker intends, what is accomplished with the methods of semantics and pragmatics. The structure level instead looks at genre characteristics, expressivity and complexity through methods of descriptive linguistics and text analysis (Herring 2004:18). Looking at meaning and structure online one can be accustomed to internet jargon, internet lingo, memes, the in-group language but also the exchange of discussion and knowledge.

Herring's study also brings forth instructive tables that help the CMDA approach to plan out the data sampling. With tables of data sampling techniques, five discourse analysis paradigms, four domains of language, and discourse behaviors hypothesized to indicate virtual community, one is well suited to begin the research data sampling. When dealing with interpretations of data, Herring emphasizes taking medium and situational variables into account while also adhering to three levels of interpretation: close to the data, close to the research question, and beyond the research question (Herring 2004:20). The findings of a research should be issued through generalizability, revisiting the research question and indicate how it has been answered, and extrapolate the strongest possible evidential case for the research. It is therefore essential for this thesis to maintain that its scope only covers findings from participatory communities on Twitch, a subsection on Twitch with groups ranging from 30-500 viewers, and not covering Twitch.tv as a whole. It is also of importance to mention that when analyzing a chatlog on Twitch, it is a data sampling technique involving a group where the disadvantage may be that it does not cover all participatory communities and that the groups in question are unique compared to the ones left out of the analysis.

## 2.5 Summary of Literature review and Theory chapter

Finishing this chapter, the reader is now more informed of the thesis' focus with regard to participatory communities, types of expression one can experience online, emoticon and emote usage, spectatorship, and the abstract term of community. When analyzing the chatlogs of the participatory communities, Traxel's Creator-Recipient model (2017) and Herring's approach to CMDA (2004) will be instructive to create a reliable examination. The qualitative survey will hopefully shed light on the particular emotes' meaning, context in which it is used, and the participant's stance to each particular emote. There is an underlying thought as to whether or not some emotes are used in the wrong way. The emote of TriHard is sometimes in conflict with some streamers as it is often used negatively, resulting in some streamers banning the use altogether on their respective broadcasts. For an insight into the TriHard controversy, Julia Alexander wrote an article of the abuse of TriHard combined with a, newly added, chicken bucket emote being spammed all over Twitch (Alexander 2018). A toxic chat community is something that is more apparent in larger streams where it is harder to regulate the influx of messages spammed. One could argue that the trouble with emotes has to do with the intended use of the people who integrated them versus the actual use that toxic chat culture forces upon chats. There is also the question of whether or not an emote should be removed if they are only used negatively, yet this can ruin the language variety of Twitch altogether.

In exploring a virtual community, such as a participatory community, one has to keep in mind that these places are safe spaces for a lot of members and the sense of familiarity and shared history online is something that can outmatch any community in the real world. This thesis' aim is not to pinpoint any viewer and deem them as outsiders to society, but to investigate and understand the peculiar language variety that Twitch has to offer.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Once the research question's focus has been established, one can proceed with the following method chapter. When the underlying idea was to investigate meaning behind the top 5 most used emotes, and how the use of emotes on Twitch affected the participatory communities and the context of the sentence, it is reasonable to contact the actual users of Twitch in order to obtain data for the thesis. The way to move forward is twofold. For the main research question and with Twitch users under the magnifying glass, the thesis aims to explore users' interaction with the Twitch medium, opinions, and attitudes, and an instructive way to generate data this way is through a qualitative method. There were a lot of options to collect qualitative data from the informants, yet seeing as the participants were from different countries with different time zones, the best choice to generate data was through an electronic survey. The recruitment of Twitch users was done from contacting the streamer and asking the streamer for permission to advertise the upcoming survey in their respective communities. This resulted in gathering 18 participants who volunteered for the survey.

For the sub-questions focusing on the emotes' impact on sentence and participatory community and looking at discourse characteristics of a participatory community on Twitch, the informative way to go would be through a discourse analytical method. With this approach, the research receives insight to the nature of interactivity between participants and how the communication between viewers and streamer are mediated. With already having contacted three different participatory communities on Twitch for the survey, it would be from two of those communities that the thesis would record the chatlogs for further analysis. In this chapter, the process of data collection, analysis of data, and assessment of quality will be presented.

#### **3.2 Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis**

Studying the language variety on Twitch is a research on CMC and online behavior. With a digital medium like Twitch, the thesis explores the way humans create personal connections to each other. It is important to note that the research does not cover all modes of CMC. In CMC

there are several ways to interact with people, yet the ways are normally characterized into two categories. The first category is asynchronous communication and it is distinguished as communication where conversation does not rely on an immediate response. Examples of asynchronous communication could be e-mails, voice messages and text messages. The second category is synchronous communication, a category in which active communicative parties are involved. Examples for this are instant messages, video conferences and chats on Twitch. Synchronous communication online is similar to face-to-face communication with its active conversation, yet what the former lacks is the social cues that the latter has. Chatting on Twitch is much more about taking turns to communicate with the streamer and viewer while an interaction in real life is equipped with gestures, vocal tone, body language and facial expression. These social cues are physical contexts that help to interpret meaning, however, in an online communicative sense, the emotes of Twitch can serve as social cues to interpret the message correctly. Nancy Baym maintains that the lack of physical context online does not mean no context at all and that “People communicating in personal relationships share relational contexts, knowledge, and some history” (Baym 2010: 9).

In order to analyze discourse characteristics and context to a sentence, one has to apply the domains of language. Seeing as the analysis will focus on sentences involving emotes, the domains of structure and meaning seem to be the most informative way to go. In that way, one gets to analyze syntax, discourse schemata, expressivity, what the speaker intends, and what is accomplished through language. All these phenomena at the structure and meaning level involve different methods of use. This allows the thesis to explore fields of descriptive linguistics, text analysis, semantics, and pragmatics in order to best analyze the sentences involving emotes. The domains of interaction and social behavior can also have some benefactors to the research, yet structure and meaning are the core domains for this thesis. When analyzing the emotes in use, the theory of illocutionary acts from Austin (1962) and Searle’s taxonomy of illocutionary acts (1979) will be taken into consideration. An illocutionary act is the intended utterance of the speaker. Searle (1979) divided the illocutionary acts into five categories: Assertive illocutionary acts, commissive acts, directive acts, expressive acts, and declarative acts. Assertive acts are statements, commissive acts are promises, directive acts are commands, expressive acts are avowals of emotion, and declarative acts are for proclaiming certain events (e.g. marrying, baptizing, arresting). Eli Dresner and Susan C. Herring (2010) maintain that emoticons not only

express emotion but “they help convey an important aspect of the linguistic utterance they are attached to: What the user intends by what he or she types” (Dresner & Herring 2010:256).

### **3.2.1 The choice of the sample**

Most CMDAs are looking at sample through one form of communication. In most cases, these samples are written textual traces that someone has left behind, open for investigation and reflection of online behavior. What Twitch excels at is the option to investigate the written, oral and visual traces left behind by the streamer and viewers. This is due to Twitch’s option to store Video on Demand (VODs) recordings of the livestream, which in return can allow this thesis to investigate the three forms of communication more in-depth. Finding distinctive samples for analysis would have to be chatlogs where the emotes in question are included and then proceed to analyze them in terms of how the streamer and viewer reacts, both in text and on video. In that way, one can get the context of the situation and then analyze further in order to get what the speaker intends and what is meant. This type of sampling is called sampling by phenomenon where the focus is on in-depth analysis of the emotes. The disadvantage of this sampling technique is that one may experience loss of context and get no possible conclusions. Herring (2004) maintains that when deciding sample size “the more infrequent the phenomenon in the data, the larger the sample should be” (Herring 2004:12). For a richer phenomenon sample, the thesis will use samples from two different livestreaming channels, thus creating room for similarity and differences in emote usage.

Based on the live streaming channels where the thesis recruited participants for the survey, the thesis chose to analyze chatlogs from two of the participatory communities, one American and one British. The American livestream was from Twitch user LudwigAhgren, a streamer who gathered an audience from Just Chatting and from playing games like Mario Party 2, Super Smash Brothers Melee and Dark Souls. The British livestream was under the name SubParButInHD and consisted of two men who mainly gathered an audience from the game Rocket League. According to the average viewer count, both livestream channels fell under the label participatory community. The time and location for when to gather the data sample was

between February and March of 2019 where the streamers were live and the emotes appeared in chat.

In order to find a significant sample, the chatlog would have to include one of the top 5 used emotes. Once an emote that fits this description appears in the chatlog, a snipping tool is used to capture the message and its following response, be it from streamer or from other viewers. By looking at the statistics from Stream Elements, one can look at how frequently the emotes appear, ranking them from 1-100 in its usage. Interestingly, both SubParButInHD and LudwigAhgren lacked the emote TriHard in their top 100 emote statistics. It is, thus, difficult to find samples of TriHard in use, and the thesis will therefore leave TriHard out of the sample collection. By the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2019, the statistics showed that SubParButInHD had PogChamp in 8<sup>th</sup>, LUL in 13<sup>th</sup>, Kappa in 15<sup>th</sup>, and 4Head in the 36<sup>th</sup> position of the top 100 most used emotes. For LudwigAhgren, the statistics showed LUL in 4<sup>th</sup>, PogChamp in 9<sup>th</sup>, Kappa in 44<sup>th</sup>, and 4Head in the 72<sup>nd</sup> position in the top 100 most used emotes. For PogChamp and 4Head in use, the thesis took a sample from SubParButInHD while samples with LUL and Kappa were taken from LudwigAhgren's stream. By analyzing the meaning of the emotes from chatlogs, one can draw comparisons from the analyzed emote to what the participants believe the emotes mean in the qualitative survey, in order to see if they correlate with each other.

### **3.3 Qualitative data collection**

A qualitative research method is a method that opens the possibility to find answers to a question, collect evidence and produce findings not determined from the start. Natasha Mack et al. maintain that qualitative research "is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations" (Mack et al 2005:1). Arguably, a research on the medium of Twitch seems to fit the effective method of collecting opinion, behavior and social context that a qualitative method provides. The method shows a personal side of the issue where behaviors, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals are under investigation. By choosing to use a qualitative survey the focus is on the underlying reasonings and motivation of the individual. Similar to research on online behavior, the aim is to get the individual's perspective. Distinguishing a qualitative survey from a



quantitative survey is the style of questions they provide. A qualitative survey would be more inclined to use open-ended questions where participants can provide their own answers whereas a quantitative one would have a fixed question leaving no room for individual expression except for the ones given by the survey. The survey provided in this thesis is a qualitative method of data collection, however, it triangulates, meaning that it uses both quantitative and qualitative questions, but evidently is qualitative in its focus group and purpose to describe variation of emotes.

Seeing as the survey was a qualitative survey of participants from participatory communities on Twitch, the logical way of getting volunteers for the data collection was from contacting the livestreaming channels that fit the criterion of being a participatory community, meaning streams ranging from a 30 to 500 viewer count. The writer of the thesis therefore contacted the owner of three different participatory communities if it would be possible to recruit volunteers for the survey. This resulted in getting 18 participants for a survey that was opened on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2019. The survey consisted of 37 questions of varying types. The types of questions ranged from open-ended questions, checkbox questions, contingency questions to closed-ended questions. When mixing quantitative and qualitative findings one is equipped with both numerical and textual data. The two methods complement each other. For instance, by having numerical data on what the participants think a certain emote means and then looking at the textual data from a question regarding if that certain emote is being used in a wrong way, one is set with a richer data than one would without the quantitative. Constructing questions in order to find meanings behind emotes should not only depend on closed-ended questions alone but rather involve a mix where one has predetermined alternatives and an option to fill in their own answer.

The instrument to collect survey data was through the program Google Forms, a free tool that is easy to use. Google Forms allows researchers to create quick and easy questions to gather and organize information. Once the data is complete, it can easily be converted to a spreadsheet where one can get a better overview. The data, divided into numerical and textual findings, will then be analyzed and presented to describe and quantify variation, to describe characteristics and group norms regarding Twitch.

### **3.3.1 Background information about the case and its participants**

As the idea was to contact three different livestreaming channels, the way of contacting them was through different mediums. Being familiar with the different streams beforehand, the approach was either to contact them on Twitter, or through Steam. Twitter is a social network similar to Facebook where one has the ability to send private messages to the individual user. Two of the three streamers were approached on Twitter and asked them to promote the upcoming survey. The last streamer was contacted through Steam, a gaming and communication platform. When the three owners all agreed to the recruitment of participants, a recruitment letter was made in order to get volunteers. This letter explained what the initial thesis was about, its purpose, and need for volunteers. Seeing as it would take a lot of time to reach out to the viewers individually, the thesis instead made use of the program Discord. Discord is a software used for text and voice chat. All three different livestreaming channels used Discord and had their own respective channels for their streams. The same recruitment letter was sent in all three channels and if anyone volunteered, they were to contact the writer of this thesis on Discord consenting to join and giving the thesis their Twitch username. What is important is that the participants were Twitch users, contacted in participatory communities, chosen by volunteering.

