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INTENTIONED NETWORK CONVERGENCE:

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA IS REDEFINING, REORGANIZING, AND REVITALIZING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

By

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PREFACE

> All people dream, but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their mind, wake in the morning to find that it was vanity. But the dreamers of the day are dangerous people, for they dream their dreams with open eyes, and make them come true. This, I did.
>
> -T.E. Lawrence, Lawrence of Arabia

To all of the revolutionaries and visionaries, to my friends at Invisible Children, and to my friends pursuing the Kingdom of God in cities across the United States and world, I thank you for your dedication and for your daylight dreams. Who are we to change the world? Who are we not to?

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CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL MEDIA IN COLLECTIVE ACTION

I distinctly remember when my mother brought home our first family computer. On an ordinary afternoon in 1995, my brother and I watched, with looks of amazement, as my mother drew us a picture on Microsoft Paint and then printed the drawing for us. From that first primitive personal experience with computers, I could have never imagined the ways in which digital devices would come to dominate American lifestyles. The use of personal technology has exploded over the last twenty years, becoming a central aspect of American culture evidenced by the approximately 70 percent of U.S. households that owned at least one Internet-enabled computer in 2009.[1]

Citizens around the world are becoming increasingly digitized. From those early days when personal computers seemed extraordinary to today's wide array of Internet-enabled devices such as mobile phones and tablets, Internet use has become intricately involved in many facets of day-to-day life. Of the roughly 6 billion people currently living on the planet, 4.8 billion own a mobile phone while only 4.2 own a toothbrush.[2] One-quarter of these mobile phones worldwide are able to access the Internet and in the United States nearly 90% of the population owns an Internet-enabled cell phone.[3] With exorbitant use of to the Internet on both mobile and desktop platforms, it is becoming increasingly difficult to quantify an individual's use of the Internet in a given day.

The advent of social media has also been a tremendous source for increased use of the Internet and interconnectivity of the world population. 91% of mobile

Internet use and 79% of desktop Internet use is utilized for social networking on such dominant websites as Facebook and Twitter.[4] On mobile phones alone, the average American spends 2.7 hours per day engaging with social media with youth and young adult usage far outweighing this average. That amount of time is approximately twice the amount of time the average American spends eating in a given day, and a third of the time they spend sleeping.[5] At the beginning of 2012, Facebook had 800 million active users, a 200 million increase in users in a single year.[6] In just 20 minutes on Facebook, over 1 million links are shared, 3 million messages are sent, and almost 2 million people update their status.[7] Meanwhile, Twitter has a user base of 140 million, averaging 340 million tweets, short 140 character segments of text or links to other media, per day.[8] The number of geographically diverse people plugged in to the Internet and actively engaging in conversation is contributing to what many believe is a shrinking sense of distance between global citizens. The advent of our technology-inundated society has expanded interest in uses of these technologies beyond virtual diaries and scrapbooks upon which individuals broadcast one's ever-changing emotional state via Facebook statuses or tweets. Organizers and activists are increasingly learning how to co-opt and leverage online social networks, reinventing and revitalizing social activism, social movements, and contentious politics.

Beyond Memes and distraction: the Internet Utilized for Action

Broadly defined, 'activism' refers to the actions of a group of like-minded individuals coming together to change the status quo, advocating for a cause, whether local or global, progressive or not.[9] Activism can encompass social

movements and moments or sustained campaigns of collective action. Social movements involve a prolonged contestation of authority with interactions between the challengers and power holders,[10] with the end goal of ultimately achieving some kind of social change.

The Internet and social media, in their rapid and generally democratic exchange of information, represent flexible and decentralized communication infrastructures which are highly successful in helping to unite these like-minded individuals. On both Twitter and Facebook, the dominant social networking websites in the United States, all users are allowed to contribute and view content. Such personal content is then broadcast to those with whom an individual is connected. These connections constitute an individual's digital social network. Just as individuals develop social networks through shared affinities and experiences in real life, the Internet enables users to digitize their existing personal networks and connect with new users purely through the exchange of ideas and digital content online. Through the facilitation of rapid and cheap communication across geographical boundaries, the Internet can thus aid in transforming individual dissatisfaction to mass collective action quickly and efficiently. This exchange of ideas and affinity production represents fledgling stages of coalition forming and collective action, which is an integral first step in the development of social movements. Additionally, online tools can help social movements find and disseminate information, recruit participants, organize, coordinate, and make decisions. However, this greater ease and speed of online communication does not

necessarily lead to the durable and stable activist networks that traditional organizers argue are necessary for sustained social movements.[11]

The production of affinity groups through the organic exchange of ideas has been a topic of criticism due to the fact that these affinity groups often give rise to leaderless and amorphous movements. As natural affinity groups begin to organize their voices to enact change through digital means such as petitions, Facebook groups, culture jamming, and a host of other new additions to the repertoire of modern contentious actions, critics suggest that such movements or isolated acts of activism create little or no practical effect.[12] A pejorative combining the words slacker and activism, slacktivism, was coined to differentiate this social network powered activism, evoking some of the underlying tensions surrounding the continued development of Internet-based or Internet-aided activism.[13]

For better or worse, the Internet has made simply clicking 'Join Group' or 'Sign Petition' seem like a political act. This development points us towards looking beyond a pure analysis of the potential impact of social movements to a consideration of the role of personal engagement with a cause in discerning the future of activism. In fact, it is the widely lauded simplicity of online activism that scholars have suggested could undercut a movement's value, creating the half-hearted, meaningless activism, or 'slacktivism' noted above.[14] Further, while Internet scholar Evgeny Morozov acknowledges that the Internet can facilitate mobilization and collective action, he cautions against technological determinism that glosses over the importance of offline participation.[15] Other scholars have also questioned whether virtual interaction can prompt the levels of trust among

participants needed to support sustained collective action. Without trust, members are not deeply dedicated, so while a movement's support might grow quickly initially, that support is likely to soon fall off.[16] Some have found that virtual ties alone, without 'real' face-to-face interaction, are doubtful to be strong enough to successfully mobilize or sustain a social movement, as real relationships are considered more valuable and effective than impersonal electronic communication.[17]

Social media has the ability to instantaneously spread messages to the masses, unrestricted by time or space. The emergence of an internet-based 'Activism 2.0' alongside Web 2.0[18] applications provides an opportunity to utilize social movement theories to explain how online activism, organized via social network sites, can facilitate more traditional forms of offline activism that could be taken to the streets. Activism's power is not derived from the tools that fuel it like the Internet but rather its ability to mobilize people and inculcate in them a deep-rooted sense of commitment which leads them to publicly identify with, and fight for, the causes they deem most important. The varying degrees of commitment are indicative of how engaged an individual is with a given cause. Some causes face drastic political and societal opposition. Advocating for these types of causes often necessitates high-risk activism. Studies by Stanford sociologist Doug McAdam illustrate that the phenomenon of high-risk activism necessitates strong personal ties, or a deep level of personal engagement, to an issue or concern. Herein we find another potential pitfall of social media activism to radically alter issues. The

platforms of social media are built around weak ties and weak ties seldom lead to high-risk activism or substantive institutional change.[19]

Still, social media's success in involving a larger demographic of the population over a truly tremendous array of issues is promising and holds untapped potential for social change. Dismissing the a previously apathetic crop of casual contributors for their inch-deep activism punishes participants prematurely for doing good and dissuades them from future engagement let alone deeper or more high-risk activism. Perhaps, with positive feedback and affirmation for the even miniscule ways that these individuals are beginning to exercise their political will, these initial acts can be seen as a "gateway drug" of sorts leading to more civic engagement.[20]Though these actions may depart significantly from traditional methods of activism, they are becoming increasingly institutionalized in American society and politics.

Amidst all of the praise and criticism, people all across the globe continue to utilize social networks in making personal decisions, whether they have political ramifications or not. In a society that will not witness the end of the digital world in any foreseeable future, activists must learn to operate within or reshape current network structures so as to leverage the collective power of the Internet in the best way possible. As activists and organizers seek to maximize their impact, one is left to question, what is the potential of online social networks to create successful social movements?

Literature Review

Often, in the analysis of social movements and activism powered by social media sites, such analyses are completely divorced from the larger scholarly conceptions of social movement theory and collective action politics. Rather than viewing these social media movements as a new form of resistance altogether, Van de Donk argues that the Internet should complement, not replace, existing social movement tactics.[21] Digital social movement campaigns should be evaluated as traditional movements with communication and organization merely facilitated by the Internet. Very similar to the communication facilitation of social media, both radio and television had substantial effects on the ability of organizers to gather individual's to leverage their voice for collective action. Yet the Civil Rights Movement and other movements of the 60's and 70's that most prominently benefited from the development of the radio and television have always been analyzed using the traditional framework of social movement theory with which such movements as Marxism have traditionally been analyzed. To best discuss the potential of online social networks to create successful social movements, we turn, then, to several forefathers of the dominant schools of thought regarding awareness creation and mobilization in the political sphere.

Four prominent historical thinkers- Karl Marx, Vladimir Illyich Lenin, Antonio Gramsci, and Charles Tilly- all have made lasting contributions to organizers' conceptions of collective action. These figures are the fathers of classical traditions and their contemporary vestiges. Together they presented theories regarding the relationship between collective action and grievances, resources, cultural frames, and political struggle. Although their classical theories are rarely

linked to their modern counterparts, the evolution of these scholars' thoughts on social movements can be traced throughout the historical events which radically shaped them. The widespread activism of the 1960s caused a reawakening in the study of social movements and a drastic change in acceptance of such activist practices, which has ebbed and flowed leading up to the present. As social movements become more prevalent through social networking, these same theoretical narratives typically utilized to evaluate social movements and the development of collective action must be applied to new instances of social media mobilization and organization.

The Development of Solidarity Through Interaction

Coalescing individual opinion is a requisite step in the development of collective will but this aggregation does not occur naturally or without some intentioned advocacy. Seeking to understand the genesis of this thought in order to discern how effective social media is at catalyzing and supporting social movements, the thoughts and writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels provide an initial jumping off point. Marx and Engels epistemology conceptualized conflict as an inevitable entity built into the very structure of society. Karl Marx, writing about the alienation of the worker through capitalism focused on the cleavages of capitalist society that created potential for mobilization of the proletariat class against the bourgeoisie. Marx and Engels were both classical structuralists whose beliefs did not take into account the actual mechanisms that draw individuals into collective action, believing, instead that social classes would naturally develop collective allegiances and mobilize as technology development caused increased interaction

between individuals. In the case of the proletariat, Marx believed that the capitalist development of factories and assembly lines would force closer interaction of the working class. Naturally, they believed, this interaction would develop the relationships and resources necessary in order for these interacting individuals to act collectively, voicing their dissent. Marx describes this process as the "ever expanding union of the workers."[22] The only resources that Marx thought to be necessary in order to stoke a revolution were class-consciousness and trade unions. Due to the fact that Marx and Engels believed that collective action was rooted in social structure they neglected to consider other resources needed to engage in collective action, collective action's cultural dimension, and the importance of politics.

With no resulting revolution of the working class, Marx was left with a predicament that has continued to elude activists ever since: why members of a group that one would expect to revolt fail to do so, even given conducive historical conditions. Marx reasoned that a revolution failed to form due to a false consciousness deployed by the bourgeoisie to keep the proletariat in a state of ignorance. He maintained that, given enough time, the divisions within capitalism would lead to class revolts. Yet, through our observation of history, we know that divisions amongst workers and the integration of workers into democracy developed instead alongside capitalism. Through growing nationalism and protectionism trends, many workers and capitalists became allied suggesting that much more than class conflict was necessary to produce collective action. Without a clear idea of the role of culture and leadership in coalescing workers for collective

action, Marx oversimplified the political conditions necessary for the revolutionary mobilization he imagined.

