FANS TURNED PROSUMERS: A CASE STUDY OF AN ONLINE FANSUBBING COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to understand the reasons behind illegal consumer behavior in the free world of the Internet. An online group of fans, which makes free, high-quality subtitles of a Japanese boy band's media appearances, was interviewed and a community, which holds exclusive right to watch the subtitles, was surveyed to shed light on what motivates these consumers-turned-producers to manipulate and distribute copyrighted material. Another purpose was to investigate the methods the prosumers use to protect themselves from legal prosecution and how that affects the relationship between the fans that produce and the fans that consume the subtitles. The very nature of the Internet that fosters this activity also poses a challenge because rules cannot be enforced and intellectual property cannot be protected. Ultimately, it is a balancing act between hiding from the public eye, receiving social benefits of being a prosumer, and fulfilling the demands of a deprived community.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

General Background

In a time of advanced technology and increasing globalization, our world has become more accessible to everyone. People are able to constantly be in contact with others located all over the world and form tight-knight online communities where they are able to share their interests and passion. There are a variety of online communities, many of which are fan communities, in which the members share love for many things that can range from a musical group to a sports team, or even a brand. In this research, an online fan community of a Japanese boy band has been chosen for a case study in order to shed light on fan behavior and fan activities in a new age of technology and social media that has altered the way fans interact with content producers and with one another. The community at question is Sunshine Subs, an online volunteer group that produces non-profit subtitles (called 'fansubs,' as in, fan made subtitles) of Japanese TV dramas and variety shows that star members of their favorite boy band and distributes them for free to the rest of the online fan community.

The research questions are as follows:

1) What are the motivational factors for the prosumers in this case study?

2) How do the prosumers cope with the potential illegality of their activity?

3) What is the relationship between the prosumers and the consumers who watch fansubs in the world of the free Internet?

In order to contextualize the case study of this online community and answer the research questions, I will examine a wide array of literature in Chapter 1 from the broadest perspective, globalization and the Cool Japan trend, to a more specific take on the matter, prosumerism and participatory culture, finally ending with a legal aspect, which reflects the confusing gray area of using copyrighted material for personal purposes. As we will see, each perspective builds upon the other to show that fansubbing is not a unique case of fan or consumer behavior, but rather an increasingly common place yet undocumented occurrence that should be researched to help us understand the consequences of consumer demands not being met in an interconnected, globalized, cyber world, as well as the altruistic motivation consumers have to adopt a new role as producers that receive no monetary compensation for their hard work.

After discussing the literature, I will explain the anatomy of the virtual fan community in more detail, providing information on the object of the group's fantasies, the boy band, as well as how the community functions and is governed. Chapter 1 ends with a section describing my methodology and ends the introduction chapter. Chapter 2 is an analysis and discussion of the survey and interview data collected for this case study regarding the motivation of the fans-turned-producers. Chapter 3 elaborates on the tension between the desires for social status of the prosumers and the spirit of sharing that governs the greater fandom. Chapter 4 is the conclusion, followed by appendices and a list of references.

Globalization and Cool Japan

Globalization is the heightened connection between information, people, and capital due to global infrastructures and modern technology. Giddens (2003:7) wrote in *Runaway World* that "globalization has something to do with the thesis that we now all live in one world – but in what ways exactly?" We have been thrust into a new world where we are regularly in contact with others who are different in terms of way of thought and way of life. With the advent of new technology and faster connection speeds, space and time have essentially been contracted, thus allowing instant connectivity for people separated by oceans and land. It is undoubtedly a global phenomenon that affects the world economy, international market, foreign politics, as well as cultural identity. In this "globalizing world where information and images are routinely transmitted across the globe" (Giddens 2003:9), there is an intensification of the flow of people, consumer products, capital investments, media images, and many other things, which causes the physical and ideological borders or boundaries of nations to blur.

However, it is wrong to think of globalization as a global-specific phenomenon because as many scholars point out, it also permeates the personal, individual, and local level. Family values and cultural traditions are being transformed, and people are continuously adapting to new ideas as they encounter them on a daily basis.

Monty (2010) explains the two types of cultural exports that the Japanese industry had at the onset of globalization. It started with a strong industry in 'cultural hardware' through electronic brands such as Sony and Panasonic, which became household brands

worldwide. In the early 1990s, however, Japan's bubble economy collapsed and various industries began to slow down, pulling Japan's economy into recession. "To keep the industry thriving, Japan had to develop cultural software," and it was during an economic down time such as this, when Japan's cultural products, including *anime*, *manga*, computer, and video games, began booming and became one of the most successful export industries (Van Laer 2010). "Instead of collapsing beneath its political and economic misfortunes, Japan's global cultural influence has only grown," and Japan's success overseas led the Japanese government to support its cultural industry in the hopes of building a form of 'soft power,' a term that was introduced by Joseph Nye (1990) (McGray 2002:47). According to Nye, 'soft power' is a way of getting others to "want what you want through cultural attraction and ideology without resorting to coercive and costly military force" (Lam 2007:353). Bound by the Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution that disallows any acts of war, the Japanese government and scholars believed that making Japanese popular culture a global success would constitute having "economic, political, and diplomatic power" (Shiraishi 1997; Van Laer 2010:248).

The increasing global presence of Japanese cultural products has been termed 'Cool Japan' and was most notably discussed in Douglas McGray's (2002) "Japan's Gross National Cool" article, in which he surveyed multiple angles of Japanese youth culture ranging from Pokémon, luxury goods, fashion, and Hello Kitty and their considerable potential for 'soft power' abroad because "the whiff of the Japanese cool" was what most attracted foreigners to Japan. McGray's analysis of Japan's coolness was very well received and jumpstarted the campaign for Cool Japan, to the point that an

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NHK television series called *Cool Japan Hakkutsu: Kakkoii Nippon!* was created to "illustrate the quickly changing Japanese culture and how it is perceived by the international community that have recently made Japan their home" (NHK 2012). The homepage of the TV show defines Cool Japan as "a term that describes the growing international interest in Japan. From the worlds of fashion, anime, architecture to cuisine, the cultural aspects of Japanese society that have long been left undiscovered are starting to make a strong impact on global trends" (NHK 2012).

With the emerging global image of Cool Japan, the Japanese government rode the coattails of the increasing popularity of Japanese popular culture and accordingly developed a national policy in 2002, called the Intellectual Property Strategic Program, which focused on supporting innovation and creativity in the form of Japanese media such as *anime* and video games (Van Laer 2010). The government wanted to increase global demand for Japanese products overseas as well as use that as a form of soft power and national symbol to "induce pro-Japanese sentiments in Asia" (Van Laer 2010:249). In fact, "many committees have been established that discuss the promotion of Japanese culture" in similar ways (Iwabuchi 2010). By creating positive shared memories among those in Asia, particularly the youth, the government hoped that it would help Asian youth to positively associate the image of Japan with traditional values such as harmony, compassion, and coexistence (Van Laer 2010). Many scholars are doubtful as to whether or not Cool Japan was successful in that way, especially in Korea and China, because of Japan's well-known history of "imperial aggressiveness, military might" and various war atrocities that the Japanese government has failed to acknowledge and express remorse

for (Daliot-Bul 2007; Lam 2007; Van Laer 2010). In a way, Daliot-bul (2007) notes, the government may not want to associate its cultural products with traditional values, because traditional Japan would be related to its negative history.

Nonetheless, as Van Laer (2010:263) observes, the Japanese government's efforts were in vain as it took away the "cutting-edge, countercultural" and youthful appeal that Japanese popular culture offered to audiences worldwide. The Japanese state did not drive the production, diffusion, and global consumption of cultural products such as *manga* and *anime*. Such industries were actually propelled by consumer taste for the refreshing creativity and non-conformity of Japanese artists and accompanying market forces (Lam 2007:350). "The intrinsic characteristics of Japanese animation, cinema, and character goods – obvious quality, stylistic and thematic complexity, insistent difference from Western pop conventions – have undoubtedly proven attractive to global consumers" (Tsutsui 2010:46). The global success of Japanese popular culture was also made possible by an emerging 'participatory culture,' a phenomenon that facilitated interactions between media producers and consumers in a way that synthesized their roles and creating, 'prosumers,' (Jenkins 2006a; Van Laer 2010), which we will discuss in more detail in a following section.

Delving deeper into the reason why Japanese popular culture was successful overseas, Iwabuchi (1998) believed it had to do with the products being *mukokuseki* or 'culturally odorless' (lacking in nationality) and localized in the foreign market. He believed, for example, that owners of a Walkman would not associate it with Japan

because the product does not exude any Japanese image. This philosophy was also employed once the Japanese government and cultural producers realized the potential global market for *anime* and *manga* because they became "aware that the non-Japanese-ness of characters works to their advantage in the export market" (Iwabuchi 1998:167). They both unconsciously and intentionally reduced or erased Japanese "bodily, racial and ethnic characteristics" causing the animated characters to not look 'Japanese' (Iwabuchi 1998:167). They also invested in localization with the help of local industries to appeal to local audiences (Iwabuchi 1998). However, in cultural products such as *anime* and *manga*, which are inherently Japanese, it is difficult to imagine that the lack of Japanese-ness is making it popular. Tsutsui (2010:43) observes that "the very idea that Japan lacks fragrance in the global pop marketplace is open to question; there can be little doubt that among the factors driving international interest in Japanese popular culture, at least during the 1980s and early 1990s, was Japan's image as a rapidly rising economic power and a kind of high-tech utopia, leading the world in robotics as well as video game technology."

However, the success of localization seems to be mixed. In the late 1970s when American distributors began importing *anime* to the United States, not only did they "adapt" anime, they also "completely rewrote the stories to make them something unique for presentation to American audiences as well as to television audiences around the world" (Ruh 2010:31). *Anime* such as critically acclaimed director Hayao Miyazaki's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* was butchered and reedited; the names of the characters were changed and the movie was marketed as a children's movie instead. This

version of the movie was not well received by American or international fans, and the failure came in part due to how audiences "cared about the film's artistic integrity" (Ruh 2010:44). Although this example of localization failed miserably, there have been other television series such as *Robotech* and *Voltron*, which have been successfully adapted and marketed to American audiences "by expanding the shows beyond the scope of the Japanese originals" (Ruh 2010:47). Ruh (2010) does not conclude whether or not localization of Japanese products should be recommended and ends on an ambiguous note regarding the matter.

Another example of this effort was how Hello Kitty was originally marketed in Japan when she was first introduced in 1974, and how she was first exported to the United States in 1976. During the 1970s, very few Japanese people went abroad and "people yearned for products with English associations. There was an idea that if Kitty-chan spoke English, she would be very fashionable" (McGray 2002:49). Hence, her full name is Kitty White. Although she became popular in Japan, Sanrio's American-based marketing team had a tough time selling Kitty to American audiences. They ended up having to design two Kitties, "one for Japanese and one for Americans" (McGray 2002:49). The Japanese Kitty and American Kitty had different colors, different motifs that appealed to each set of audiences.

However, Hello Kitty has become an instantly recognizable global icon and there are no longer any differences in the design between American Kitty and Japanese Kitty. Audiences worldwide now know that Hello Kitty is from Japan and "that's why they like

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it… especially the younger generation" (McGray 2002:50). In other words, the Japanese originally attempted to be culturally odorless with Hello Kitty, which was a successful tactic, but that is no longer necessary. Is this because the Cool Japan campaign was successful, such that there is no longer a need to erase their Japanese-ness or be *mukokuseki*? Perhaps Japan's cultural products can be truly Japanese when they are exported now as a result of their increasing 'soft power.' Back before Cool Japan began, McGray (2002:48) found that "artists, directors, scientists, designers, and culture mavens…tended to think very little about foreign audiences." That has changed over the course of the past years of increasing globalization, yet Japan has still remained reluctant about exporting other inherently Japanese cultural products such as television programming and other forms of media entertainment, much to the frustration of foreign audiences that my case study is about. Perhaps it is because Japanese producers know that being *mukokuseki* makes it easier to export products overseas and thus, they would only choose products that have the capability of being odorless. Japanese entertainment relies heavily on Japanese humor, Japanese entertainers, and the overall image of Japan, all of which are highly difficult to erase, thus making it problematic to export.

Prosumers in Participatory Culture

As we have discussed, the demand for Japanese cultural products increased worldwide due to a variety of contributing factors, one particularly being new technological developments that allowed for the quick dissemination of information, news, and products, as well as blur physical boundaries between consumers and producers. This has also been called 'media convergence' by Jenkins (2006a); it is an

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environment in which virtually every aspect of contemporary life is constantly being shaped and reshaped to new channels of communication and information technologies. The advent of the Internet has especially been an influential instrument that has enabled people to "create, consume, learn and interact with each other, thus altering the ways that consumers interact with core institutions of government, education, and commerce" (Daliot-Bul 2009:262). The content industry has similarly been affected by advanced communication technologies, as the market must adapt to changing consumers. Culture is now generated bottom-up, from the level of consumer input because there is now a space, a new participatory culture, for people to "create and share ideas, experiences and fashions" (Daliot-Bul 2009:257).

Prosumerism, the portmanteau of the words 'consumer' and 'producer,' refers to the blurring of boundaries between those two worlds. As opposed to a traditional consumer who would buy products as they are pre-made by companies, a prosumer would take active part in the production process, such as designing or customizing. An example would be when one buys a computer nowadays, one can choose the type of hard drive, graphics card, and monitor among many other customizable features to suit one's needs. Web 2.0, a general term associated with using the Internet and various web applications as a platform for sharing information, user-generated content, and mass collaboration is where the new age of prosumers have become prolific. "Prosumption has always existed, but various social changes (e.g. the rise of the Internet and of social networking on it) have greatly expanded both the practice of prosumption and scholarly attention to it" (Ritzer, Dean, and Jurgenson 2012:379).

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Many scholars of prosumption have said that Web 2.0 has created unprecedented opportunities for consumers to actively participate in the production process of products, which may have also paved the way for a new type of prosumer capitalism (Beer and Burrows 2010; Ritzer, Dean, and Jurgenson 2012; Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). Participatory culture, particularly on the web, has reshaped contemporary consumer culture because consumers now have the tools to draw upon and appropriate existing cultural forms (Beer and Burrows 2010). In "the possibility of a new stage wherein consumers themselves begin to create commodities and consume them on their own terms," prosumer activity can take place in both legitimate and illegitimate fields (Otsuka 2010:113).

When a firm or company wants consumer input, they can open up their production process and invite consumers to participate by submitting personal designs or ideas for customization, thus including the consumers into the process, but in ways that the producers can maintain control over. Fuller (2010) called this legitimized process "virtual co-creation" but there is limited research within the literature on what type of consumers would participate and what are their expectations.

Social exchange theory explains that consumers would virtually interact and co-create if they expect the process or the resulting product would be rewarding. The reward can be tangible, such as goods or money, as well as intangible, such as "social amenities or friendship" (Fuller 2010:100). The interaction with other fellow consumers, or rather, prosumers, may also be rewarding enough in itself because consumers typically engage

in online communities not only because they are interested in the topic but also to meet other enthusiasts (Fuller 2010; Kozinets 2002). Social exchange theory does not provide answers to the underlying motivations consumers have for participating in co-creation processes, however. Fuller (2010) brings up self-determination theory as a way of filling that gap, as the theory posits that "engaging in leisure activities such as virtual co-creation can be considered a function of intrinsic motivation and self-determined extrinsic motivation" (Deci and Ryan 2002; Fuller 2010). Motivation can range from intrinsic (e.g. having fun, gaining friends, or altruism) to internalized extrinsic (e.g. gaining reputation, learning new skills, having a product for one's own use), and finally, to purely extrinsic (e.g. receiving payment, increasing one's career prospects) (Fuller 2010; Von Krogh, Spaeth, Haefliger, and Wallin 2008). Existing research about consumer motivation in this new context of participatory cultures has shown that it is generally a combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic motive that drives consumers to engage in prosumer activities.

Drawing upon existing research, Fuller (2010) compiled a list of 10 motive categories that may propel a consumer's desires to participate in co-creation processes initiated by producers. The list includes: intrinsic playful task, curiosity, self-efficacy, skill development, information seeking, recognition (visibility), community support, making friends, personal need (dissatisfaction), and compensation (monetary reward) (Dahl and Moreau 2007; Franke and Shah 2002; Hemetsberger and Pieters 2001; Lakhani and Wolf 2003). These motive categories were then tested by Fuller (2010) and were found to be true for consumers engaging in legitimate co-creation projects, but there has

not been follow-up research regarding the application of these motive categories in *illegitimate* projects.

Prosumer activity can certainly go beyond legitimate boundaries, particularly when the activities are not initiated or endorsed by producers, but commenced by consumers themselves. Fan behavior typically falls into the potentially illegitimate side. One of the common activities consumers and fans have been known to do is take scenes from their favorite movies, mashing them to create a fan-made video synced with their favorite pop song, then uploading it to YouTube, the popular video sharing site, for public sharing and viewing. The issue is constantly in debate as it is questionable whether or not altering copyrighted material for the sake of personal creativity can be categorized as fair use. On the one hand, if it is without permission, it is seen as copyright infringement. On the other hand, it can be seen as fair use and freedom of speech, rights that are protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. We will discuss the legality of fair use and prosumerism in the following section. Nonetheless, over "48 hours of video are uploaded every minute, resulting in nearly 8 years of content uploaded every day" (http://www.youtube.com/t/faq) – and that is just on YouTube, the third most visited website on the web. It is obvious that such "playful appropriation has become mainstream and even an integral part of everyday life of the significant proportion of people involved in web-based participatory consumption" (Beer and Burrows 2010:6-7).

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This new consumer culture has changed many fundamental aspects of our personal and daily lives. There have been changes of senses of privacy, to the extent that we can be seen as living in a 'confessional society,' where we have a strong sense of "obligation to live private lives in the public domain for fear of being socially excluded" (Bauman 2007; Beer and Burrows 2010:7). It not only sharing minute details of what we do in our private lives, but also sharing things that we see, hear, and read about, things that we create and our feelings about all of it. As social beings, sharing has always been one of the fundamental human behaviors, but participatory web culture has given us incalculable space to share almost infinitely as active prosumers (Shirky 2012).

Are Prosumers Being Exploited?