The survey had multiple nationalities ranging from Australia, The United Kingdom, The United States, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, to The Netherlands. The age of those who volunteered ranged from 18 years old to 31 years old and consisted of 15 males and 3 females. 17 of the participants had interest in video games and all 18 had interest in watching other streamers play video games. 72,2% (13) of the participants enjoyed playing with friends while the remaining 27,8 % (5) enjoyed playing alone. The participants varied in the amount of time they used on video games per day where one of them played for 1 hour on average while five participants played for 2-3 hours on average, eleven participants played for 3-5 hours on average, and one participant played for 8 hours a day on average. Their average time spent watching Twitch ranged from one participant watching about 15 minutes each day to nine participants who spent 30 minutes – 2 hours on average, seven participants watching 2-5 hours on average, and one participant spending 6 hours on average. Every participant spent their time on Twitch watching entertainment from other individual streamers.

### 3.3.2 Electronic survey

Working with Google Forms allowed the writer of this thesis to create a variety of question types, and after typing in the questions made beforehand, the task was to choose the right question type that provided the best results. The underlying idea was to have the questions that would provide participants' opinions in the best possible way. The choice of checkbox questions instead of multiple-choice questions was one of the primary challenges. Multiple choice questions fall under the closed-ended category, yet checkbox questions follow the same template but also allows the participants to write their own answer. Checkbox questions were used to find the participants' thoughts to what the emotes in question meant, whereas multiple choice was used when participants were asked to rate the importance of chat, emotes, and streamer interaction with the chat. The other question types used were open-ended questions that required a short answer, contingency questions that required an elaborate answer if the answer was yes. Once the survey was polished and finished, a message was sent to each individual participant enclosing a link to the survey. The participants were told to finish it whenever they had time available. Due to the survey being voluntary, the thesis gave the participants a deadline of 14 days. However, the deadline seemed impractical as 14 of the 18 participants finished the survey within the first day. The remaining four finished the survey 6 days after.

The link to the survey brought the participants to Google forms where the headline said, "Survey of Twitch participants". The first textbox explained that the aim for the survey was to gather insight to viewing habits, Twitch chat, Twitch emotes, and the participant's connection to the medium. The survey was divided into 6 sections where the participants had to answer 37 questions in total to finish the survey. The first section had four questions regarding information of the participant. The section was mostly open-ended asking for their age, country of origin, and Twitch username except for the closed-ended question about the participants' gender. Despite having the Twitch username provided for an online identity, the survey was anonymous. Having information on nationality, age, and gender adds more variety to the survey and allows for further analysis to see if there is variation between the genders, ages and nationalities.

The second section was named "Background questions" and took use of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The focus was to gather data to the participant's interests, gaming habits, usage of Twitch, and history of Twitch. Through this section, the survey gathered insight

to how participants found Twitch, what they mainly watch Twitch for, time spent on Twitch, and what makes Twitch more appealing than watching other forms of entertainment. The third section revolved around viewing habits and looked at participants' feelings of inclusion to Twitch, whether they were passive or active consumers, motivations to interact with the medium, what device they watched Twitch on, and who they watched. The section took mostly use of closed-ended questions because the section focused on gathering statistical data rather than textual data. The fourth section was dedicated to the importance of chat and asked the participants to rate the importance of having a chat next to the stream, having emotes in a chat, having the streamer interact and being affected by the chat, and if the participants had an emote they used a lot compared to other emotes. This revolved heavily around closed-ended questions where the participants had to choose alternatives between irrelevant, relevant, important, and very important allowing the survey to gather insight to a quantified variation between the participants.

The fifth section was named "Emote questions" and was the primary objective of the entire survey. This was where the questions that would try to answer the thesis' main research question were situated and revolved around questions of the participants' perception of meaning regarding the top 5 emotes. The preface of this section stated the statistics of Stream Elements' top 5 most used emotes on Twitch and reminded the participants that it was their perception of the emotes that mattered. This was where the checkbox questions came to play, where the questions regarding Kappa, TriHard, PogChamp, LUL, and 4Head had a set of predetermined alternatives but also allowed for the respondents to add their own answer. Seeing as the TriHard emote was among the top 5, an additional open-ended question was made to see if the participants had some insight to if the emote was used in a wrong way. The sixth and last section was named "Finalized question" and included a commendation for completing the survey and a checkbox question for what the participants regarded as the most important part of the Twitch medium.

Once the participants were finished with the survey, the thesis was equipped with both abundant numerical and textual data. Google Forms allows the research to check individual answers alone and as a summary of the whole thing. With the summary section, one is equipped with valuable graphs and textboxes that include every individual answer. Having a survey as a

research tool is great when trying to describe or quantify variation. Using both closed-ended and open-ended questions allow the research to have counted answers as well as unique answers that one did not expect beforehand. The structure of this survey was made with the focus to get participants through the questions quickly, hence the use of both open-ended and closed-ended. Arguably, one could perhaps get better answers from participants in a face-to-face interview, however, with the easy access to internet and survey software, the choice fell on survey.

### **3.3.3 Observations**

One of the distinct observations when trying to find samples for the CMDA from the livestreams of LudwigAhgren and SubParButInHD was the prevalence of subscriber-specific emotes. These emotes rocked the statistics of the top 100 most used emotes for their respective channels. For instance, SubParButInHD had 7 subscriber-specific emotes on top followed by the global emote PogChamp whereas LudwigAhgren had 3 subscriber-specific emotes on top followed by the global emote of LUL. This could be due to the fact that these two channels are participatory communities where the viewers create a shared identity and history by interacting with each other through emotes and the playful spirit of conversation. LudwigAhgren's viewers also relied heavily on using emotes that were neither global nor subscriber-specific. By adding extensions like BetterTwitchTV and FrankerFacez to one's web browser, one is equipped with even more emotes to the chat. These emotes are, however, not converted if one does not have the extensions installed. The peculiar thing for LudwigAhgren is that the FrankerFacez emote Pog, which is simply a cropped image of the mouth and nose of PogChamp, was used 10,000 times more than PogChamp itself. For SubParButInHD the use of FrankerFacez or BetterTwitchTV was minimal.

## **3.4 The process of data collection and data analysis**

After the survey was complete, there were certain steps that the analysis went through. The first step was to become familiar with the numerical and textual data. Becoming familiar with the data meant that one had to read all the textual responses and to know the statistics of all

the closed ended questions. This step allowed the valuable responses to become easily accessible. The second step was then to categorize the responses based on the answers they provide. For instance, the question of how people came to find Twitch.tv allowed the thesis to categorize the responses into groupings of people who found Twitch through YouTube, from Justin.tv, from friends, and so on. After the responses were put into groupings, the third step was to identify the patterns and to make connections. This is particularly important when looking at the participants' perception of emotes, to see the patterns between what most believe to be the meaning compared to the other anomalies of responses. After the patterns, groupings, connections, and relationships were established, the final step was to interpret the data and explain the findings. This final step relied heavily on attaching the right significance and meaning to the findings, otherwise the data collection would be faulty. It was therefore important to keep the thesis' focus in mind at all cost, and try to find the relevant connection between the survey and the research question

Using Google Forms allows the research to convert data into a spreadsheet. This opens the opportunity to get an easy overview of the responses allowing them to be grouped easily thereafter. The numerical data from the survey can already be shown in graphs directly from the Google Forms website, however, for further analysis, the data must be inspected through the spreadsheet.

### **3.5 Research validity and reliability**

Research validity and reliability is important for any kind of study. Validity refers to the overall quality of a research looking at whether or not the study sets out to do what it claimed to do in the introduction. For a qualitative research involving surveys, validity looks at whether the instruments measure what they set out to investigate. For this thesis' survey, the aim is to gather data from participants' viewing habits, chat and emotes usage, and the connection to the Twitch medium in order to find meaning behind the top 5 most used emotes. Arguably, the survey is valid as it asks specifically about the emotes in question and allows the participants to express their response either through predetermined alternatives or writing a response themselves. Although the focus group of the survey was participants from participatory communities, this

does not mean that every single individual had only livestreams below 500 viewers that they watched. For instance, there were two participants who stayed in participatory communities but responded that they watched livestreams with high viewer counts. This can be due to feeling left out of the participatory community or just having a preference to watch larger streams.

For the CMDA, the aim is to look at how emotes affect the sentence and the participatory community while also exploring the discourse characteristics of a chat. The validity of a CMDA is sound because it sets out to analyze emotes through meaning and structure levels of language with focus on genre characteristics, semantics and pragmatics, and discourse schemata. Herring maintains that “Responsible interpretation of research findings is necessary to insure the validity of any study” (Herring 2004:20). It is therefore important both for the survey and for the CMDA to indicate explicitly how results answer what the aim of each method set out to do.

The findings from research must also be looked at through the lens of reliability. For a qualitative survey, reliability relates to questions about the instruments used for gathering data with questions of whether they have been piloted, if they have been used by others, and if conditions are the same for everyone. The choice of survey program for this thesis was simple. Google Forms was an easy and free to use program, only requiring the writer of this thesis to log on by their Google account. For the participants, the survey required no login, but in order to keep track of who responded, the first question asked for the participants’ Twitch username for the thesis to keep track of who was finished and who was not. This particular survey has only been used by this thesis, the responses have not been tampered with and the responses stay the same as written from the spreadsheet. Each participant was also provided with the same survey questions, creating consistency for everyone. To create an even more sound reliability of research, one can address personal biases and biases in sampling. The choice of studying Twitch in a linguistic perspective does not happen randomly. This study has obviously an interest in the Twitch medium and the meaning of emotes, yet the thesis also strives to stay neutral in the way survey questions are worded. By no means do the questions try to persuade the participants to respond in the study’s favor.

For a CMDA, the choice of sampling is to pick chatlogs where one or more emotes of the top 5 occur. This can be argued to be related to one’s own bias to what one deems to be a valuable sample. The choice also relies heavily on if the emote is connected to a sentence,

therefore, once the requirement of sentence + emote is made, it is picked up by using the snapping tool and then analyzed in the later stages. Analyzing an emote without the sentence is more difficult and is avoided for a more credible interpretation. The way this thesis tried to find valuable emote usage was through watching VOD's from the respective livestreaming channels. These VOD's are available for everyone, for those who missed a livestream or for those who used the livestream in a CMDA. A CMDA also relies heavily on interpretation of the researcher, it is therefore important to note that there can be different interpretations, yet the thesis will try to find the most reasonable meaning behind the sentence based on the responses from other viewers and the streamer himself. A CMDA of this kind can also be seen as problematic as it researches online behavior and one cannot directly know the message creator's internal feelings and thoughts, however through theories of speech acts and analysis, one can at least gather the intended force of a message.

### **3.6 Research ethics**

The ethics regarding research involves the use of participants in a study. In this research, ethics will be discussed with regards to the survey. One of the key points of the qualitative survey was that it was voluntary. The participants were approached from Discord, yet chose to join the survey themselves, giving the thesis their consent to be a part of this study. The choice of having almost no personal information of the participants was intentional, creating a more anonymous survey. Only having information of their Twitch username, age, nationality, and gender allowed the survey to categorize the participants even further than one would with just a username. One could argue that the level of anonymity also allows the participants to respond more freely and not be afraid to be harassed by their answers.

### **3.7 Summary**

Finishing this chapter, the reader is now informed on the thesis' approach to find answers to the research questions. For the CMDA data collection, the way to move forward is through analyzing chatlogs of synchronous communication. The main purpose here is to find samples



containing either Kappa, PogChamp, LUL, and 4Head and to analyze further on the way the emote complements of the participatory community, the discourse characteristics of a Twitch chat, and the context and intended meaning behind the used emote. By analyzing the chatlogs in the language domain of structure and meaning while also making use of the theory of illocutionary acts, the thesis will try to create valid findings of the emotes in use and try to answer the research questions afterwards. In the qualitative data collection, the idea is to gather as much insight from participants' perception of emotes as possible while also getting information on Twitch's appeal and users' interaction with the medium. In the next chapter, one will be introduced to the findings of both the CMDA and Qualitative survey.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

As previously stated in chapter 3, the thesis has two sets of methods for answering the research questions. The qualitative survey focuses on the main research question while the CMDA focuses on the sub-questions. With this in mind, the findings chapter is structured by introducing the findings of the main research question first and the following sub-questions afterwards. The findings of the main research question examine the participants' interactions, opinions, and attitudes of the Twitch medium. Even though not all questions in the survey deal with the perception of emotes, the insight to the participants' usage and thoughts with the Twitch medium may give a better overview of Twitch's appeal and popularity. For the sub-question findings, the thesis inspects the emotes' impact on a sentence and the participatory community, and the discourse characteristics within two participatory communities.