Contemporary collective behavior theory seeks to revision Marx's structuralist conceptions of class conflict. While not fixated solely on the social cleavage of class, collective behavior theorists of the 1950s and 1960s focused on the manner in which mobilization could be motivated by central grievances which were believed to stem from underlying structural point of contention. For many years, American sociologists maintained that social movements and the political superstructure of society were unrelated, believing that collective behavior lies outside the scope of normal societal interaction. In direct contrast however, political theorists of the era were concurrently developing a theory positing the normalcy of interest groups as part of the political process. Eventually, attempts were made to synthesize these two theories within collective behavior theory. This synthesis concluded that societal cleavages produce different avenues for collective behavior. Among these suggested avenues were political movements and interest groups.

This theory of mobilization, however, is often rejected due to its inability to articulate how to catalyze and energize mobilization. Hindered by their conception of collective behavior outside of the normal interactions of society, these links to the political framework of the state were often lacking. These theories, as a standalone view on social movement genesis, were largely discarded following the politically charged protests of the 1960s.

Yet, many of the amorphous, and oftentimes more short-lived, movements that have manifested themselves predominantly through the use of social media

have come about purely through the very forms of organic connection deemed ineffective by critics. The Internet is an unparalleled transmitter of free and easily accessed information. Often lauded as a democratic medium, it enables anyone with access to the necessary hardware and an Internet connection to have a voice and broadcast their opinions to others around the world. Web 2.0, known for its interactive platform, includes blogs and the social network sites mentioned above, Facebook and Twitter. Such social network sites (SNS) are online services within which users to create a public or semi-public profile, build a network with other users with whom they share a common link, and navigate other users' profiles and networks. Allowing all individuals to have a voice and providing for a space within which each individual may express their opinions and frustrations make the formative step of "the manufacture of discontent" possible.[23]

Shared grievances and unification around issues of discontent are an essential precondition to uniting individuals together so as to leverage collective action. The free flow of information and the two-way communication of the Internet allow individuals to simultaneously distribute and consume information as evidenced by new developments in citizen journalism. Processing the information produced by others has the potential to align groups of people through the process of awareness creation as individual's paradigms shift. Various individuals who may have been previously unconnected may help to facilitate an increase in discontent and generalized beliefs regarding contributing factors that have created the current situation through the collaborative sharing of information.

The Importance of Leadership: Synthesis and Coordination

Yet, there is no proof that this exchange of information alone can produce the type of social capital and community ties required for the development and sustenance of a social movement. Low barriers to access and publication can actually have an adverse effect by providing a confusing, distracting surfeit of information. This massive collection, and potential overexposure, of information is not enough to catalyze a movement and like Marx, we are left with groups of people who should potentially be mobilizing but fail to do so.

In the development of classical theory, Vladimir Illyich Lenin was one of the first to successfully introduce a theory able to generate the movement organization necessary to catalyze mobilization. The first of Marx problems, that of leadership, was one of the prominent fascinations of Lenin, the father of the November 1917 Russian Revolution. Observing the failure of the working class to mobilize independently, Lenin believed that strong, central, organization could be the solution. Lenin attempted to resolve this lack of mobilization of the working class through the creation of a group of professional revolutionaries named the 'vanguard' that would serve as the leaders and voices of the proletariat. Through their leadership and the construction of a unified voice and group desires, Lenin believed mobilization was possible.

Though Lenin was able to mobilize a large number of people in the Russian Revolution, the grievances of the working class were dismissed and the social movement ultimately was ineffective in producing its desired change. The vanguard, in the form of he Russian Bolshevik Party, displaced the will of the working class with that of the party when they came to power. Scholars such as Tucker and

Tarrow argue that Lenin's amendments to Marxist theory are highly colored by the historical conditions of Czarist Russia.[24] Lenin adapted Marx's theory to the context of the repressive state and to the society it ruled which both inhibited the development of class-consciousness and collective action.

A more contemporary theory which grew out of a critique Lenin's creation of the vanguard can be seen in the concentration of 1960's and 1970's resource mobilization theorists on leadership and organization. As the 1960's and 1970's erupted with reawakened social participation, many scholars were puzzled as to how collective action was possible among individuals who were, in general, dismissed as self-interested. In his book, *The Logic of Collective Action,* Mancur Olsen solidifies himself as a prominent thinker regarding this issue as he suggests that a core group of people are necessary to mobilize others around a central interest of the collective good. Olson links this claim to rational choice theory as he attests:

> …unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests.[25]

Due to free-riding and the inability to withhold from members of a group based upon their contributions, this fact reinforces the rational, self-interested individual's tendency to not act to achieve collective benefits.

While the vast majority of individual's default mode of existence may be characterized by self-interest, a small group of issue-focused people may be able to rally others to a cause. Though much less strict a form of leadership that Lenin's vanguard, this de facto leadership cadre within a movement mirrors Lenin's assertions that there must be a marshalling force within a successful movement to

direct and inspire its members. Olson does postulate that within smaller groups individual and collective good often become more closely intertwined and are thus harder to differentiate. Such confluence of interests could negate the necessity for strong central leadership. However, as the size of a group expands, the need for leadership expands as various participants begin to free ride on the work of the central, active contingent and even minimal collective good becomes hard to attain.[26] Thus, Olson limits the motivations for collective action to the material and personal incentives typically associated with rational choice theory. This strong limitation of incentives for mobilization failed to explain the widespread participation of thousands of people who were striking, rioting, and demonstrating on behalf of interests that were not their own during the time of his writing.

Hoping to resolve this inconsistency, sociologists John McCarthy and Mayer Zald believed that structural theories of social progress could explain the existence of participation devoid of clear self-interest incentives. In their article, *Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory*, McCarthy and Zald argue that such participation is the result of the increase in resources available to individuals within advanced industrial societies.[27] They also postulated that the external financial support of movements in such societies was giving rise to a new kind of professional movement. This theory became known as Resource Mobilization Theory and succeeded in explaining in more concrete terms how mobilization may be manifested. Yet, such a theory of professional movements did not align with the new informally organized movements that continually sprang up across the 1960's

and 1970's including later developments in the Civil Rights Movement and newer movements surrounding anti-war sentiment.

Central organization such as that espoused by Lenin and Olson is of great importance in helping to combat the potential overexposure of information online in order to catalyze a movement. In order to mobilize against a given societal ill or situation, we must first solidify individuals' shared areas of discontent to form collective action. The broad sharing of information online may facilitate plausible remedies, necessary for the development of collective action, but a fundamental shift in hierarchy must occur in order for collective action to take place. Activists interact through a wide range of media and modes of communication online and the ways in which social movements balance and coordinate their presence in these various communication spaces is central to their success and survival. Bridging the gap between awareness-creation and fledgling organizing, the necessary management of these communication spaces requires the addition of an individual or group of individuals who may construct the available information in such a way as to encourage a particular action or program of action for those who share similar discontents within society.

Whereas most modern non-digital social movements have clear figureheads and agenda-setting executive leaders, decentralized groups have coordinated many internet-based collective action initiatives. Such decentralized structures seem to be facilitated and reinforced through the use of the Internet. Unlike other means of communication, the Internet cannot be centrally controlled and can thus facilitate the development of transnational, diverse, and loosely connected activist networks

that are now able to organize protests and wage campaigns without a formal membership base, physical headquarters, or identifiable leaders.

While the Internet can practically support such networks with its capacity for information seeking and dissemination, mobilization, coordination, and the building of a common identity, these capabilities should not be seen as inherent to online tools. Rather, they depend on the skills, attitudes, and culture of the activists employing them. Despite the absence of a formal and institutionalized structure, social movements can still engage in certain practices that allow them to mobilize but, maintaining an enduring presence through time is extremely difficult without some semblance of leadership. Regular face-to-face gatherings, collaboration around and the development of short-term practical objectives, open narratives, and the maintenance of a permanent space online provide activist networks with more stability and continuity. Many online social activist demonstrations may not have this central leadership at their inception but this leadership is later formed in order to sustain their collective presence through the coordination of action and aggregation of the large magnitude of information available online.

One recent example of such a development in leadership is the nurse-in movement that originated in Illinois but quickly spread across the United States. After being harassed at a Chicago Target store for breastfeeding her child in a Target store and, in the store employee's opinion, violating public decency laws despite being covered by a blanket, mother Michelle Hickman decided to host a nurse-in to protest.[28] Ms. Hickman published her intent on Facebook and was soon receiving notes of support and promises for solidarity from across the country. Her initiative

caught the attention of a pro-breastfeeding organization, Best for Babes Foundation that helped to disseminate news of the planned nurse-ins and gather over 6,000 mothers at over 100 nurse-ins in more than 35 states at Target stores.[29] Despite a fairly impressive turnout, the nurse-in had very little effect and gained very little attention. While this lack of attention has been claimed as a victory by some including nurse-in veteran Sara Shepherd who states, "It was nothing special, just a bunch of moms nursing their babies… It's a step in the right direction that we're going toward normalizing nursing." Other moms attested that this action has at least sparked a conversation. "It's going to take a couple of generations before it's a non-issue," Sara Shepherd concluded, but since that breast-filled day in December, no further action has taken or been planned illustrating the continued need for strong leadership and momentum building.[30]

The Value of Culture: Creating a Collective Identity

The charisma and organization of movement leadership, alone, cannot provide the momentum necessary to generate and sustain a social movement. Many scholars became disenchanted with McCarthy and Zald's dismissal of the role of grievances, emotion, and culture in the development of social movements. If the key social psychological issue for the resource mobilization actor centered on the problem participation outside of rational choice theory, this new theory sought to conceptualize an actor that was socially embedded with loyalties, obligations, and identities that reframe issues of potential support for collective action. In hopes of developing a theory more representative of the times- the 1960's and 1970's- major theorists such as Antonio Gramsci offered perspectives on the growing

decentralization of movements, informal participation, and grassroots participation as a form of democracy.

When Lenin's Russian Revolution failed to spread westward, European Marxists realized that, at least in Western conditions, vanguard forms of organization would not be sufficient to mobilize individuals towards revolution. Gramsci postulated that it was also necessary to develop the consciousness of the worker, conceiving of the workers' movement as a "collective intellectual" within which the primary task was to create a coherent working-class culture.[31] This creation of working-class culture, in response to the cultural hegemony of the bourgeoisie, would help to bond the working class. Gramsci acknowledged that such social developments would likely take substantial time and require a greater societal proficiency in cultural interaction. But, this cultural discourse and identity creation would prove instrumental in the success of widespread mobilization. Therefore, Gramsci's subsequent amendments to Lenin's organizational solution illustrated the importance, and a strong belief in, the power of culture.

Critics of Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony feared that this necessity for interaction over time could not guarantee that the working class would be able to effectively influence the ruling elite. Some worried, instead, that this continued dialogue between the two groups would result in greater influence of the bourgeoisie society. Without a theory as to how these interactions should look, Gramsci's theory fails to take into account the power that hegemonic culture can have in acculturating those outside of their class. Gramsci focused on the need to build cultural consensus around specific goals of the party but failed to take into

account the political conditions in which these poorly connected workers with few resources would be able to mobilize on behalf of their interests.

Framing and collective identity theorists of the 1980s and 1990s focused on the sources of consensus necessary in disparate movements. This shift to the enunciation of the importance of cultural and emotional frames in influencing how individuals perceive and relate to specific sources of collective behavior was a considerable divergence from McCarthy and Zald's largely structuralist annunciation of organizational structures. E.P. Thompson is one of the earliest recognized theorists who articulated this increased importance of cultural understanding within movement mobilization. Credited with coining the term, "the moral economy", Thompson worked to convey the necessity for a sense of injustice to be linked to a grievance in order to spark mobilization.[32]

Thompson's theory, augmented by Erving Goffman's concept of framing,[33] Bert Klanderman's concept of consensus mobilization[34], and William Gamson's concept of ideological packages,[35] began to articulate how and why individuals construct their participation in a given movement. These theories, taken as a whole, advanced earlier conceptions of the marketing of a moral issue. Such marketing takes place as organizational leaders embed narratives of grievances into culturally significant events or images that already evoke a given emotion conducive to leading a viewer to believe these narratives illustrate a just and important issue. The work of Michel Foucault, who famously wrote about the dimensions of power and their structural linkages, was instrumental in helping to understand how this creation of a movement culture could be an act of resistance. Foucault argued that

social movements were a way in which individuals could actively resist the imposition of particular identities dispersed by the ruling authorities and regimes. In advocating for the expansion of social movements, Foucault asserted that contrary claims to identity introduced a degree of subjectivity to the truth that authorities presented as absolute.[36] By undermining this truth, social movements are capable of upending traditional power structures and revising the representation of individual and group concerns within the political framework.