Humphrey and Grayson (2008) looked at the rise of prosumerism and its influence on the market through Marx's concepts of use value and exchange value. Use value is the usefulness of a commodity "and is realized only in the process of consumption" (Marx 1859). A commodity can also have an exchange value, in which it can be sold on the market or traded for another commodity of a different or similar value. "The creation of use value is oriented toward the object, while the creation of exchange value is oriented toward others" (Humphreys and Grayson 2008:11). In other words, when consumers collaborate with companies to produce objects, they are only creating use value because the products are for personal satisfaction and are useful to the consumer's specific needs (such as our earlier example of customizing one's own computer). However, it is when consumers create products that are of potential interest to other consumers that these products have exchange value. This is when consumers

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become an asset, or as cynics may say, a source of free labor for companies and corporations (Humphreys and Grayson 2008). A potential revolution and major shift in the market is occurring in frequently increasing instances where "consumers are being asked – and often are willingly agreeing – to take over steps in the value change that create exchange value" (Humphreys and Grayson 2008:11). Prosumers help companies become more successful in the market because they reflect (and act upon) consumers' desired qualities and characteristics of a product. Exchange value is representative of the 'sphere of exchange,' which Marx believed to be focused on the extrinsic orientation of pleasing others, as opposed to the 'sphere of consumption,' which focuses on pleasing oneself (through producing objects with use value). However, consumers who participate do not receive any part of the exchange value. Currently, when consumers participate in the exchange value creation process, both producers and consumers seem to agree that all the value the consumers should receive is the "enjoyment of contributing to the process" (Humphreys and Grayson 2008:13). For that reason, companies usually do not pay consumers, which have led to criticism that it merely becomes a source of free labor, and could be seen as consumer exploitation.

It is difficult to say whether prosumers are being exploited. Previous research has said that capitalist systems and producers can exploit consumers to earn more profit" (Ritzer, Dean, and Jurgenson 2012; Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). The expectation is that prosumers should be happy enough to be given a chance to be part of the production process (Ritzer, Dean, and Jurgenson 2012). One could say this is a modern version of 'false consciousness,' but it is more likely that the prosumers genuinely enjoy it and that

they are not simply being manipulated into such feelings by capitalists (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010:25). It does seem to be true that "most prosumers, online and offline, often seem quite happy about prosuming" (Ritzer, Dean, and Jurgenson 2012:387). However, this is the case in legitimate prosumption, where prosumers are able to "experience the greatest material gains mainly because of the fact that their willingness to work for no pay is met with, perhaps even induced by, the availability of a series of products offered free of charge" (Anderson 2009; Ritzer, Dean, and Jurgenson 2012). In so-called 'illegitimate' prosumption such as fansubbing, where companies and copyright holders disallow (or highly discourage) such acts of manipulating and distributing copyrighted materials, and do not endorse it in anyway, the prosumers (fansubbers) may feel that they deserve to own some of the exchange value. The value is then not monetary, but rather, social status and recognition, having a social circle and sense of community, and pride in producing a high-quality, in-demand product (Holt 1995; Humphreys and Grayson 2008; Muniz and O'Guinn 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). There is less justification for the actions of illegitimate prosumption activities, but fansubbers believe that they are helping Japanese producers gain exposure overseas (Condry 2010). At the same time, in the case of *anime* fansubbing, it is said that *anime* fansubbing groups have an unspoken agreement with American licensors and distributors. The *anime* fansubbing groups continue to be active and serve as an indication to licensors and distributors as to what *anime* series are popular among fans for possible legitimate distribution. If the *anime* series is licensed, it is common and expected practice for the fansubbers to drop the series.

Liking a boyband such as Prism is a personal endeavor and hobby, but in the new environment of media convergence, the need to share has become intensified. In prosumption, people operate on the 'sphere of exchange,' because they want to share with others who have the same interests, and social networking outlets have made this a reality. Fansubbing begins with the sphere of consumption, where a fan likes Prism and desires products and goods such as fansubs that will help him or her to keep liking Prism. For some, it can then transfer over to the sphere of exchange, where the desire is now to *share* the love for Prism with other fans, and to create products that help others to keep liking Prism. Humphreys and Grayson (2008) found that, quite obviously, people value objects they produce more than things others produce, which make fansubbing a very personal hobby, yet at the same time, a hobby that depends on other fans. Humphreys and Grayson (2008) calls this type of activity, 'collective production,' because consumers are collaborating with one another to produce things of value to the consumer community. This can, and often does take place without company involvement. Perhaps then, in illegitimate prosumption, there is no exchange value being created and only use value, because fans do not profit from fansubbing and neither are the fansubs exchanged for other commodities; the fansubs only benefit the personal uses of the community members (Muniz and Schau 2005).

The (Il)legality of "Fair Use"

In the current digital age, consumers now have the ability to gain access to cultural products that may not be immediately (or legitimately) available in their local countries, and with media convergence taking place, consumers can now "archive,

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annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content" in ways that are still under intense

debate due to questions of fair use (Daliot-Bul 2009:257). Are the activities of prosumers

legal? The Internet is free for all, open to sharing and discovering; it is a gray area that

the government and big industries cannot have full control over. As Daliot-Bul

(2009:262) observes, "government agencies cannot forbid, control or manage the cultural

production and the often subversive vitality of Cool Japan imagery which is (re)produced

in this environment." That is to say, once the product has been released into the hands of

the consumers, the Internet and accompanying technological advances (be it photo/video

editing software, peer-to-peer file sharing, YouTube, and so on), the copyright holders

and original producers cannot fully control what the consumers do with their products.

Yet they certainly attempt to do so through various channels such as creating space for

controlled creativity, legislation and sporadic arrests.

A most interesting case of cultural producers attempting to control their consumer

fan base is none other than the renowned franchise, *Star Wars* (Jenkins 2006b). The first

Star Wars film came out in 1977 followed by two sequels, which became a pop culture

phenomenon. Die-hard fans expressed their love for the franchise in many ways, from

watching the movies hundreds of times over, dressing up as Darth Vader, Princess Leia,

and other characters, memorizing dialogue, and collecting memorabilia. Consumers

turned producers wrote fan fiction, drew comics, and made countless ambitious amateur

films, such as painstakingly gathering fan-made footage for three years to recreate the

entirety of *Star Wars: A New Hope* scene-by-scene, all the while using copyrighted music,

dialogue, and scenes from the actual movie. Amateur *Star Wars* films became so popular

that amateur directors had their own fanbase, held their own dedicated film festivals, and even received a nod of approval from the man, George Lucas himself.

Eventually, however, the fan activities grew out of control, at least from the perspective of the producers of *Star Wars*. Although Lucas and stakeholders initially welcomed and encouraged such enthusiastic and devoted fan behavior, at a certain point, they felt that the fans had crossed the line by using too much copyrighted material and by developing story lines within the *Star Wars* world that were deemed unacceptable (e.g. erotica). The producers stepped in and made feeble attempts to gain control of the fan base, such as by creating their own website and video game where fans could play only minor characters in *Star Wars* (major characters such as Luke Skywalker and Han Solo were off-limits to keep the storyline true to the original), but eventually they imposed too many rules and regulations that fans grew tired of. The good reputation Lucas had accumulated with the fans when he encouraged their activities was tarnished, and fans became wary of any moves made by the producers that attempted to limit their creativity. In the end, "fans reject the idea of a definitive version produced, authorized, and regulated by some media conglomerate;" the appeal that fandom has for fans is that it gives them freedom to create and recreate their favorite characters and stories over and over again (Jenkins 2006b).

Many other big franchises such as Harry Potter and Star Trek run into the same problems with fans at an extreme level. Certain content producers endorse fan creativity; others cautiously encourage it, while some (attempt to) disallow it altogether. The vast

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difference in treatment of fans and opinions on their activities reflect the confusing gray area of fair use. When does using copyrighted material to express one's love for a franchise become infringement and law breaking? The line is both thin and wide, and there are no clear answers. Corporations, copyright holders, and content producers want consumers to express themselves and share their love for a franchise, but too much of it makes them feel uncomfortable that the consumers are crossing the line and taking the products as their own. Particularly when fans make money, it is even more uncomfortable.

Legislation has been passed in attempts to rectify and clarify this gray area. Each country has its own set of copyright laws. In the United States, there is the United States Copyright Office, which gives information and texts of acts that have been passed regarding copyright, such as the 1976 Copyright Act though newer laws dealing with similar issues have been passed since then. The most fundamental point to keep in mind regarding copyright is that simple ownership of a product, such as a book or a CD does not give the owner the copyright; only the original authors of said product are given copyright to reproduce, distribute, and perform or display the product publicly (www.copyright.gov). This is often misunderstood by consumers because by paying money, many feel that they have also bought the right to share that product with whomever they choose, in any way they choose. However, if paying money for a product does not give the possessor any rights, then there is little question that downloading content off the Internet illegally (i.e. without paying through a legitimate channel such as iTunes or Amazon) does not give the downloader any copyright whatsoever. "For most

people in the industry, any unauthorized sharing of copyrighted material is piracy pure and simple. It constitutes stealing the fruits of other people's labor" (Condry 2010:193).

However, as we have mentioned, every country has different copyright policies, and the Internet does not exist or belong to any single country. Although physical users may be located in places around the world, the virtual space of the Internet is without nationality or ownership. Moreover, because the Internet is not owned by anyone, it is difficult for it to be policed by any person or entity. The Internet is by far, much too large. In a situation with countless numbers of users (anonymous and self-identified), how would copyright laws apply? The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a specialized agency of the United Nations consisting of 186 member states, was created to "develop a balanced and accessible international intellectual property system, which rewards creativity, stimulates innovation and contributes to economic development while safeguarding the public interest" (www.wipo.int). Two treaties signed in 1996, the WIPO Copyright Treaty and the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty, required each member countries "to provide protection to certain works from other member countries… That protection must be no less favorable than that according to domestic works" (www.copyright.gov). This meant that countries had to incorporate copyright protection for products of other countries into their domestic laws.

Although the United States does not own the Internet, many of the most-visited and popular websites are run by domestic companies (e.g. Google, Facebook, Wikipedia), which makes their copyright law integral to how the Internet is policed. In accordance

with the two aforementioned treaties, the United States passed the 1998 Digital

Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), which consists of two main sections that are

particularly important. The first section on "anti-circumvention" attempts to prevent

unauthorized access to and duplication of copyrighted work through technological

innovations designed to circumvent protection measures such as the Digital Rights

Management (DRM) and copy restrictions. The "anti-circumvention" provision, although

good-willed, unfortunately has been ineffective in preventing internet piracy as it

envisioned. It has instead become a serious threat to fair use, and the creativity and

innovation of Internet users. The second "safe harbors" section protects "service

providers from monetary liability based on the allegedly infringing activities of third

parties" such as users of the services ("DMCA"). In other words, services that host and

transmit user-generated content such as YouTube are protected from lawsuits in the event

that its users violate copyright. The "safe harbors" provisions have so far "been essential

to the growth of the Internet as an engine for innovation and free expression" ("DMCA").

In practice, the DMCA seems to ironically both restrict and set free the Internet at the

same time.

Most recently, there have been two widely controversial bills that almost passed

through the U.S. Congress, one was the House bill known as the Stop Online Piracy Act

(SOPA) and the other was a Senate bill known as the Prevent Real Online Threats to

Economic Creativity and Theft of Intellectual Property Act (PIPA). The two bills were

going to expand the power of U.S. law enforcement to combat online piracy of

copyrighted intellectual property and counterfeit goods by allowing them to shut down

websites and online networks without due process. It also heightened the punishment of

copyright infringement done on domestic and international turf. The unauthorized

streaming of copyrighted material could land one in prison for a maximum of five years.

The implementation of these bills would not only cost the U.S. government an estimated

$47 million, it was also feared by many critics and the general public to be detrimental to

countless web-related businesses, and most of all, the people's right to creativity and to

freedom of speech and expression, due to the vague wording of the bill as well as its

generalizing definitions. In rallying and protesting against SOPA and PIPA, various

popular and influential websites, most notably Google, Wikipedia, Reddit, Boing Boing,

along with over 7,000 other smaller websites reportedly or posted messages protesting

the bills or blacked out the contents of their website to demonstrate what could happen if

SOPA and PIPA passed (Waugh 2012). Google began an anti-censorship petition with

the tag line "End Piracy, Not Liberty" urging users to sign it in order to get the congress'

attention that SOPA and PIPA were too extreme to be effective without adverse

consequences. In the end, over 7 million people signed the petition and Congress decided

to postpone the voting date of the two bills. The issue is still ongoing and the two bills

may morph into other bills in the future, but what happened is a great example of how

relevant the issue is to law enforcement and to our present everyday lives, as well as the

power the Internet has in mobilizing great numbers of people for a common cause. It also

demonstrates how passionate the issue is to people on both sides and the difficulty of

pleasing everyone. Until now, we still have not been able to strike the balance between

protecting copyrighted material and allowing freedom of speech and expression. Whether or not that can ever happen remains unknown.

There have been cases of arrests and lawsuits against copyright violators in the United States. The case *Capitol VS Thomas* was the first ever file-sharing copyright infringement lawsuit to be tried before a jury and was brought by the several major record labels under the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). The defendant, Jammie Thomas-Rasset was sued for downloading 24 copyrighted songs illegally through a peer-to-peer file sharing application called Kazaa (Stevents 2009). The case has been ongoing since 2007 and the amount of fine Thomas-Rasset has been charged with has fluctuated from $240,000 to $1.9 million. Other similar cases include *Sony BMG Music Entertainment VS Tenenbaum*, in which Joel Tenenbaum was ordered in 2009 to pay a sum of $675,000 for illegally downloading and sharing 31 songs from another peer-to-peer file sharing platform. As of 2006, RIAA has reported brought lawsuits against over 20,000 people in the United States whom they suspect to be participating in downloading and distributing copyrighted works.

Extreme measures have also been taken, which do not target individuals, but rather, target the platform allowing the illegal downloading to flourish. Napster, which was originally a popular peer-to-peer file sharing service on the Internet, faced legal action from the RIAA for facilitating the transfer of copyrighted material and was closed down in 2001. They were also ordered by the court to pay copyright owners a $26 million settlement, and have now turned into a music subscription service in order to pay off the

amount. Megaupload, a popular file-sharing website was also infamously shut down in 2012 for facilitating "millions of illegal downloads of films, music and other content, costing copyright holders at least $500 million in lost revenue" (Perry and Barakat 2012). Even with such drastic measures however, illegal file sharing and downloading is still abound worldwide, perhaps because technology has made it so easy to do that users are unaware of the greater consequences, or because the activity is still rampaging. There is the sense that 'everybody does it,' so the threat from the RIAA seems real yet unlikely, and most often ridiculous. The damages per song from the two lawsuits above seem unreasonable considering most songs can be bought for 99 cents on iTunes nowadays, and even the RIAA's own research have shown that "only 10% of illegal downloads are considered to be a loss in sales. Meanwhile, piracy has shown them how to monetize music online, and turn it into a profit," demonstrating that perhaps music piracy may not be as bad for the music industry as they say (Ernesto 2009).The public also feels that considering the deep pockets that the RIAA has, the arrests and lawsuits are being made to set an example for the general public of the possibly fines and trouble involved with illegal downloading (Menta 1999).

Fansubbers are Prosumers

The globalization of Japan's cultural products along with technological advances that have allowed consumers to become producers, has given way to many new types of fan activities, which allow them to appropriate copyrighted material and alter them in ways that demonstrate their passion for the product or franchise. The main activity I will be focusing on in this research is called fansubbing, which refers to the act of fans

making subtitles for foreign-language media (called 'fansubs'), such as Japanese *anime*, movies, dramas, or TV shows. A 'fan' can be "understood as an imaginative prosumer (producer-consumer) and approreader (appropriator-reader) who does not just passively consume media texts but actively and creatively participates in their cultural signification processes" (Iwabuchi 2010:87). Fansubbers are a type of fans that have found a way to express their love for their favorite *anime* or musical group and are prosumers in their own right.

Previous literature on fansubbing has mainly focused on *anime* fansubbing and the legal complications fansub groups have run into with American licensors and distributors. However, there has not been in-depth research into how fans collaborate and the reasons behind their co-creative activities, particularly fansubbing. Conducting studies on fans and fan culture remains important as it help us understand "the various ways people ardently engage with particular media texts" (Iwabuchi 2010:88). Iwabuchi (2010:88) observes that instead of just "reconfirming the creativity of [fan] activities and the pleasure of identity construction," it is important to formulate critical questions that delve beyond that. The aim of this research is to contribute to the literature by providing a fresh and in-depth perspective of a particular fan activity and the fans that are personally invested in it. The importance of fan activity is not to be undermined as "all fan practices… are worthy of consideration. The practices of the young and highly networked are representative of the forefront of electronic textual discourse, informatics, and aesthetics" (Dunlap and Wolf 2010:281). "By mapping worlds such as these… we can come to a deeper understanding of how media, cultural economies, and transnational

fandom are evolving" in an age where people have freedom to create and share in a virtual realm without immediate legal repercussions (Condry 2010:207)

For this research, I conducted a case study of a fansubbing group dedicated to making fansubs for Japanese TV dramas and variety shows that star a particular Japanese boyband I will call Prism. All names and possible markers of personal identification have been altered in this research report. Many members of the community that I have talked to requested that I keep facts and identities confidential due to privacy concerns. Although the boy band is for the public eye, the fans felt that their community should still remain "under the radar" due to possible illegal activities (i.e. the distribution of copyrighted materials) that may occur among members.

The empirical results of this case study will help to contribute to the growing literature on prosumerism and help to answer why prosumers willingly do voluntary work. Although there have been studies on prosumer motivation, there has not been research on fansubbing, an activity with many legal implications. Therefore, although fansubbers as prosumers share similar characteristics to prosumers in other areas such as YouTube video makers, Star Wars amateur filmmakers, and other legitimate or illegitimate co-creation activities, they have distinct characteristics that have arisen from the institutional conditions of the globalization of Cool Japan and Japan's export philosophy. The aim of this study is to show the unique characteristics of the fansubbing community and how it deals with the tension with the legal issues that we have discussed.

The Idol Group, Prism

Prism is a Japanese boyband and idol group. They have been active in the Japanese entertainment industry for over ten years and are one of the most popular groups in Japan. As a boyband, they sing and dance, constantly releasing singles and albums, appear on Japanese music shows to promote their songs, and hold concert tours around the nation (and sometimes surrounding countries in Asia). Their releases have continuously topped the Oricon Chart, the Japanese equivalent of the U.S. Billboard. As an idol group, they model in fashion magazines, endorse various commercial products, act in television dramas and movies (as a group and as individuals), and are well-trained TV personalities. The group hosts a handful of TV shows of their own and also regularly appears on other variety talk shows.