### **4.2 Survey findings**

Presenting results from the qualitative survey is structured in the same way the survey is outlined. Following the same order of the survey, the thesis has divided the survey findings into background question findings, viewing habits findings, chat findings, and emote and finalized question findings. Seeing as the majority of the survey respondents were males, when the thesis refers to one person, the pronoun 'he' will be used.

#### **4.2.1 Background question findings**

The participants of the qualitative survey came from all around the world and what they all had in common was that they took joy in watching other people play video games. However, the way they first came to interact with the Twitch medium was different between them. Eight of them learned about Twitch from content creators on YouTube, who migrated to streaming on Twitch. YouTube is another competitor in livestreaming video game content, however, their

platform is mostly used for creating video content, and their potential for influencing viewers to join other websites is evident. Two of the participants were avid users of the previous livestreaming service, Justin.tv, and migrated from there. Four of the participants were told by friends to check out Twitch while one participant found it by himself. Three participants found Twitch from advertising, from Twitter, Game Informer, and from a video game. Twitch itself has now endured almost 8 years of service of livestreaming, and thus, one can imagine that there has been a lot of change within the medium. Therefore, the survey asked each participant if they had noticed any change from the first time they started watching Twitch. Four of them answered they had not seen any change, but the remaining 14 had various answers. Among them was this particular response:

“Twitch is changing. They have to, as a company, try out new things and increase their profits but Twitch is a much more friendly platform compared to YouTube. Amazon acquiring Twitch hasn't changed this. In terms of the streamers and the content available, it's changed. New categories seem to pop up everyday with a new niche that people want to watch. The larger streamers attract a younger audience and continue to grow but with what seems to be monetising their channel as a priority. The amount of smaller streamers grows exponentially with the ability to stream becoming standard. So yes, Twitch has changed and will continue, however there will always be content you want to watch even if you have to scroll through the whole list of channels.”

Participant number 11.

This response was the longest of the fourteen answers, however, it touches on some great points. It describes some of Twitch's appeal, Twitch's change when Amazon bought it in August 2014, the divide between larger streamers and smaller streamers, and that there is always video content for the consumer. Due to the limitations of this thesis, not all responses will be explored, yet one can group the answers. Two participants pointed out that the Twitch medium enforced more professionalism than from the start. This can be due to streamers' tendency to see streaming as a full-time job, and something that they want to keep doing for as long as possible. Three participants touched on Amazon's purchase of Twitch and that Twitch changed to being business driven instead of content driven. Amazon's influence on Twitch is both positive and negative. The negative part is that Twitch now pushes advertisement of Amazon TV-shows to those who are not subscribed to the stream they are currently watching. However, the positive side is the introduction of Twitch Prime, a service that allows you to subscribe to a streamer each

month if you have an Amazon Prime account. The influx of people coming to Twitch was something that five participants touched on. This provided Twitch with a larger quantity and variety of streamers, yet also invite more “troll” people on the platform as well. The next question asked whether the participants’ use of Twitch had changed since they started engaging with the website. 14 of them answered yes while 4 of them answered no.

When comparing Twitch to other media, the thesis asked which instances made the participants watch Twitch over television, Netflix and YouTube. This type of question was made in order to find out what made Twitch more appealing to the other media that provide video content. The outcome revealed similar responses . The primary keywords for most of the responses were interactivity and engagement. This response compared Twitch to the media and touched on the importance of interaction:

“Twitch is generally a lower commitment because it's live footage (compared to having to set aside time to watch an entire video or episode) and the interaction you can have with other people and the broadcaster is unique and elevates the experience.” -Participant number 8.

This response touches on interactivity as one of the primary factors that elevates the experience of watching a livestream. There is always a livestream available for watching on Twitch and the consumer can choose when to watch and how much he wants to interact with the chat. Out of the other 17 responses, eleven participants said Twitch was more appealing due to the interaction and engagement with the content, be it either interacting with the streamer or the viewers. Three of the participants responded that it was different content compared to other media, while one participant said he chose Twitch when his friends or entertaining personal streams were available. The last two participants chose Twitch over YouTube because one of them lost interest in watching gameplay on YouTube and migrated from there, and the other watched specific streamers who were not as active on YouTube. A response that touched on the idea of a participatory community online answered:

“I like feeling like I'm actively apart of a community. Watching a streamer allows me to interact and be engaged in the content, where as TV (ect.) is very passive.” -Participant number 18.

#### 4.2.2 Viewing habits findings

For an insight to the participant's usage of Twitch, the thesis aimed questions at viewing habits, interactivity, and attitudes within Twitch. This section had in total 11 questions. The first question asked where the participants normally watched Twitch. To no surprise, eighteen responded that they watched it on the computer. Twitch started out as a service for watching video game content on the computer, yet it has options to watch on either tablets, mobile phones, consoles, and Smart TV's. Seven of the respondents also used their mobile phones for watching Twitch and three respondents took use of their Smart TV. The second question looked at whether the participants considered themselves to be active or passive viewers of a livestream. Twelve of the participants answered they were active viewers while five were passive viewers and one participant skipped the question. Even though participatory communities are characterized for their openness, some viewers tend to enjoy a livestream more passively than actively. They might then be lurking in the background and just enjoying the content provided from the streamer. The next question wanted to touch on if the participants were multitasking while watching Twitch. This is similar to the quoted response of lower commitment that one can assign to Twitch livestreams in the previous chapter section. None of the participants answered no, yet seven answered that they sometimes multitasked while eleven answered yes. Computer gamers are sometimes equipped with more than one computer monitor and therefore the availability of multitasking can be evident.

The following question looked at when the participants used Twitch. This was a checkbox question so that they could answer more than once. Sixteen of the participants used it in the evening, fifteen at nighttime, nine in the afternoon, five at midday, and six in the morning. The fifth question asked about the participants' attention to the chat. Fourteen of them payed attention while three did not and one skipped the question. The seventh question wanted to look at what underlying idea the participants had for watching Twitch, if they used it to reach a state of mind. Eight of them answered that they used Twitch to engage with others, Four answered to relax, four to reach no certain state of mind, one to feel both relaxed and excited = depending on what is on, and one to feel excited during big events and to relax during smaller livestreams. The eighth question asked whether they thought the time spent on Twitch was wasted or purposeful. Here fifteen answered purposeful while three answered time wasted. The following question

asked the participants about who they normally watched on Twitch. They could write whomever they wanted and the responses showed both big streamers and smaller streamers. Out of the eighteen responses, two people mentioned big streamers, seven mentioned small streamers and eight mentioned both big and small streamers. The last remaining participant responded

“KongHaraldVII. No for real though, there are too many to mention and it changes all the time”- Participant number 2.

The streamer mentioned here was put there as a joke, as the name refers to the author of this research. Big streamers are categorized in this thesis as going above the viewer count of a participatory community (500 viewers) whereas smaller streamers fit the participant community criterion. Interestingly, out of the 18 responses, six people mentioned SubParButInHD, three mentioned LudwigAhgren, and two mentioned Danzhizzle, the original communities that the thesis approached for the survey. This may be an indicator of the vast interests of the everyday Twitch viewer, there is never just one streamer that people watch. Regardless of watching bigger or smaller streamers, the ninth question asked whether the participant felt a part of the community they watched. Here seventeen of the participants answered yes while one answered no. Through closer inspection, the one who answered no watched streams of ClintStevens, Lirik, loltyler1. These streams average from 3,000 viewers, 17,000 viewers, and over 30,000 viewers according to Sullygnome’s statistics (Sullygnome). With these kinds of viewing numbers, it is arguably hard to feel a part of a community. The tenth question then followed the previous question and asked if they felt the streamer knew who they were. Here sixteen answered yes and two answered no. The two who answered no both watched bigger streams and thus probably did not feel as recognized as they would in smaller streams.

The final question of the viewing habits section enquired what motivated the participant to interact with the chat. The survey revealed that the motivation rested heavily upon the streamer (sixteen) followed by the viewers (thirteen) and lastly the moderators (four). Looking at the individual answers, five answered the streamer alone, two answered viewers alone, seven answered both streamer and viewer, and four answered streamer, viewers and moderators. Seeing as moderators were only voted four times, one can question why it turned out this way. It can either be that the participants do not really see the moderator as a motivating factor, or one could argue that a moderator is still a viewer and that the status of moderator is ignored. It is at

least a peculiar find since Hamilton et al. (2014) maintain that the role of the moderator “is not only to keep the discussion in line, but to engage viewers and promote participation and sociability” (Hamilton et al. 2014:1320).

### **4.2.3 Chat findings**

The following survey section involved questions regarding the Twitch chat in general, where the participants were asked to rate the importance of certain elements in a Twitch livestream and to reveal their frequently used emote. The section consists of five questions, where the first question asked the participants to rate the importance of the Twitch chat next to the broadcast. The question revealed that four found the chat to be very important, six found it to be important, three found it to be relevant to have chat, and five meant it could sometimes be turned off. The follow up question was about the importance of emotes in the chat. This resulted in eight people finding it very important to have emotes, five finding it important, four people finding it relevant, and one finding it irrelevant. The one who responded emotes to be irrelevant was a viewer of both big and small streamers. Perhaps he saw emotes as an obstacle for having conversations online or perhaps he just did not like to use them altogether. The third question examined the importance of having the streamer read the chat. The answers revealed that there was an importance factor all around where four rated it as very important, twelve rated it important, and two rated it as a relevant factor.

Following up on streamer interaction, the next question asked the participants to rate the importance of having the streamer affected by the chat. The underlying idea of the question was to the importance of having the streamer interact with the chat, their actual following on the website. The responses revealed that nine answered it to be relevant, eight for it to be important, and one for it to be very important. The final question was a question to prepare them for the section of emote questions and also to provide the thesis responses of the participants’ most frequently used emote. The responses revealed that some of the participants did not read the question correctly. The question asked for a singular emote, yet the responses showed more than one emote. Regardless, the survey revealed six people using PogChamp, four people using other global Twitch emotes, two people using subscriber-specific emotes from SubParButInHD and

six people using extension emotes. One participant skipped the question and another one answered N/A, not applicable. Extension emotes refer to the emotes you get from browser extensions like BetterTwitchTV and FrankerFacez. The popularity of extension specific emotes was surprising, yet perhaps it is a comment towards Twitch's lack of emotes available and that these emotes appeal more to the public than global emotes do.

#### **4.2.4 Emote and Finalized question findings**

The part containing emote questions was the main section for the survey primary research focus. It was here that the survey aimed to find responses aimed towards the main research question of the thesis, namely the meaning behind emotes. The survey section contained 7 questions about emotes and the participants' perception of them. At the start, the section had a preface informing the participant of the statistics of Stream Elements regarding the top 5 most used global emotes on Twitch. Due to this preface, the first question asked if the participants were avid users of these emotes. The question revealed that fourteen people were avid users of PogChamp and LUL, eight used Kappa frequently, seven used 4Head, one used TriHard, and one was not an avid user of these emotes. What was interesting here was that TriHard, the second most used emote, had only one avid user. The questions that followed were structured in the ranking of the emotes, from top to bottom, with questions regarding the emote's meaning. Here the questions had predetermined alternatives, yet also allowed the participants to add their own response. Thus, first came the question about the participants' perception of the meaning behind Kappa. The responses revealed two additional answers:

“Paired with a comment to ensure sarcasm is expressed through text if it unclear.”- Participant number 8

“it's an extremely lazy emote for people who aren't capable of saying what they mean” - Participant number 11.

The responses also revealed that the participants mixed more than one alternative with another. The mixings showed that seven answered both sarcasm and irony, one answered sarcasm + irony + something funny, one answered sarcasm + something negative + the second quoted response, one showed sarcasm + something funny, and one showed sarcasm + irony +



first quoted answer. In total, seventeen meant it expressed sarcasm, eleven meant it expressed irony, two meant it expressed something funny, and one meant it expressed something negative.

The next emote in the ranking was the emote TriHard. The responses revealed five additional alternatives:

1. "TriHard is often used to represent African-American individuals on Twitch." - Participant number 5.
2. "I see it mostly used to point out when something could be considered racist, or racially controversial" - Participant number 7.
3. "If you're try harding and failing maybe idk honestly" - Participant number 9.
4. "Something racist" - Participant number 17.
5. "Some people use it to express trying hard at a game, or just a funny thing happened. Others use it as a racial slur." - Participant number 18.

