

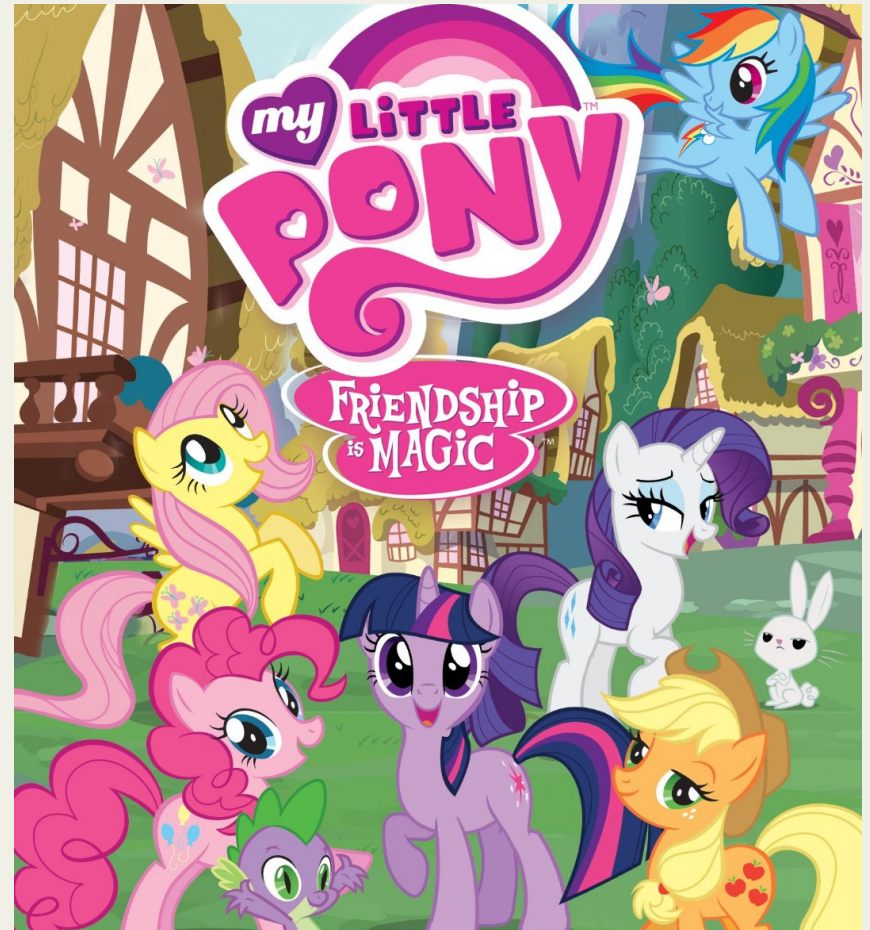
# THE BRONY CULTURE STUDY

& Computer Mediated Recruiting  
and Interviewing

By Jessica Marsh

# MY LITTLE PONY FRIENDSHIP IS MAGIC

- Created by Hasbro Studios, 4<sup>th</sup> Generation of *My Little Pony* entertainment
- Premiered on Hub Network in Fall of 2010
- Target Demographic: Girls 3 to 9 years old
- Anthropomorphic ponies who have magical powers and fly. Battle mythological creatures as well as negotiate slice-of-life dramas.





*My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic, Season 2 Episode 2 ,“The Return of Harmony”*

# WHO ARE BRONIES?

- Adult males. Average age 21 years old. International fandom.
- Formed approximately 2010-11 on 4chan. In response to Amidi's article about the end of "creator driven era of TV animation."
- Fans branched out creating websites and forums specific to fan community.



# WHY STUDY BRONIES?

- Little academic scholarship on Bronies and fandom when study began. Attempt to further research on Bronies and fandom as well as potentially support other research (surveys and content analysis).
- Unusual fandom: Adult males actively engaging with and enjoying text targeted toward children, particularly girls. Research on men engaging with feminized text is minimal.
- Relatively large fandom: 24,000 participants (Turner, 2014); 60,000 participants (Brony Study); 10,000 attendees (BronyCon, 2015).
- Active Fandom: Conventions, creative works, active participation online and offline. Indication of show having emotional/behavioral impact. Sincere audience.

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

## RELATIONSHIP TO SHOW

What drew Bronies to watch *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* and why do they continue watching? How has the show affected them?

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER FANS AND FANDOM

What motivates Bronies to participate (or not) in the fandom and if they participate, how do they participate? What pleasures do they gain from participating?