The International Fan Base

Although Prism members exclusively speak and sing in Japanese, they have been able to accumulate a large number of fans overseas. Prism follows a long line of male idol groups that are produced by one of the top talent agencies in Japan; they, therefore, have the advantage of becoming known to fans by being related (agency-wise) to other popular male idol groups. That is to say, a person who is a fan of a senior male idol group would get to know Prism because they are produced by the same well-known talent agency. Through their acting in popular dramas and singing a number of theme songs for these dramas, fans have also been able to pick them out as actors and trace them back to their involvement in Prism. Other portions of Prism fans find out about them because

they have some pre-existing interest in Japanese culture, or are introduced to Prism by a mutual friend.

However, the introduction of Prism to global fans is goes beyond simple coincidences and friends. Going back to the discussion on Globalization and Cool Japan, scholars have noted that the Japanese are usually reluctant to invest in going overseas and breaking into foreign markets without assurance that they would be successful. Therefore, it was local industries in other countries that promoted and pulled Japan and its cultural products out into the global realm (Iwabuchi 1998). Because the entertainment industry in Japan, be it domestic TV programming or Japanese pop (J-pop), is practically self-sufficient, there is little incentive for Japanese artists and entertainers to go abroad. Their focus is on the ever lucrative national Japanese market first and foremost. Additionally, producers also believed that their product would "suffer a high cultural discount overseas because it is too Japanese" (Iwabuchi 1998:169). However, as in the case of Taiwan and Thailand, J-pop became popular in Asia through local promotion such as radio shows and little CD shops importing Japanese CDs, which made Asian youths aware of it (Iwabuchi 1998). When popularity increased, so did the demand and television networks begin to pick up Japanese music shows (with subtitles in the local language) and broadcast J-pop music videos around the clock. Finally, after much promotion, J-pop artists would tour Asia and hold concerts in countries where they did not even know they had fans. Iwabuchi (1998) writes that J-pop appeals to Asian youths because of its sophistication and how it has successfully absorbed and indigenized, or as some would say, glocalized, a variety of Western pop that gives it an exotic appeal, yet still maintains familiarity for

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being Asian. For Westerners who like J-pop, it is likely that the opposite is what makes it appealing. In that case, some amount of 'cultural odor' does sell.

Existing global fans have also played an important part in further disseminating Prism, and many other products of Japanese culture to future fans. Fan organizations such as *anime* conventions, *anime* and *manga* clubs at universities has made the international public more aware of Japanese products. "Fans have also made extensive use of the internet, creating blogs, chat rooms, and websites… to interact, build communities, and share information. The internet has also created new means for fans to distribute Japanese entertainment products, often illicitly; fansubbing… and scanlations, the scanning and translation of pirated comics… make anime and manga readily available online to the large English-language audience" (Tsutsui 2010:46). Although the activities may be illicit, it has served as a positive way of spreading Japanese cultural products to global audiences.

It is interesting that non-Japanese speaking people, normally females, become fans of Prism. How then, are the fans initiated into the Prism fandom online? In doing a quick Google search, we find that the first search result is a Wikipedia article on the group, while the second one leads to the first and most important English-speaking online fan community dedicated to Prism, which will be called Go Prism. There are approximately 15,300 members in this very lively and active community, and that number only includes registered users. Go Prism is open for public access, and one can browse through a majority of the posts without having to register and log into

LiveJournal, the online blog service that hosts the community. This community has virtually every Prism-related media one can think of: scans of news and magazine articles, music downloads, concert DVD rips, and uploads of TV shows, dramas, and news clips. Most importantly, almost everything has been translated and/or subtitled into English.

Before I describe the setting and methodology of the research further, I would like to restate the research questions in the context of fansubbers now that we have a clearer understanding of the global campaign of Cool Japan and prosumerism in the Internet age. There are three research questions:

1) What are the motivational factors for the fansubbers of Sunshine Subs?

2) How does Sunshine Subs cope with the potential illegality of fansubbing?

3) What is the relationship between the fansubbers and the fans who watch fansubs in the world of the free Internet?

To answer the research questions, I will first describe the setting of the research along with the methodology. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 will analyze and discuss the data collected for this research.

CHAPTER 2. SETTING AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will give more detail on the setting of the research such as the anatomy of the virtual world, a history of how fansubbing developed, and the profile of Sunshine Subs. The chapter ends with the methodology of the research, which include interviews with the fansubbers of Sunshine Subs, a content analysis that demonstrates the collaborative nature of Sunshine Subs, and an anonymous survey of the members of Miracle Nation.

The Anatomy of the Virtual Fandom

Fansubbing of general Japanese media is central to any non-Japanese speaking fan community, be it for an *anime* or for a boyband. If we look at fansub groups that do Japanese dramas and TV shows (not just of Prism), there are at least 293 English and other language fansub groups that have their own profile page on The Guide to Fansub Groups webpage. Not every group chooses to have a public profile page however, especially those that are new, temporary, or are one-person operations. There could easily be over 350 fansub groups dedicated to Japanese media. It is difficult to estimate how many fansub groups out there are specifically dedicated to Prism, but a count through some of the prominent Prism subtitles indexes show approximately 30 fansub groups and individuals (i.e. those who work alone in making fansubs). This number fluctuates up and down as people can quit and start fansubbing rather rapidly.

The most important feature of fansubs is that they are absolutely free. Fansubbers volunteer to do it on their own free time and receive no monetary compensation. Those

who watch fansubs are able to access them for free, although they often have to join a community before being allowed access. To further understand the structure of this online fandom, I have developed a concentric circle model (Figure 1) to map out the many layers of interactions that can occur. The outermost layer is the Real World, which includes everyone in the physical world. Next is the Fandom of Prism, meaning, the network of fans within and outside of Japan. The Online Communities are created by the largely international network of fans who build communities to link people through common interests (i.e. Prism's music, Prism's TV shows). Such communities can be in English, Chinese, Spanish or any other language, though the people who participate may not necessarily be native speakers of those languages. Within the Online Communities, fans have begun fansubbing in Fansub Communities, which include the group of fansubbers and fans who are allowed access to the fansubs. In the innermost circle are the Fansub Groups, which include the fansubbers who work on making and distributing the fansubs for free.

It is important to note that there are multiples of each entities (i.e. there are well over a hundred Fansub Groups for various fandoms, and those Groups often have their own Fansub Communities to which they distribute their fansubs). In this research, one specific Fansub Community: Miracle Nation, and Fansub Group: Sunshine Subs have been chosen as the primary object of this research, as they are arguably the oldest fansub group in the Prism fandom and have a large number of community members. I am also well-connected with this group and have unlimited access to all their resources, which makes it ideal for data gathering.
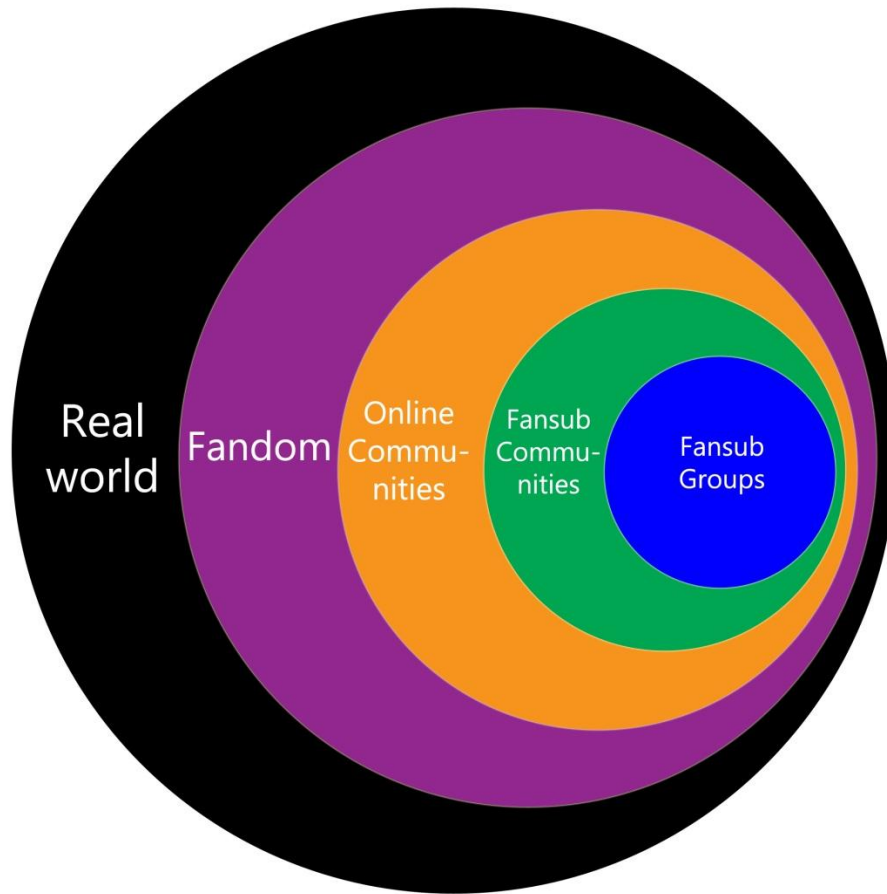
Figure 1. Model of the Virtual Fandom

To clarify, Sunshine Subs comprises the staff that makes the fansubs, while members of Miracle Nation have sole access to those fansubs. Because Miracle Nation is a closed community, those who are not granted membership do not have access to Sunshine Subs' fansubs.

A Short History of Fansubbing

One of the most amazing characteristics about Go Prism is that it gives access to Prism-related media for non-Japanese speakers. The community is built around translations of magazine interviews, subtitles of TV dramas and talk shows, as well as

anything else that give the non-Japanese speaking fan access to Prism-related media. The existence of this international fandom that provides a bridge for non-Japanese speaking fans to Prism is a reaction to the lack of attention the Japanese gives them. There are no official English translations of any Prism-related materials, be it interviews or variety shows. There is an official fan club but that is limited to residents of Japan (to sign up, one needs to provide a Japanese address). Only very recently has the talent agency, which runs the fan club and keeps a tight hold on the boyband itself, begun to acknowledge its international fanbase by starting an English language electronic newsletter. Although the talent agency has been in the industry for almost fifty years and Prism itself has been active for over ten years, they have only begun to open their doors to fans overseas. It is a tiny step, and until they open their doors more, overseas fans will continue to take matters into their own hands by giving themselves access to Prism-related media even if they have to cross legal boundaries.

The act of making subtitles for, in this case, Japanese media is called 'fansubbing.' The product is called fansubs, while the makers are called fansubbers. It is a not a new phenomenon that has arisen with the advent of the Internet as one would think, however, as people have been creating fansubs offline since the 1980s, mainly for Japanese *anime* that had increasing global popularity during that time.

Before the Internet, fans had to record the Japanese movies, TV show, or *anime* that they wanted to subtitle on to VHS, and go through a time-consuming and expensive process of using professional-grade subtitling machines, or digitizing tapes to add

subtitles through a computer, which were also expensive products back then (Condry 2010). The output had to be to a VHS tape because the Internet at the time was too slow to transmit and download big, high-resolution digital files. Those who wanted the fansubs would have to place an order and receive the VHS copies (in fact, that was how my brothers and I used to watch Japanese *anime* such as *Rurouni Kenshin* during the 1990s). When high-speed Internet access became widespread, computers became a household item, and digital media became more ubiquitous, at which point high-quality, aesthetically-pleasing, and accurate fansubs were possible. The Internet has certainly made fansubbing easier, faster, and more efficient. Fansubs became even more prevalent when virtual fan communities, such as Go Prism, were built around the act of fansubbing. The Internet connected fans from all over the world who shared the same passion and interest, as well as the same frustration towards the Japanese for not meeting their demands.

Fansubbing was created as a reaction to a lack of supply from official and legitimate channels. In the time that it took Japanese cultural producers to realize that they had a potential market overseas, fansubbing had been created as a way for fans to take action and meet their own demands. This began particularly with *anime*, before Japan realized there was a very profitable market overseas. Fans who wanted to see Japanese *anime* became impatient waiting for the *anime* to be licensed, translated, and distributed in their local countries. "Despite the sudden proliferation of titles, there were very few shows released in the American market. Most *anime* fans did not have regular access to these shows, so some fans decided to take it upon themselves to share their

favorite *anime*" (Eastman 2010). They thus resorted to producing fansubs or simply buying them illegitimately for more immediate viewing pleasure. Fansubs were thus made to satisfy that dissatisfaction with the slow local distributors and licensing companies.

Once cheaper equipment and high-speed Internet became common, the act of fansubbing transformed from a couple of people working together on VHS in relatively close physical proximity and snail mail, to a whole group, or rather, community of up to twenty to thirty people constantly working and collaborating in a virtual space, with many never meeting each other or even knowing what their so-called 'friends' looked like in real life (Isler 2008). Yet even without physical contact or full disclosure of one's true identity, strong friendships and communal bonds are still able to form to the point that some consider one another family. Fansubbing became a hobby and many willingly collaborated and dedicated personal time to doing it free of charge (Isler 2008). Though this phenomenon began with *anime*, it has now spread to other things Japanese that fans demand, such as *manga* scanlations (where fans scan pages of a *manga* and photoshop in English translations), to movie, drama and variety TV show subtitling. Again, we see that the advent of fansubs has basically been a reaction to the slow recognition by the Japanese that they have overseas fans.

"The direct involvement by fans in the introduction of the source material into the target culture allows them to be not only consumers but also distributors and producers" (Sell 2011:94). Fansubbing is based upon the modification and distribution of

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copyrighted materials without permission, making it illegal according to the copyright laws discussed earlier. Fans usually obtain the media to subtitle by either buying the actual media if it is available (such as purchasing a DVD and then ripping it to a digital file) or by downloading someone else's rip or recording of said media. However, many fans feel justified in their participation in fansubbing because they have no other choice since there are no official English translations available (Condry 2010). In fact, many believe that they are actually contributing to the promotion of Prism by exposing the boy band to international fans and increasing the fan base. In addition, fansubs are not made for profit and fans do it for free, causing fans to feel more justified. Despite that, fansub groups are still built upon the premise that fansubbing is illegal, and fansubbers take many precautions to protect themselves through rules and regulations that govern their communities and how the fansubs are used. Yet as we will see, there is a conflict between the desire to receive credit for one's hard work and the desire to share the goods (i.e. fansubs) with the greater fandom, which causes much ire among the fan community.

Sunshine Subs

Fansubbing online used to be a personal endeavor, with mainly one or two persons performing all the necessary roles to releasing the subtitles. When high speed Internet access became more pervasive, people began collaborating online and forming communities and groups. It is difficult to know when the first ever fansubbing group was formed, but within the Prism fan community, it is well-known that one of the first groups was Sunshine Subs. Many fans in the Prism community respect Sunshine Subs for that

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and staff members of Sunshine Subs also believe the group to be trendsetters for having a group of fans makes fansubs, instead of one person making it alone.

Sunshine Subs was successful in creating an efficient system for fansubs to be made. By dividing up the jobs for individual staff members to do, each staff member feels responsibility for their assigned job and counts upon other staff members to complete theirs. The separated jobs (which include translating, timing, typesetting, editing, encoding, and uploading) created a sense of reliance among the members. Because usually one or two persons are responsible for a task in a given project (e.g. movie, TV show, or drama episode), it creates pressure that if one does not finish one's own job, the entire project cannot move forward. Moreover, Sunshine gives freedom to the staff to choose whatever project they would like to work on, giving the staff more motivation because they are able to work on videos that they have personal interest in. The emphasis is particularly on the translator who jumps start the entire process; hence, translators are arguably the most important members within the group.

In order to understand the inner workings of Sunshine Subs, it is important that we profile the group first. Sunshine Subs was founded in 2006, and currently has 29 members listed, with eight inactive members or members on hiatus. Since their debut release in 2006, the group has so far released over 600 projects and counting. On average, the group completes approximately a hundred projects per year. In this particular case, a 'project' can mean many things, from an episode of a drama series, a broadcasting of a talk show, a movie, or a news clip. The length of each project can also vary as news clips

can be as short as two minutes, while a talk show can run as long as two hours. Their

fansub community, Miracle Nation, has over 5,000 registered members. Sunshine Subs is

arguably the biggest fansubbing group currently active on the Internet that focuses on

making fansubs for Prism's media appearances.

Members of Sunshine Subs are located all over the world, such as the Philippines,

Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Latvia, multiple U.S. states, and more. The age group varies

quite a bit, with some older members being in their fifties while the youngest are in their

early teens. The majority of the members seem to be in their twenties and thirties (though

most prefer not to divulge their exact age).

In both the online community and fansub group, members operate under screen

names or usernames and rarely divulge identifying personal information unless they

become acquainted and friendly with other members. In such cases, the virtual

friendships can be strengthened through continuous communication and eventually

'upgraded' to real life, with people meeting up and getting to know one another face-to-

face. It is also important to note that an estimated 95% of Miracle Nation (as well as other

Prism, or any male idol group fan community for that matter) is a female, making the

community highly gendered.

The main method of communication is computer-mediated communication

(CMC). Members communicate primarily through forum posts and private messages,

with occasional e-mails if the situation calls for it, as well as instant messaging, Twitter

and Facebook. With CMC, constant and instantaneous interaction is possible and thus

there is a high degree of messages being sent back and forth between members that can bypass the time differences between the vastly different physical locations of the members. It also establishes a sense of closeness and reliability among members, as they feel that other members are always instantly reachable should urgent questions or problems arise.

As we have established, fansubbing is an illegal activity due to copyright laws. Although it is a gray area, and many fans themselves are not exactly sure what laws they are violating, a fansub group's greatest fear is being discovered by a licensing company and being closed down or arrested somehow. Accounts of legal action being taken against fansub groups or copyright violators who upload recordings of TV shows take on the character of urban myths since fans have only heard stories that have been passed down from other fans. Nonetheless, it is the primary reason (though some view it as excuse) for fansubbers to have strict rules to regulate their community. Miracle Nation, like many other fansub communities, has set a number of rules barring members from redistributing the fansubs outside the community, uploading the fansubs to online streaming sites, and selling and profiting from the fansubs. Drastic measures such as removing all members of Miracle Nation (an incident known as 'the purge' by the fandom) have been taken to quell rule-breaking.