These responses perhaps portray the intended and actual use of the emote. Quotes 3 and 5 touch on what the person behind TriHard, Mychal Jefferson maintain the emote to be associated with, to try hard, hence the wordplay Tri+Hard (Destiny 2018: 1:45:00). Quotes 1, 2, 4 and 5 touch on perhaps the actual use of TriHard, of something racist and negative. The predetermined alternatives show that nine answered TriHard expressing something negative, four answered it expressed sarcasm, one expressing irony, one expressing something positive, and seven expressing something funny. The mixings of the alternatives show that one mixed negative and sarcasm, one mixed sarcasm + funny + and quote no. 1, one mixed negative and positive expressions, one mixed negative + funny + and quote no. 3, one mixed funny + quote no. 4, and one mixed negative + funny and quote no. 5.

Due to the controversial nature of the usage of the TriHard emote, an extra question was made asking the participants if they felt TriHard was used in a wrong way. This was an open-ended question and provided the survey with great responses. For most of the responses, nine revealed that TriHard was sometimes used in a racist way, one answered that in the speedrunning communities it was used in the correct way, a place where Mychal Jefferson started streaming, and one answered both yes and no since it could also be used in a sarcastic way. A key response to this question is exemplified here:

“Yes, twitch chat as an entity generally uses it with racist connotations. In large streams usually at an events channel rather than an individuals stream. When a black person appears on stream I’ve seen it used sometimes accompanied with racist remarks.” - Participant number 11.

The next emote in question, was PogChamp. The responses resulted in nine additional answers, mostly similar to each other:

1. “Excitement” 2. “Expressing excitement” 3. “Epic and crucial moments of hype 4.” Excitement, Joy” 5. “Expressing excitement, Hype-ness” 6 “Something good happened! you got a highscore?? POGCHAMP!” 7. “Excitement/ Hype over something that has happened or the chat is anticipating” 8. “Something that happende that’s really cool” 9. “It can also represent excitement”

Out of the predetermined alternative, two voted sarcasm, one voted irony, sixteen voted expressing something positive, and two voted expressing something funny. The mixings of the alternative were mostly accompanied with expressing something positive next to the excitement related alternative that the participants added. The fourth emote in line was LUL and had only one extra alternative added: “Laughing at something that occurred on the stream or something the streamer did” -Participant number 11. The survey revealed eighteen people perceiving LUL as expressing something funny, three people perceiving it to also express sarcasm, four people to also express irony, and two to express something positive. LUL is probably the easiest of the five emotes to distinguish meaning from since it seems to be mostly used in a laughing manner. The final emote, 4Head, resulted in three additional responses:

- 1, “To express something silly or dumb” - Participant number 6.
2. “Expressing something that’s not easily achivable example; Just be happy 4Head” -Participant number 9.
3. “Usually used to mock the streamer in a friendly way about something they have done” - Participant number 11.

Out of the predetermined alternatives, two meant it expressed something negative, eight meant it expressed sarcasm, four meant it expressed irony, two meant it expressed something positive, and fourteen meant it expressed something funny. Out of all the mixings, most of them were mixed with the idea of expressing something funny. For the finalized question, ending the survey all together, the participants were thanked for participating and asked them to deem the

most important part of Twitch. The predetermined alternatives consisted of the interest in gaming, the medium overall, the entertainment, the streamer, the community, and the chat. The responses revealed 3 additional responses:

“I think all of it is important” -Participant number 9.

“a combo of interaction, entertainment and community”- Participant number 16.

“The whole experience, there isn’t one thing that’s most important, it all fits together as one big thing” - Participant number 17.

The first and third quotes here could probably be assigned to the alternative ‘the medium overall’ while the second is just a combination of important factors to Twitch. The finalized question revealed nine deemed the medium overall to be the most important, three favored the streamer, two favored the community, two favored the interest in gaming, one favored the entertainment, and one favored the combination of interaction, entertainment and community to be the most important parts.

### **4.3 CMDA findings**

When presenting the CMDA findings, the thesis has structured it to follow the three research sub-questions. The focus here is to find answers to how emote(s) affect the participatory community involved, the context of the emote usage, and the discourse characteristics of a Twitch chatlog. The CMDA takes use of four chatlogs: 2 from SubParButInHD and 2 from LudwigAhgren. The samples have been chosen by phenomenon, where the top 5 most used emotes occur, with the exception of the TriHard emote. The TriHard turned out to be a rather remote emote of SubParButInHD and LudwigAhgren’s chatlog. It was, therefore, left out of the analysis, as it would be too time consuming to find a sample with its use. The samples have been put in the Appendices, from Appendix 1 to Appendix 4. The appendices in question are structured from having 4Head first followed by LUL, PogChamp, and Kappa. What is left out of the appendices is what the broadcaster of the livestream is saying. The suitable responses from the streamer are, however, quoted to provide context to the chatlog.

### 4.3.1 The emote's effect on the participatory community

It is important to note that even though a participatory community builds upon creating a shared history and encourages openness, the streamer is not obliged to respond to every single message that is sent in the chat. The streamer may read everything, but it is within their right as a streamer to respond to a message they find applicable for a response. When you have broadcasts that can range from 30-500 viewers, it can be difficult to create responses for each individual message. For the first appendix, SubParButInHD is streaming a game called Rocket League, a football game where rocket-powered cars are involved. For this particular stream, StumpyGoblin, one of the streamers from the duo SubParButInHD, is referred to by name instead of their username, SubParButInHD. Stumpers is also a nickname for StumpyGoblin. In the appendix, Stumpy is asked by user 'illintelligence' if he plays card games on the computer. Following this, 'illintelligence' shows his negativity towards the game Hearthstone, but also tries to convey that Stumpy should try a game called Auto Chess in the game Dota 2, a game that requires no purchases of additional content. The user 'illintelligence' also tries to persuade Stumpy by saying "i can teach you 4Head". The messages seem to be directed towards the streamer, hence the lack of responses from other viewers in the chatlog. StumpyGoblin responds to 'illintelligence' by saying this:

Stumpy: 02:48:38: "I have heard of Auto Chess. I don't know, I am not really into card games to be honest.

The second appendix is from the streamer LudwigAhgren and it contains the emote LUL. In this stream, Ludwig is playing a game called Pokémon Platinum, a game originally made for the Nintendo DS. Ludwig is, however, playing this game on an emulator, a program that allows the game to be played on the computer. The goal of Pokémon Platinum is to gather Pokémon and level them up in order to finish the game. Whenever a player encounters a Pokémon, he can either choose to fight, catch or run away from the Pokémon. In this sample, Ludwig encounters two Pokémon, Doduo and Buziel, but chooses to run away from them. This causes moderator 'DoctorBattle' to respond by saying "afraid of doduo LUL" and "afraid of buziel LUL". These two responses seem to be only directed towards Ludwig in a mocking manner, and, therefore, gets no attention from the other viewers with the exception of 'Jip\_\_' saying "Buziel is one of

my MVPs in my Plat Rando nuzlocke”. Ludwig also chooses to ignore the comments made by DoctorBattle and keeps playing the game.

The third appendix is from SubParButInHD and contains the usage of PogChamp. This time, Cole, the second half of SubParButInHD, is playing Rocket League. The sample takes place when user ‘FlawlessPumpkin’ proclaims he managed to get engaged. This message seems to be a statement for the whole crowd, and thus, creates congratulatory responses from both Cole and the viewers. In this instance, the use of PogChamp seems to fill the whole chat in order to create wholesome responses for the groom/wife to be. The responses from Cole also enforce the wholesome experience when he says:

Cole: 19:50: “Also Flawless Pumpkin, You got fucking engaged! That is sick! That is absolutely sick.”

Cole: 20:37: Yeah, FlawlessPumpkin, that is so fucking amazing. I am upset that I did not get to meet your, uhm, your then Girlfriend, Sarah wasn't it? On the day that we met. But I am sure one day, Im sure one day we all shall meet. Either way, congratulations, just in general man!

The last appendix is from LudwigAhgren streaming Pogostuck, a game where one is supposed to climb heights using a pogo stick. The sample takes place when user ‘Saftkanne2’ greets Ludwig, to which Ludwig responds:

05:54:09 "Saftkanne, I don't really know who you are. I'm not gonna front. Oh wait, I do remember a bright green name from last light, from last night. If that was you, I apologize. I don't hate my viewers, but I was a raging maniac. Also, the bright green name is hard to read.

From this point, Ludwig has brought up the topic of username colors. This leads the chat to, for instance, respond with “we are all just names to lud” and for user ‘TheWonderYears’ to respond with “everyone change your color Kappa”. TheWonderYears’ sentence seems to gather no response from either viewer or Ludwig, but stands there as a sarcastic comment in hope for people to change their color in order to confuse Ludwig. The color of one’s Twitch username seems to be an important aspect and a way to create one's own identity online. Ludwig furthers the topic by stating:

05:54:35 "I- Colors are really important to me, like if somebody changes their color, I notice almost immediately. It throws me off. I usually think it's a different person, cuz I don't like read the full name every time, right, I just read like the first three letters and I'm like 'okay, you know, it's IDK it's yellow, all right, it's marena (viewer IDKmarena). You know, it has gucc in the name, it's white, it's guccijesus69"

When looking at the emote's effect on the participatory community from these four appendices, one can try to gather whether the emote usage opens up the possibility for others to respond to the sent message. In appendix 1, where 4Head was used, the message was aimed at the streamer alone and provided no additional responses from the viewers. Yet, it would seem that the sentiment to the message sent was a positive way trying to get the streamer to try out a new game with additional help from the viewer. In the second appendix, where LUL was used, the message was also aimed at the streamer alone. The messages sent seemed to mock LudwigAhgren's choice of running away from two Pokémons. The mockery seemed to get no interaction from neither Ludwig nor viewers. In the third appendix, where PogChamp was used, the messages were aimed at the viewer proclaiming his engagement. It seemed as if PogChamp's effect made other viewers join in on using PogChamp as a way of congratulating 'FlawlessPumpkin'. In the last appendix, where Kappa was used, the message was aimed at the viewers, commanding them to change their username colors. The message sent seemed to be a sarcastic reply to Ludwig's association with username colors. Each message with an emote next to it all seem to have an intention connected to the emote used, whether it be mocking, showing excitement, light hearted comments, or sarcastic.

#### **4.3.2 Sentence context**

Trying to find the context of a sentence containing one or more emotes can have various difficulties. Luckily, when analyzing this within Twitch chatlogs the sentence is either aimed at the streamer, viewer or the overall community. It can either be a comment on the ongoing video content, question to the streamer/viewer, a reply to a certain viewer, or making statements. For the first appendix, the context relies heavily upon a question asked by user 'illintelligence'. It

seems as if ‘illintelligence’ tries to broaden StumpyGoblin’s video game collection by introducing him to a new game. This type of interaction may be another way of creating a shared identity with the streamer and it should be noted that Twitch, connotated as interactive television, can have viewers who try to affect the ongoing content. The follow-up sentence containing the emote 4Head, is continuing ‘illintelligence’s’ introduction of the new game for StumpyGoblin. According to the qualitative survey, most of the participants perceived the emote to express something funny, yet in this sentence the intention seems to be more of light-hearted way of offering help to a possible newcomer to a game.

illintelligence: “i can teach you 4Head”

In the second appendix, the context of the sentence is directed towards the streamer. User ‘DoctorBattle’ is commenting on the gameplay from LudwigAhgren twice but receives no response from the streamer. The phrases “afraid of doduo LUL” and “afraid of buziel LUL” are used mockingly after Ludwig chooses to avoid fighting Doduo and Buziel. How impactful the comments from ‘DoctorBattle’ are unclear, yet the responses from Ludwig are non-existent. The third appendix focuses on the responses from ‘FlawlessPumpkin’s’ statement of getting engaged successfully. Declaring one's engagement is something that calls for congratulations both in the real world and the online world. Thus, there is no surprise that a lot of the viewers wanted to congratulate upon ‘FlawlessPumpkin’s’ achievement. According to the thesis’ survey, the perception of PogChamp mostly relied on expressing something positive, while six additional answers touched upon that PogChamp expressed excitement. For ‘FlawlessPumpkin’s’ case, both perceptions seem to fit the responses. The responses with PogChamp in use looked like this:

Ajeezy: “Congratulations Pumpkin PogChamp”

DanMB: “PogChamp Flawless P”

DjgentlemanXIII: “@FlawlessPumpkin What amazing news! Congratulations! PogChamp <3

addyman0: @FlawlessPumpkin PogChamp Congratz! 😊

The fourth appendix deals with Kappa in use and the context to which the sentence is situated seems to be a response to the overall community watching. Streamer LudwigAhgren touches upon the the importance of username colors on Twitch as a way of recognizing regular

viewers. This importance evokes user 'TheWonderYears' to respond with "everyone change your color". Without knowing what Kappa is or if Kappa was not present within the sentence, the sentence could be seen as a command for everyone to do this act. However, by looking at the perception from participants, the emote is paired with expressing irony or expressing sarcasm. In this case, the latter seems the most applicable. After reviewing these appendices, finding the context to where emotes are situated depends heavily on what is happening with the content, what the viewers are declaring, what the viewers are commenting, and of what the viewers are asking.