Within movements whose mobilization is conducted mainly through online social media and networking, this necessary cultural framing and strategic self-representation reaffirm the need for movement leadership to ensure sustainability. As acknowledged earlier, the Internet and these social networking websites in particular are inundated by incredible amounts of information in the form of jokes, movies, news stories, and musings. In order for a movement's claims to be heard or noticed within this cacophony of information competing for attention, such claims must be presented in a way that resonates with actors. By defining clear sources of unity and cohesion, movements are able to solidify their constituents and maintain regular communications, targeted to their specific interests and cultural frameworks.

One direct challenge that social media movements must deal with is the development of activism and movement allegiance as a form of social or cultural capital. In certain cross sections of the American populace, it has become 'cool' to be an activist or to be politically involved in some manner. Such a development can be linked to youth political efficacy campaigns like MTV's Rock the Vote that produced

PSAs starring celebrities encouraging youth voters that their voice matters. By linking positive participation with culturally hip individuals, Rock the Vote and other similar organizations hoped to make it a popular thing among America's youth to vote. For every action committed, people receive positive or negative feedback, whether explicitly stated or not, which dictates whether that individual is likely to repeat the particular action or a similar action in the future. This positive feedback for youth political efficacy has had a contributive influence on the development of slacktivism. Within given movements, participants may use distinguishing demarcations like custom avatars, or simply stated participation in a movement's initiatives in order to gain the reputation benefits from said affiliation without any action.

Commodity activism represents a more extreme development of this potential activism for the sake of social capital. In the United States, buying product RED items- ranging from Gap t-shirts to Apple iPods- signifies that an individual supports the Global Fund to help eliminate AIDs in Africa or wearing a movements t-shirt signifies that you uphold their beliefs and aspirations. While the development of commodity activism has also benefitted movements- it helps to demarcate movement activists and solidify a collective identity as well as providing necessary funding sources- it also presents significant challenges to the mobilization of a truly dedicated collective.

The Important Implications of Political Developments

Almost all assertions of truth in social movements construct meanings or particular ways in which to perceive events so as to facilitate this identity building.

While these scholars' work advanced our understanding of how and why individuals mobilize, the curious cyclical nature of social movements, wherein participation ebbed and flowed throughout time, remained unanswered. Modern theory has turned to the work of Charles Tilly and other theorists evaluating the cycles of opportunity and repression within political systems to explain this changing magnitude of contention.

The conception of politics as a component of society's superstructure that was shared by Marx, Lenin, and Gramsci remained relatively unrevised until the conclusion of World War II. Due to the highly political nature of the Civil Rights movement in which law and political representation were directly challenged, American scholars were quick to develop a theory known as Political Opportunity Structure which found its foundation in Tilly's *From Mobilization to Revolution*. The political apparatus of a country, Charles Tilly argued, has autonomy of its own in which protest could be seen as a political resource. Tilly proposed a "polity model" of relations among rulers, insiders, and outsiders in which he sought to articulate the power of political structure.[37] In this model, Tilly illustrates how political opportunity, political threats, and the perception of a regime's facilitation or repression of social movements can effect mobilization.

The current state of American politics is both allowing for magnified influence of social movements and the direct suppression of these same movements. The power of all individual's ability to produce and disseminate content has created citizen journalism and resulted in more power being wrest from traditional power structures in American society as the power of traditional media gatekeepers is

reduced. As social media allows for the greater connectivity of the citizenry, such connection and collective action is having substantial effects on electoral politics in the country leading to highly responsive candidates and policy makers. Candidates and incumbents, as representatives of the people, have ideally always sought to be the voice of the people. As the voice of the people is most strongly evident through social movements and the social media networks that organize them, these movements and acts of protests are becoming increasingly normalized or institutionalized within the framework of American politics. Such institutionalization is both a benefit and a direct hindrance to the continued success of social movements as social media's importance in reflecting the political will of the masses will not soon be overlooked but may be made more temperate by its inclusion within formal politics.

The power of the Internet to connect people across time and space has also increased the presence of transnational movements. Globalization and the diminished distance between people due to reduced barriers of communication have help to create the conception of a global citizenry. Advocating on behalf of those less fortunate around the world, Americans are increasingly lobbying their policy makers to help create and mandate change abroad. Such developments are reshaping international politics and international human rights jurisprudence. Amidst the continued economic downturn in the U.S., the American government is more than willing to deflect interest on the poor state of affairs at home to honor Americans' calls to action globally.

The 9/11 massacres of 2001 have also reshaped the American government's treatment of social movements. In the wake of these events United States police and federal security agencies ratcheted up surveillance of all manner of groups.[38] The swift passage of the U.S. Patriot Act soon after 9/11 also left little room for advocates of civil liberties to protest and has resulted in the steady increase in surveillance. The Patriot Act allows for the secret search and monitoring of private records and communications, often without any evidence of wrongdoing. Such an increase in surveillance represents the growth of the democratic state's capacity for suppression.

Social Media: An Attempt Toward Synthesis

Digital social networks have laid the groundwork for the increased effect and sustainment of successful social movements but have simultaneously crippled these same movements. While internet-based activism has allowed for a stronger alignment of individuals through the free sharing of information and the development of various strands of collective will, the glut of information contending for air time on social networking sites has also dissipated the potential effects of any of these groups' collective action. Digital media has also facilitated both deeper and more superficial engagement within particular movements, creating an atmosphere wherein some people are allowed to feel political while actually contributing very little to any political act in some movements while successfully raising committed individuals in another. The historical analysis conducted above reveals several important tendencies of social movements for organizers. From this historical analysis, it follows that when struggles revolve around broad cleavages in society,

bring people together around inherited cultural symbols, and can build on- or construct- dense social networks and connective structures, episodes of contention can transition into sustained social movements. When seeking to produce these social networks, a highly intentioned use of social media and collective identity architecture situated at the right moment of political opportunity is necessary.

Chapter Outline and methodology

Due to the newness of digital activism, most of the scholarly discourse surrounding the issue has tackled specific case studies. While analyses of President Obama's mobilization of the youth electoral cohort through social media in 2008 and the broadcasting of the Iranian revolution via Twitter are important events in the development of social media as a political and organizing tool, the constantly evolving use and relevance of individual technological advancements serves to isolate these events within their individual frameworks and time periods. Awash amidst this scholarly dissection of individual events and situations, the necessity of an analysis of digital activism in the aggregate has been largely abandoned.

This thesis aims to take up this call of analyzing the sustained use of social media applications in raising and sustaining social movements. Using the main components of collective action analysis outlined above- that is, the development of collective action through shared grievances, mobilization of resources and leadership, cultural framing, and implications of the current political state- I seek to evaluate three diverse case studies. These case studies were intentionally chosen to represent social movements of varying scale, age, and type of cause.

First, we turn to the 1999 Seattle protests of the WTO summit, the origin of the use of social media in mobilization. The case of the Seattle protests is a strong baseline from which to start our analysis as it pioneered the use of social media in contemporary modes of contention and successfully caused the WTO summit to end prematurely. These protests also introduced new forms of police surveillance and opposition that remain in strong opposition to the success of modern digital activism movements. Utilizing the Internet for coordination and the dissemination of information, the Seattle protests mobilized incredibly disparate groups around the same cause with no formal leadership. Allowing these constituent groups complete autonomy, the Battle of Seattle illustrates the Internet's ability to aggregate individual action and successfully mobilize under decentralized leadership structures.

To analyze new conceptions of social media activism and coordination, chapter two is a case study of the non-profit organization Invisible Children and its continued advocacy initiatives aimed at bringing peace and recovery to the regions of central Africa effected by the Lord's Resistance Army. The highly popular campaigns of Invisible Children, founded in 2005, frequently garner the attention of celebrities and policy makers through their mobilization of enormous numbers of youth across the United States and the globe. This mobilization takes place both online and offline through various in-person demonstrations, lobbying, and film screening initiatives and online through twitter bombing and strategic distribution campaigns. With a support network that exists primarily online, Invisible Children actively creates a distinct culture and identity for their followers that successfully

fosters unity and solidarity among its supporters. Utilizing a strong central narrative that creates a strong emotional connection with its participants, Invisible Children is able to invite new viewers into deeper interaction with their mission and organization across multiple media forms, equipping them with the necessary information to become an advocate rather than a passive slacktivist.

Jumping in

As digital technology continues to inundate our lifestyles, the necessity to understand and utilize it effectively is of increasing importance. Chances are, in the time it takes you to read this, you will be interrupted by your cell phone or consider checking your email or Facebook for the latest developments. In a world for so much of our attention is captured by these social networking sites, activists, organizers, and those hopeful for a more beautiful tomorrow must find a way to shift the focus to issues that matter. In order to understand where the future of social media activism is going, we must first comprehend its past. And so we turn to Seattle in 1999 and the revitalization of contentious politics.

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[1] Venkatesh 2010:1; Rainie 2010
[2] Daniells, 2012
[3] Hepburn 2011
[4] "Usage and Population Statistics" 2012
[5] Hepburn 2011
[6] Daniells 2012
[7] Hepburn 2011
[8] Weber 2012
[9] Kahn and Kellner, 2004
[10] Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1978
[11] Tarrow 1998: 12
[12] See Chatfield 2011, Siegel 2011, Davis 2010, Morozov 2011, and Whipple 2011 among many others for examples of the skepticism and criticism of 'slacktivist' movements.
[13] Gladwell 2000
[14] Morozov, 2009; Van De Donk et al. 2004
[15] Morozov 2009

[16] Van Laer and Van Aelst 2010
[17] Tarrow 1998: 142
[18] Web 2.0 applications include social networking sites, blogging, online forums, and all other participatory internet media developments
[19] Gladwell 2000
[20] Paynter 2010
[21] Van De Donk 2004
[22] Tucker 1978: 481
[23] McCarthy and Zald, 1977: 1213
[24] Tarrow 1998, 24; Tucker 488
[25] Olson 1965: 2.
[26] Olson 1965: 48.
[27] McCarthy and Zald 1977:1212
[28] "Michelle Hickman, Mom Organizing Target International Nurse-In To Take Place December 28th" 2011.
[29] "Target Nurse-In: Breastfeeding Chicago Moms Protest Store Policy" 2011
[30] Rochman 2011
[31] Cox 1993: 57
[32] Thomspon 1971
[33] Goffman 1975
[34] Klandermas 1989: 114
[35] Gamson 1989
[36] Foucault 1982
[37] Tilly 1978
[38] Tarrow 1998: xvi

CHAPTER 2: THE SEATTLE ADVENT OF INTERNET-SUPPORTED ORGANIZATION

Introduction

During the post-Cold War age, activism and more radical ideologies faded from public life as capitalism and neo-conservatism dominated the American political consciousness. Although the 1990's had been a decade of relatively contained conflict due to this obscurity of activism, November 1999 and similar anti-globalization initiatives marked a drastic shift in this trend. Converging on Seattle, a coalition of domestic and transnational groups spanning such diverse identities as students, feminists, anarchists, queer, and human rights activists came together to critique the current developments in globalization. More specifically, the movement targeted the neo-liberal structure of globalization and its negative side effects on sections of the global population. The World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are the main economic institutions that were erected to regulate the increasingly international scope of politics. Replacing the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the WTO regulates trade and provides the framework within which countries structure trade agreements while the IMF promotes international economic cooperation and trade. These underlying financial agreements direct and align this new international system of power and their structure and content have been the source of worldwide contestation. In the disruption of the Seattle ministerial summit of the WTO, the movement against globalization gained considerable traction and expanded the global dialogue surrounding international governance, the implications of free trade, and the

systematic inequalities that contribute to the growing wealth disparities around the world.