Fans who want to join Miracle Nation must now complete an application promising to abide by the rules of the community, and write a short answer on what they like about Prism in a way that would show the staff that the applicant is a true Prism fan.

The application process that a fan has to go through to become a member of Miracle Nation is extensively explained on the front page of the community blog. Fans who want to join Miracle Nation to gain access to the fansubs must promise to abide by the rules of the community, which include not uploading the fansubs to any streaming sites (e.g. YouTube), not selling the fansubs for personal profit, not redistributing the fansubs outside the community without permission, and not stealing the translations and claiming them as their own work. Fans must write out their promise to follow the rules in their own words, in such a way that would show their understanding of the rules. After doing so, fans must then answer which member of Prism is their favorite and explain one thing they do not like about that member. There is no word limit and no requirement as to how long that answer has to be (nor does grammar and spelling count), though fans that have gone through the process have complained that it feels like they have to write an essay.

Once they submit their application, they must wait until a staff member of Sunshine Subs reviews their application and it either gets accepted or rejected. The wait has been known to last as long as three months due to the high daily number of applicants, and the comparatively small number of staff to process all the memberships. It thus requires much patience to wait for an answer. When rejected, users do not get an individual explanation and if they ask, would either be ignored, referred to the group's online FAQ, or in extreme cases of badgering, be banned as stated on the website: "The moderators reserve the right to approve or reject anyone. Please do not ask when you will be approved or why you have been rejected. It's all in the FAQ for you to read. We will

not reply, and we will not hesitate to ban." Many fans in the fandom view this as extreme and there is evidence of resentment for Sunshine Subs outside the community.

Every once in a while on LiveJournal, a user would start a 'hate meme' – a thread of comments where users are encouraged to comment anonymously about how much they hate a given topic, unabashedly and uncensored. The anonymity factor usually spurs users on more because there is no fear of personal repercussions, though some are brave enough to post under their usernames. There is a variety of topics that could be discussed (or rather, ripped to bits) that revolve around not only Prism, but other similar Japanese boy bands. Topics have included "Would you rather just have fandom stop being stupid?" or "Do you still hate [name of boy band] with a burning passion?" or "Would you like [name of boy band member]'s STDs?" or "Feel supreme repugnance every time you see [name of boy band member]'s face?" Other hate memes do not have a topic at all and simply encourage unrestricted demonstration of hatred for whatever the users feel like. There are also hate memes centered on fansub groups, in which their quality and reputation are questioned, attacked, and 'flamed' (i.e. bashed). Sunshine Subs has been a subject of hate memes many times, and a read through many of the longest hate memes show that many admit the great quality of the fansubs done by Sunshine but the strict rules and extreme past behavior such as the purge have caused the greater community to give up on ever joining Sunshine. The majority of the hate meme participants lament and are frustrated over Sunshine's 'elitist' behavior and have come to hate Sunshine, labeling the staff members 'bitches' and other such terms. Yet these are the same people who ask

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for people to give them links to Sunshine's fansubs, showing that they still want to watch Sunshine's fansubs despite hating the staff members who run the group.

Within a fansubbing group, each member is assigned a certain core position that reflects her skills. There is a raw provider who records the show in Japan and uploads it online or buys the original DVDS, rips them, then uploads them for sharing (this does not necessarily have to be a member of the group but could be someone working independently to share videos in general), a *translator* who has adequate knowledge of Japanese and English, a *timer* who times each line of the translation to the spoken lines in a show, a *typesetter* who chooses the size, color, font, and placement of the subtitles, an *editor*, who checks the accuracy of everyone's work, particularly the English translation, and an *encoder* who embeds the subtitles directly into the videos. For a single drama episode for example, there is usually only one person for each core position although depending on the project, it may have multiple translators who split the work load for more efficiency. Table 1 shows the list of staff members of interest to this study and their respective roles in Sunshine Subs. Certain staff members have also taken on multiple roles.

In order to join Sunshine Subs as a fansubber, one has to decide first on the desired role based on one's skills. A fan with advanced skills in Japanese and English may want to become a translator, while another fan who has beginner to intermediate skills in Japanese may want to be a timer instead. After deciding on a position, a fan can contact Sunshine Subs and take the appropriate test that will showcase their skills.

Translators would receive a short clip to translate, timers would receive a clip to time, and so on, depending on the position one is applying for. There is no time limit as to how long one takes to finish the test; people have taken days to a couple of weeks. Once the test is sent back to Sunshine Subs, the existing members who hold the same role would look over the test and comment on the skill level. That is to say, translators in the group would look over translation tests and timers would examine timing tests. The decision to accept a person into the group as a permanent staff member would normally depend on majority vote. However, existing members also take into consideration the manner in which the applicant had written their e-mails to see if they demonstrated similar attitudes toward fansubbing and Prism (e.g. easy going, loves Prism) to ensure harmony in the group.

Table 1. Roles of Sunshine Subs Interviewees (by order of task completion)

STAFF NAME	ROLE
Rain	Translator
Serena	Translator
Sofia	Translator
Ann	Timer
Brandi	Timer
Elysia	Timer
Ella	Timer
Moshi	Timer
Jenny	Timer/Typesetter/Editor
Adrienne	Typesetter
Martha	Typesetter
Light	Encoder
Rose	Encoder
Sunny	Editor/Encoder

Methodology

In collecting data for this research, research methods including participant observation, interviews, surveys, and content analysis have been used. Participant observation entails entering a particular community, in this case Sunshine Subs, for an extended period of time in order to become intimate with the members and practices of the group. I have been, and still am, an active fansubber in Sunshine Subs since 2009, although I did not enter for the purposes of research as I am also a fan of Prism. Having settled down in the group, however, the knowledge that I have accumulated about the group, fandom, and the fansubbers' interactions is of great use in contextualizing the attitudes of the fansubbers and community members. Throughout the data analysis, I draw upon personal anecdotes and observations I have made about the behavior of the fans.

To protect the identities of all the community members as per the members' requests, I have altered their names and any possible markers of identification (i.e. links to and the name of the community, the name of the boyband, and the names of the TV shows they make fansubs for). Prism, Sunshine Subs, Miracle Nation, Rainbow Land, and any other names are therefore, all pseudonyms.

In-depth structured interviews were conducted with the staff members (i.e. fansubbers) of Sunshine Subs. Of the 21 staff members contacted for interviews, 14 responded and agreed. Although there were 29 members listed in Sunshine Subs, eight were on hiatus and were not contacted. The consent form was given at the time they were

asked to participate to ensure that the staff was aware of what they were agreeing to. Because all communication was done online (mainly e-mail, Facebook, and private messages), the consent form was sent to the potential interviewees electronically. If they were 18 years or older and consented, they were asked to print the consent form out, sign, then either send it back to me by snail mail or e-mail (in this case, they would also have to scan it back in).

Once I received the consent form, I scheduled individual interviews with the staff members if they had time to chat through instant messaging (MSN Messenger or Facebook chat). Schedules were made in consideration of the time differences between my location in Hawaiʻi and their location in another U.S. state or country. Other staff members who did not have time for a chat session chose to do the interview through e-mail correspondence, in which, I would send a couple of questions at a time and wait for their response. Through e-mail it was less of a conversation than I would have liked, but it was the most convenient option for certain staff members. Additionally, because the interviews were structured, this made it easier to accommodate their choice. As the interviews were conducted online, no transcription work was needed and the texts from chat session and e-mails were saved into a Word document immediately after.

For a list of the questions asked, please see Appendix A. The questions revolved around how the fansubbers felt about working collaboratively online and highlighted their attitude towards fansubbing and its illegality. To support the results of the interview analysis, a content analysis was also conducted in a forum called Rainbow Land where

Sunshine Subs staff members work and communicate with each other. Each project that Sunshine Subs works on has a dedicated thread in the restricted section of the forum, which only staff members of Sunshine Subs can access. A project can be any one video Sunshine works on, such as a broadcasting of a variety TV show, a TV drama episode, or a movie. Among the 560 projects that Sunshine Subs has finished, I chose a drama special that the group worked on back in 2010 for this analysis. This drama special, which resembles a TV movie, was chosen because I believe it was one of the projects that particularly exemplified the synergy, collaboration, and support among the group members, as the drama in question featured all members of Prism for the first time in over ten years.

Promise was a two hour special drama that aired in 2010. Due to its length, there were three translators, two timers, one typesetter, two editors, and one encoder, as well as 'the cheerleading squad' as one member dubbed them, which included the rest of the group, working on the fansubs. Through the course of thirteen days, January 12 to the 25, a total of 149 posts were made that spanned ten pages of text, with the thread being viewed a total of 1187 times.

The thread was saved into a Microsoft Word document and cleaned for mentions of real names and other points of identification. Once the document was cleaned, it was imported into Microsoft Access and coded according to my personal codes and Robert Bales' (1950) Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) coding scheme. Table 2 and Table 3 list the detailed coding scheme. Once the coding was finished, the data was analyzed and

compared with results from other similar studies of online communication among a small group.

An anonymous survey was also conducted among the 5,000 or so members of Miracle Nation using Google Forms. The survey was posted in the community blog and was available from October 7, 2011 to October 22, 2011 (approximately two weeks). A total of 285 responses from individual members of the community were collected. The sample was not random; it was a volunteer sample based on the population of Miracle Nation. If a person was a member of Miracle Nation, they could see the post with the survey link, and if they were 18 years old or older, they were allowed to take the survey. No incentives to take the survey were provided. No personal or identifying information was collected, and survey takers were asked to not provide any identifying information. Two of the responses were thrown out because they were blank, and another response was from a person under the age of 18. Therefore, 282 responses were used in the survey analysis. For a list of the survey questions, please see Appendix B.

The survey responses were downloaded from Google Docs, where the data was kept online, into a Microsoft Excel file. After the file was cleaned for duplicates and empty submissions, it was imported into Microsoft Access 2007 for analysis. By creating queries and pulling out specific questions, major trends within the answers were discovered and noted.

In the next two chapters, I will analyze and discuss the results that I collected through these three methods while answering the research questions. Chapter 3 will focus

on the fansubbers' motivation to work for free, which can also be generalized to

prosumer motivation. Chapter 4 will build upon the results from Chapter 3 and highlight

the tension between the fansubbers and the fans who demand fansubs. The relationship

between the producers and the consumers of fansubs is constantly in a state of flux due to

conflict desires of wanting to share fansubs yet still receive credit while protecting the

community from legal prosecution.

CHAPTER 3. ANALYSIS OF PROSUMER MOTIVATION

In this chapter, I will answer the first research question by analyzing the interviews of the fansubbers to discover what motivates them to participate in this fan activity despite widespread assumption that it is illegal. Fansubbers are a type of prosumers and understanding what motivates them will help shed light on prosumer motivation in general. I first outline the importance of Prism in the lives of the fans, demonstrating the emotional and personal ties most fans have to Prism. Although fansubbers could make a profit from fansubs, they choose to do it for free in light of the spirit of sharing within the fandom and the core principle behind fansubs: that fansubs are made by fans for fans. This leads into the four main points of motivation that propel the fansubbers of Sunshine Subs to continue their voluntary work. The four points are: fulfilling the demands that the Japanese cannot fulfill, giving back to the online fan community of Prism, being a part of a community, and having a way to escape from and cope with stress.

Prism's Influence

Before we can delve deeper into the motivation and inner workings of the fansubbers, we must first establish and understand why Prism is so important to the fandom. What is it about Prism that makes them so appealing to international fans, to the point that the fans participate in illegal activities just for the sake of feeling closer to them? Prism is a boy band but by American standards, they do more than other well-known boy bands such as N'Sync or the Backstreet Boys. Trained to be singers, dancers,

as well as overall entertainers with polished and pretty looks since their pre-teens, the

members of Prism have been marketed as idols in Japan. They dabble in a wide range of

activities, including, but not limited to singing, dancing, acting, hosting TV shows, talk

shows, and radio shows, modeling, authoring literary pieces, and so on. Their multi-

talented quality is one of the most common reasons why Miracle Nation members love

Prism. Prism appeals to audiences of all ages but they particularly have their biggest fan

base in women in their twenties and thirties, which is largely what makes up Sunshine

Subs. Of the 14 Sunshine staff members, 71% promptly answered that they loved Prism

because Prism made them happy. "They are my happy pill!" expressed Elysia. Just over

half also added that they were and are still attracted to Prism because of the deep

friendship and connections the boy band members have with one another, something

referred to as "member *ai*" (member love) by fans.

Many similar reasons were listed in response to why the Miracle Nation members

liked Prism, a Japanese boy band that operates in a different country and culture from

where most of them live. In their group activities, their "member *ai*" or in other words,

camaraderie, seems very obvious in terms of how the members interact with one another.

They constantly make jokes, give encouraging advice, and are portrayed to support one

another in both their group and individual endeavors. Seeing this strong "member *ai*"

among them makes the fans admire their close friendship and camaraderie.

At the same time, Prism's friendship, the group's strong and collaborative work

ethic, as well as general positive outlook on life (as they are portrayed in the media) make

them good role models for fans. Many respondents answered that Prism was an inspiration to them in every aspect of their life. One respondent wrote, "They make me happy and encourage me to pursue my dreams, setting the example on how they had done that too, also show us the value of friendship and love what one does and putting passion and effort to make the most of it" (Survey #3). Others talked about how Prism made them happy and helped them through difficult and trying times in their lives. This shows that Prism is viewed as very accessible and relatable to the fans, such that fans feel like they "know" Prism. Prism has also helped fans understand Japanese language and culture.

Unfortunately, however, the members of Prism do not speak anything but Japanese and the group works exclusively in that language, which makes it very difficult for foreign fans to understand them. Fansubbing was created as a remedy to that problem and has so far served as a bridge to Prism for international fans. Online fan communities have been built around the activities of translating and fansubbing alike, and would not have flourished without them.

Why Do Fansubbers Work For Free?

Fansubbing is a hobby for all the fansubbers involved. Since there is no monetary compensation and fansubbers are volunteers, they are able to dedicate their time whenever they choose to. When asked if they felt like they should be paid for doing fansubs, a resounding 93% answered no. (Only one person answered that it did not matter, as long as she enjoyed herself). For the other twelve staff members who answered no, they explained that the driving principle of fansubs is that it is "by fans, for fans. It is

done out of love for the same subject, not out of monetary motivation" (Sofia). This "made by fans for fans" is an important ethic that is the core belief of the greater Prism online community, which came up repeatedly in the survey. If they were paid, Elysia mentioned, "It would destroy the purity of the fandom."

Over half of the interviewees agreed that being paid would force them to change the way they made the fansubs, and the way they felt about it. Fansubbing would cease to be a fun hobby and there would be increased pressure from the paying viewers. No fansubber claims to be a professional as none of them do it for a living, causing each fansubbing group to have its own standards that often fluctuate depending on how rushed the fansub production was and the skill level of the staff members that worked on it. Asking for money would therefore also be unfair since there are multiple fansubbing groups that operate under different standards. Requiring payment would force fansubbing groups to set standards in terms of the skill level of the fansubbers, the quality of the fansubs, and the turn-around time in order to satisfy the anxious customers. The complications and obligations that come with money make it not worthwhile to the fansubbers. Without money, there are no deadlines, no standards (which can be good and bad), and no obligations to anyone. Moreover, as mentioned by 36% of the staff, fansubbing is an illegal activity and therefore, no one should be profiting from it. Although this may look like consideration for the copyright holders such as the managing agency of Prism or the television networks that broadcast the shows, in context it seems to be more out of consideration for the members of Prism themselves. Making profit off fansubs feels like wronging Prism, and doing so would be an ethical violation as a true

fan of Prism. We will see in the next sections that the actual illegality is not as big of a

concern as the moral issues involved.

Motivational Point 1: A Reaction against Japan

Four main points of motivation that drive the fansubbers' passion for their

volunteer work became apparent in the interviews. The overarching motivation that gave

birth to fansubbing Prism is a reaction to the lack of attention international fans have

received from the Japanese entertainment industry. This echoes back to our discussion on

how the Japanese have been reluctant to invest in and send their entertainers abroad for

fear that their entertainment style is too Japanese, with a type of humor that would be

incomprehensible and unappreciated by foreign audiences. Unless there is a strong

demand for it, like the way *anime* and *manga* were constantly sought after by overseas

fans, the Japanese find very little incentive to go abroad with their boy bands, especially

when the industry is quite lucrative within the country already and the Japanese are able

to rely on other globally popular cultural products such as movies, *anime*, and *manga* to

export. The international fans of Prism are thus not given much attention; at most, the

managing agency has sent Prism to surrounding countries in East and Southeast Asia but

they have not yet set foot in Europe or the United States as a group.

Although their managing agency has been in the entertainment industry for over

fifty years and Prism has been active for over ten years, they have only begun to open

their doors to international fans. Just last year, they began an English-language electronic

newsletter and developed an app for the Apple and Android platforms that allow fans to

subscribe (for a fee) to their website, which gives fans access to blog messages and videos of the boyband. To join the official fan club however, a fan still has to have a Japanese address. To this day, there have not been any official English translations of anything Prism-related save for one or two Hollywood movies the members have acted in that have been licensed and distributed outside of Japan. Prism's CD and DVD releases can be bought online and shipped all over the world, but the great majority of Prism's media appearances are never aired outside of Japan.

The slow recognition from the official Japanese channels has therefore driven international fans to seek out other means of accessing their favorite boyband. Fans have resorted to illegal file-sharing and downloading, as well as fansubbing as a way to meet their own demands of wanting to see and hear more from Prism. When asked in the survey why it was important to have fansubs, the majority of Miracle Nation explained that they did not know Japanese, and did not live in Japan, meaning that they had no immediate access to any Prism media in their home country. Unlike a fan in Japan who could simply turn on the TV and watch Prism; international fans have to rely on potentially illegal file sharing to gain access to Prism media. Fansubs therefore serve an important social function and many fans justify that it is the only way for them to keep their interest in Prism; because there are no official resources, they have no other choice. English (and other languages) translations have especially been necessary in the growth of the Prism international fandom because unfortunately, the vast majority of such fans do not have adequate Japanese language skills to be able to understand Prism's music,

interviews, dramas, and TV shows. Yet the desire to understand Prism remains strong to the extent that even the potential illegality of fansubbing cannot deter fans.