### **4.3.3 Discourse characteristics**

Finding discourse characteristics of a participatory community on Twitch is deeply associated with other CMCs of social media. With background to Traxel's study (2017), Squires' study (2016) and Danet's book of communicating online (2001), one can find key characteristics of online discourse within chat. With these in mind, one is more informed on concepts of netspeak, leet speak, regular correct, regular incorrect, hashtags, features of digital writing, and most importantly emoticons. The positive side or worse side of looking at digital writing on Twitch is that one is not restricted to just writing in the correct regular form. At Twitch one can express oneself freely, yet hateful conduct would probably be moderated. Exploring the first appendix one can gather instances of emotes, netspeak, lack of traditional capitalization, abbreviations, and typos. Instances of emote occur with using 4Head, PogChamp and a subscriber-specific emote. Netspeak occurs with the word "noob" and abbreviations in "lol". The lack of traditional capitalization is exemplified with the sentence "is it your eyeball?". A typo occurred in the sentence "Also stopped playign because of that".

The second appendix includes instances of emoticons, lack of traditional capitalization, shortenings, emphasis. Emoticons that occurred were LUL and 😊, lack of traditional capitalization in "safari zone was done", shortenings in "Buziel is one of my MVPs in my Plat Rando nuzlocke, and emphasis in "safari zone was asssssssssssssssss". Different from the first and second appendix, the third appendix sees the prevalence of hashtags coming in, something to which Lauren Squires refers to as indicating topics and evaluative sentiment"



(Squires 2016: 476). In addition to hashtag, one can gather emoticons, lack of traditional capitalization, and abbreviations from the third appendix. One finds instances of hashtag in “I managed to get engaged successfully #Hype”, emoticons in all the PogChamps used, lack of traditional capitalization in “was it expensive I mean the house”, and abbreviations in “since I last watched lol”. The fourth appendix uses instance of lack of capitalization, emoticons and shortenings. Lack of capitalizations in “how do you keep a color”, emoticons in Kappa and LUL, shortenings in “u” instead of you and “lud” instead of Ludwig.

Twitch chat discourse characteristic relies heavily on not being instructed to write within certain rules. That is particularly evident with all the sentences having a lack of traditional capitalizations. The use of abbreviations and emoticons is something that Twitch is also accustomed to as it is a part of the language variety used. Shortenings also occur frequently as the chat relies heavily on sending messages quickly to the ongoing broadcast of the streamer. What is peculiar is the lack of leet speak within Twitch. As leet speak deals with using numbers and certain symbols on the keyboard, it is odd that it has not reached these appendices. Perhaps leet speak do not appeal to the average Twitch viewer or perhaps it has been replaced with the use of netspeak instead. What is important is that as long as the message sent is understandable to viewers and streamer, a discourse can thrive.

## **5. Discussion**

Researching online behavior within its discourse deals often with what is anecdotal and speculative from the researcher's perspective. For this thesis, the research deals primarily with finding meaning behind the textual traces people leave behind online and focusing on the intent of using Twitch's emotes. The underlying idea for conducting a research like this was noticing how the use of CMC emoticons enforced more sentiment to a sentence than one would see on a normal piece of paper. One can certainly enforce sentiment on paper as well. Consider the use of writing "Good morning" and "Good morning!" on a piece of paper, and in a CMC setting, referring to the third appendix, the responses of "Congratulations FlawlessPumpkin" and "Congratulations FlawlessPumpkin PogChamp". For the written sentence on paper, the exclamation mark enforces more sentiment than without it whereas the use of the emote PogChamp does the same in a Twitch chat. In this chapter, the thesis will first go through the findings from the qualitative survey before heading into the CMDA findings. While the former discussion can be analyzed on its own, the latter will take use of the findings from the survey.

### **5.1 Qualitative survey discussion**

For this subsection of chapter 5, the goal is to investigate and discuss the findings from the emote questions of the survey. From here, the goal is to examine meaning from the participants' perception of emotes in order to answer the main research question: What is the meaning behind Twitch's top 5 most used emotes and in which contexts of conversation do they occur? In the question of whether the participants were avid users of the top 5 most used emotes, fourteen responded that they were avid users of PogChamp, fourteen also used the LUL emote, eight used Kappa, seven used 4Head, and one participant used TriHard. Following this, the subsection will discuss each emote, from top to bottom in terms of its rank.

First up is the Kappa emote, and what seems to be problematic about this emote is the contention to its meaning. From the survey findings, seventeen participants believed the meaning is to express sarcasm, yet eleven ticked that it expressed irony. Interestingly, nine participants mixed that it expressed both irony and sarcasm. And to be fair, there is a thin line between

expressing something as ironic and something as sarcastic. In most cases, sarcasm is a branch of irony that has the intention of expressing something in a negative manner. In a Twitch setting this can be expressed for instance in the sentence “siiiick gameplay Kappa”. Irony, on the other hand, is used to express something in a reverse way. Those who are incapable of understanding irony will, most likely, take the comment in a positive way when it actually means the opposite. Seeing as these two expression types are a form of saying something rude or opposite of what is said, the terms can arguably be said to be expressing something in a negative manner. An example for irony in Twitch could be the phrase “wow you are doing sooooo good Kappa”. The contention of these most upvoted responses may seem to be problematic at first, but once it is revealed that they are closely tied in their use one could argue that Kappa means both sarcasm and irony. When used in sarcasm it is to ridicule whereas irony is more to just express opposite meaning.

TriHard is next up for analysis. TriHard seems to be even more problematic than Kappa in terms of its perception. What once started out as being used to express that the broadcaster was trying hard in a game, has now evolved and gotten more meaning assigned to it. In the survey, nine responded that it expressed something negative, seven responded it expressed something funny, four meant it expressed sarcasm, one meant it expressed irony, and one meant it expressed something positive. In addition, four people touched upon that it was used in a racist context, whereas two added it meant the act of trying hard. It can be argued that, seeing as nine ticked that it expressed something negative and that four mentioned racist contexts towards it, most participants see it as a negatively used emote. Yet for this particular emote, where seven participants also see it as expressing something funny, one seeing it as expressing something funny, and two touching upon the act of trying hard, the intent of using TriHard has a variety of meaning. It can, therefore, be argued that it is conditional to the setting it is in. When one sees it spammed in a live stream where a black man appears, its use may be negative. When one sees it used in specific game communities, for instance speedrunning, its use is probably positive and expressing that the live streamer is trying hard.

The third emote is the PogChamp emote. This emote is not as difficult to examine, yet it has some responses that will be discussed. The responses reveal that sixteen believe it to express something positive, seven believe it to express excitement, three meant it expressed hype, which

is similar to excitement, two meant it expressed sarcasm, two meant it expressed something funny, and one saw it as expressing irony. The responses of expressing excitement, hype, something funny, can all be assigned to the majority response of expressing something positive while irony and sarcasm may seem out of place. Irony and sarcasm are referred to as negative responses yet without confronting those who use PogChamp in sarcastic and ironic manners, it may be difficult to see how such an emote can express those intentions. One cannot with full certainty know the true intention of the sender's messages yet emotes help acquire more meaning to what is being sent. Ironic and sarcastic comments included with PogChamp may work successfully but one can, however, argue that it will be difficult to see PogChamp used in a negative way and understand the intent is to be sarcastic or ironic. The title of this thesis includes "Hello [Streamer] PogChamp", a phrase that shows excitement for seeing the broadcaster live and this kind of greeting is, in most cases, always set in a positive manner.

LUL is the fourth emote in question and what one can gather from looking at the overview of the survey responses is that there is not much anomaly between the responses. As the emote depicts a man laughing, a lot of the responses were expected. Eighteen of the responses ticked that the emote expressed something funny, four meant it expressed irony, 3 meant it expressed sarcasm, one voted that it expressed something positive, and one responded with an additional alternative: "Laughing at something that occurred on the stream or something the streamer did"- Participant number 11. What needs to be discussed is the notion of expressing something funny, whether that can be seen as something positive or negative. Being funny or joking at the ongoing content can go both ways, but it is situational. If the LUL emote is being used as an attack on the person, it can be interpreted as being a negative response, whereas if it is used as commenting on something that occurred on the stream or a light ridicule towards the streamer, one can see it as a light banter and therefore somewhat positive. For instance, the second appendix shows someone commenting on LudwigAhgren's choice of running away from two pokémons. LudwigAhgren is here not obligated to kill the pokemons and the comment seems to be a light poke at his choice of running away, and therefore not negative. From the fact that irony and sarcasm were ticked here, one could argue that those are used to be subcategories of expressing something funny.

4Head is the last emote in question and what one can claim from this emote is that is a more light-hearted version of the LUL emote. LUL is usually seen as a cruder way of commenting on the stream whereas 4Head is seen as a light version of that. The survey findings revealed that fourteen saw 4Head as expressing something funny, eight noted that it expressed sarcasm, four said it expressed irony, two said it expressed something positive, and two meant it expressed something negative. The additional answers also mentioned it was used to express something silly, to mock the streamer in a friendly way, and to express something that was not easily achievable. One could argue that all these alternatives ticked for 4Head, are used for joking, directed towards either the streamer, viewer or ongoing content. The duel between the two voting that it expressed something negative and the two voting it expressed something positive may also be looked at in the situational context that the emote is connected to. If it is used as an attack on the person it may be negative but if it is a light jab at the ongoing content, one may see it as positive, similar to light banter within the participatory community. The irony and sarcasm ticked in the responses are set in a joking manner and may also be looked at in the situational context they appear.

Creating a framework for the meaning of these emotes in question is instructive and useful for the whole interaction of the Twitch medium, yet as one can see with the TriHard emote, meaning is not something constant, its meaning can be changed. The results from Kappa show that the majority perceives it used for irony and sarcasm. TriHard's meaning has more or less transformed into several different meanings. Starting out as the act of trying hard, the survey reveals that it also means to express something negative, racist, sarcasm, irony and something funny. The connotation of racism with TriHard also raises the question whether it should be taken away to prevent the racism from occurring, but then one may also see it as the trolls having an impact of Twitch's infrastructure, something that Trihex and Destiny discuss in their podcast (Destiny 2018: 1:47:20). PogChamp's findings reveal that it is overall seen as positive and that it expresses excitement towards what is happening. The last two emotes, LUL and 4Head, are both seen as the emotes used for jokes, whereas LUL is a stronger type of mocking the broadcast and 4Head is the light version for ridicule. 4Head and LUL can also take use of the irony and sarcastic in their way of mocking, yet Kappa enforces more connotation towards irony and sarcasm.

## 5.2 CMDA discussion

The CMDA findings reveal results that will examine discourse characteristics of a participatory community chat, how emotes affect the context of the sentence and the participatory community involved. For this, the thesis took use of four samples, two from LudwigAhgren and two from SubParButInHD, containing Kappa, PogChamp, LUL, and 4Head. This section will first discuss the emote's effect on the participatory, followed by emote sentence context, and discourse characteristics in the end. Watching broadcasts on Twitch involves primarily turn taking between viewers and streamer, or viewer and viewer. It is therefore interesting to investigate how emotes impact on the act of turn taking.

The emote's effect on a participatory community focuses on who the message with the emote is sent towards and to see what impact the emote brings for the following response. In the first appendix, user 'illintelligence' is trying to approach StumpyGoblin, a member of SubParButInHD, in order to introduce him to a new game called Auto Chess. The message is only aimed towards the streamer where 'illintelligence' tries to persuade him by adding the sentence "i can teach you 4Head". Now in the previous subsection of this chapter, the discussion of 4Head's meaning showed that it could express something funny, sarcastic, ironic, positive, and negative. The message sent seems to not convey any particular of these perceptions. One could argue that, for instance, a smiley could instead replace the 4Head emote as it seems to just be a sentiment offering to help StumpyGoblin out in trying a new game. Alas, StumpyGoblin turns 'illintelligence' down as he is not interested in that type of game genre.