The Battle of Seattle, which this analysis will focus on, is just one constituent moment in decades of activism against the international development of globalization. However, the Seattle protest and its mobilization of such a diverse coalition of actors is often recognized as a pivotal moment, reshaping the way that protest demonstrations are conducted. The Internet's structure and scale figured prominently in the demonstration's success as it challenged and altered the landscape of political discourse and advocacy. The introduction of the use of the Internet in mobilization and direct action has many implications on the way in which social movements continue to utilize the Internet today. Therefore, an analysis of the advent of Internet-coordinated activism serves as a strong foundation upon which to build the larger analysis of the Internet's ability to catalyze and sustain social movements today.

Early Rumblings

Critiques of globalization and the use of the Internet in contentious politics did not originate with the Battle of Seattle. Third World leaders had publically questioned the wealth disparities among nations for many years but the power to connect individuals across geographic boundaries through the Internet helped to augment the voice of these developing world leaders through the leveraging of international resources and attention. Often regarded as the first use of the Internet in activism, the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico, served as an early indication of the power of the Internet to recast progressive grass roots

movements.[1] The Internet was also credited as a strong factor in the 1998 transnational movement to block another multinational regulatory agreement, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).[2] Scholars Aelst and Walgrave, in their study of the role of the Internet in the 'anti-globalization' movement, assert that though traditional means of protesting such as demonstrations were not absent from the MAI resistance, the internet proved to be a necessary force in maintaining the cohesion of the approximately 600 organizations that contributed to this resistance. While they admit that they cannot discern the Internet's influence in isolation from that of the other resistance efforts, they do make a case for its substantive contribution. In order to discern the influence of the utilization of the Internet they analyzed the lack of success of earlier comparable movements that employed similar in-person tactics. The only alternative factor, and therefore believed to be the reason for successful mobilization in this attempt, was the unifying force of the Internet.

Bolstered by the successful dismantling of the MAI, many of the participating anti-globalization activists set their sights on the upcoming ministerial meeting of the WTO. Asserting that the WTO was merely an instrument of multinational corporations used to harm small, economically developing countries,[3] these activists sought to block Seattle streets and make their disapproval of the WTO public. Relying on the Internet to coordinate thousands of protestors, the now famous Battle of Seattle disrupted the WTO summit with a chaotic mixture of demonstrations and confrontations. The disturbance, broadcast around the world, opened the door for a more critical dialogue on the motivations and ramifications of

globalization. Dismantling the positive marketing of policy makers that touted the benefits of globalization, protestors introduced contrary opinions and a new subjectivity into the political discourse surrounding globalization.

Utilizing the Internet to coordinate the use of age-old tactics such as lockdowns and new additions to the direct-action repertoire such as hacktivism, protestors succeeded in mobilizing 40,000-50,000 on the streets of Seattle, causing officials to postpone the opening ceremony of the summit and to end the meetings early. Protestors also stood their ground against increased police retaliation including the use of tear gas and the firing of rubber bullets.[4] Such resiliency against increased repression is largely credited to the Internet's empowerment of new methods of direct confrontation that utilized decentralized coalitions and nonhierarchical models of coordination.

Political Preconditions: Windows of Opportunity

The anti-globalization movement was a direct result of the globalization process, erupting out of an era of relative peace due to the window of opportunity the development of globalization provided for its own critique. The international phenomenon of globalization centralized power and influence, birthed new inequalities and resulting discontent, and helped to create the transnational movements that would soon seek to dismantle it. These factors were necessary preconditions for the formation of movement grievances and the resulting activism that rocked globalization initiatives such as the Seattle WTO ministerial summit.

As the international system began to subordinate state interests to those of larger globalization initiatives, the role and sovereignty of the state began to

diminish.[5] Power became increasingly consolidated in multiple state apparatuses such as the G8 and EU to which citizens had no institutional political access. Such centralization fostered a growing discontent within the American citizenry (and, assuredly, other nations polities) that was exacerbated by the intensification of worldwide inequality as a result of free-trade initiatives. These new global trade initiatives benefitted large multinational companies and revised the global economic framework. The wealth created during the economic expansion of the 1990s largely benefited the upper five percent of US families. This accumulation of wealth resulted in the top five percent of US families controlling 43 percent of the national aggregate income while only five percent of the aggregate was held by the lowest fifth of the population.[6] Global capitalism, movement activists claimed, was destroying the public or commons as it infiltrated many aspects of life. In Shepard and Hayduk's chronicling of capitalisms attack on the lifestyles of the American citizenry, they assert that, through global capitalism "politicians and whole governments are routinely bribed and bent to capital's will" and children are targeted as consumers since birth as they "are tracked… and fed advertisements and slogans in place of needed nourishment."[7] The tone of these critiques only begins to illustrate the disenfranchised pathos utilized by movement activists to frame their contention and politicize nascent others.

While globalization centralized international power and magnified global inequalities, it also produced a greater connection between the global population through the development of transnational communication, identification, and movements. In these ways, globalization was also helping to produce new forms of

protest, community organizing, and coalition building. Contentious politics scholar, Sidney Tarrow, believes that this greater international advocacy and identification produced new "rooted cosmopolitans."[8] These 'rooted cosmopolitans' are people whose acts of contention are based primarily in their own countries but also engage in transnational activism on behalf of claims that go beyond the nation-state. These actors, representing a novel coalition, remain domestically rooted, but may frame their demands in global terms. In this way they remain linked to the social networks that inhabit their domestic space, and are better able to utilize the resources and opportunities that place provides.

This rise in 'rooted cosmopolitans' is often termed, by anti-globalization activists and organizers, as 'glocalism'. Glocalism, a portmanteau of global, local, and activism, illustrates the new intersection of local and global concerns within which all political activism is based on the insight that every local action has global components and ramifications.[9] In the anti-globalization movement and the Battle of Seattle demonstrations, activists targeted international corporations as sources of local, national, and international cleavages. Local groups focused their attention on structures that appeared to be geographically distant, but that actually exert a powerful influence on local issues in the emerging conception of the world as a global village.[10] This broad conception of influence and connection between distant global citizens was made possible only through the communication infrastructure of the Internet, through which distant actions could be aggregated and like-minded activists could develop coalitions.

Bringing Together the Opposition: Unlikely Coalitions

With the advent of the Internet, earlier forms of communication utilized by activists such as phone trees and dependence on traditional media gatekeepers were abandoned in favor of email, listservs, and websites. Activists utilized the Internet to catalog negative effects of economic deregulation, attack major multinational corporations digital infrastructures from the inside, and to distribute protest details for those attending the Seattle protests. Discussion lists and listservs were utilized as key tools to educate and organize existing activists and to politicize those who were otherwise apathetic to the cause. Through the increased information on potential targets and allies, the anti-globalization movement was able to use the Internet to build large coalitions of actors and coordinate their movements despite only lose ties binging them together.

The development of a virtual radical community of independent media sites, listservs, news reports, video feeds, photo documentation, and online discussions and diaries, enabled this unprecedented coalescing of divergent organizations. A political party or national organization did not unite the anti-capitalist protest movement that garnered world attention on the streets of Seattle in November 1999. Rather, the demonstration was a convergence of many smaller organizations, each with its own specific target within the larger opponent of multinational governance. Each group shared the glocalist belief that the myriad of social problems they were each fighting against stemmed from the broader development of global deregulation.[11] The increased knowledge of these diverse targets, coalition allies, and the linkages of divergent social ills to globalization were all facilitated by the increased access to information available through the Internet. By bringing

together a multitude of different groups, the Internet was able to "converge… long-standing bundles of ideologies, practices, values, and targets."[12] Notable constituent organizations in the Seattle demonstrations included the Direct Action Network (DAN), Friends of the Earth International, Corporate Europe Observatory, the Independent Media Center (IMC), the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Focus on the Global South, the Ruckus Society, Public Citizen, and many others. In total, through the online distribution of an anti-WTO petition circulated by Friends of the Earth International called 'Stop the Millennium Round Statement,' over 1,000 activist groups representing 77 different countries signed on to voice their opposition.[13]

Each constituent organization participating in the Seattle protests utilized their website, along with 3rd party websites created specially for the protests, to help coordinate their followers and educate website visitors on the practices and negative implications of economic deregulation. The most popular websites helping to prepare for the protests were WTOWatch.org, SeattleWTO.org and Seattle99.org in addition to the new Indymedia website which was used extensively during the protests and will be discussed later. WTOWatch.org streamed live footage from within meetings surrounding the official WTO summit, giving the public full-access to the deliberations of the WTO ministers. These websites also feature fact sheets, talking points, and accommodation and housing offers and ideas, for those attending the protests. In this manner, organizers were able to help reduce some of the difficulties new activists or those not from the area might experience in knowing how to participate in the protests.

Beyond websites and personal email chains, listservs provided a targeted method of communication and became the social nexus for cyber activists. Two listservs, MAI-NOT and MAI-STOP, figured prominently in the resistance against the Multilateral Agreement of Investment in 1997 and were later appropriated to mobilize activists for the Battle of Seattle. Discussions on these listservs and subsequent others founded specifically for the WTO protests linked the anti-globalization movement to previous social movements. Specific listservs were also developed for target audiences: the organization Public Citizen hosted a WTO-HOST listserv for local Seattleites, TW-LIST for national mobilization, and WTO-INTL for international discussions. An email subscription discussion thread, listservs serve as a powerful way to distribute information to interested individuals, stoke conversations, and coordinate action through targeted distribution. Listervs were able to maintain an active audience of WTO critics and through efficient, focused, many-to-many interactions and discussion, were able to mobilize individuals and fortify trust between participants.

This strong coalition of diverse groups held incredible political influence as they were able to "emphasize their differences to potential supporters, while also emphasizing the commonality and cooperation of their targets."[14] Such a commonality in targets despite differing identities made these disparate organization's claims seem more universal and allowed most outside observers to locate an organization with which they could identify. A quote from a member of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) illustrates how the AIDs and queer community linked their individual interests to broader concerns of globalization:

> Fighting the AIDS pandemic had come to mean fighting institutionalized racism, sexism, and the class system, in addition to homophobia. It meant fighting undemocratic international trade laws, and unjust immigration system, the prison industrial complex, poverty, unresponsive government, budget cuts, a disaster in healthcare, and countless other manifestations of bureaucracies that put profits ahead of people.[15]

These diverse coalitions were directly antithetical to the identity politics of Gamson. While it was argued in previous movement with a similar confluence of organizations that the Internet provided for new unifying identities, we see that organizations actually maintained their individual identities and separate political agendas as well. These individual identities were loosely conflated but retained their full force in maintaining distinct collectives within the greater whole, establishing layers of identity with different levels of saliency. Such a coalition of labor, feminist, ecological, peace, and various anti-capitalist groups provided the basis for "a new politics of alliance and solidarity to overcome the limitations of postmodern identity politics."[16] Some of the ideological similarities between groups enhanced perceptions of reliability and trust.[17]

One active use of framing employed by activists that appealed universally to this conglomeration of activists was achieved through the sharing of quotes. By sharing quotes from previous revolutionary leaders, organizers were able to tap into preexisting coalitions and discontent to disseminate information and stoke contentious feelings. One such linkage to earlier revolutionary movements can be seen in the sharing of sections of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" in which he states, "… It is a historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily… We know painfully though experience that

freedom… must be demanded by the oppressed."[18] This quote from an oft-lauded non-violent leader of the Civil Rights movement was used by WTO organizers to ferment more radical ideas about opposition to be employed in Seattle and to frame the act of opposition as taking a stand against injustice in the international system.

Coordinated Chaos

The diverse constituent organizations participating in the Seattle WTO protests required the creation of an entirely new protest organizational structure. Seeking to respect the goals and values of each constituent organization, demonstration organizers sought to create an egalitarian culture of networking, consultation and consensus building rather than competition and formal hierarchy to govern the demonstrations. This resulted in a decentralized model of power causing the demonstrations to seemingly lack structure and cohesion from the outside. However, such decentralization allowed for greater flexibility and resilience and successfully baffled the repressive efforts of the Seattle police force for some time.

