ABSTRACT

TITLE:	Anonymous: Reimagining Deep Play in the Internet Age
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ABSTRACT: The proliferation of social interaction mediated through the Internet across the globe within the past two decades has altered the very way in which cultures form and interact. New cultures are evolving devoid of place and physical, face-to-face interaction, generating and flourishing through interaction limited to social media and online chat rooms. One such cultural group, Anonymous, a collective of computer hackers, has evolved out of the Internet to produce acts of defamation and resistance against those it opposes in an in-your-face manner, capturing international headlines and the attention of governments and revolutionaries alike. Through a literature review of Anonymous and computer hacker culture, as well as an ethnographic analysis of Anonymous' Twitter and Facebook feeds, it is evident that the means by which Anonymous communicates and engages in direct, daily actions of resistance or sabotage against its targets can be understood through the application and adaptation of anthropologist Clifford Geertz's concept of deep play. The hacks carried out by Anonymous pose high stakes for players in that the individual is on the line, much in the same way as Geertz's Balinese cock-fighters risk their livelihood and social position by engaging in illegal cockfighting. Just as the cockfight enables the Balinese to symbolically engage in societal critique and competition, the hacking executed by Anonymous functions to provide the same type of engagement while simultaneously extending this critique to directly challenge status hierarchies and the inequalities embedded within both global and local social matrices.