The second appendix involves the use of LUL in LudwigAhgren's live stream of playing Pokémon Platinum. In this sample, user 'DoctorBattle' mocks LudwigAhgren's decision of fleeing two pokemons by saying "afraid of doduo LUL" and "afraid of buziel LUL". These types of sentence can be argued to be directed towards the whole community as it is not an approach directly to Ludwig. One could for instance see these two comments as sentences that have the intention and perhaps hope for others to bandwagon on the mocking of Ludwig's decisions. It may seem as negative comments or even positive, yet Ludwig is within his own right to make his decisions in a game and he can also choose to ignore 'DoctorBattle's comments. The aftermath of 'DoctorBattle's comments seemed to create no responses, neither from viewer nor streamer.

The third appendix involves the use of PogChamp and, in this instance, we see the aftermath of FlawlessPumpkin proclaim of finally getting engaged. This is where the nice atmosphere of a participatory community comes in. Getting engaged is, of course, something to be proud of and deserves congratulatory responses. As a proclaim is a message sent out to the public, both viewers and streamer chimes in with positive responses, SubParButInHD verbally and the viewers with messages including PogChamps. For the third appendix, the proclaim is the message that creates a response, yet once the first congratulatory response with a PogChamp involved, more viewers congratulate with the same emote.

The fourth appendix samples the use of Kappa in LudwigAhgren's stream. The use of Kappa is a response to the topic of colors in Twitch usernames. The color of usernames is an important aspect for Ludwig to recognize whoever is watching. To the comments made by Ludwig, the viewers respond with the likes of "we are all just colors to lud", and for 'TheWonderYears' to send "everyone change your color Kappa". 'TheWonderYears' message is aimed at both streamer and viewer in an ironic tone to create confusion for Ludwig in his way of recognizing his viewers. Alas for 'TheWonderYears', no responses come from the viewers nor LudwigAhgren. What one could take away from these appendices is that whether or not emotes influence other viewers to respond. It could be situational as the congratulatory responses with PogChamp cause others to do the same whereas the instances of Kappa, LUL, and 4Head do not.

Discussing sentence context is something that correlates with the emote's effect on participatory as the latter is the aftermath of the context to which the sentence is situated. It will therefore be summarized here. For the first appendix, 4Head is used as a positive response similar to a smiley being used in a message. User 'illintelligence' tries to influence StumpyGoblin to play a new game with a friendly tone. He does this by offering to teach him the game accompanied by the 4Head emote. In the second appendix, 'DoctorBattle' uses LUL as a form of ridicule towards streamer LudwigAhgren's action of fleeing from two pokémons. It can be perceived as a light poke at the streamer or even banter behavior from 'DoctorBattle'. The third appendix introduces several responses of PogChamp. The responses are positive in nature as they congratulate the newly engaged 'FlawlessPumpkin' in a positive and exciting manner which thus creates a wholesome experience for his new achievement. In the fourth appendix, user 'TheWonderYears' responds to the topic of colored usernames with "everyone change your

color Kappa”. The context to the sentence is of a sarcastic tone where ‘TheWonderYears’ call for the viewers to change their color, but in reality is not serious about his command.

Discourse characteristics from Twitch is somewhat similar to what you would find in an MMORPG or other games that use chats to communicate. While in games like World of Warcraft the use of chat is often used to write rapid responses to what is going in the game, for Twitch the use of rapid responses is in response to the turn-taking that happens between the streamer and viewer, or viewer with another viewer. What is important to note here is that writing in Twitch does not require the formal writing that you would find in school related texts or e-mailing co-workers in work related matters. Twitch chat is therefore open for the playful spirit of communicating and everyone is free to express themselves however they want to. Like role-playing games online, on Twitch one is often accustomed to the use of netspeak, emoticons, typos, lack of capitalization in sentences, regular incorrect and regular correct sentences. For the appendices of chatlogs one can see that these examples share some of these types of expressions. What all of the appendices have in common is, of course, emotes being used to add sentiment or context to the sentence it is situated in. One can also see the apparent use of lack of capitalization used in all the appendices. The lack of capitalization may be a personal choice from the message creator, or it can be seen as the fastest way of communicating to the ongoing content.

In the first appendix one is introduced to typos, which can either be explained from rapid response or just a general human mistake. In the second appendix one can also see the use of emphasis in “safari zone was asssssssssssssssss”. Another instance of CMC characteristics is the use of hashtag in the third appendix. The hashtag is often seen in instances of Twitter and Instagram to create a topic to which the sentence is situated, yet it also appears on Twitch from ‘FlawlessPumpkin’s’ proclamation of getting engaged. Abbreviations and shortenings also occur in the appendices where ‘u’ is used instead of ‘you’ and ‘lol’ used to express laughter, used either to create faster responses or a way of expressing themselves without the regular correct form. What does not show up in the appendices is the use of leet speak and the reason for that is unclear. Perhaps this type of expression is going extinct, where people who used leet speak evolved or turned to netspeak, or perhaps its use has not reached the Twitch platform. It may also be argued that the use of leet speak may not be that understandable to users who have not experienced this type of expression and it would therefore be left out of Twitch conversations.



As examined and discussed in chapter 4 and 5 of this thesis, one can see that Twitch chats provide a place for creativity and self-expression in a lot of different ways where emotes certainly helps.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study has explored the supposed language variety used on Twitch and discussed the meaning and context of Twitch's top 5 most used emotes. The appendices show what discourse characteristics can be found within a chatlog of a participatory community, the context to which the emotes are situated, and the participants' perception of the emotes' meaning. One of the most striking findings from the qualitative survey revealed that there were more meanings, or rather, more uses for a particular emote. While the results showed different alternatives ticked, the alternatives were, in most cases, linked or very similar to the most voted alternative. The emote contexts examined in the appendices are somewhat limited as they only show one instance of each emote used; however, by comparing the context to the findings from the qualitative survey, one can see how they correlate with each other. As this study focused on Twitch within participatory communities, where the streamer and viewers create their own identity within the Twitch realm by creating shared history with each other through shared activity, it is not certain whether the results shown in this study are applicable to larger livestreams.

The underlying idea for this research was to investigate whether the Twitch viewers had a similar or different understanding of the uses and meanings to Twitch emotes, and from this, try to get a better understanding of the language variety used on Twitch. From the findings, one can gather that Kappa, PogChamp, 4Head, and LUL all seem to be in unison with regard to their use whereas TriHard is in conflict of its use and may therefore be conditional to the setting that it is used in. The way this research tries to answer the research questions is somewhat different from other studies. As this research is a study on online behavior within Twitch, the answers are mostly speculative. Despite such speculation, the main research question is answered from the survey findings, whereas the sub-questions are answered by examining the first four appendices and then extracting a valid answer.

There are a myriad of possibilities for further research within the Twitch medium, For a linguistic purpose, the focus on emotes should be a priority. As the present study also had a focus on contexts in which emotes are used, the results were limited to one single sample and focused only within the participatory community. If one were to focus on emote context alone, the

research should also involve a large quantitative sample from numerous livestreaming channels in order to reveal more than one use of the emotes examined. What this present study also focused on was the controversy or problematic uses of the TriHard emote. This could be examined further with regard to where the emote is used as well as people who ban the emote on their channels versus those who do not. This touches on the toxic chat culture of Twitch where questions of whether certain emotes should be removed or not in order to reduce negative behavior. Another striking observation that could be examined further is the increased use of browser extension emotes from BetterTwitchTV and FrankerFaceZ. Here one can see how these particular emotes can go beyond global emotes in terms of their use. For instance, in LudwigAhgren's stream the FrankerFaceZ emote "Pog" was used more often than its original global emote "PogChamp".

Within sociology, one could examine the culture of Twitch with a focus on the herd mentality of viewers within large livestreaming channels. In this context, herd mentality relates to how viewers can be influenced by viewers to adopt certain behaviors. In terms of copy pastas and other chat spams, one can see the apparent herd mentality at work. Symbolism could also be examined with regard to emotes. Popular emotes from BetterTwitchTV and FrankerFaceZ depict Pepe the Frog showing various emotions. The Pepe the Frog emote thrives on Twitch, but in recent times, the frog has been viewed as being a symbol of the alt-right movement and the mode of expression for white supremacy ideology, to such an extent that its creator felt the need to publicly state that this was not his intention when creating the character (Gault 2018). From here one can examine the use of Pepe the Frog on Twitch to see whether its use is tied to racist behavior or if it just has the purpose of mediating certain unproblematic sentiments. Another particular aspect of Twitch could be how certain emotes become neologisms when they move beyond the Twitch realm. For instance, on Twitter, one can find certain Twitch emotes being used in hashtags of tweets even though the emotes are not being automatically converted to their pictorial icons. This could reveal the influence Twitch has across other social media platforms.

As Twitch is still the preferred livestreaming platform and there seems to be no sign of a decline in the consumption of livestreaming media, the importance of studying the linguistic and pragmatic integrity of a Twitch chat should still be evident today. The present study is one step

closer to understanding the meanings and scope of emotes, but as entailed there is plenty more to research both within linguistics and sociology.

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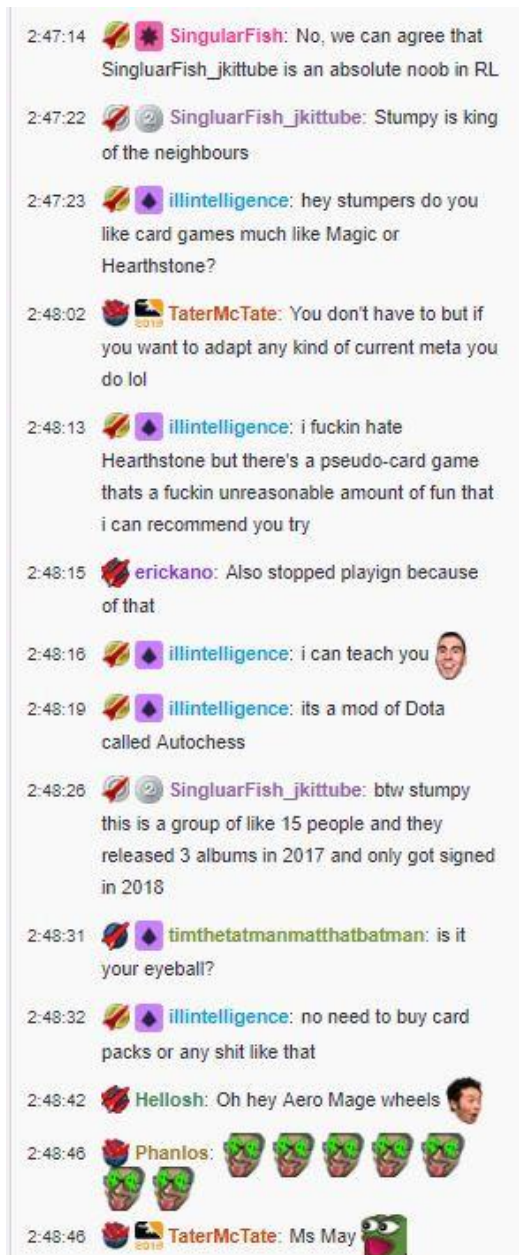
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## Appendices




Appendix 1: Chatlog from SubParButInHD stream from 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2019.  
Title: C3 3's in RL, then Cities Skylines & beer <3 // !lights !prime !discord.