Fansubs are vital in understanding Prism: "Since part of why I like Prism is watching their interactions with each other, the fansubs are essential for me to enjoy watching them to the fullest" (Survey #39); and essentially keeping their interest in the idol group: "Not a lot of fans would follow these idols with just (Japanese) raws (recordings from TV without subtitles) and would easily lose their interest without fansubs" (Survey #73); and increasing their love for Prism: "I feel closer to Prism because I can understand what is going on in the shows/dramas. That's weird, but Japanese fans have access to Prism through television, movies, fan club, and concerts. As an overseas fan, the fansubs are pretty much all I have when it comes to the real Prism" (Survey #172). Without fansubs, the fans would not know Prism and would not "have a hobby" (Survey #25).

How would the dynamic of this world change if there were official English translations and/or subtitles of Prism's media appearances? It is highly doubtful that such a day would ever come, but if it did, it most certainly would decrease the number of active fansubbing groups in the online fandom. However, there are many non-English speaking fans of Prism who want non-English subtitles; therefore, there would still be fansubbing of Prism's media for languages other than English. English speaking fans might still continue to demand fansubs however, particularly if the standard and accuracy of the Japanese-produced subtitles were not satisfactory. Moreover, if there were official

English subtitles, it would most likely only be for DVD releases that Prism makes, and not for their variety show appearances, which are shown on television networks such as TV Asahi and Fuji News Network. In that case, there would still be a demand for fansubs as the Japanese-produced subtitles cannot possibly subtitle *everything* Prism appears in. And fans want to watch everything. For free. Moreover, providing official English subtitles will not stop the problem of unauthorized copying and sharing, because fans will still continue to copy and share as they please. The Internet is a breeding ground for that type of behavior and anyone with intellectual property on the Internet or that can be put on the Internet will face the same problems of having their property stolen and shared without permission.

Motivational Point 2: Giving Back to the Fandom

The second point of motivation for fansubbers is the desire to give back to the virtual Prism fan community. When asked what were the original reasons and motivating factors that led to the staff joining in producing fansubs (with any group, not just Sunshine Subs), 50% said that they wanted to do fansubs in order to "give back" to the online Prism fan community. 29% of the staff, namely the translators, wanted to do fansubs as a way to learn and improve their Japanese. Surprisingly, none of the staff members mentioned their love for Prism as being one of the motivations for their decision to begin fansubbing. Perhaps it is a given, yet nonetheless, the staff focused more on their desire to give back to the fandom that helped introduce them to Prism, as well as a desire to improve the quality of the fansubs they had been watching before joining. Without the online fandom, many of the fansubbers would not have even known

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of Prism, much less have any access to their music and media appearances. Knowing that there is a demand for fansubs because the international fans receive little attention from the Japanese, there is plenty of room for fans to rise to the challenge and meet the demands themselves, thereby giving back to the community. The importance of fansubs to the fan community cannot be understated, as one survey respondent wrote, "I honestly think if it were not for the efforts of these faithful and loyal fansubbers, I do think that Prism would not have gained this much popularity especially within the online communities" (Survey #137).

In conceptualizing the dynamics of the complex relationship between fansubbers and the members of its community, we can use Weber's classical theory of status groups from his seminal work, *The Distribution of Power within the Political Community: Class, Status, Party*. Weber's three-component theory of stratification involves multiple orders of inequality: economic, social, and political. "The structure of every legal order directly influences the distribution of power, economic or otherwise, within its respective community" (Weber 1991:180). Within each order, there is a different type of corresponding power that stratifies people and gives power to certain people over others. The second order of stratification, social order, which stratifies people into different status groups, applies particularly well to the case of fansubbers. A status group consists of people who enjoy the same level of prestige or honor in society as well as a similar lifestyle. Weber's concept of status groups also entails that "a specific *style of life* is expected from all those who wish to belong to the circle," meaning that status groups are exclusive (Weber 1991:187). Fansubbers who form a fansubbing community begin to

exclude themselves from other fans by making the community closed and requiring an application process for other fans to join and become closer to them. However, prestige and honor can only be granted if those around them would allow it. In other words, a person cannot claim a status for himself; he must prove his superiority to others and earn the status through the approval of those around him. This is known as the "social estimation of honor," in which people evaluate others and give honor and prestige based on culturally agreed upon social values and norms (Weber 1991:187).

In meeting the demands of fellow fans, the fansubbers gain status for being "better" fans for contributing to the community and keeping it active and current. As the majority of the survey respondents expressed, fansubs are an essential connection to Prism and are one of the few ways fans can keep their interest in the boyband. Being a fansubber would bring much respect and praise from surrounding fans, and many fansubbers are proud to identify themselves as such. This finding is in support of Condry's (2010:203) findings that the "desire to demonstrate expertise also reminds us that fandom is about participation but also about status. Yet importantly, it is status that is not monetary as much as it is communitarian and aesthetic." Fansubbers of Sunshine Subs, a group that has reputation for high-quality fansubs, not only receive status for being a fansubber in a first place, but for being one that provides some of the best in the online fandom. Translators especially have a coveted status because they are viewed as the most necessary bridge to bringing fans closer to Prism. Fansubbers are therefore seen as the most dedicated of fans, who spends countless hours of their own time, putting

themselves at risk with the law for the sake of other fans, for the sake of being a bridge to Prism.

Even in Sunshine Subs' personal forum, Rainbow Land, one can see a certain level of stratification among the staff members of the group. When a staff member posts something in the forum, it is accompanied by the username, position in Sunshine Subs, user picture, the date they joined Rainbow Land, the number of posts they have made so far, and their current location. Under the listed position in Sunshine Subs, however, there are a certain number of hearts which depict the importance of that person's position in the group. The translators and other staff who take on double roles (e.g. Sunny is both an editor and encoder) have the most hearts at ten, while timers, typesetters, and encoders have seven hearts. Although there are only two levels of hearts that a staff member can have, it is still interesting that they feel the need to show how more important certain roles are. This supports what is well known throughout the general fandom, that translators are the most respected. When I asked the fansubbers if they believed their task to be important in the process of fansubbing, most agreed that it was, but half mentioned that it was not as important as translators.

Motivational Point 3: Being a Part of a Community

The third motivational point may not have affected the interviewees' decision to begin fansubbing, but it is related to what keeps fansubbers doing what they do: being a part of a community of fellow fans. There is a very strong and positive support network among the members of the fansubbing group, which showed very clearly in a content

analysis of Rainbow Land I conducted using Bales' (1950) Interaction Process Analysis (IPA), a method used to systematically observe face-to-face interaction. Bales' IPA was originally was created to study face-to-face interaction between a small group of people in the same physical space, but it has been used to study online communication, in order to measure the differences and similarities between physical and virtual interactions. In Bales' IPA, there are 12 categories divided into two types of interactions: socioemotional reaction and task-oriented communication. Socioemotional communication can be positive or negative, ranging from displays of solidarity and friendliness to tension and antagonism. Task-oriented interactions include questions and answers that aim to complete a task, such as getting suggestions or information. Table 2 lists Bales' IPA coding scheme, broken down into the two types of interactions.

The two-hour special drama, *Promise*, was in high demand in the online community long before its broadcast, and there was much competition among other fansubbing groups to see who would release the first subtitled version. Sunshine Subs was one of them, and with the competitive spirit kicking in, it was not only a solid effort of the core staff working on it, but also the rest of the group members cheering them on and providing moral support even if they were not directly involved with the project. I coded the thread in Rainbow Land dedicated to *Promise* according to the codes in Table 2 along with my own codes listed in Table 3. The codes are as follows: Date, Time, and Name of poster. Since the posts were short, the full text was also recorded in the database. The rest of the codes were all binary (Y/N): if staff members used nicknames for one another, if Japanese elements (i.e. the use of Japanese words) occurred in the posts.

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Table 2. List of Bales' (1950) Interaction Process Analysis Categories

Function	Process	Paired processes addressing problems of
Social-emotional Area: Positive Reactions	1. *Shows solidarity*, Raises other's status, gives help, reward	1 & 12 Integration
	2. *Shows tension release*, Jokes, laughs, shows satisfaction	2 & 11 Tension management
	3. *Agrees*, Shows passive acceptance, understands, honors, complies	3 & 10 Decision
Task Area: Attempted Answers	4. *Gives suggestion*, Direction, implying autonomy for other	4 & 9 control
	5. *Gives opinion*, evaluation, analysis, expresses feeling, wish	5 & 8 Evaluation
	6. *Gives orientation*, information, repeats, clarifies, confirms	6 & 7 Orientation
Task Area: Questions	7. *Asks for orientation*, information, repetition, confirmation	7 & 6 Orientation
	8. *Asks for opinion*, evaluation, analysis, expression of feeling	8 & 5 Evaluation
	9. *Asks for suggestion*, direction, possible ways of action	9 & 4 Control
Social-emotional Area: Negative Reactions	10. *Disagrees*, shows passive rejection, formality, withholds help	10 & 3 Decision
	11. *Shows tension*, asks for help, withdraws out of field	11 & 2 Tension management
	12. *Shows antagonism*, deflates other's status, defends or asserts self	12 & 1 Integration

Table 3. Coding Scheme of Sunshine Subs' Fansubbing Project, *Prism*

Date	The date of the post
Time	The time of the post
Name	The name of the poster
Post	The actual post
Nickname?	Were staff members referred to by nicknames?
Japanese elements?	Did staff members use Japanese words?

Table 4 details the percentages of each type of interaction that occurred according to the coding scheme in comparison with Fahy's (2005) study of interactions among students and a teacher engaged in a graduate level online course at a Canadian University. The second column has the percentages from my analysis while the percentages on the third column are the total percentages of the types of interaction that occurred for all the students and teacher combined in Fahy's (2005) study. The fourth column is the suggested limits of occurrence (minimum and maximum) that Bales' (1950) concluded face-to-face, small group interactions generally should have.

Unfortunately, this is where a fault of my analysis comes to light. The total percentages of occurrence quite obviously, do not add up to 100%. When I was coding the forum posts through Bales' IPA system, I found that many of the messages were too long to not fall under more than one category. In face-to-face interaction, there is instantaneous reaction and action taken. If a person asks for suggestions, someone else would immediately answer. The length of spoken utterances is generally shorter than a

forum post or e-mail. In online conversation, particularly forum posts (as opposed to instant messaging), users can post short or long messages. In this thread for *Promise*, the posts ranged from one word to a couple of paragraphs. Forum posts therefore allows users to post messages of any length, and it enables users to go back and carefully edit their messages so that they ask all the questions they need to ask and express all the opinions warranted. By categorizing such posts into one simple category is impossible and would be wrong as doing so would cut out so much information and characteristics.

This is one of the main limitations to using one post as a unit of analysis. If I had used one sentence, then a more detailed and categorized coding of the utterances would have been possible. The following is an example post that I deemed to fall under many categories in Bales' IPA:

> *Diana said…*
> *sneaking in* I actually had faith we could finish it in 20+ hours hahaha XDDD This is good though, I'll be back on campus by tonight so I won't miss this release
>
> YAY Ari!! Nice work ^____^!
>
> For 'hannin' I think I was using 'culprits' haha because they say the word 'tero' (terrorists) separately at some points I think...

This post was categorized under: Japanese elements ('hannin'), solidarity ('YAY Ari!! Nice work'), tension release ('hahaha XDDD'), giving suggestions ('I was using 'culprits''), giving opinions ('I actually had faith…'), giving orientation ('they say the word 'tero''). Following Bales' description, I felt that it met all the criteria. I therefore allowed multiple responses for each unit of analysis.

Table 4. The Percentages of Occurrence for Bales' (1950) IPA Categories

IPA Categories	Occurrence in this study (%)	Occurrence in Fahy's (2005) study (%)	Bales' (1950) Suggested Limits (%)
Solidarity	50.70	5.00	0 – 5
Tension Release	70.90	1.00	3 – 14
Agrees	18.20	10.00	6 – 20
Gives Suggestion	18.90	1.00	2 – 11
Gives Opinion	74.30	40.00	21 – 40
Gives Orientation	45.90	28.00	14 – 30
Asks Suggestion	6.80	1.00	2 – 11
Asks Opinion	14.90	9.00	1 – 9
Asks Orientation	14.20	4.00	0 – 5
Disagreement	6.10	1.00	3 – 13
Tension	10.10	0.00	1 – 10
Antagonism	4.70	0.00	0 – 7

It is thus difficult to compare my set of percentages with Fahy's (2005) and Bales' (1950) suggested limits but we can still observe general trends. The highest percentages that came up in my analysis were for the positive social-emotional tasks of displaying solidarity (50.70%), releasing tension (70.90%), and the attempted answers task of giving opinion (74.30%). However, these same percentages were shockingly low in Fahy's (2005) study; his percentages were 5.00% for displaying solidarity, 1.00% for releasing tension, and 40.00% for giving opinion. Although the latter percentage was the highest in Fahy's (2005) study, it is comparatively low compared to my own. The drastically different settings between the two studies contribute greatly to the difference in findings. My study is of a group of passionate fans drawn together by similar interests in a boyband and participating in an illegal activity that keeps them bound together, while Fahy (2005) studied a classroom, in which students were required to participate and communicate online as part of their final grade for the online class, and there was an authoritative figure, the teacher, monitoring the discussion. In such a setting, there could not be any negative interactions, and the majority had to be opinion giving as students participated in discussions of topics assigned by the teacher. Unlike Sunshine Subs, the students were not collaborating on a project to meet a common goal and were not bound together by a passionate interest.

Since the percentages in my study add up to more than 100% due to multiple responses, it is difficult to apply Bales' (1950) suggested limits. Generally, there were considerably high percentages of solidarity, tension release, and giving of opinion, and orientation that exceeded Bales' suggested limits to a great degree. The first two

categories are part of the social-emotional area for positive reactions and while giving

opinions falls under task-oriented interaction, it also includes the expressing of feelings.

These feelings that are expressed are most often positive, as I observed while coding.

No matter what role or task the fansubber had in the group, every participating

member made a large number of posts that were positive, encouraging, and expressing

satisfaction. For negative socioemotional reactions (disagreement, tension, antagonism),

the percentages of occurrence were the lowest, going down to single digits, which is

significantly lower than the positive reactions. The prevailing characteristics and

interactions of Sunshine Subs while working on *Promise* expressed a sense of solidarity

with much laughter, jokes, and general harmony. The group gets along well and works

hard to get the job done efficiently. The strikingly small occurrence of negative social-

emotional messages is a testimony to the strong support network the group has

established for one another. Although this was only one project Sunshine Subs worked on,

the overwhelming positivity is a solid characteristic of the group. This allows the group

to function both as productive prosumers and a group of close-knit friends or family,

coming together for the love of one boy band.

Even with the issue of multiple responses, it is possible to conclude that in this

study, there was a high degree of positive interactions that characterize how the

fansubbers of Sunshine Subs collaborate as a whole. The notion that online

communication is generally more positive than the face-to-face interactions that Bales

studied is supported in the studies on CMC that use IPA. Pena-Herborn (2004) took the

same IPA model and applied it to text-based exchanges in a multiplayer videogame, which may be closer to the interactions of fansubbing teams than online classrooms because users there are coming together voluntarily, holding a common interest. The original hypothesis was that the lack of visual and context cues would decrease feelings of social presence (Kiesler, Siegel, and McGuire 1984). Therefore, the majority of messages in the multiplayer online game should have been task-oriented, and the lack of persona connection should produce more negative social-emotional content (Pena-Herborn 2004). Contrary to that, he discovered that in online videogames, social-emotional communication tended to be more positive and occurring more frequently than task-oriented communication, which is interesting as it echoes back to Rheingold's (2000) notion that it is easier to make friends online and create real, interpersonal bonds. Users perceive such online space as a safe environment to engage freely in social interactions and explore interpersonal relationships (Parks and Roberts 1998).

However, in online video games, there is an added layer of motivation to be positively driven. Pena-Herborn (2004) observes a status difference among players of varying experiences. More experienced players become part of an insider group, a place earned after many hours of relationship building and maintaining. We will see a similar stratification with the fansubbers. New and less inexperienced players are considered outsiders at the beginning, and must build experience and relationships in order to move up into the insider group. Among the insider group, there is higher positive socioemotional content, perhaps because they were "involved in organizing the clans of which they were a member. They may have had a vested interest in ensuring that the

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communication was positive (i.e. to maintain cohesion and satisfaction of the social group)" (Pena-Herborn 2004:28). This concept is part of another theory, the Social Information Processing (SIP) theory, which suggests that time is an essential factor in determining the development of online interpersonal relationships, which I posit to be true among the staff of Sunshine Subs, who have worked together for many years (Pena-Herborn 2004).

As Pena-Herborn (2004) and Fahy (2005) have demonstrated using Bales' IPA, online communication tends to be more positive and harmonious socioemotionally. Task-oriented interaction is conducted to keep users engaged and headed toward a common goal. The mix and balance between positive socioemotional and task-oriented communication seems to build a strong, healthy, and productive group such as Sunshine Subs. Fansubbing groups are different from the normal online community that simply engages in conversation of similar interests; fansubbing groups are a productive team continuously collaborating to produce products both as a hobby and a way of giving back to the community. They therefore should have a higher percentage of positive socioemotional reaction and task-oriented interaction.

The specialization of skills and tasks in the process of making fansubs also creates reliance and a sense of responsibility among the fansubbers. Functional division of labor joins people together and forces them to be dependent on one another. By turning people into specialists with only certain skills, people need the help of others to ensure their survival or success. The division of labor that makes up organic solidarity is evident in

the inner workings of the fansubbing group. Before the advent of fansubbing groups, there were (and still are, of course) fans that did fansubs solo, and performed all the tasks of translating, timing, typesetting, and encoding on their own. Sunshine Subs has been known to be one of the first fansubbing "groups" in the fandom, where they divide up and delegate the work to different people and function as a collaborative group. All of the roles rely on one another to create the best and most high quality fansubs possible. Translators are depended on by every other successive role and take the first step in making fansubs. That is, without translations, no fansubs can be made. At the same time, translators also depend on all the other roles, particularly editors, to check the accuracy and grammar of their translations. There is thus a strong degree of interdependence among the staff, as virtually no staff member has all the necessary skills to make such great fansubs on their own. Having this division of labor also enables non-Japanese speaking fans to participate in the making of fansubs and have the chance to gain a certain amount of status within the fandom. Being a part of a fansubbing group, whether as a timer or an encoder, would still be a position that people would recognize and respect.