The Seattle protests deliberately created a decentralized model of power. Any centralized structures that did exist, were typically administered by the Direct Action Network (DAN) and served only to coordinate the autonomous decisions of the various groups. Thousands of participating protestors were organized into different affinity groups, clusters, and spokescouncils. Affinity groups were the smallest unit of organization consisting of 5-20 protestors and functioned as a discrete unit with the power to make its own strategic decisions. Among these decisions was how to protest: utilizing different forms of protests already part of the

civil disobedience cannon, including new uses of street theatre, locking themselves to structures, and linked arms to physically block the WTO ministers entrance into the summit. Affinity groups were then constituent groups within larger clusters, which were assigned to various predetermined geographic zones around the convention center where the WTO summit was taking place. Spokescouncils, meetings composed on one representative from each affinity group, were also utilized to coordinate the groups. Such a coordination method allowed affinity groups to maintain their individual authority.[19]

Early founders of the Internet desired for the Internet to be "inherently anti-hierarchical, a decentered system, seemingly without central power controls."[20] A Washington-based research center TeleGeography, in their attempt to map the architecture of the Internet, found that rather than sharing the structure of a large web as others had previously postulated, the Internet is a network of "hubs and spokes" wherein hubs are the centers of activity and the spokes are links to other centers which are autonomous but interconnected.[21]The protest organization of affinity groups and clusters in Seattle was an activism model that "mirrors the organic, decentralized, interlinked pathways of the Internet- the Internet come to life."[22]

The fact that these campaigns were so decentralized was the chief contributor to their success. Rather than existing as a source of incoherence and fragmentation, such decentralization served as an "adaptation both to preexisting fragmentation within progressive networks and to changes in the broader culture."[23] This strategy of decentralization is actually very similar to the military

strategy referred to as a 'war of the swarm'. The military definition of 'war of the swam' is a movement with "no central leadership or command structure; it is multi-headed" and therefore "impossible to decapitate."[24] Through the autonomy of individual affinity groups, police repression was thwarted as groups were able to move and react, contributing to the great resiliency and flexibility of the protests.

Media Distortion and Misrepresentation

Despite the substantial mobilization, media portrayals of the WTO resistance were often inaccurate. While it is possible that the chaos of decentralization prevented the media from comprehending the central thrust and goals of the demonstrations, just as it had baffled the police attempting to contain the demonstrations, protestors maintained that this misrepresentation was intentional. Shortly after the Seattle summit, an article chronicling this misrepresentation was published in Extra!, the Fairness and Accountability in Reporting organizations magazine publication. The Extra! article details the media's claims of activists being "anti-trade" rather than reporting on the complexity of many activists' stances. Other popular stories in the media sensationalized the few violent demonstrations that broke out in Seattle. In coverage of these violent actions, reporters classified all of the activists in Seattle as anarchists and failed to offer any critique of police use of pepper spray and plastic bullets in deterring activists.[25] Activists believed that the inaccuracy of the global media stemmed from the demonstration's conflict with the capitalist interests of the owners of mainstream newspapers and TV stations that benefitted from globalization. This resulted in the distortion of the activists'

initiatives and underreporting on the number of protest participants through systematic neglect and bias.

As a reaction to this misrepresentation, the Independent Media Center, which is frequently referred to as Indymedia, was formed. Indymedia sought to produce "autonomous media" and is recognized as the birthplace of citizen journalism. Exerting "soft power- that is media oriented measures that aim to attract rather than coerce,"[26] Indymedia sough to allow for the uncensored sharing of activists' experiences and perceptions of the demonstrations. Indymedia can be seen as a predecessor to Facebook in that it created a space where anyone with access to the Internet could spontaneously publish text, photos, audio, and video files online, facilitating the greater exchange of information and coalescing of like-minded individuals. Through activists' ability to disseminate information without the censorship of dominant media conglomerates, the consumer and producer relationships surrounding information and the power systems that underlie such knowledge flows have been upended. Indymedia received more than 2 million hits during the Seattle protests[27] allowing for individual protestors to share their motivations for protesting and combat the false portrayals of the mainstream media. Through this sharing of individual stories, the power of personal identification was also activated. As individuals with little knowledge of the protests witnessed mainstream media coverage, many sought more information online. Through their interaction with Indymedia's content, viewers might find protest diaries from someone with whom they could identify, allowing for easier alignment with the goals of the resistance. While sites like Indymedia may not make mass media

obsolete, they do challenge their narratives and introduce previously disregarded elements of public opinion.[28]

Social Media Beyond Coordination: Hacktivism's Dawn

While much of the Battle of Seattle's use of the Internet analyzed above was used to coordinate and direct existing methods of activism, the Internet also added several new forms of direction action. The most integral, albeit ethically questionable by some, was the use of hacktivism. Hacktivism was originally utilized by the Electronic Disturbance Theatre (EDT) during the Zapatistas movement.[29] Through the development of a software program called FloodNet which repeatedly requested the same page, the EDT was able to cause opposition websites to crash hindering their internal coordination and functionality. The same thing could be accomplished through the coordinated sending of emails to a given address or faxes sent to the same number, directly inhibiting the ability of those in opposition offices to efficiently respond. During the Seattle protests, world wide activists unable to physically protest in Seattle sought to attack their opponents from the inside by staging hacktivist actions like a virtual sit-in through the blockage of enemies' sites, and flooding opposition offices with emails and faxes. These stay-at-home activists were also instrumental in continuing to spread, via email and web forums, information regarding the negative effects of the WTO.

During the Seattle summit, the WTO utilized its own umbrella website (wto.org) to disseminate literature about the trade negotiations, moderated discussion room, and webcasts of delegate meetings. This website was soon the target of movement hacktivists who erected a version of the site with a realistic alias

url (gatt.org). This falsified site mirrored the official page in design elements and content but linked to websites critical of the trade negotiations. As individual's across the globe saw coverage of the protests through their local media sources, many stumbled upon this website, believing it to be the official website of the international political body. In this way, hacktivists were able to capture the attention of individuals and present a critical view of globalization initiatives.

Movement Decline: Serial Protests and Coalition Divergence

While the decentralization of the Seattle WTO protests aided in the effectiveness of this initial action, it also contributed substantially to the downfall and eventual diminishment of this transnational activism against globalization over time. Successfully shutting down the WTO ministerial summit on the streets of Seattle was undoubtedly a success in challenging global deregulation. However, this summit was a small aspect of a larger drive toward globalization. The success of the early demonstrations against globalization at the MAI resistance and Seattle demonstration energized activists and helped to produce strong turnouts at World Bank and IMF protests in Washington, D.C. in April 2000 and protests against the Republican and Democratic Party conventions in the summer of 2000. Yet, despite large numbers of activists in attendance, these protests became woefully fractured, undermining their influence.

The weaknesses of the multi-headed system of decentralized power utilized in Seattle was clearly demonstrated in the World Bank and IMF protests in Washington, D.C. Attempting to blockade delegates entry to the summit, much as they had in Seattle, affinity groups secured all intersections leading to the summits

location. However, due to new police monitoring of the same listservs and websites used to coordinate activists,[30] delegates had been transported to the summit by 5 a.m., preemptively thwarting the blockade attempts. When this discovery was made my activists, a spokescouncil meeting was called and opposing ideas divided the protesting population. Some affinity groups desired to remain in location, ready to block delegates exit from the summit while others were in favor of abandoning the blockade and joining in a large demonstration at the Ellipse. Retaining full autonomy amongst individual affinity groups, this division of protestors occurred and the blockade fell through as delegates were able to exit the summit through the unsecured intersections.[31]

Even the democratic media of listservs, with low barriers to entry and supposedly no restrictions on redistribution came under fire. Initial concerns were voices regarding the necessity of listserv moderators and administrators as activists began to question whether these administrators weren't just a different iteration of mass media monitoring and the power relations implicit within such monitoring. The censorship that some feared this administrative power permitted was utilized by Seattle listserv moderators who "discreetly dropped" xenophobic parties who had begun to associate themselves with the Seattle protests.[32] This moderation undermined the free flow of ideas that many believed the Internet created and led others to believe that "online hierarchies mirror offline hierarchies" as important decisions are made by a few actors, effecting the participation and perception of the broad populations mobilized through online mediums.[33]

Additional problems that beleaguered anti-globalizations activists were their imprecise goals and the evolving tactics of police resistance efforts. The diverse coalition of actors mobilized around the Seattle protests were unified under an enormously broad target: corporate greed and globalization. While this broad target allowed a plethora of organizations to lend their support and influence, it also created an overwhelming number of opportunities for next steps. The anti-globalization movement found itself in a tailspin of anxiety as activists continually questioned what came next and how to keep up their ideological momentum. With various organizations calling for demonstrations to be held against any action demonstrating capitalist greed, a "culture of serial protesting" took over and led to activist burnout.[34] National government constituents started to restructure their summits and meetings and the police protection that came along with them as it became clear that these central meetings provided natural windows of opportunity for those in opposition. Police began to monitor the same digital networks that were utilized to coordinate activists so that police could better prepare to quash activist demonstrations. Additionally, in order to subvert and limit the influence of activists, the WTO held its next summit in Doha, Qatar. Doha was strategically chosen for its track record of firmly containing demonstrations.[35]

Moving Beyond Globalization: Seattle's Lessons

In a wave of contention, anti-globalization protesters attacked targets beyond the nation-state and began to experiment with new and imaginative modes of action fueled by the Internet. They combined peaceful and violent performances, face-to-face and electronic mobilization, and domestic and transnational actions.

Yet, the lack of ability to sustain this momentum for a prolonged period of time points to the inherent weaknesses of Internet-orchestrated campaigns at the time. The internet-based aggregation of organizations within the anti-globalization protests had practically no permanent central command and depended on virtual networks. Such networks allow for autonomy at the base but fail to provide a mechanism to ensure the organizations continuity. The communication culture that dominates the Internet is highly successful at disseminating information quickly but is less conducive to synthesis of such information and creating strong personal ties to movements.[36] The diverse coalitions that were mobilized in Seattle strongly supported this belief as well, facilitating additional face-to-face meetings or gatherings prior to and during the WTO summit. Such meetings were deemed "necessary in order to broker the trust required of engaging in long-term organizing" and represent an area of growth for internet-based campaigns seeking to catalyze and sustain social movements at present.[37]

These limitations illustrate the potential stumbling blocks of relying on technology and the neutralized communication that may take place across the web in mobilizing and sustaining movements. Though coalition building may continue unassisted, any substantive action and real world demonstration requires more direct framing and leadership. Substantial technological development has taken place since the Seattle summit and the advent of social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter have served to expand the connective power of the Internet tremendously, enabling new forms of internet-based activism. However, as these technologies have inundated American society, they have led to new problems for

organizers such as information overload, misinformation, and slacktivism. To examine the power of these newer Internet applications this analysis turns to March 2012 and the unprecedented explosion of an online documentary called "Kony 2012," produced and strategically distributed by American-based youth advocacy organization Invisible Children.