1:38:54    doctorbattle: afraid of a doduo  



1:38:57  Ari\_\_\_: @thekidontheblock yeah, the safari zone in this gen is TRASH


1:38:58  TCO\_Stalin: Crush Claw isnt bad


1:38:59 koko\_\_17: safari zone was done



1:39:06  fgc\_daedalus: safari zone was  
 asssssssssssssssssss


1:39:09    doctorbattle: afraid of a buziel  



1:39:15  satchel\_\_\_paige: um

1:39:17  TripleA7: Tweek chocked hard


1:39:17  Ari\_\_\_: im more of a luvvdisk man myself



1:39:18  los\_bleratu: hawlucha is the coolest  
 pokemon 



1:39:18  satchel\_\_\_paige: ok


1:39:19  TripleA7: 0-2


1:39:24 thekidontheblock: what did he get from the safari zone




1:39:25  neveoyeah: does anyone have a clip of that blaziken rant

1:39:31   Jip\_\_\_: Buizel is one of my MVPs in my Plat Rando nuzlocke

1:39:41  Ari\_\_\_:  tweek

1:39:41  fgc\_daedalus: Yo its paras, speak french to him

1:39:43  zaerin\_thefirst: wow

1:39:46   luke\_greco: Tweek missed his Wario fart and lost game 2 

Appendix 2: Chatlog from LudwigAhgren's stream from 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2019.  
 Title: BEATING THE GAME 64 Bans !ludlocke

18:15 🏆🎮 **FlawlessPumpkin**: I managed to get engaged successfully #Hype

18:23 🏆🇬🇧 **JoshNesbittUK**: #Hype

18:27 🏆🎮 **FlawlessPumpkin**: since I last watched lol

18:40 🏆🎮 **AJeezie**: Congratulations Pumpkin 🤔

18:50 🟢🏆🎮❄️ **DanMB**: 🤔 Flawless P

19:01 🏆🗨️ **DjgentlemanXIII**: @FlawlessPumpkin What amazing news! Congratulations! 🤔💜

19:13 **kwasikande**: was it expensive I mean the house

19:19 🏆🇬🇧 **nath\_an**: one day I'll be able to afford £230 a month internet lol

19:34 🏆🎮🎮 **timthetacmanmatthatbatman**: 100 up and down is excellent and would recommend

19:35 🏆🎮🇬🇧 **TaterMcTate**: 🦖 To gain a stumpy we have to lose a cole 🦖 Brexit really has fucked us over

19:35 🏆🎮 **DarkShadowJ**: coooooooooole

19:38 🏆🎮 **DarkShadowJ**: 🤔

19:47 🏆🎮🎮 **timthetacmanmatthatbatman**: we can help 🏆🎮



19:49 🏆🎮🇬🇧 **TaterMcTate**: 🦖 W


19:50 🏆🗨️ **DjgentlemanXIII**: 500 up/down here 🤔


19:50 🏆🏆🇬🇧 **NewhamCyclist**: BOB

19:50 **addyman0**: @FlawlessPumpkin 🤔 Congratz! 😊



Appendix 3: Chatlog from SubParButInHD's stream from 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2019.  
 Title: last stream in the garage | !qotd !freesub




5:54:15   **yoshiPSI**: wow u hate ur viewers


5:54:16  **zaik\_swe**: sounds like the armada streams of old


5:54:27  **Ari\_**: we are all just colored names to lud

5:54:30 **Saftkanne2**: I was the dialysis guy


5:54:36   **yoshiPSI**: am i just a pink name to u


5:54:41   **KongHaraldVII**: purple is good  




5:54:46 **TheWonderYears**: everyone change your color 



5:54:47  **WaterlessMelon**: how do you keep a color



5:54:49 **Saftkanne2**: its okay, its a german name and youve been playing over 10hours




5:54:51  **WaterlessMelon**: i think mine changes



5:54:53  **zaik\_swe**: purple the best



5:54:56   **idkmarena**: oh shit



5:55:05  **Ari\_**: 


5:55:07   **MeleePNG**: gucci

5:55:08    **donnerparty**: dunno what my color is but it's dark green on mobile

5:55:15   **yoshiPSI**: some people have different colours on different computers for me

5:55:16   **idkmarena**: it changes every time donner

5:55:29   **SlippisJimmy**: am i just a color to you lud

5:55:29  **clutchier**: never change color boys

Appendix 4: Chatlog from LudwigAhgren's stream from 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2019. Title: BEATING POGOSTUCK.



What is your Twitch username?

shoegazeforawhile

csiApok

troxito

SingularFish

bleujello

RaptorKitchen

DanMB

Mizzypyon

Sirupchan

Antonmahesh

TaterMcTate

Sakuraxd\_

flouncymgoo

chargingdingle

Harstar\_

Knegen

WutLolHurr

TwinkleBiscuit

Appendix 5: Twitch usernames of the participants in the survey.



C	D
What country do you come from?	What is your age?
England	21
Slovenia	23
Switzerland	29
Norway	20
United States	19
United States	31
Denmark	19
Australia	25
Norway	20
The Netherlands	19
England	18
England	22
Canada	20
Germany	22
England	26
Sweden	24
Belgium	20
United States	32

Appendix 6: Nationality and age of the participants.

To which gender do you most identify?	What are your interests? (in general)
Male	Music, Film, Rhythm games, Jiu jitsu, Esports
Male	video games and video games
Male	Gaming, Tech, Programming, Writing
Male	Videogames
Male	sports, video games/esports, music, movies, fitness,
Male	Programming, Games, Music, Science
Male	Programming, digital design, movies & TV shows, racing
Female	Platformers, RPGs, fighting games
Female	Gaming, Music, Anime
Male	Gaming, Computers, Basketball
Male	Video games, TV/Film, eSports, Programming
Female	Gaming (hearthstone and rocket league mainly), Music, Pretty flowers and clothes
Male	Video Games, Music, Reading
Male	Esports and competitive play
Male	Video Games, Music
Male	Watching friends or tournaments
Male	Gaming, cooking
Male	Playing video games, listening to music, listening to audio books.

Appendix 7: Gender and interests of participants.

Do you mostly play alone or with friends?	If you do play, how much would you say you play a day (on average)	How much time do you spend on Twitch a day (on average)
With friends	3 hours	15 minutes
Alone	2 hours	1 hour
Alone	2 Hours (~5 on a weekend)	1-2 Hours (3-4 on a weekend)
With friends	5 hours	
With friends	3 hours	1 hour
Alone		1
With friends	3-4 hours, very rarely more than 5	Around 3 hours I'd say
With friends	3-5 hours	2-3 hours
Alone	8 hours	5 hours
With friends	3-5 Hours	.5-2 Hours
With friends	2 Hours	1 Hour 30 Minutes
With friends	3 hours	30 mins
Alone	3 hours	4 hours
With friends	4-5 hours	2-3 hours
With friends	3h	5h
With friends	2 hours	1 hour
With friends	4 Hours	2 Hours
With friends	2-3 hours	6 hours

Appendix 8: Playing alone or with friends, average time spent on gaming, and average time spent on Twitch.

What do you mainly watch Twitch for?	How did you come to find Twitch.tv?
Entertainment from other streamers	Youtubers transitioning to streaming
Entertainment from other streamers	youtubers going to twitch
Entertainment from other streamers	Migrated from Justin.tv
Entertainment from other streamers	I found it through my friends when tried streaming diablo 3 back in 2012 on Justin.tv
Entertainment from other streamers	I think some friends showed it to me but I don't really remember.
Entertainment from other streamers	Gaming news sites like GameInformer
Entertainment from other streamers	Gaming Youtubers I watched many years ago advertised streaming on Justin.tv, before it was Twitch.tv
Entertainment from other streamers	Was around when it was justin.tv
Entertainment from other streamers	Ive just always known about it cause ive always been in the gaming community
Entertainment from other streamers	League of Legends Esports
Entertainment from other streamers	via Yogscast Charity Event (Jingle Jam 2012)
Entertainment from other streamers	told by a friend
Entertainment from other streamers	Twitter
Entertainment from other streamers	Cobaltstreak when I mainly played Binding of Isaac
Entertainment from other streamers	May have been subpar's youtube videos
Entertainment from other streamers	Through friends i played with
Entertainment from other streamers	A long time ago when someone on youtube promoted their twitch livestream
Entertainment from other streamers	I think I found it through a youTuber that I used to watch.

Appendix 9: What the participants mainly watch Twitch for and how the participants found Twitch.

Have you noticed any change from the first time you started Twitch? If yes, what?
Far greater quantity of streamers, professionalism, deeper communities
Professional streamers are more and more visible compared to amateur streamers.
Way more up on the Social Justice movement, inconsistency in handling its members. Way more business driven than content driven.
No
No
The enabling of many more people to make money using the Affiliate program
As opposed to Youtube, which has slowly turned more and more corporate, the corporate characteristics of Twitch mainly come from Amazon buying them. But I still feel Twitch has managed to keep it's smaller creators comfortable way more than Youtube has.
Heavily improved usability, much greater variety
Yeah some are way much more careful on what they say and do on stream
Watching a lot more entertaining forms of streams instead of esports.
Twitch is changing. They have to, as a company, try out new things and increase their profits but Twitch is a much more friendly platform compared to YouTube. Amazon acquiring Twitch hasn't changed this. In terms of the streamers and the content available, it's changed. New categories seem to pop up everyday with a new niche that people want to watch. The larger streamers attract a younger audience and continue to grow but with what seems to be monetising their channel as a priority. The amount of smaller streamers grows exponentially with the ability to stream becoming standard. So yes, Twitch has changed and will continue, however there will always be content you want to watch even if you have to scroll through the whole list of channels.
No
No
Twitch Prime probably had the biggest impact as a streamer and viewer
Quality and latency improvements
i'm more into watching friends play rather than other people i don't know
Huge influx of people watching twitch, a few years ago the most someone could get is 10 thousand, now people get over 30 thousand viewers a stream
Well, the trend of what video games are popular on twitch seems to change rapidly. I think there are a lot more trolly people on the platform now as well.

## Appendix 10: What the participants have noticed in change from the first time they started using Twitch.

Has your use of Twitch changed since you started engaging with the site?	What instances make you watch Twitch instead of other media like TV, Netflix, YouTube?
No	To watch specific streamers that aren't as active on youtube/ Live esports events
Yes	I can engage with the streamers. Streams are more genuine since they are live.
Yes	Different content
No	Interaction and communities
Yes	Twitch allows me to interact directly with streamers which creates a dynamic that is more active and engaging than just watching a show and it's a nice alternative sometimes.
Yes	Interactivity, Content, Engagement. Many other forms of viewing entertainment are consumed more passively.
Yes	Esports events barely happen anywhere else, if they do it's usually worse video quality. I also pretty much don't watch Youtube gameplay videos anymore, that has entirely moved over to Twitch for me.
Yes	Twitch is generally a lower commitment because it's live footage (compared to having to set aside time to watch an entire video or episode) and the interaction you can have with other people and the broadcaster is unique and elevates the experience.
Yes	Cause i want to go afk in my brain and just watch some good ol'gameplay
Yes	Friends streaming, entertaining personal streamers.
No	Wanting to interact with the content creator and their community
No	Can engage more with the content as it's something I do myself
Yes	Live content is more exciting in some cases
Yes	The interaction with the streamer and other viewers
Yes	Choice over TV, interaction with the content creators over YT
Yes	it's a direct interaction with what you're watching
Yes	Gaming-related stuff, interaction with streamers
Yes	I like feeling like I'm actively apart of a community. Watching a streamer allows me to interact and be engaged in the content, where as TV (ect.) is very passive.

Appendix 11: If the participants use of Twitch has changed and what instances makes the participants to Twitch instead of TV, Netflix, and YouTube.

Where do you normally watch Twitch?	Would you say you are an active or passive viewer of Twitch? (If you chat during stream or mostly just watch the entertainment being broadcasted)
On the Computer	Passive viewer
On the Computer	
On the Computer	Active viewer
On the Computer	Active viewer
On the Computer, On my mobile phone	Active viewer
On the Computer	Active viewer
On the Computer, On my SmartTV	Passive viewer
On the Computer, On my mobile phone	Active viewer
On the Computer, On my SmartTV	Passive viewer
On the Computer, On my mobile phone	Passive viewer
On the Computer	Active viewer
On the Computer, On my mobile phone	Active viewer
On the Computer	Active viewer
On the Computer, On my mobile phone	Active viewer
On the Computer, On my mobile phone	Active viewer
On the Computer	Active viewer
On the Computer, On my mobile phone	Passive viewer
On the Computer, On my SmartTV	Active viewer

Appendix 12: Where the participants normally watched Twitch, and whether the participants see themselves as active or passive viewers of Twitch

Do you multitask while watching Twitch?	When do you use Twitch?	Do you pay a lot of attention to the ongoing chat?
Yes	Morning, Midday, Night	Yes
Sometimes	Afternoon, Evening, Night	Yes
Yes	Afternoon, Evening, Night	Yes
Yes	Morning, Evening, Night	Yes
Yes	Evening, Night	Yes
Yes	Midday, Afternoon	Yes
Yes	Evening, Night	No
Sometimes	Morning, Evening, Night	
Sometimes	Morning, Midday, Afternoon, Evening, Night	No
Sometimes	Evening, Night	Yes
Yes	Afternoon, Evening, Night	Yes
Sometimes	Morning, Midday, Afternoon, Evening, Night	Yes
Sometimes	Evening, Night	Yes
Yes	Afternoon, Evening, Night	Yes
Sometimes	Evening, Night	Yes
Yes	Evening	No
Yes	Afternoon, Evening, Night	Yes
Yes	Morning, Midday, Afternoon, Evening	Yes

Appendix 13: Whether the participants multitasked while watching Twitch, when they used Twitch, and if they payed a lot of attention to the ongoing chat.