When asked in the interviews if the fansubbers could recall any conflicts they have had among one another, no one could think of any. Having a closed community has led the staff members to become very tight knit and close to one another, with little conflicts or arguments. By working constantly together online, the staff members are in contact almost every day, if not multiple times per day. There are numerous ways the group keeps in contact with one another as they take advantage of both advanced and

rudimentary technology. The staff members use LiveJournal, Facebook, Twitter, phone calls, text messages, emails, private messages, and even snail mail (namely, holiday cards) to keep in contact. Members that live in the same geographical area would call each other more often and even meet up in person. Many of the members have also exchanged phone numbers so that they could keep in contact with one another in cases of natural disasters or personal problems that could prevent them from coming online.

However, contrary to what the interviewees responded, in my personal observation, I have seen that the interactions among the staff of Sunshine Subs, although incredibly positive and cheery, are not without negative instances. As with any group collaboration among people of different ages and background, there have been cases of misunderstanding and disagreement. Many of them stem from the fact that all communication is done online and through text. The lack of facial expression and voice makes it difficult to decide how a sentence should properly be read and easy to misunderstand as an insult instead of a joke, for example. This is one of the disadvantages to CMC that fansubbers brought up in their interviews and past misunderstandings have been resolved through more detailed explanations or are simply let go.

Another source of conflict has stemmed from not being credited properly. On all of Sunshine Subs' fansubs, there is a watermark of the group's logo, usually at the top left hand corner (where the broadcasting network's logo is also placed). At the beginning or end of each video, Sunshine Subs would also add a credits list, listing all the staff

members that worked on the fansubs and their respective roles. There have been times when people were not properly credited or wrong usernames were used, and that has caused some conflict. This reiterates Motivational Point 2, where being a fansubber gives one social status. That status can only be given if the fansubbers receive proper credit and others acknowledge their hard work. Not having credit on the video also makes it liable to be stolen by others, which has happened in the past. Having one's name credited, therefore, ensures one's social status and protects one's hard labor. Additionally, having one's own teammate forget that hard work can also be hurtful.

These incidents of conflict however, were usually among two or three people at most, and did not involve the entire group, although the communication would take place in a medium where all the staff members could read and be aware of the situation. The fact that no one brought up any specific instances in the interview denotes a greater sense of harmony and understanding that conflicts happen, but none of them were detrimental enough to really cause continuous ire and detrimental consequences. In other words, there has not been any breaking up of friendships or staff members quitting Sunshine Subs due to a conflict.

In addition, Sunshine Subs ensures that new members accepted into the group are of a similar mindset with everyone else. As evidenced in a blog post calling for new staff members, Sunshine lists the following general requirements for all applicants:

1. Must be a Prism fan.

2. Must be a team player, and know how to work with people. We are a proactive and reactive team and basically leech off or help each other.

3. Must be willing to learn, accept criticisms as constructive.

4. We would prefer that you are not an active member of another subbing group.

The first requirement is understandable, that an applicant should be a Prism fan. The second requirement reflects how the group wants to work as a team, and that being able and willing to collaborate on making fansubs is an important criteria. The third requirement is a way of quelling possible future conflicts and warns applicants that criticisms are not a personal attack, but rather suggestions for improvement. The last requirement calls for dedication to Sunshine Subs to ensure that applicants have enough time to dedicate to Sunshine and not be distracted by work for other fansub groups, which could possibly diminish the quality of work for both groups. These four requirements gives a glimpse into what qualities Sunshine Subs desires in its members and how that keeps the group active and productive: loving Prism, being a team player, being a good listener and learner, and having dedication to fansubbing.

All of the staff members agreed that it is not difficult at all to work with the group online with no face-to-face communication. "We are children of the technological age," explained Sunny. Many cited that because Sunshine has such an efficient working system that makes fansubbing fun and organized, it is actually easier and faster to work online. Fansubbing does not require physical or face-to-face interaction. Because of the nature of fansubbing, each fansubber's work can be done individually, and then handed to the

group for editing and polishing for the next stage. The translator, timer, typesetter, editor, and encoder are all able to work alone on their computers in their respective locations. Yet because the labor is divided, each lone fansubber is drawn in to rely on others and collaborate to create a whole piece of completed work. Three of the staff members admitted that they were shy people in real life and that being able to work purely online in a safe environment encourages them to be more open and outgoing, even with people they have not met in real life. The great majority (86%) of the staff members said that they considered the other members to be friends, with the longest-staying and most active members (29%) considering Sunshine to be family. One staff member, Rain, added that "There are a few people from the group that I consider to be one of my closest friends, and I have been able to share with them about my personal life and problems that I rarely talk about to my non-subbing friends in person."

Over half (57%) have also met other group members in real life. Those who have met other fellow group members in person seem to be more attached to the group and more inclined to call them 'close friends' or 'family.' One anomaly is Rose, who said that she feels very close to the group members, enough to call them family, despite never meeting any of them. However, as one of the longest-staying member and most active member of the group, she is in the most contact with all the members and is affectionately called "Grandma" (though she is in her early twenties). There are other such affectionate nicknames that the staff have designated for one another, which reflect the way in which they are perceived the rest of the group. For example, the leader of the group is often called "Mommy Jenny" while the second in command is sometimes called

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"Daddy Sofia." These nicknames are reserved especially for Jenny and Sofia, respectively. Nicknames have also developed from inside jokes, for example, a pair of translator and timer is often referred to as "Rabbit and Bunny." These nicknames help to create a warm familial atmosphere within the group.

The social benefits of fansubbing are very important for the interviewees and continuously motivate them to work hard with one another. The collaborative group effort and the resulting high quality work make the fansubber feel a part of something greater than herself and to have a community to call family. Nearly half (43%) agreed that being in Sunshine has allowed them to make more friends from all over the world. As Elysia put it, "Being a part of something is a nice feeling. I'm grateful to be a part of this amazing group ☺"

Motivational Point 4: A Form of Escapism

This leads to the fourth and final point of motivation for fansubbers: fansubbing is a form of escapism. As we have established, fansubbing is a hobby for all the fansubbers. Without any monetary obligation, they are able to view it as a way of releasing stress, escaping from daily obligations and mundane work. Fansubbing Prism, their favorite boyband, allows them to "fan" them, feel like a better fan for contributing to the community, and be closer to Prism by spending hours watching their videos. Additionally, being able to share the love with fellow fans who are equally zealous, along with the positive interactions within the support network, make this a very therapeutic hobby, as some fansubbers said in their interviews.

The fans who become fansubbers would have an emotional tie to Prism and often credit Prism for being an inspiration in some aspect of their personal lives. However, considering the amount of time and dedication they give to a hobby in a virtual realm, it is a valid question to ask if fansubbers are socially inept or awkward and fall under a certain social category, such as nerds or geeks, and if they have trouble integrating into normal society. There seems to be a strong stereotype against those with online friends – that they cannot find friends in real life and must resort to staying in front of the computer to find 'friends.' In my personal experience, this was both true and false. I initially became a fansubber due to my strong interest in translating and found that fansubbing was a great way to hone my language skills and get practice for becoming a professional translator in the future. At the time, however, I did not fully dedicate myself to fansubbing (I only fansubbed every now and then when I had some free time). About six years later when I went through a difficult and lonely period in my college years, I looked to fansubbing as a way of making friends and fully diving into an activity I could spend hours doing without having to worry about so-called real life problems. Fansubbing was indeed therapeutic, and the friends I made became my support group that encouraged me not to give up. Over the years that I have gotten to know the staff of Sunshine Subs and the fansubbers of other fansub groups, I have found that there are some who join fansubbing during a particularly trying time of their life. Fansubbing has served as a way of escaping and a way of healing. After the healing ends (although it never truly ends), the relationships fostered and warmth of the community make it difficult to leave. Ella, a timer in Sunshine Subs, also went through similar experiences;

in her interview, she said that she needed to begin fansubbing because she was going through an "emotional funk" and fansubbing was a great way of making her feel content and happy.

Many staff members of Sunshine Subs are full-time employees, full-time students, and even mothers with children of their own to care for. Some may be socially awkward or simply shy, but the community born out of fansubbing serves as a safe place where they can be themselves without the heavy baggage from real life. Many are healthy and socially active, functioning members of society who joined fansubbing for the reasons we have discussed.

As the final question of the interview, the staff members were asked to evaluate the impact that Sunshine has had on their personal and/or professional life. Half said that they developed a good work ethic and learned professionalism by being independent, responsible for their own tasks, having patience, collaborating with people from different backgrounds and age groups, coping with stress, and dealing with negative criticism. This was highly interesting to hear because, as we have discussed, fansubbing is not a paid job but a hobby. Yet the amount of dedication and time the staff puts into fansubbing almost makes it like a job, one that they willingly lose sleep and time over in order to produce the best quality product that they can. Perhaps this is a result of the strong group mentality Sunshine has.

The four motivational points that propel each fansubber to dedicate her free time to fansubbing for no monetary compensation show that there is a wide range of personal,

social, and professional rewards that make fansubbing a worthwhile activity – enough to cross legal boundaries. Now that we understand more what the fansubbers think and feel, and what is most important to them in fansubbing, we can step back and see how that affects their relationship with the greater community, namely, the fans who watch their fansubs.

CHAPTER 4. THE OPPORTUNITY AND OBSTACLE OF THE INTERNET

In this chapter, I will answer the next research question: how do prosumers, that is to say, fansubbers, cope with the potential illegality of their activity? The assumption that fansubbing is illegal is accepted and unquestioned throughout the online Prism fandom. Whether or not everyone is actually aware of it is a different matter, but no one would doubt that the manipulating and sharing of copyrighted materials is unlawful. This assumption causes there to be rules and regulations that are deemed necessary to protect the community from being discovered and shut down by authorities. Sunshine's methods are still acceptable to most of Miracle Nation due its historical significance to the Prism fandom as well as the group's stellar reputation.

Yet the rules and regulations seemingly contradict the spirit of sharing the love of Prism within the fandom and the core principle that fansubs are made by fans for fans. If fansubs are exclusive to those in a closed community, how can it truly be sharing? I will outline the history of Sunshine Subs and how it has changed over time, as the group attempted to balance the illegality of fansubs while satisfying personal desires and sharing with the rest of the community in the free environment of the Internet where rules are not easily enforceable. This will lead into the last research question on the nature of the relationship between the fansubbers and its audience, because, at present, the evolution of Sunshine Subs has given way to a tense relationship between two groups. Yet in the end, I find that the cause of the tension and conflict is not any individual

group's selfishness, but rather, the nature of the free Internet itself. The unprecedented opportunities for creativity and sharing is an opportunity but also an obstacle.

Fansubbing is Illegal

In analyzing the interview and survey data, a certain tension between Sunshine Subs and Miracle Nation has come to light, all the while being constantly burdened by the overarching potential threat of the illegality of the activity. Fansubbers primarily became fans in order to share with and contribute to the community that helped foster their love for Prism as well as to fill the gap unfulfilled by the Japanese, yet they operate under the accepted assumption that fansubbing is illegal, which causes there to be strict rules and regulation in regards to the distribution and use of fansubs.

In the Background section, I outlined the rules that govern Miracle Nation as well as the well-known and difficult application process fans are put through in order to gain membership to the community. Due to the understanding that fansubbing is potentially illegal, Sunshine was one of the first groups to enforce rules that have now become standard throughout the general fan community. Sunshine closed their community and began a rigid application process in which applicants had to explain what they loved the most about Prism and agree (by rewriting in their own words) that they would not redistribute the fansubs outside of the community without permission or upload the fansubs to streaming sites such as YouTube. 71% of the staff members said that they closed their community mainly to deter the rule-breakers that were becoming too uncontrollable. It was also a way to protect both the fansubbers and community members

partaking in this illegal activity, as the fansubbers believed having such rules would decrease the chances of getting caught by authorities. For the same reasons, they had to have rules about not allowing members to redistribute or sell the fansubs, or upload the fansubs to any streaming sites, in order to prevent their fansubs from being publicly noticeable and available. It also serves as a way to prevent their work from being 'stolen' by others who take credit for it. This is where the group's awareness of the illegality of fansubbing is most apparent.

Having a closed community with a tight hold on the membership, while enforcing rules that disallow members from redistributing fansubs outside the community gives the fansubbers a sense of protection and safety. Although rule-breakers exist nonetheless, many fansubbers feel at ease in partaking in this activity, knowing that the best precautions have been taken to prevent overexposure of the community.

I have been referring to the illegality of fansubbing as 'potential' and so have certain fansubbers in their interview. Although we have discussed the copyright laws of the United States, the actual threat of being arrested for sharing copyrighted material still seems weak. Although arrests have been made and legal action has been taken, the practice remains very common and widespread; consequently, the general public is not convinced to drastically change its behavior. One of the timers, Ann, said, "Subbing isn't any worse than ripping CDs/DVDs which is done all over the Internet." In that case, it may be understandable that 28% of the fansubbers admitted to not knowing that fansubbing was illegal in the first place, although it did not change their mind about

continuing after they found out. Another 43% were aware that fansubbing was potentially illegal but did not deem the activity to be dangerous or the threat to be real. Moreover, because the subject of the fansubbing was a Japanese boy band, the staff do not feel imminent threat from the government of their own countries (i.e. non-Japanese countries), believing that their government has better things to do than to "persecute [them] personally" (Sunny). For those living in the United States, Sunny warns not to download American media because that may catch too much attention as opposed to Japanese media, which American authorities should not care as much about.

Despite acknowledgement that the illegality of fansubbing is potential at best, the argument that fansubbing is illegal still dictates much of the fansubbers' movements online. Most fansubbing communities are now closed and require an application in order to be accepted, and almost all of them implement the same rules and regulations that Sunshine Subs have. Such rules are the best way to protect the community from authorities as well as protect the fansubs. When there are rule-breakers, however, Sunshine has been known to take extreme actions in response.

Sunshine usually bans any member who breaks the rules. If a member uploads Sunshine's fansubs to a streaming site and Sunshine is alerted, a sort of internal investigation would take place, in which staff members track IP addresses and attempt to locate the 'mole' in the community of Miracle Nation. Members who are found to be breaking the rules would be banned without question. When possible, the IP address

would be banned, which would prevent that member from reapplying to Miracle Nation under a different username.

When rule-breaking became out of control, the purge took place. This was highly controversial, and many fans (who claimed that they had never broken any rules) felt insulted that they had to prove themselves to be moral, rule-obeying members. Many deemed it inappropriate that one rotten apple spoiled the whole barrel, and everyone had to pay for that cost. Despite that, Sunshine stood by its decision because it was very important for them to deal with rule-breakers. Rule-breaking is seen as a serious offense because it could expose and endanger the community. The possibility of another purge is always imminent, and many current members of Miracle Nation are still wary that another purge may happen.

In addition to the exposure and endangerment of the community that comes with online streaming and unauthorized sharing, there is also an emotional hurt that fansubbers feel. There have been many instances when not only are the fansubs taken without permission and uploaded to streaming sites, but the fansubs have been manipulated to show another group's logo. In essence, other fans like to steal the fansubs and take credit for the hard work. Perhaps that is why Sunshine takes rule-breaking so seriously. There is a personal reputation and pride at stake when the fansubs are stolen, and Sunshine admits that although having an application process and the rules

> would not probably stop the streamers from continuing
> what they do, but we do what we could. All we asked was
> for them to respect our wishes and rules, but they turned a
> blind eye at every turn and spit in our faces. The same goes

for the online peddlers of subs OF ANY fansubber, not just
Prism. Hopefully the people concerned would stop being
entrepreneurial at fansubbers' expense.

This message written on the front page of Miracle Nation demonstrates the feelings of the

fansubbers of Sunshine Subs. Even though rule-breaking is unstoppable on the Internet,

as the very nature of it is absolute freedom to do as one pleases, the fansubbers want to

do what they can to gain the respect they believe they deserve. The feeling of being

ignored is equivalent to being spat in the face, not only for Sunshine Subs but every other

fansubbing group out there that is working hard to share with the fandom. The fansubbers

clearly are unwilling to let go of authorship of their work and will do what they can to

curb rule-breakers, but that determination calls in to question issues of ownership and

true dedication to sharing.

Who Owns the Fansubs?

If the videos that Sunshine Subs are subtitling do not belong to them, how can

they claim ownership over the fansubs? The fansubbers may own the subtitles as it is the

product of their hard work, but they do not own the videos. This is the problem that

'hardsubbing' has. Hardsubbing is the process of embedding the subtitles directly into the

videos, so that one cannot download the subtitles without also downloading the videos.

The two come as a pair and cannot be separated, causing Sunshine to essentially control

the distribution of the copyrighted videos. This is in opposition to 'softsubs' that keep the

subtitles separate from the video in a text file, allowing downloaders to download either

one or the other or both. However, there is a risk in softsubs, because people can

download the text file, edit it, and claim the subtitles as their own. Rose, an encoder,

mentioned that hardsubbing is one way of protecting Sunshine's videos from being claimed by others, which is an issue the group had constantly battled with, and consequently Sunshine Subs no longer offers softsubs of their work.

Even with hardsubs, however, Sunshine's work still gets 'stolen' by others. There are members of Miracle Nation who download Sunshine's fansubs and upload them to streaming sites after embedding their own logo or name onto it, making it look as though it is their own work. This has led Sunshine to take other protective measures besides hardsubbing, such as closing the community from public members and requiring fans to apply for membership before being allowed access to the fansubs, as well as setting out rules disallowing the redistribution of fansubs outside the community and the uploading of fansubs onto streaming sites. In Miracle Nation, Sunshine has total authority over their decisions in how to handle the fansubs and what they believe to be the best ways to protect the community and their fansubs. Sunshine does not hesitate to ban or even purge the community even though they themselves are considered to be breaking the law by using copyrighted material.

Yet 89% of Miracle Nation agrees with the application process. Again, basing their reasons on the assumption that fansubbing is illegal, having an application process is necessary as it deters rule-breakers. "An application process (hopefully) weeds out those members who do want to steal the subs and claim them as their own" (Survey #60); and ensures that the community members are "true fans" (Survey #81). It is a frustrating but indispensable measure to ensure the safety of the fansubbers and the community

members alike. The application process also builds trust within the community, as one respondent answered, "it feels nice knowing that everyone who has applied to be in this community has similar inclinations and moral standards than I do [sic]; it wouldn't be the same if the people who were accepted didn't care to the same extent about the security and amount of love for Prism that other members have. It's all about trust in this community, and that's incredibly important in establishing a true community" (Survey #232). Others feel that because Miracle Nation belongs to Sunshine Subs, no one has any right to tell them how to run the community. Sunshine can do whatever they feel they are entitled to, because it is their community and their fansubs at risk. Having an application process has also become a standard for other fansubbing groups in the Prism fandom as well, and so it is more acceptable for Sunshine to continue with their methods.