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[1] Kahn and Kellner 2004: 87
[2] Van Aelst and Walgrave 2004: 100
[3] Van Aelst and Walgrave 2004: 102
[4] Eagleton-Pierce 2001
[5] Shepard and Hayduk 2002: 2
[6] Shepard and Hayduk 2002: 4; Freeman 1990
[7] Shepard and Hayduk 2002: 4
[8] Tarrow 2011: 238
[9] Shepard and Hayduk 2002: 5
[10] Shepard and Hayduk 2002: 5
[11] Klein 2002: 266
[12] Wood and Moore 2002: 22
[13] "Stop the millennium round!" 1999
[14] Wood and Moore 2002: 30
[15] Shepard and Hayduk 2002: 13
[16] Kahn and Kellner 2004: 89
[17] Levi and Murphy 2006: 663
[18] Shepard and Hayduk 2002: 16
[19] Descriptions of the structure of the Seattle protests are largely derived from Starhawk 2002: 52-56 and Klein 2002
[20] Eagleton-Pierce 2001: 333
[21] Klein 2002: 267
[22] Klein 2002: 267
[23] Klein 2002: 269
[24] Klein 2002: 270
[25] Ackerman 2000
[26] Nogueira 2002: 292
[27] Kavada 2010: 106
[28] Scholz 2010: 23
[29] Eagleton-Pierce 2001:334
[30] Klein 2002: 271
[31] Timeline of events adapted from accounts in Klein 2002 and Shepard and Hayduk 2002
[32] Eagleton-Pierce 2001: 334
[33] Eagleton-Pierce 2001:334
[34] Klein 2002: 271
[35] Eagleton-Pierce 2001: 336
[36] Klein 2002: 270
[37] Wood and Moore 2002: 26

CHAPTER 3: INVISIBLE CHILDREN'S KONY 2012, INFAMY TO MOBILIZATION

Introduction

The Battle of Seattle and its use of Internet applications such as listservs and independent websites to coordinate activists is one example among many of an internet-supported movement. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, technology and social media have inundated our society as they have become a central medium through which people connect, converse, and coordinate. As this prevalence of social media has taken hold, new internet-based organizations, diverging from those that were merely used the Internet to assist with coordination and the dissemination of information, have surfaced. Though these digital movements and the actions that they undertake may drive actions in the real world, they exist and mobilize individuals through predominantly online means. The challenge of this new era of social media organizing is in creating digital collective identities necessary for these movements to materialize offline. While movement scholars like Malcom Gladwell reject this online activism and argue that in-person social interaction is necessary to foment collective action,[1] some organizations are defying these requirements, creating highly active online communities that effect real change across society and the globe. Invisible Children (IC)[2] is one of the most lucrative of these new-media driven humanitarian campaigns.[3] Their strategic methods used to mobilize American and international youth support against Joseph Kony and crimes of the Lord's Resistance Army is the subject of this chapter's analysis.

Joseph Kony, less than two months ago, was a name that only a small percentage of the American populace would have been able to identify. Today, however, Joseph Kony and his violent campaign of terror through Uganda, the Central Africa Republic, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are famous. Grandparents, teenagers, elementary schoolers, scholars, and a slew of social groups in between are now aware of Joseph Kony's actions and are calling for their governments to respond. This newfound attention and groundswell of support are almost entirely the result of Invisible Children. *KONY 2012*, a 30-minute hipster-chic documentary produced by IC and released on March 5, now has over 105 million views on YouTube and Vimeo, claiming the title of the most viral video of all time. *KONY 2012* has been reported about by every major media source. While not all of the coverage has been positive, the mobilization of Americans around this distant concern is causing many non-profits and other social movements to take note of the social media practices that have skyrocketed IC and its claims into the spotlight. With its mission linked closely to the narrative story of its founders, Invisible Children is able to mobilize supporters around a story that constantly evolves and matures with them offering many entrance points for a broad range of people. This narrative, alongside Invisible Children's assertion of tangible action steps framed as moral imperatives, curated member culture, and recasting of the responsibilities of being a global citizen, are responsible for Invisible Children's unparalleled success.

Introduction to Invisible Children and the Lord's Resistance Army

Uganda has faced political upheaval, social unrest, and repression since its independence from Britain in 1962.[4] Human rights violations accompanied the shifting heads of state throughout the country's past and continue in the current rule of President Yoweri Museveni as various armed insurgencies have sought to challenge his rule. Joseph Kony emerged, as the leader of The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), one such insurgency group from Northern Uganda, has raged since 1986 against the Ugandan government.[5] A violent rebel militia, the LRA is accused of murder, the forceful conscription of children as soldiers, and sexual enslavement.[6] Joseph Kony tops the International Criminal Court's list of indicted war criminals and the LRA has been classified as a terrorist group by the United States government.[7] Since 2008, when the U.S. began cooperating with the Ugandan government in attempting to arrest Kony, more than 3,400 civilians have been abducted, 2,400 others were killed, and over 400,000 have been displaced from their homes.[8] Little success has been had in bringing justice to those living in the wake of his atrocities and this rampage continues as Kony and the LRA have moved out of Uganda and into the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Invisible Children is a US-based advocacy organization founded in 2004 by filmmakers Bobby Bailey, Laren Poole, and Jason Russell that strives to awaken people across the globe to the existence of Joseph Kony and his vicious army. The three filmmakers, following their graduation from the University of Southern California's film program, traveled to Darfur in hopes of documenting the Sudanese genocide. Following streams of refugees fleeing Darfur, they found themselves in

northern Uganda amidst a conflict they knew nothing about. Their first film, *Invisible Children: Rough Cut*, documents this story and their unlikely friendship with several of Kony's escaped child soldiers.[9] Just four years after its founding, Invisible Children employed 90 staff members conducting development work on the ground in Uganda and 30 U.S. staff helping to drive the organization's advocacy campaigns. In three years, the organization went from raising roughly $300,000 to $10 million.[10] Social media, praised for its democratic exchange of information, has also contributed to the democratization of fund-raising. Rather than entire campaigns being supported by a few multi-million dollar donors, many current campaigns are funded through many smaller donations from large groups of participants. At Invisible Children, this can be seen in the Tri campaign. Made of mostly college-aged American youth with relatively little money to spare, members donate three dollars a week through automatic money transfers. This example of many small constituent donations to the goals of an organization is a small picture into the same effect that amplifies the opinions of IC through the aggregation of its individual supporters voices.

Invisible Children's organizational efforts are broken into three distinct categories: the movie, the movement, and the mission. Started by filmmakers, IC believes in the power of stories and produces high production quality films to educate, mobilize, and empower viewers. These videos provide an entry point into the organizations other initiatives by allowing viewers to connect to how other individuals have responded to the crimes of the LRA. IC's movement refers to the

event production and media campaigns that the organization hopes will increase awareness and promote support on the international peace process.

The movement consists of volunteer staff, interns, roadies, and local club members in high schools and colleges. Roadies are volunteer workers, typically college-aged, who tour the country for 3 months at a time screening IC's films at local schools and churches. The roadies, as representatives of the larger organization, are able to build local trust networks that support the central organization of IC. Through this local connection, IC is able to develop networks of people who can share the organization's views and mobilize others through personal interaction. These local networks are also utilized through participation in IC's performative campaigns including the Global Night Commute, Displace Me, the Rescue, 25 and the upcoming Cover the Night. Each of these campaigns is orchestrated to attract media attention and demonstrate support for IC's initiatives by gathering supporters, in mass, across the country and globe.

The mission of IC is comprised of all of the organizations development and rehabilitation work in the LRA affected regions of eastern and central Africa. These include programs, all led and implemented by IC's African employees, for protection of civilians, amnesty and surrender initiatives for combatants, rehabilitation and reconstruction projects, and educational programming and mentorship. Through these programs over 4,000 students have received an education, rehabilitation centers have been built and funded, and microfinance campaigns have empowered local women to provide for their families. Through another program to help communicate safe ways for combatants to defect from the LRA, IC has developed

radio broadcasts and collaborated with the United Nations in designing culturally sensitive fliers to be airdropped from helicopters and hidden throughout forested regions that the LRA is known to traverse. These programs have led to many successful defections including that of one of Kony's wives. Additionally, IC has developed an Easy Protection Warning Plan called the LRA Crisis Tracker that tracks the movements and actions of the LRA through citizen reporting, allowing for the notification of vulnerable communities. The LRA Crisis Tracker, available as an iPhone app and online at any time, is saving lives in Africa and serving to educate those around the globe, in real time, of the continued crimes of the LRA.

Indicative Past Successes and Mobilizing Moralist Constructions

Many current critics of Invisible Children cite their programs and use of social media as forms of slacktivism. These critiques reveal a lack of faith in the effect of online mobilization and IC's ability to mobilize their strong online community to act in real life. Both ideas, however, can be largely dismissed due to the successful mobilization of IC supporters that led to the passage of the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act (S. 1067/HR. 2478).

This incredible feat was achieved through one of IC's demonstration campaigns called The Rescue in which supporters camped out in cities across the globe and refused to leave until their individual event raised a certain amount of money, was covered by local news affiliates, and a "mogul"- a celebrity or person of political importance- attended the event and pledged their support of the campaign. This event brought enormous attention to the organization as the event was broadcast by Oprah after a 7-day sit-in at her studios and coverage on most major

news conglomerates. Riding this momentum, approximately 1,500 IC supporters converged on Washington, D.C. and, in conjunction with the advocacy organizations Resolve Uganda and the Enough Project, lobbied their senators and congressional representatives on behalf of S. 1067 and HR. 2478.

Cited by TIME magazine writer Alex Perry as "one of the greatest advocacy campaigns of all time, a true tail-wag-the-dog story," this event was able to mobilize enough support to assert such substantial political pressure in Washington that both the Congress and the Senate passed the bill. This new law called for the President to develop a strategic plan to apprehend top LRA leadership and assist in recovery initiatives in the affected regions.[11] This law is the most widely cosponsored Africa-related piece of legislation in the last 37 years[12] Barack Obama's strategic plan, a direct result of this legislation, resulted in the President's decision to deploy 100 special operations advisors to central Africa.[13]

Ironically, the ability of social media tools to facilitate low-cost data transmission, group formation, and conversation that has led to the successful mobilization in Seattle, various IC campaigns, and many others, has also manifested an increasingly pronounced set of interrelated problems. These problems include over-communication and miscommunication on the part of organizers who send messages and information overload on the part of volunteers who receive them. While the costs of transmitting and storing information have declined dramatically, the human cost of processing information has not seen substantial flux. In the broader landscape of the Internet, attention is perhaps the scarcest commodity of all. Due to the immediacy of the Internet and its fueling of our instant gratification

society, individual's regularly turn to established hierarchies, authorities, and their own trusted networks to help them sort information and establish meanings. This shift has driven IC and similar advocacy organization to deliver simplified, relevant, and actionable information and to develop strong identity and community frameworks for their constituents. While this simplistic and actionable packaging of events better facilitates mobilization, it prevents the deeper and more nuanced understanding of situations that typically facilitates a higher level of engagement with a cause.

The roadies, mentioned above, that travel across the country conducting screenings of IC's films, have been instrumental in the development of the local trust networks and personal relationships with the larger organization of IC that allow them to capture individual's attention amidst the immense amount of online information. The founders of IC, roadies, and Ugandan citizens who regularly travel with roadie teams as advocates, have spent the last 8 years meeting their supporters. These relationships have been highly influential in developing participant trust and identification with the organization. Holding 3,000 events a year in various churches and schools, publishing highly personal videos about their own attempts at reconciling their privileged position in our globalized world with the atrocities in central Africa, and maintaining active relationships through the digital world of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have allowed for the creation of a deeper level of association and sense of belonging among participants.[14] This belonging has been augmented through the online acculturation of followers through IC's blog that features their favorite music, websites, art, and various online

diversions. “To be a member of Invisible Children,” Laura Swartz asserts in her analysis of IC identity formation, “means to be a viewer, participant, wearer, reader, listener, commenter and participant in the various activities that make up the movement.”[15] The Civic Paths Project, a research group led by scholar Henry Jenkins at the University of Southern California, conducts research on youth and participatory politics. Jenkins and his contributors describe this “world building” as transmedia storytelling in which elements of a movement are “dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels.”[16] Though these actions are seemingly unrelated to the mobilization of awareness of Joseph Kony’s rebel army, this world building serves an important function in crafting the identity of IC’s followers and the unification of a mobilized collective.

Through the development of their own epistemology or moralistic construction of belonging in our globalized society, IC has been able to present their claims as moral imperatives, necessary for the protection of “our friends” in Africa.[17] A rallying idea that has persisted throughout IC’s existence has been that “where you live shouldn’t determine whether you live.”[18] Such an idea reflects the same type of global citizen identification as was developed in the Seattle WTO protests. This broader conceptualization of citizenship blurs borders and subordinates state sovereignty. Marking a scale shift in identification, this global conceptualization of identification transforms the issues in central Africa into global issues for the whole of humanity.