Do you feel that the time used on Twitch is wasted or used for a good purpose?	Who do you normally watch on Twitch? (Username of streamer(s))
Purposeful	Lirik, loltyler1, ClintStevens
Purposeful	KongHaraldVII. No for real though, there are too many to mention and it changes all the time.
Time wasted	KongModMan, Zaphare, Riot Games, StarCraft, realoods, HopfensmoothieOfficial
Purposeful	Subparbutinhd -- Aethos
Purposeful	mang0, Ludwig, Clint Stevens, leffen
Purposeful	abomination1212, subparbutinhd, callumtheshogun, wingedvox
Purposeful	SubParButInHD, Yogscast, Nerdcubed
Purposeful	LudwigAhgren, Leffen, Puwexil, Fessel to name a few, but literally hundreds of people!
Purposeful	IWillDominate, BrainTM, Scarra, Limealicious, BoxBox, DisguisedToast
Purposeful	Shroud, (IRL friends), DisguisedToast
Purposeful	SubParButInHD
Purposeful	Tylacto
Purposeful	Ludwig Ahgren, yogi_sb
Time wasted	jessie, yukeo and friends that are streaming
Purposeful	SubParButInHD, Danzhizzle, ChessBrah, AlexandraBotez, Dannyb21892
Time wasted	Ajerd_ , dillongoo , RocketLeague
Purposeful	DanzhizzLe
Purposeful	callumtheshogun, SubParButInHD, Strykr918, Ajred_, VinceRL, IWillDominate

Appendix 14: If the participants found the time spent on Twitch wasted or purposeful and who they normally watched on Twitch.

Do you feel a part of the community of the stream you watch?	Do you feel that the streamer knows who you are?	In your opinion, what motivates you to interact with the chat?
No	No	The streamer
Yes	Yes	The streamer, The viewers
Yes	Yes	The streamer, The viewers
Yes	Yes	The streamer, The viewers
Yes	Yes	The streamer, The viewers
Yes	Yes	The streamer, The moderators, The viewers
Yes	Yes	The viewers
Yes	Yes	The streamer
Yes	No	The streamer
Yes	Yes	The streamer
Yes	Yes	The streamer, The viewers
Yes	Yes	The streamer, The moderators, The viewers
Yes	Yes	The streamer, The moderators, The viewers
Yes	Yes	The streamer, The moderators, The viewers
Yes	Yes	The streamer
Yes	Yes	The viewers
Yes	Yes	The streamer, The viewers
Yes	Yes	The streamer, The viewers

Appendix 15: If the participants felt a part of the community they watched, if they felt the streamer they watched knew who they were, and what made the participants motivated to interact with the chat.

How important is the chat for you?	How important would you say the emotes from Twitch are for you?	How important is it that the streamer you watch reads chat?	How important is it that the streamer is affected by the chat?
Important	Important	Important	Relevant
Can sometimes be turned off	Relevant	Important	Relevant
Relevant	Very important	Important	Important
Can sometimes be turned off	Relevant	Important	Relevant
Important	Important	Important	Important
Very important	Very important	Important	Relevant
Can sometimes be turned off	Very important	Relevant	Relevant
Can sometimes be turned off	Irrelevant	Important	Relevant
Relevant	Very important	Very important	Very important
Important	Important	Very important	Important
Relevant	Very important	Important	Important
Important	Important	Very important	Important
Important	Relevant	Relevant	Relevant
Very important	Very important	Important	Important
Very important	Important	Very important	Important
Important	Very important	Important	Important
Very important	Very important	Important	Relevant
Can sometimes be turned off	Relevant	Important	Relevant

Appendix 16: Importance of chat, emotes, and streamer’s interaction with the chat.

Do you have an emote that you use quite a lot compared to the other emotes? If so, which ?	Are you an avid user of these emotes? If so, which?
PogChamp	PogChamp
PogChamp PogChamp PogChamp PogChamp PogChamp	Kappa, PogChamp, LUL, 4Head
PogChamp	Kappa, PogChamp, LUL, 4Head
DansGame	LUL
I don't have any emotes that i use significantly more	Kappa, PogChamp, LUL
trrIMFW	Kappa, PogChamp, LUL
trrIGood	PogChamp, LUL
N/A	No, I am not an avid user of these emotes.
CoolCat	Kappa, PogChamp, LUL, 4Head
MonkaS	Kappa, PogChamp, LUL
Variants of the PogChamp/LUL emotes e.g. POGG	PogChamp, LUL, 4Head
:)	LUL, 4Head
Salutation emotes that signal hello or goodbye	PogChamp
PogChamp, 4Head, Pepega, LuL, PepeJAM and all	TriHard, PogChamp, LUL, 4Head
	LUL
PogChamp	Kappa, PogChamp, LUL
Kappa and Pog	Kappa, PogChamp, 4Head
PogChamp	PogChamp, LUL

Appendix 17: What emotes the participants used frequently and which emote(s) of the top 5 most used emotes they were avid users of.

What do you think the meaning behind Kappa is? (there is an alternative to fill in an alternative that is missing)	What do you think the meaning behind TriHard is? (there is an alternative to fill in an alternative that is missing)
Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony	Expressing something negative
Expressing sarcasm	Expressing something funny
Expressing irony	Expressing something negative, Expressing sarcasm
Expressing sarcasm	Expressing something negative
Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony, Expressing something funny	Expressing sarcasm, Expressing something funny, TriHard is often used to represent African-American individuals on Twitch.
Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony	Expressing sarcasm
Expressing sarcasm	I see it mostly used to point out when something could be considered racist, or racially controversial
Expressing something negative, Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony, it's an extremely lazy emote for people who aren't capable of saying what they mean	Expressing something negative, Expressing something positive
Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony	Expressing something negative, Expressing something funny, If you're trying hard and failing maybe idk honestly
Expressing sarcasm	Expressing something negative
Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony, Paired with a comment to ensure sarcasm is expressed through text if it is unclear.	Expressing something negative
Expressing sarcasm	Expressing something funny
Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony	Expressing sarcasm
Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony	Expressing something funny
Expressing sarcasm, Expressing something funny	Expressing irony
Expressing sarcasm	Expressing something negative
Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony	Expressing something funny, Something racist
Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony	Expressing something negative, Expressing something funny, Some people use it to express trying hard at a game, or just a funny thing happened. Others use it as a racial slur.

## Appendix 18: The participants' perception of Kappa and TriHard

Do you feel that TriHard is used in a wrong way? If yes, why?	What do you think the meaning behind PogChamp is? (there is an alternative to fill in an alternative the is missing)
Sometimes used by some communities in a derogatory/racist context	Expressing something positive, Excitement
Sometimes yes because people spam it when there's a black person. Usually only in big chats though	Expressing excitement
Yes and no, it's usually used in a racist context but at the same time in a sarcastic way	Expressing something positive, Excitement
It is often used in a semi racist way, often when something to a black person or someone does something that is often characterized as black behavioural habits etc.	Epic and crucial moments of hype
sometimes it is used in a racist context which I believe is wrong	Expressing sarcasm, Expressing something positive
I've seen it used to represent anything to do with a black person, or black culture, with varying degrees of offensiveness, from playful to very offensive.	Expressing something positive, Excitement, Joy
I don't think there is a "correct" way to use most emotes. But I do disagree with many community's uses of TriHard	Expressing something positive, Expressing excitement, hype-ness
While in speedrunning streams it's largely used in a positive way, elsewhere the use of it is overwhelmingly racist.	Expressing something positive
	Expressing something positive, Something good happend! you got a highscore?? POGCHAMP!
	Expressing something positive, Expressing something funny
Yes, twitch chat as an entity generally uses it with racist connotations. In large streams usually at an events channel rather than an individuals stream. When a black person appears on stream I've seen it used sometimes accompanied with racist remarks.	Expressing something positive, Excitement/Hype over something that has happened or the chat is anticipating.
Sometimes (ie when used to make 'racist' jokes)	Expressing something positive
	Expressing something positive
for the most part it's used in memes but it can go too far	Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony, Expressing something positive
Yes, it gets used a lot by the community just to represent a black streamer.	Expressing something positive
is it not a censor emote?	Expressing something positive
As I said, for racist goals	Expressing something positive, Something that happende that's really cool
Yes. I feel it is used in place	Expressing something positive, Expressing something funny, It can also represent excitement

Appendix 19: Question whether the participants felt TriHard was used in a wrong way and the perception of PogChamp.



What do you think the meaning behind LUL is? (there is an alternative to fill in an alternative that is missing)	What do you think the meaning behind 4Head is? (there is an alternative to fill in an alternative that is missing)
Expressing something funny	Expressing something funny
Expressing something funny	Expressing something funny
Expressing something funny	Expressing something negative, Expressing irony, Expressing something funny
Expressing something funny	Expressing something funny
Expressing irony, Expressing something funny	
Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony, Expressing something funny	Expressing sarcasm, Expressing something funny, To express something silly or dumb
Expressing something funny	Expressing sarcasm, Expressing something funny
Expressing irony, Expressing something funny	Expressing something negative, Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony
Expressing sarcasm, Expressing something funny	Expressing sarcasm, Expressing something that's not easily achievable example; Just be happy 4Head
Expressing irony, Expressing something funny	Expressing something positive, Expressing something funny
Expressing something positive, Expressing something funny, Laughing at someone	Expressing sarcasm, Expressing something funny, Usually used to mock the streamer in a friendly way about something they have done.
Expressing something funny	Expressing something funny
Expressing something funny	Expressing sarcasm, Expressing something funny
Expressing something funny	Expressing sarcasm, Expressing irony, Expressing something funny
Expressing something funny	Expressing irony
Expressing something funny	Expressing something funny
Expressing sarcasm, Expressing something funny	Expressing sarcasm, Expressing something funny
Expressing something positive, Expressing something funny	Expressing something positive, Expressing something funny

## Appendix 20: Participants' perception of LUL and 4Head

After this survey, what would you deem to be the most important part of Twitch?

The interest in gaming

The community

The interest in gaming

The community

The medium overall

The medium overall

The entertainment

The streamer

I think all of it is important.

The streamer

The medium overall

The streamer

The medium overall

The medium overall

The medium overall

a combo of interaction, entertainment and community

The whole experience, there isn't one thing thats most important, it all fits together as one big thing.

The medium overall

Appendix 21: Finalized question of the survey.



TOP TWITCH EMOTES		TOP TWITCH EMOTES			
1	trrISellout	106 186	12	<3	8 258
2	trrIHype	35 970	13	LUL	7 743
3	trrIYodawg	31 389	14	trrIShock	7 687
4	trrIDoink	16 355	15	Kappa	7 578
5	trrINoo	14 018	16	trrID	7 425
6	trrIOL	13 318	17	trrIRef	7 055
7	trrICole	12 286	18	trrIRage	7 027
8	PogChamp	11 713	19	trrIStumped	5 846
9	trrIGood	11 023	20	trrIMFW	4 744
10	trrISub	9 991	21	trrIThicc	4 615
			30	GivePLZ	2 910
			31	trrIOVE	2 152
			32	:D	2 011
			33	trrIOVE	1 528
			34		1 517
			35		1 499
			36	4Head	1 479
			37	trrIBad	1 299
			38	HeyGuys	1 222
			39	NotLikeThis	1 214
			40		1 154

Appendix 22: The top 5 most used emotes on Twitch in SubParButInHD's top 100 most used emotes. Pictures taken 5<sup>th</sup> of March (TriHard was not a part of the top 100).

Rank	Emote	Count
1	ludwigStar	48 374
2	ludwigHypers	39 469
3	ludwig7	31 350
4	LUL	25 358
5	jermaOld	15 505
6	ludwigBrain	12 581
7	yogisbSip	9 772
8	ludwigSmooth	9 722
9	PogChamp	8 855
10	ludwigS	8 582

Rank	Emote	Count
40	ludwigHi	2 391
41	hugsBigBrain	2 379
42	BibleThump	2 291
43	ludwigEZ	1 946
44	Kappa	1 815
45	WutFace	1 649
46	DansGame	1 520
47	ludwigRage	1 512
48	<3	1 510
49	ludwigl	1 507

Rank	Emote	Count
64	emohran	1 000
65	mangoBleh	1 019
66	ludwigHandsome	1 003
67	BlessRNG	990
68	hugsStinker	950
69	ludwigGold	919
70	ResidentSleeper	918
71	itswillEmote	912
72	4Head	884
73	doctor56Doc	754
74	ludwigD	728

Appendix 23: The top 5 most used emotes on Twitch in LudwigAhgren's top 100 most used emotes. Pictures taken 5<sup>th</sup> of March. (TriHard was not a part of the top 100).