An overwhelming 96% of the survey respondents said they agreed with the rules of the community because again, Sunshine has the right to do what they want in their own community and the rules are fair and standard in other communities as well. Fansubbing is illegal and it is important that preventive measures be taken lest the fansubs are misused. Otherwise, if there are too many rule-breakers, Sunshine Subs could decide to quit or even worse, be shut down by authorities. "Because they're risking themselves in order to help us. I wouldn't like it if they were suddenly sued" (Survey #22). The members do not want to lose access to fansubs, as we have seen how important fansubs are to the fans in keeping their connection with Prism. "If Sunshine were to be found out by the big television companies that make the videos, a huge legal issue could arise that could greatly impact the subbing community and the fans that rely on it so

heavily" (Survey #84). Many also acknowledge once again, that fansubbing is hard work and that the fansubbers deserve proper credit for all the time and effort they dedicate to it for free. "You don't pay for great subbed videos, you gotta respect the rules!" (Survey #57). One should not abuse the work of other fans, because fansubs are for private use only and are made to share Prism. "I really don't want to cause problem to those, who helps me to enjoy my fandom more" (Survey #118).

The Significance of Sunshine Subs

Despite the difficulty of the time-consuming application process and extreme measures Sunshine Subs has taken to protect the community and themselves, there are many advantages to being a part of Miracle Nation. In the survey, respondents felt that being a part of a fansubbing community such as Miracle Nation or the larger fandom that surrounds it enables fans to share their interest with fellow fans and make new friends. It is a way for them to feel as a part of the Prism fandom, which is something legitimate Japanese resources have failed to do. "Without being able to watch Prism's dramas I find myself disconnected from other fans in the community. The media provided by Sunshine is a link that binds the community and enables many people to converse and relate to one another based on a mutual foundation" (Survey #120).

Although 89% of the respondents answered that they were also a part of other fansub communities similar to Miracle Nation, it was still of interest to ask why they wanted to join Miracle Nation in particular, a community run by Sunshine Subs that has a history and rumors of elitist attitudes, difficult and long application process, and strict

rules controlling the community. The respondents highlighted many of the positive aspects of Miracle Nation and its fansub group, Sunshine Subs. Aside from the fact that many want to learn Japanese or do not speak Japanese at all, for many members, Miracle Nation helped introduce them to Prism and even now, remains one of the most extensive and best resources for obtaining Prism-related fansubs. Sunshine Subs was the first fansubbing group of its kind back in 2006, giving Miracle Nation a long history in the virtual Prism fandom. One of the survey respondents answered that she joined because "she wanted to have access to the subbed files available only to members of the community" (Survey #257). This reflects Sunshine Subs' long-standing history in that because they have been around the longest; they have much older videos (with English subtitles) that are not available elsewhere. They have also built themselves to be the most important community for the virtual Prism fandom by providing consistent, high quality, accurate, and overall best fansubs and are continuously active in ways that keep them current with the fandom.

Respondents mentioned that being a part of Sunshine also helps them keep up with Prism-related news. As a very big fansubbing community, it also provides a place for fans to meet other fans. Echoing the sentiment of one of the fansubbers, Jenny, who said that fans can identify and appreciate Sunshine's enthusiasm for Prism because "we are first and foremost FANS before we are fansubbers," a survey respondent said "I enjoy watching quality fansubs made by a solid group of Prism fans" (Survey #150). This indicates that the dynamic of the fansubbing group also affects the way the community members perceive them. For those reasons, Sunshine's strict rules and harsh application

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process seem justifiable. "They have justifiable reason to do it. Sunshine group is one of the 'longest running Prism subbing community' and their quality is better than some of the communities" (Survey #59), making it understandable and worthwhile to go through the application process for their fansubs. The reputation of Sunshine is thus well known throughout the Prism fandom. As virtually the first Prism-centric fansubbing group established in 2006, Sunshine has built up a name for itself in terms of dedication, speed, and quality.

The majority of the fansubbers (79%) said in their interviews that they decided to join Sunshine because they believed that Sunshine was the best fansubbing group for Prism-related media, demonstrating consistent quality, good organization, accurate work, and continued activity. Two of the longest-staying staff members said that they joined Sunshine simply because it was the only Prism-centric fansubbing group around at the time, which hints at the historic relevance Sunshine has to the online Prism fandom.

Despite the negative criticisms, as we have established, Sunshine has been and still remains one of the oldest, if not the oldest and most active fansubbing group in the Prism fandom. Most of the staff (71%) considered Sunshine as very important and a central cornerstone of the Prism fandom. 93% of the staff take pride in the top-notch quality and consistency of Sunshine's fansubs over other groups in the fandom and believe that the quality of their subs is why other fans want to watch their subs. Fans can always expect high quality and accurate subs from Sunshine "because we don't do things half-assed" (Jenny) and "because we really care about quality over speed" (Moshi). The

goal of Sunshine is to release the most accurate and well-made subs possible even if that takes longer to accomplish. This echoes Condry's (2010:203) study on *anime* fansub groups, where he discovered that "clearly, fansubbers are motivated in part by a commitment to a craftsmanship and desire to have that sensibility appreciated by viewers." Although this motivation was not apparent in the interviews, the commitment Sunshine has to provide the best fansubs possible remains one of the main reasons why Sunshine Subs' fansubbers have high social status within the fandom.

Jenny, who joined Sunshine back when it was the only Prism fansubbing group, expresses the following sentiment:

> Not to sound arrogant but I think Sunshine started the trend of subbing groups in the Prism fandom. I think Sunshine was one of those who started working on WHOLE episodes. So I wouldn't say that Sunshine is important in the fandom. Obviously fandom will still flourish even without us. But I would like to think we… set certain precedents? Quality-wise, too. If anything, I think we can take pride in saying we were one of the pioneers. Haha!

This sentiment is shared by four other staff members who are familiar with the history of Prism fansubbing and Sunshine. Sunny even mentions that "a lot of other groups also emulate us sometime in certain respects" such as with regards to having a closed community, having an application process, and enforcing the rules that have now become standard in virtually every fansubbing group. Sunshine therefore has a place in Prism fandom's history, and many felt that if a person becomes a new fan of Prism, they would inevitably run into one of Sunshine's works and be introduced to Prism through that.

In the real world, a comparison to this behavior can be made perhaps with the mafia, who serve as the police of the underworld. Although criminal activity abounds and is encouraged, the mafia still serves as the ruling group that maintains order, trust, setting the rules to privately protect fellow crooks from the authorities, as well as other fellow crooks (Gambetta 1993). The Sicilian mafia that Gambetta (1993) wrote about did not focus on violence as a method of control, but rather sold private protection as a commodity. When this so-called business model is successful, "problems of law and order and public hazards are kept under control" (Gambetta 1993:3). It shows that even in underground and illegal activity, order and rules are still necessary to keep the wheels turning. Although fansubbers are certainly not the mafia, we can see how traditional behavior of social control manifests and is reproduced in the virtual world with adaptations to new problems of accountability, property ownership, and the role of technology, which both helps and hinders problems.

In a setting as Sunshine Subs and Miracle Nation, where there is no similar presence as the mafia to enforce the rules or buy protection from, the manner in which the online communities function is based upon established norms. Although the rules that Sunshine Subs has established for Miracle Nation seem like codified rules with harsh punishments such as banning, the rules are unenforceable in ways similar to the law. A rule-breaker in Miracle Nation cannot be tried by a jury or sentenced to jail, and there is no police to arrest him or her in the first place. The rules therefore, are more like norms of expected behavior that the fandom has established and agreed upon. Because there is no authoritarian figure or lawful punishment, such norms require the pressure of the

general community to enforce. Violators of the norm (i.e. rule-breakers of the fansubbing community) would be condemned by the community and ostracized by the leaders, who are the fansubbers that run the community. The presence of rule-breakers actually helps to remind the community what the norms are and the consequences of breaking said norms. The rules and regulations of Miracle Nation therefore represent a basic social process of how society controls deviant behavior without the use of law enforcement.

The Evolution of Sunshine Subs

In order to paint a clearer picture of the changing relationship between Sunshine Subs and its community members of Miracle Nation and answer the third research question, I have created a timeline (Table 5) to depict how Sunshine has evolved and adapted to the rising problems of rule-breaking and the free nature of the Internet, while balancing personal desires for credit and social status.

It is important to notice what type of fansubs Sunshine was doing throughout the events in the timeline. Back when Sunshine began, Miracle Nation was the ideal community. It was open, anyone could join, and Sunshine provided softsubs. Softsubs versus hardsubs is an important distinction, because as I explained, softsubs keep the subtitles and the videos separate. Although it has its disadvantage in that it cannot do moving subtitles or alter the appearance of the subtitles as much as hardsubs permit, softsubs can be considered to be the less illegal choice of the two, because people can just download the softsubs text file with the subtitles and find their own copy of a video to watch with it, Sunshine is not held accountable for distributing copyrighted material.

However, the other unfortunate disadvantage to softsubs is that they cannot provide

strong protection against theft because people are easily able to edit the text file, put their

own names in, and take credit for Sunshine's hard work. After many instances of abuse,

Sunshine decided to stop providing softsubs in 2008. They changed to doing hardsubs

only, and although hardsubs are more difficult to manipulate, other fans still do it and

embed their own logo onto Sunshine's hardsubbed video files.

Table 5. Timeline of Events in Sunshine Subs and Miracle Nation

Year	Description of Events	Type of Fansubs
2006	Sunshine Subs is formed and later opened Miracle Nation, a then open and public community anyone could easily join.	Softsubs and Hardsubs
2007 - 2008	Rule-breakers increased and Sunshine's fansubs were stolen through softsubs.	Stopped softsubs and moved to hardsubs only
2009	Miracle Nation moves to a moderated membership, a closed community with an application process. Rule-breakers persist and Sunshine purged the community.	Hardsubs only
2010-2012	Miracle Nation remains moderated and rule-breakers still persist though reportedly less.	Hardsubs only

However, with hardsubs, Sunshine must also change its distribution model. Now, they can be held accountable because the subtitles are embedded directly into the video, meaning that one cannot download the subtitles without also downloading the copyrighted video. To combat this change, Sunshine moved to a moderated membership, a closed community, in 2009 to essentially add another layer of protection from the authorities. However, even that did not deter rule-breakers and Sunshine ended up having to purge the entire community and start all over again with their membership. Before the purge, Miracle Nation had over 6,000 members but it has since grown back to having over 5,000 members. Although they have approximately 1,000 less members, it is still a sizeable amount for an online community.

"Made By Fans for Fans"

The changes Sunshine Subs has made with its fansubs and Miracle Nation has resulted in a much more tense relationship with the consumers who watch the fansubs. Having an application process with such strict rules seems to violate the ethic that fansubs are made by fans for fans, and the same sharing spirit that envelops the fandom and motivates fansubbers to begin fansubbing in the first place. The 11% who disagree with the application process, believe it to be too strict and intimidating for incoming fans who want to join the community, particularly for new fans that are still unfamiliar with Prism and are unaware of how the fandom functions. The application is too time-consuming, not only to write up, but also to wait for a response. There are also those who find the application insulting, as it seems that Sunshine does not trust other fans to follow the rules. It has been seen as elitist and a way for Sunshine to exercise control over other

fans like a dictatorship, and as not in line with the sharing spirit of the fandom.

"Assuming that fansubbers want to share out of the goodness of their hearts, it shouldn't

be so hard to become a member" (Survey #89).

The application can thus divide the fandom because it makes it exclusive and

available to only a select group (despite that group being over 5,000 people), and thereby

builds resentment in the fandom. Respondents also expressed frustration and confusion

over how ineffective the application process is, because simply making someone

"promise" to follow the rules does not ensure that they will. They are empty words. As

one respondent puts it, "I'm a member who follows the rules because I like to think I'm a

polite person. I don't follow them because I promised to" (Survey #121).

The 4% who disagree with the rules are an even smaller minority. Yet the issues

that they bring up in their answers highlight the biggest confusion fans have in terms of

fansubs because the illegality of it contradicts the desire to share and spread the love of

Prism. Uploading to streaming sites could bring more fans to the fandom and provide

more access to other fans, and if the fansubbers are truly afraid of being caught by

authorities, then they should not credit themselves on the videos. As one respondent

strongly expresses,

> The easiest and most obvious solution to protecting
> themselves from being sued is to sub anonymously; several
> sub groups have done so. Stop sticking your name on it,
> and no one can reasonably pin it on you. The only reason I
> can see someone really wanting their name on it is for what
> amounts to bragging rights; MY translation, MY encoding,
> MY timing, etc. If you really cared about not being sued,
> then stop trying to claim ownership of things that don't

belong to you… I have never been so repeatedly and rudely insulted as when Sunshine group throws what amounts to a hissy fit every time a video is stolen. It happens. You can't stop it from happening. Get over it and either admit that you're mad because someone took something you worked hard on (rather than claiming it puts the group at legal risk, since the easiest solution there is STOP PUTTING YOUR NAME ON IT) or just accept that some people are jerks that don't give a damn about rules. No amount of applications is going to stop them, so stop punishing the rest of us because of them (Survey #121).

We can now see that there is agreement on the ineffectiveness of having rules and an application process on both sides (as Sunshine admitted to the same ineffectiveness on their homepage). The confusion lies in how much the (il)legality actually matters to the fansubbers. It seems like it matters, which is why they enforce the rules but as we have seen, the fansubbers do not feel a real threat to being caught by authorities. That reason can therefore seem somewhat superficial as the true reasons are more deep-rooted.

If fansubbers were truly afraid of authorities the simplest solution would be to subtitle everything anonymously as respondent #121 articulated, which is not difficult to do. Real names are disguised by usernames, and the fansubs do not need to be marked with any logo claiming the fansubs as a product of their own. However, as we have seen, there is much credit and status to be gained with being a fansubber. Being credited for one's hard work is desired and taken seriously; it not only serves as a way to deter those who may steal the work and claim it as their own, but also to broadcast the authors' names to the fandom in order to be acknowledged as a valued contributor to the community. Fansubbers are normally credited in the fansubs by their username or by their internet pseudonym that they have created. Real names are usually never used in

crediting. As Sunny, one of the editors, admitted, "There is a little glory to it, seeing my name in credits, of course." Subbing anonymously may decrease the risks of being discovered by authorities, but it comes at a cost of losing one's status and name.

The Fansubbers' Ideal World

In my personal experience of being a fansubber, I have found that almost every fansubber has a secret dream they hope could come true. That is, to be recognized and approved by the members of Prism themselves. Not by the Japanese copyright holders, or the big unnamed authorities, but by Prism. If Prism were to acknowledge the fans' hard work of bringing their media appearances to the international audience, and approve of it, perhaps even encourage it, it would serve as the greatest form of validation for every fansubber involved. The reality of that happening is very slim, but even then, having one's name on the fansubs is way to ensure personal validation that perhaps Prism watched '*my*' fansubs.

The ideal type of fansubs that Sunshine would like to do would therefore be the following: hardsubs with credit distributed in an open community where no one breaks the rules. However, the ideal type of fansubs the fans would like is: hardsubs streamed online; credit or no credit does not really matter. Softsubs cannot be streamed online but fans seem to want streaming the most because it can be watched easily without downloading and taking up hard drive space, and it can be quickly shared with anyone and everyone interested. If receiving credit would cause complications of unauthorized sharing though, the fans would most likely prefer the fansubbers not crediting themselves

to make things simpler. However, as the rules of Miracle Nation stipulate, streaming is not allowed because it exposes the community too much (in a way, that is too risky and too much credit the fansubbers do not want). The second best option would be to provide softsubs, which are small sized text files that can easily be shared, yet as we have seen, that comes with its own problems. Miracle Nation has gone through the different options and choices they have in making and distributing their fansubs (save for streaming), and they have evolved from an open, ideal community in the sharing spirit to a closed, narrower community. Miracle Nation is no longer in line with the spirit of sharing as much as it used to be, even though that same spirit was one of the motivational reasons for fansubbers to begin in the first place. People have come to doubt and question Sunshine's real motives and ask if their fansubs are really made by fans *for* fans.

Weber said that status can only be gained if others recognize and award that status. For that reason, fansubbers must credit themselves in their fansubs in order to gain the proper respect they deserve. Without crediting themselves, no one will be aware of or acknowledge what they do and the hard work they put in as individuals. Subbing anonymously would entail losing the chance to have that status tied to one's username and giving it up to just the general title of "fansubbers." For Sunny, who said that there is a little glory in having her username on the fansubs she works on, receiving credit is important, as that is the only way other people can recognize and giver her respect as a fansubber. With the countless hours put in and the amount of meticulous editing and details put into the fansubs, subbing anonymously at the risk of that work being stolen is difficult to swallow.

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What is more important then, hiding from authorities, getting proper credit for one's hard work, or sharing the love of Prism with the fandom? There are no clear answers. The fandom operates under the overarching assumption that the fansub communities need to be closed and hidden because fansubbing is illegal, and that affects the way fansubbers work. It causes exclusivity and tension between the fansubbers and those who want access to the fansubs. Being credited and sharing the love contradict one another at a certain point and the best solution and compromise Sunshine Subs could come up with is by crediting themselves and having a closed community where they can enforce certain rules to protect their work, themselves, the fans, and the community and thus have a safe space to share as much as they can with whom they choose. The point is not to completely prevent rule-breaking (although that would be ideal), it is just to cut down the number of people who want to try. The fansubbers are frequent users and experts of the internet and are more familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of fansubbing than outsiders. They know all too well among themselves that the application process, rules, and even self-crediting are futile because in this digital age, anything can be pirated and it is naïve to think that one could completely prevent it. Within the Rainbow Land forum, staff members have discussed this issue often with a light-hearted attitude that reflects their awareness of the situation and the ineffectiveness of their protective measures, but they can still have fun with it, get some laughs, and play it like a game. Just because everything can be pirated does not mean that they should give up the fight and simply sit back while other more entrepreneurially-inclined fans take advantage of their hard work.