This broader conceptualization within the collective identity of IC supporters has been reaffirmed and cemented through the framing and creation of the ‘fourth

estate'. Recently, IC has turned to the French revolution as a strong rallying symbol. In the French Revolution, the polity conceived of society in 3 separate estates or factions: the first estate was comprised of the clergy, the second of the nobility, and the third of the rest of the population. It was the third estate, that of the common man, that rose up during the French Revolution and fought for the development of rights for all citizens. IC has united its supporters around the concept of the fourth estate; expanding the defense of liberty and equality to the global stage. More than just demanding the respect of their own rights, members of the fourth estate demand the rights of others regardless of place or identification. Citing the democratization of information through social media as a mechanism that has "allowed the people of the world unprecedented access to knowledge, self publication on a global scale, and emotional connection across borders." This development has led to the erosion of "the 'otherness' that has always come from distance and cultural distinction" and is uniting people along the lines of their "common humanity."[19] This framing of identification with the rest of the world is portrayed as a moral responsibility or imperative. The usage of strong and inclusive language such as "our" and "we" throughout IC's various campaigns and media links any viewer to this new moralistic imperative and therefore frames the lack of engagement in their mission as a deliberate disregard for humanity.

Kony 2012: A Recipe for Mobilization

The newest addition to IC's collection of films, *KONY 2012,* was born from the idea that, in order to bring Joseph Kony to justice, the world must first be aware of his crime. IC's founder, and narrator of the *KONY 2012* video affirms this goal

early on in the film when he states, "99% of the plat doesn't know who Kony is. If they did, he would have been stopped years ago."[20] In order to achieve this end, the accompanying campaign around the film, is aimed at making Joseph Kony famous, relying on its viewers to share the story through social media and their personal interactions. Clear instructions in the film encouraged viewers to contact 20 predetermined "culturemakers" and 12 policymakers who could assist in increasing the visibility of Joseph Kony and the LRA.

The immense popularity of the film that ensued surprised both IC and people around the world. IC had set a goal for "Kony 2012" to reach 500,000 people in 2012 and was as amazed as the world population when it reached an astonishing 52 million views in the first four days on going online.[21] Dominating 6 of the top 10 global trending topics on Twitter and surfacing on many Facebook feeds across the country, that number has only increased since the films original debut on March 5, 2012. As "Kony 2012" took over the social media landscape, mainstream media outlets including most prominent newspapers, magazines, and television news stations featured the campaign. This reinforcement and dissemination of the "Kony 2012" video continued to bring new viewers to the film with over 105.5 million total views as of April 15, 2012.[22] YouTube site statistics of the viewership of the film illustrates the strong influence of youth: the video was heavily viewed from mobile phones and is most popular among 13-17 year old females and 18-24 year old males.[23] The Internet was found to be more than three times more important in sharing the film for young adults than traditional media such as television, newspapers, and radio by the Pew Research Center's Internet and American Life

Project. Only 10% of young adults surveyed reported discovering the film through these traditional mediums while close to 35% cited social media and Internet sources as their mode of discovery.[24] IC's target audience and main supporters have, throughout their existence, been predominantly American youth. Some of the success of the "Kony 2012" film comes from its intentional crafting to speak to this target audience- using youth language, influencers, visual style, and tone. Yet, this same focus that has allowed IC to connect with people in this busy, tuned out world but has opened also opened IC up to newfound criticisms over simplification.

Going Viral

While much of the initial media buzz around "Kony 2012" portray the wild popularity of the film as a spontaneous explosion, the "Kony 2012" did not actually go viral. Multiple scholars who have analyzed the massive spread of IC's message cite the social networks of the group's youth supporters.[25] Through the long-term accumulation of followers discussed above in reference to the development of a collective identity and moralistic framework, IC was able to create an online army to help distribute the film by activating their own individual social networks. These young people, already connected to the organization and to its cause, were among the first to receive the video through targeted emails and social media blasts and in turn passed it along through their social networks to their friends and classmates, starting a process while drew the attention of millions.[26] Gilad Lotan mapped the diffusion of the "Kony 2012" film online in a similar fashion to that of TeleGeography during the Seattle demonstrations. Developing a map of nodes and spokes to visualize how this contagious spreading occurred, Lotan found that "dense clusters

of activity… were essential to the message's spread."[27] Lotan's mapping of the dissemination is included here, in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Gilad Lotan's Nodal Mapping of #Kony2012 Twitter Dissemination[28]

See image 5 of 7 at:

http://blog.socialflow.com/post/7120244932/data-viz-kony2012-see-how-invisible-networks-helped-a-campaign-capture-the-worlds-attention

Lotan's mapping of the "Kony 2012" dissemination also uncovered two important characteristics of these clusters. As identified above, a strong geographic element of proximity was identified in many of the periphery nodes. This geographic linkage is believed to be a direct result of IC's roadie tours, developing in-person connections and mobilizing local communities in off-line organizations. Celebrity Twitter handles were also central in the development of dense clusters of distribution, as evidenced in Lotan's map by the cluster surrounding the handle of actress Kristen Bell, IMKristenBell. Employing the tactic of "attention philanthropy," the "Kony 2012" concluded in the specific instructions for viewers to share a link to the video with all of their Facebook friends, culturemakers (celebrities, billionaires, and public figures), and policymakers.[29] The Kony 2012 accompanying website made it as simple as possible to tweet a culturemaker: by clicking on one of the 20 culturemakers pictures, a Tweet that @mentioned that celebrity was auto generated requesting the celebrities support. By simplifying this process, IC was able to empower its followers to inundate celebrities with requests for their support. While Tweeting is easy, it's also immediate and public, which translates into urgency and

accountability, especially when directed at policymakers who vow to represent the will of their constituency. In this Twitter-attack, Ellen Degeneres, alone, received over 36,000 mentions and the resulting pressure from these mentions resulted in 9 of the 20 culturemakers, including Oprah, Justin Beiber, Taylor Swift, and Bono voicing their support of the campaign. With the Internet contributing to "the rise of the cult of celebrity to unprecedented heights," this endorsement of celebrities gave the Kony 2012 campaign another monumental boost, contributing to the millions of views that brought the film into the spotlight.[30]

Digestible Initiative: Narrative, Simplification, and Action

The message of "Kony 2012", functioning successfully as spreadable media, is easily shared due to its narrative direction, simplification, and clearly enunciated goals and intermediate plans of action. IC was founded and originated in a transmedia landscape as its founders tried to figure out how to respond to the violence they had witnessed in Uganda. From the beginning, IC has followed the clear narrative of these three filmmakers narratives without any separation between their lived experience and fictional content. This strong narrative of the filmmakers driving the story, structures the movement in a way in which it is revisable and can grow and mature alongside the filmmakers. As Bobby, Jason, and Laren learned more about African politics, their documentaries naturally represented this growth. This narrative center is what gives the sometimes disparate initiatives of IC their central coherence within the larger mission but also allows for the entrance point of connection for first-time viewers of IC's content. These newcomers discover the atrocities of Joseph Kony and the LRA alongside the

filmmakers, and their own processing of the conflict is accelerated through the natural maturation and transformative steps in the filmmakers' journeys. In this way, the narrative of Jason, Bobby, and Laren's experience serves as a model for how outsiders should experience viewing the film and the moral conviction they should leave the viewing with.

The narrative of the "Kony 2012" functions in a very similar but contributes to an even greater simplification of the conflict narrative. This simplification stems from the premise of the video: Jason Russell explaining to his young son, Gavin, who Joseph Kony is and why Jason works for causes in Africa. Explaining the conflict to his young son results in a very clear albeit un-nuanced understanding of the conflict which follows that Joseph Kony is a bad man, he hurts and abducts children just like Gavin, and if each of us does our part in influencing powerful people, the world's most powerful military force will take action and Kony will be captured. Ethan Zuckerman states that this simplistic framing "plays into existing narratives about the ungovernability of Africa... [and] the power of US military."[31] While these narratives may be challenged or found to be destructive in the actual nuances of the situation, they tap into present views of the American populace are therefore more easily digested and supported.

IC's assertion of tangible goals and action steps capitalized on the mobilization potential generated through this narrative connection and assertion of moral responsibility. In an interview with Good Magazine, Jedidiah Jenkins, IC's Director of Movement Ideology reflected on this decision to articulate clear goals, saying, "… high-class documentaries… rarely presume to propose an answer… and

we hate that. You're left going, "… Now what am I supposed to do about it?" What we did was paint moral clarity and provide direct action steps… that resonates with people."[32] Through this assertion of specific actions aid in aggregating the power of everyone mobilized and create a powerful, coordinated, and consistent demonstration.

Critiques and Shaken Trust: Reaffirming Trust and Understanding

In Henry Jenkins analysis of transmedia storytelling mobilization like that of IC, he asserts that two types of media information, spreadable and drillable, are necessary for newcomers in a movement to become advocates. Spreadable media is that which disseminates information horizontally across networks translating into views, tweets, and Facebook shares. Spreadable media is, therefore, instrumental in raising awareness but does not guarantee any substantial engagement with the content of the spreadable media itself. Drillable media fills this void and facilitates this deeper engagement by educating individuals on the nuances of the subject of the cause.

The "Kony 2012" film is not meant to stand alone, separated from the rest of the IC's movement and mission elements. By looking at just this one piece of the organization in isolation it is easy to miss the full complexity of IC's well-reasoned and highly-regarded programs. Purposely simplified due to the shortened attention span of our instant-gratification neighbor and targeted at IC's youth demographic, the "Kony 2012" film contains some drillable media but does not fully delve into the intricacies of African governance, development and aid politics, and how these important concepts intersect with IC's programming. Adam Finck, the director of

IC's aid programs, argues that, "A glance at our programs on the ground and the substance of our most recent advocacy campaigns shows that we do our homework, and the choice to make this film 'simple' was just that, a choice."[33] This lack of drillable media is necessary for a deeper understanding of the political underpinnings of the turmoil in central Africa and implications of intervention.

IC's typical model, of roadie-hosted screening, enables Invisible Children to create a different experience than that possible when watching *Kony 2012* online. By supplementing its films with live interaction with the roadies, IC is able to supplement the various films' messages through more in-depth discussions and question-and-answer sessions. While this approach is able to reach much smaller audiences, it is able to deliver the more informed message for which critics are calling. Much criticism against IC has surfaced due to the lack of drillable media in the "Kony 2012" video on its own and has led to an ongoing dialogue in which the necessary drillable media is being circulated by IC and African scholars.

A broad range of experts including Africanist professors, humanitarian policy advisors, and foreign policy thinkers have expressed some very legitimate concerns about "Kony 2012".[34] Nicholas D. Kristof, a two-time Pulitzer Price winner specializing in cases regarding genocide and political repression, chronicled the myriad criticism of the Kony 2012 film in an article for The New York Times. Claims against the Kony film include that it is neocolonialist and another example of "white man's burden imperialism", a naïve oversimplification of a complex 26-year war, and that it is another case of slacktivism among others.[35] These critiques have also illustrated the negative potential of information going viral on the Internet as, just

like “Kony 2012” originally went viral, critiques of the film also exploded across the web within days. While many people became engaged in a powerful conversation about development aid and perceptions of charity work, this worthwhile debate was soon drowned out by a wildly inaccurate and very malicious online takedown, most of whose participants were “utterly uninterested in truth but focused instead on point-scoring, trashing and hurting” IC’s numerous supporters.[36]

This negative potential of viral Internet information was further evident in the unfortunate hospitalization of Jason Russell, disrupting the central narrative of IC’s movement and creating potential chinks in the organizations trust. While the narrative story line following the maturation of Jason has served to increase outsiders’ ability to connect with IC’s content, such a foregrounding of Jason’s personal life, passions, and character have taken an incredible toll. Trying to keep up with appearance requests on major media outlets to increase awareness, crushed by the highly personal attacks of IC and himself personally, and failing to sleep for upwards of 9 days, Jason eventually suffered from a “brief reactive psychosis.”[37] News of this breakdown, sensationalized and including inaccuracies that claimed the Russell was found masturbating in public, traveled fast and was broadcast by celebrity gossip shows such as TMZ. By the end of the day, a new hashtag was trending globally on Twitter: #Horny2012. This unfortunate downfall of Jason and the dissemination of the critiques of IC’s practices resulted in a backlash evident in the social media narratives that were earlier mobilized to create awareness. While 7% of the Twitter conversation from March 5-12 was skeptical or critical about the Kony 2012 campaign, as of March 7 that percentage had increased to 17%.