## EXPERIENCES WITH “OUTSIDERS”

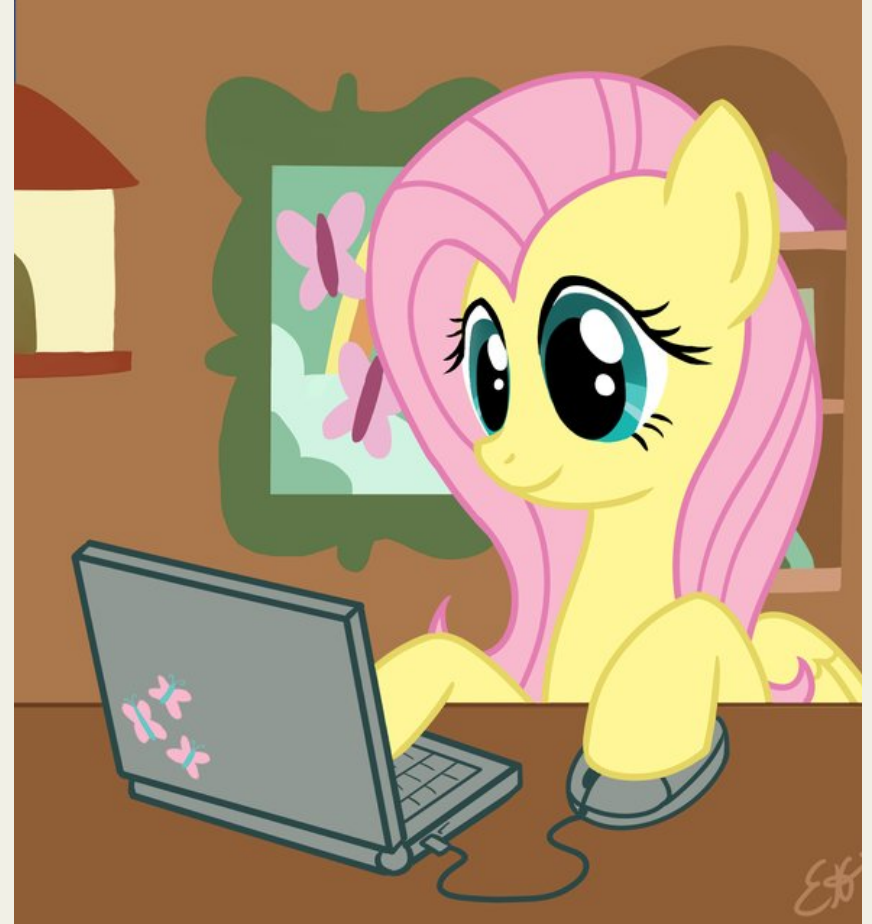
What types of experiences have Bronies had when sharing their “Bronyhood” with those outside of the fan community?

# COMPUTER MEDIATED RECRUITMENT AND INTERVIEWING



# RECRUITING BRONIES

- Establish online presence  
<http://thebronyculturestudy.com/>
- Start observing and interacting in fan forums
  - Restrictions to posting to outside content
- Posting study description to fan Facebook groups, Equestria Daily, and Reddit





# INTERVIEW PROCESS

- Preliminary questions that focused on research topic
  - Semi-structured, synchronous interviews using Skype
- Benefits:
  - Conduct interviews from anywhere, reach a wide demographic
  - Easily share images and links to fan content
  - Affordable, flexible on time
- Drawbacks:
  - Webcam quality and inability to read body language
  - Audio and video lag/distortion
  - Online distractions/multitasking by interviewee

# MY STUDY

- Qualitative
- Interviewed 46 fans; 34 males, 12 females
- Most interviews approximately 1.5 to 2 hours in length. Audio recorded.
- Interviewed most participants only once.

- Transcribed and coded till saturation, 10 interviews.
- Established themes by looking for...
  - Repetition
  - Metaphors and analogies
  - Transitions
  - Similarities and differences
  - Linguistic connectors
  - Missing data
  - Theory-related material such as active audience and media effects theories.

# WHY DO BRONIES LIKE THE PONIES?

- Visual appeal of show
  - Well illustrated, vibrant colors, manga qualities
- Engaging storyline
  - Characters overcome obstacles and struggles that are relatable to adult audience.
- References to pop-culture and geek culture icons
  - Dr. Who, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, Sherlock Homes, *Lord of the Rings*
- Emotional impact
  - Makes them happy, altered outlook on life

# IN THEIR OWN WORDS...

Trailer for documentary *Bronies: The Extremely Unexpected Adult Fans of My Little Pony*