However, because fansubbers are unwilling to cut themselves off from "authorship" of their work, they open themselves to the potential legal repercussions as the work can now be traced back to them. There is a circular logic at work, in which the unreal threat but real possibility of being caught causes the fansubbers to close the communities and set rules, yet they are unwilling to fully protect themselves by subtitling anonymously due to the desire of wanting credit and status, as well as the other positive intrinsic rewards we have discussed. Fansubbers take great pride in their work, and naturally want to be recognized for it, meaning that receiving credit is more important than not getting caught. The benefits therefore outweigh the cost, and the fansubbers rationalize their behavior and choices by believing that they are helping to spread the love of Prism to more fans, and that the risk of being somehow pinpointed by some Japanese authority is slim.

The rationalization is also based upon the fact that fansubbers are not making any money from fansubbing and do not require any payment from viewers. The fansubbers do not feel as guilty, and feel more justified in their actions. If they are not making profit (in fact, they are the ones paying money to the Japanese to get official Prism goods such as CDs and DVDs), the least they could do is ask for some recognition. In the interview, many of the staff members agreed that fansubs should not paid for and that they, as the producers of fansubs, should not receive any money for it because fansubs are made by fans for fans, and receiving money would be a violation of that principle. Similar attitudes were observed in the survey results. The vast majority of the respondents (87%) would not pay for fansubs because fansubs are made by fans for fans. "It's called fansubs

for something. Fansubs means fans do the subbing so it's a voluntary work therefore no money should be included" (Survey #250). Fansubs have always been free and there is no reason they should be paid for now. Moreover, because many acknowledged that fansubbing is illegal, if it were to be paid for that would only serve to make it even more illegal or immoral and could get the fan community into more trouble. "To be brutally honest, the videos do not belong to them [the fansubbers] but the people who produced it. That's why subs should be free" (Survey #242). "If subbers got paid, then it will be more all the reason why producers try to hunt subbing groups down and make sure they don't make any profit" (Survey #233).

If fansubbers were to begin demanding money for their volunteer work, it could also potentially lower the popularity of the community. Many fans do not have enough money to afford to pay for fansubs, especially on a regular basis. A couple noted that if they had to perhaps pay a one-time access fee, it would be acceptable. However, there are currently no set standards or quality assurance for fansubs – precisely because fansubbing is volunteer work and not professional work. "Fansubbing is not a job" (Survey #244) and no fansubbers claims his or her work to be professional and 100% accurate, which would make it not worthwhile if fans were forced to pay money for badly made, inaccurate subs. It would be unfair to the fans that are cash-strapped to be denied access simply because they could not afford it. Echoing back to the principle of "made by fans for fans," fansubs should not be exclusive because they are made to share the love of Prism and to bring the fan community closer together. "I think a main reason why fansubs are around is to spread awareness of our group [Prism] and really just to spread

the love" (Survey #248). Certain fans also expressed that they would rather spend their money on official merchandise and goods from Prism. Additionally, the respondents viewed fansubs as not costing money to make and therefore, should not require any money. That claim, however, is inaccurate as fansubs do cost money. Fansubbers often shell out their own money to buy official DVD releases in order to obtain the videos to make fansubs, and pay for file-hosting services to enable sharing of large, high-quality digital files.

A small minority (14%) said that they should pay for fansubs because fansubbing is hard work, and the fansubbers should be compensated with something more than just a plain 'thank you.' One respondent said that "Subbing is not an easy task. It takes time. And subbing is considered a job just like any other jobs out there" (Survey #264). Although it is not professional work and the fansubbers are volunteering, the amount of time and effort they dedicate to their fansubs can be seen as comparable to a job. If fansubbing was professional work, then some would agree to pay. However, because there is still the sense that fansubbers should not personally profit from the activity, some also expressed that they would be willing to pay the community instead of individual staff members. Donations may also be more acceptable (and Miracle Nation members have been known to donate LiveJournal paid accounts to Sunshine Subs, as opposed to a basic account, which does not have as many features). As long as the payment is not compulsory, as with donations, fans seem to be more willing to give when and what they can.

There is a strong sense that fansubbing is really a labor of love and is one of the ultimate ways a fan can express his or her (mostly, her) love for the idol group. "If someone's requesting to be paid... I don't think I'd be able to call them a fan" (Survey #25). Profiting off Prism for personal gain is seen as an act of a "fake fan" as opposed to a "true fan," one who only enjoys fansubs for personal purposes. Profiting off the hard work of other fans that do it for free seems to be even more appalling.

Levels of Stratification in the Prism Fandom

We can now see that there are many levels of stratification, not just among the fansubbers, but among the entire fandom. At the lowest level, there are "fake fans," who break the rules of Miracle Nation and other similar communities and perhaps sell the fansubs to make profit for themselves. That goes against the standing principle of the fandom, which says that fansubs are made by fans for fans. By breaking the rules, one is disrespecting the fansubbers and not only putting the fansubbers at more risk with the law, but also jeopardizing the fansubbing community and even possibly the Prism fandom as a whole. Members of Miracle Nation fear another 'purge' if too many rule-breakers appear and do not want that to happen again (neither does Sunshine Subs want to do it again). But there is a fear that fake fans could to disrupt the peace, and cause even more drastic changes that take away the privilege of accessing fansubs. Going against the rules by uploading to streaming sites is also a sure fire way of increasing visibility to this closed, underground, and illegal community. Although the possibility is unlikely, if authorities found out about the fansubbing community, fans fear they could shut it down.

The next level would therefore be a "true fan," one who enjoys fansubs for personal use and is respectful of the fansubbers and the rules of the community. One can gain more status within the fandom by contributing back to it. There are many people who translate, draw fan art, write fan fiction, and provide raw (i.e. unsubtitled) video files. Any fan who posts something useful back to the community is given some respect. Translators, as we have seen in the number of hearts they are given in Rainbow Land, enjoy some of the highest status within the Prism fandom, as they provide a means for non-Japanese speaking fans to understand what Prism says and does. Translators can translate many things such as an interview from a magazine or song lyrics, which have become increasingly common as the Prism fandom becomes more popular online. Being a translator in a fansubbing group and translating TV dramas and variety shows is one of the most difficult tasks with the most responsibility as it is the first step to jumpstart the fansubbing process, and therefore would enjoy a higher status than other translators. Other members of the fansubbing group would also have high status, particularly if they are part of one of the bigger fansubbing groups in the fandom, such as Sunshine Subs. The history of Sunshine Subs as the first subbing group in the Prism fandom, along with its excellent reputation for high quality fansubs makes being a member of that group ever more coveted.

The desire to be recognized, which causes the community to be closed with strict rules, also creates another illogical gap that leaves many general community members confused. As we have seen, fansubbing is based upon a very important ethical principle that they are "made by fans for fans." This came up repeatedly in both the interviews and

surveys, and serves as the backbone and core principle of the online Prism fandom. However, closing the community and making it exclusive seems to violate this principle. The spirit of sharing is evident throughout the entire community and it bands the fans together as a way to answer the demands the Japanese cannot fulfill. Fansubs were born out of a necessity and strong desire to understand Prism. The international fandom has so far been built around fansubbing communities that have become bridges to the idol group. If fansubs are made to satisfy the demands, do the fansubbers actually want to share or do they want to be recognized? Again, there is no straight or correct answer, and the fansubbers can only rationalize it by saying that they *are* sharing to over 5000 fans – a substantial number – but the illegality of fansubbing, the rampant rule-breakers, and the desire to be recognized forces them to keep the community closed with set rules and regulations to protect the fansubs.

However, it is not the selfish desires of the fansubbers or the other rule-breaking fans in the community that is the true reason behind all these conflicting problems. The application process, the rules and regulations, and the layers of protection Sunshine attempts to hide under are constantly being torn down and exposed by the rule-breakers. Yet none of this would even be possible if it were not for the nature of the Internet and Web 2.0 itself. The very essence of the Internet is absolute freedom to have access to, manipulate, and share materials at will. This was what gave birth to the participatory culture and what created the prosumer. Prosumers are able to obtain and appropriate content as they please with the help of Web 2.0, and that is how fansubbers can do what they do. Ironically, the fansubbers have put themselves in the same position as the

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original content producers of Prism have. Prism was produced in the institutional environment of globalization and Cool Japan, but because the group was not deemed to have potential overseas, they were never exported despite a strong demand for it from Prism's growing international fanbase. Japan kept copyright of Prism and the law protected Prism's materials from being 'stolen' by the fans. However, with the help of Web 2.0 and the opportunities participatory culture has provided, deprived fans became avid prosumers and began fansubbing. Sunshine Subs and Miracle Nation were born and initially were ideal by being open and doing softsubs, yet that could not remain because there were problems of theft. Miracle Nation was closed and rules and regulations were tightened in attempt to take control of the situation and protect the fansubs yet still somehow share. The fansubbers are now in the same situation as the producers of Prism, trying to enforce unenforceable rules to prevent their work from being stolen in a lawless environment that has been compared to the Wild West. What had provided an opportunity for the fans to fulfill the demands themselves is now an obstacle they constantly battle with.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this case study was to provide insight into prosumer behavior and motivation, which is a topic that has gained increased attention over the recent years. The unique aspects of this case study include the institutional environment in which fansubbers have flourished. The globalization of Japan's export industries and the campaign for Cool Japan both made people around the world consume Japanese products, whether or not they realized their Japanese origins. However, although globalization and Cool Japan succeeded in creating a demand for Japanese products overseas, the Japanese producers failed to deliver certain products, such as their boy bands. Fansubbing communities were born in this environment, where there was an unfulfilled demand in a space where consumers could use Web 2.0 and the philosophy of sharing and co-creating to their advantage. The three research questions of this case study were as follows:

1) What are the motivational factors for the fansubbers of Sunshine Subs?

2) How does Sunshine Subs cope with the potential illegality of fansubbing?

3) What is the relationship between the fansubbers and the fans who watch fansubs in the world of the free Internet?

The fansub group, Sunshine Subs, and its community to which they exclusively distribute their fansubs to, Miracle Nation, were the sources of data for this study. I conducted in-depth interviews with 14 fansubbers of Sunshine Subs as well as a community-wide anonymous survey and a content analysis of one of the fansubbing projects Sunshine Subs has done. In answering the first research question, I found that

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there were four factors that motivated fans to become fansubbers and continue the activity despite possible legal ramification. The advent of fansubs itself was an act of retaliation against the controlling Japanese talent agencies and broadcasting corporations. It served as a way for fans to fulfill their own immediate demands for *anime* but overseas fans of Japanese boy bands also picked up fansubbing for the same reasons. The Japanese do not cater to international fans and many restrictions are thus put on how fans can have access to their idols.

By making fansubs, international fans are able to escape from the control of the Japanese copyright holders and can support their favorite idols through their creative freedom, which operates under the spirit of sharing the love of in this case, Prism. The fansubbers are also motivated to give back to the online community that had introduced them to Prism and thereby gain status among the community for being important contributors that allow non-Japanese speaking fans to gain full access of and understand Prism's media appearances. This leads to the third motivation. Because fansubbing brings fans who share similar passion and enthusiasm for Prism, fansubbers have been able to cultivate close friendships with other fansubbers. In the case of Sunshine, many are close enough to consider one another friends and even family. Sunshine serves as a support group with highly positive interactions as we saw in the content analysis results of Rainbow Land. This relates to the fourth and last point of motivation, in that fansubbing is a form of escapism and therapy for fansubbers. The act of fansubbing itself (e.g. translating, timing) provides fansubbers with a sole task that they can concentrate on for hours and forget about their stress

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However, the online fandom of Prism operates under the assumption that fansubbing is illegal (as well as the sharing of copyrighted material). This assumption affects everything that fansubbers do, from the type of fansubs they make to how they run Miracle Nation. The second research question focused on how the fansubbers deal with this illegality. Although initially Miracle Nation started out as an ideal open community, and Sunshine was able to distribute both softsubs and hardsubs, problems of theft spiked. This goes back to the second point of motivation, in which fansubbers receive social status for contributing to the greater community. In order to receive status, they must credit themselves in the fansubs so that those who watch can recognize their personal contribution. The theft of the fansubs, particularly softsubs, meant that other fans were taking credit for their work, causing Sunshine to shift to making hardsubs only and eventually, closing Miracle Nation and forcing fans to apply before being allowed access to the fansubs.

Rules have also been developed within the fansubbing community, which shape how fans should think and behave. These shape the fans' belief that fansubs are made by fans for fans, no one should profit from them, they should not be uploaded to streaming sites, and so on. These rules still operate under the overarching rules of the Japanese (i.e. that fansubbing is illegal) but provide an escape for overseas fans from the severe oppression and powerlessness that stem from not having as much access to Prism as they would like.

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The third research question was on the nature of the relationship between the fansubbers and the consumers of fansubs in the world of the free Internet. From the survey results, we have seen opinions that the strict rules of Miracle Nation have built a certain amount of resentment within the larger fandom, and there are many who disagree with the way this community as well as other fansubbing communities is run. Many do not fully understand why fansubbers need to credit themselves and make the fansubs exclusive, except as an act of selfish pride or a display of authority over others. Rules and regulations conflict with the sharing spirit and ethic that fansubs are made by fans for fans. However, because fansubs are made for free and fansubbers are volunteers dedicating their own time to make fansubs, they feel that the least they could ask for is a thank you and receive recognition for their hard work. This is especially true for Sunshine Subs, because the fansubbers of that group takes so much pride in the high quality of their fansubs. In the end, choosing to do hardsubs only and having a moderated community is Sunshine Subs' way of balancing between the illegality of fansubbing, the desire for recognition, and the philosophy of sharing (which echoes the greater philosophy of the free Internet).

The problems between Sunshine Subs and Miracle Nation are a product of the free and open nature of the Internet and Web 2.0. The Internet exists without any laws or rules and although people, such as copyright holders and fansubbers, attempt to create such rules, there is no effective way of enforcing them. Even if Sunshine makes every applicant promise to abide by the rules of the community, there is no guarantee that the applicant would and in most instances, there is no way to find out. Anyone with

intellectual property that can be appropriated and shared online faces this same issue, and

my case study has shown the best solution Sunshine Subs could come up with. It is an

ironic case of Internet lawlessness, in which the very same environment that allowed

fansubbing to be possible and to flourish, away from the eyes of the Japanese, is now

hindering the fansubbers' ability to protect their own work.

The limitation of this research includes the personal bias I have towards Sunshine

Subs. As an active member in the group, it is difficult to be unbiased in my assessment of

the group and of its reputation within the Prism fandom. However, my insider perspective

is also invaluable in characterizing the fans-turned prosumers and it was only by being a

member of the group, that I was able to conduct in-depth interviews with the fansubbers

as well as have full access to Rainbow Land and other sources of data necessary for this

research. Another limitation would be that I did not collect demographic data in the

survey that would have been useful in profiling Miracle Nation (e.g. in terms of age,

gender, geographic location). Such data would help to show where international fans of

Prism are located and how the popularity of a Japanese entertainment product has

disseminated worldwide, possibly due to the surge of fansubbing online.

This research contributes to the growing literature on prosumerism and helps to

answer some of the central questions in the literature, from prosumer motivation to how

the unprecedented opportunities of Web 2.0 affect consumer behavior. Fansubbing is a

unique case in itself because the potential illegality and conflicting desires and priorities

of the fans involved, but at the same time, this type of case is becoming increasingly

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common in an age of participatory consumption. It is a reiteration of an age old problem. "The phenomenon [of prosumption] itself is not new but is arguably primordial…Humans are by their very nature prosumers (e.g. those in hunting and gathering societies are best thought of as prosumers)" (Ritzer, Dean, and Jurgenson 2012:380). Even when Charles Dickens first came to America back in the 1842, he found that he was already famous for his literary works and was treated as a celebrity. That may have been a good thing, but the problem was that Dickens' works had not been officially or legitimately published in America. The power of the printing press and a lack of international copyright law allowed for pirated copies of his work to be distributed for free all over America without his permission, and there was nothing Dickens could do to stop it. In fact, when he suggested that people buy legitimate copies (so he could also be compensated), Americans criticized him for being greedy (BBC 2012). In the age of the Internet and Web 2.0, the issue has been transformed but the fundamental problem remains the same: how can you enforce rules in a lawless environment? This would be great for future research on prosumerism to focus on.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. List of Sunshine Subs Fansubbers Interview Questions

1. What position do you have in Sunshine Subs? Please describe your duties.
2. How important is your role in the process of making fansubs?
3. How long have you been a part of Sunshine Subs?
4. Why did you decide to participate in making fansubs even though it is a potentially illegal activity?
5. There are multiple fansubbing teams online, why did you choose Sunshine Subs over others?
6. What was the application process you went through to become a part of Sunshine Subs?
7. Sunshine Subs only subs Prism media. Why do you like Prism?
8. Do you feel that you should be paid for doing fansubs, why or why not?
9. What reasons does Sunshine Subs have for making the community a closed one with an application process?
10. What reasons does Sunshine Subs have for the rules of the community (i.e. no uploading fansubs to streaming sites or distributing fansubs without permission outside the community)?
11. How would you describe the relationship between yourself and other team members? Do you consider them acquaintances/colleagues/friends/family/etc.?
12. Have you met other team members in real life?
13. Through what mediums (online or offline) do you communicate with team members?
14. Do you find it hard to work with the team online, with no face-to-face communication? Why or why not?
15. What are some advantages/disadvantages to working purely online?
16. Please describe some conflicts you've had among your own team members. How were they resolved/How did they end?
17. Please describe some conflicts your team has had with Miracle Nation. How were they resolved/How did they end?
18. How do you view the position or importance of Sunshine Subs within the Prism fan community?
19. Why do you think people want to watch Sunshine Subs' fansubs?
20. How has being in Sunshine Subs affected your personal and/or professional life in general?

Appendix B. List of Anonymous Community-wide Survey Questions

1. Are you 18 years old or older?
2. Why do you like Prism?
3. Why did you want to become a member of Miracle Nation?
4. Why is it important to you that you have access to fansubs?
5. Are you a part of other fansubbing communities?
6. Do you think you should pay for fansubs? Please explain your answer.
7. Do you agree with the application process Sunshine Subs has? Please explain your answer.
8. Do you agree with the rules Sunshine Subs have in regards to their fansubs (i.e. no uploading fansubs to streaming sites or distributing fansubs without permission outside the community)? Please explain your answer.

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