This intense pushback and negative publicity for IC required the organization to think quickly to reassure its massive social network and reaffirm their trustworthiness. In a movement in which high-ranking IC leaders proscribe most actions, a strong level of trust is absolutely necessary for the success of mobilization and deeper engagement. To reaffirm this trust, IC's interns and roadies were instrumental in making personal phone calls to central long-term supporters of the organization. In addition to these personal calls, IC developed a webpage in which they addressed every critique leveled at the organization, and produced many new videos including statements of support from major policymakers and scholars, a question and answer series in which questions were submitted via Twitter to #AskICAnything, and an additional film extensively detailing IC's aid programs and the upcoming global demonstration called Cover the Night. Ben Keesey, the CEO of IC, has been prominently featured in all of these new videos as he has stepped in to fill the hole in the narrative storytelling of IC's films due to Jason's absence. Ben Keesey represents an excellent alternative entrance point of connection for viewers because, like all newcomers to the organization, he was once a naïve individual at a movie screening but has now, through personal transformation and investment of time and energy in researching the conflict, has become highly involved.

Some Initial Success

The original goal of the Kony 2012 campaign, of making Joseph Kony famous, was clearly achieved through the millions of video views and coverage of the campaign on every major media outlet across the country. In addition to Kony's face gracing the cover of TIME Magazine, the clearest positive effect of the awareness-

raising initiatives of IC is the introduction of new legislation and political pronouncements in the U.S. and around the world. Citing the groundswell of support produced by the film, congressmen McGovern and Royce introduced a bipartisan resolution (H.Res.583) to the House of Representatives. In his introduction of the legislation, Representative McGovern stated, "hundreds of thousands of Americans from across the country, especially youth activists, have expressed outrage at the atrocities of the LRA and called for renewed efforts to bring an end to their violent activities… I am hopeful that we can use this momentum as a force for change."[38] Forty-eight congressional representatives currently cosponsor this resolution.[39] A similar bipartisan resolution (S.Res.402) was introduced in the US Senate by Coons and Inhofe and is currently cosponsored by 41 senators.[40] The response of American policymakers has spurred other governments around the world to pledge their support in detaining Kony. Just two days after the Senate resolution was introduced, the African Union announced that it was sending 5,000 soldiers to join in the hunt for Kony.[41] The introduction of these new pieces of legislation, illustrating the United State's and other government's increased commitment to helping to resolve the conflict in central Africa, show how the early stages of the Kony 2012 awareness campaign in translating into tangible action.

Kony 2012's Lessons for the New Era of Social Media Movements

The Kony 2012 campaign has demonstrated the almost limitless and instant potential that the new media tools of the Internet have for engaging the world. However, the campaign also has demonstrated the similarly limitless and thoughtless responses that often dominate these new media forms as well. Kony

2012, the most viral video of all time, is arguably the most effective use of social media in awareness creation and, though its offline element will not culminate until April 20th, the movement still has strong implications for the future of organizing in the Internet-ruled world. Using vastly different strategies than that of social media's forefathers in the Battle of Seattle, IC has demonstrated that strong leadership and highly intentional campaigns are most successful at garnering mass publicity. Through a transmedia campaign of video, social media, and concrete action steps, millions of people can be brought together as one to express outrage and demand that their governments act. While not relying on the real world interaction of organization representatives and supporters to mobilize action, the strong role the roadie campaigns in building solidarity illustrate that this personal connection does retain value in our digital world. However, the strong personal connections that many followers feel toward Jason and the other founders of IC suggest that this personal connection could potentially be supplanted through narrative storytelling.

The critiques of IC's campaign can also be seen as a new success in some lights as the globe is now engaged in thoughtful dialogue about warm poverty, responsible coverage of international conflict, and underlying structures on inequality. Yet, the intense critiques leveled at IC and its supporters are also sending the potentially unintended message that social advocacy should be left to experts. Through the dismissal of this youth movement, American youth are told that helping to resolve this war is not the right place for them. It is too complicated, too hard, and too serious. Through the categorical vilification of IC, critics risk the alienation of thousands of young people whose hearts for humanitarianism were first touched

by an IC film or campaign. Just as these critics have decried the simplification of those affected by the LRA, so the hearts and minds of IC leaders and supporters cannot be reduced to a single characterization. The good intentions of many persist and must be empowered. Dedicating their lives to making a difference, even three college boys from San Diego can awaken the world with cameras, social media, and a network of friends.

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[1] Gladwell 2000
[2] Invisible Children has played a significant role in my own politicalization and I must, therefore, admit my bias in support of IC. Since watching the Rough Cut Invisible Children documentary my freshman year in high school I have become deeply involved with the organization, attending all of their mobilization campaigns and lobbying on behalf of related legislation in Washington, D.C. My work with Invisible Children is the reason that I am a Politics and International Relations major and why I have focused much of my class work on African politics. As my political acumen has developed, I have regularly reevaluated my support of Invisible Children and its many campaigns. Invisible Children has stood strong against all of my criticisms and thus, I must admit my bias in support of Invisible Children's campaigns and epistemology. I therefore write this analysis as a member of both the organization and the movement I seek to analyze; this affiliation affords me a level of long-term understanding that is absent from mainstream media accounts of IC's work and the mechanisms it uses to motivate participants like myself. Much of my knowledge regarding IC's campaigns will be first-hand accounts of the facts obtained through my own experience and conversations with the founders.
[3] Brough 2012: 180
[4] Quinn 2007: 389
[5] Baines 2007:100
[6] Quinn 2007: 390
[7] Mwaniki et. al 2011
[8] Finck 2012
[9] "Invisible Children: Rough Cut" 2004
[10] Brough 2012: 180
[11] Perry 2012
[12] Blattman 2012
[13] Perry 2012
[14] Mogus 2012
[15] Swartz 2012: 2
[16] Swartz 2012: 2
[17] "Invisible Children: Rough Cut" 2004
[18] "Invisible Children: Rough Cut" 2004
[19] Invisible Children Staff 2012
[20] Russell 2012
[21] Helgesen 2012
[22] The film had 17.9 million views on Vimeo and 87.6 million views on YouTube per view counters on both websites

[23] Lotan 2012
[24] Rainie, et al 2012
[25] Ross 2012, Jenkins 2012, and Lotan 2012
[26] Jenkins 2012
[27] Lotan 2012
[28] Lotan 2012
[29] Lotan 2012
[30] Burns 2009: 7
[31] Zuckerman 2012 "Unpacking Kony 2012"
[32] Jefferson 2012
[33] Finck 2012
[34] This anaylsis, in no way, claims to be a comprehensive account of the Invisible Children's programs and does not seek to delve into the deeper question surrounding whether Invisible Children's approaches to peace and restoration are beyond reproach. While the critiques of IC do have significant effects on the mobilization around the issue, the normative conclusions about the best practices to bring peace to central African will not be discussed here.
[35] Kristof 2012, Helgesen 2012
[36] Perry 2012
[37] Perry 2012
[38] McGovern and Royce 2012 H.Res.583
[39] H.Res.583
[40] S.Res.402
[41] Ross 2012

CHAPTER 4: THREATS TO ENTHUSIASM IN MODERN SOCIAL MEDIA MOVEMENTS

Claims summary

From hacktivism, to twitter bombing, to information and propaganda diffusion, to coordination bringing people from all over the world to international sites of protest over great distances, the Internet has rapidly become a basic tool of movement organizers. These new forms of activism coordination and action are powerful tools in communications, fundraising, distributing ideology and propaganda, providing training and recruitment for activists, and overcoming situation challenges presented by law enforcement, censorship, and apathy. It is highly reductive to regard these mechanisms as mere vehicles for message transmission as social media has become a constituent aspect of more traditional forms of social movement organizing and has added new forms of civil disobedience and mobilization. Rather than displacing traditional organization, Internet applications allow for organizations and individuals to mobilize and expand their social networks, leveraging collective action Creating new social networks through the mobilization of those that already exist, movements are able to develop strong Internet collectives, acting and executing as a group.

Digital social networks provide the infrastructure for the increased effect and sustainment of successful social movements. However, the increasingly cluttered communication landscape of social media has also created a new set of obstacles for organizers to surmount. While internet-based activism has assisted in coalition formation through the free sharing of grievances and public opinion in the new communication infrastructure of social media, the glut of information contending

for airtime on social networking sites has also dissipated the potential effects of any of these groups' collective action. In many ways, social media can be seen as a vehicle for collective action in a neutralized setting in which coalition forming becomes part of the digital experience as individual's increasingly seek out community and connection online. Through the creation of strong ideology and identity frames, movements are able to encourage deeper engagement with their cause and provide the community these individuals are seeking.

As in traditional methods of mobilization, sustained social movements surface around struggles that tackle broad cleavages in society. Constructing dense social networks through cultural and identity framing, these networks can be leveraged for action. The normative pressures and solidarity incentives that are coded within these networks function as a form of social control counteracting low levels of commitment and assisting in the action of a coalition of actors.

The Technology Isn't Enough: The Need for Intentioned Use

The notable examples and case studies that so many analyses like this one focus on must be understood as rare exceptions underlining the fact that the great potential of online mobilization is rarely realized. Most campaigns against 3rd world dictators do not garner the attention of millions and airtime on every major media outlet. Most protests against global trade policies do not mobilize tens of thousands and disrupt global trade summits. Yet, the lack of success of many of these organizations is not for lack of trying. Clearly, technology alone is not enough.

Originally, this analysis sought to include a third case study of a movement in its infancy: the recent boycotts, demonstrations, and rallies held at the Claremont

Colleges following the firing of 17 undocumented dining hall employees in the midst of efforts to unionize. By examining the phenomenon of social media organizing in the microcosm of our campus and its superstructure of campus politics, it was hoped that this case study would facilitate an in-depth examination of social media's effects within a smaller, though highly connected, population. Hoping to see how social media is able to help catalyze action and bring about initial acts of contention, this analysis sought to examine this movement in its beginning stages. However, following several interviews with central student organizers within the campaign, it became clear that each student perceived the use of social media in the campaign as of little value. Viewing the exchange of ideas online as a neutral act and utilizing the social media sites purely for organizational assistance in inviting peers to on-campus demonstration, the on-campus mobilization of student support fell short. Without an intentioned employment of social media and careful crafting of disseminated claims, one's tweets and Facebook status becomes just another blip in the shouting match of internet communication.

Attention Deficit Diagnosis

An additional development that potentially hinders the catalyzing power of social media is the newfound poverty of attention. Ask almost any college student about accidentally checking the Internet or a mobile device while working on an important assignment and they can testify to the Internet's power of distraction. With one click, individuals can find themselves wandering across the Internet, lost on a trail far away from their original reason for accessing the web. This wandering and discovery is part of the power of social media as people exchange fascinating

new discoveries, but it is something that holds destructive power for one's ability to focus. Sadly, the idea of having someone's undivided attention is becoming increasingly less probable. In the end, the Internet and social media require us to exchange our time and privacy for exposure and attention. Fatigue is an inevitable product of this disparate engagement. This diffusion of attention translates into a smaller window of time through which to reach potential activists.

Even when social movement organizers are able to articulate persuasive information that becomes highly distributed, this meaning of this information can become quickly clouded in a process called "memetic entropy."[1] The open-forum nature of the Internet creates the ability for users to comment or critique just about any content on the web. This overabundance of information quickly becomes disorienting. On increasingly popular applications like Twitter, the "period between when a conversation becomes widespread or trending and the point at which it becomes 'polluted' with a high amount of noise in the form of tangential conversation is rapidly shrinking."[2] The most relevant and actionable content often becomes increasingly obscured. Without clear limits on participation, no way is available to clearly identify which user-generated content should be most salient to a potential activist. Memetic entropy further increases the need for strong voices or leadership in the development of social and sustainment of social movements as people look to a credible source to aggregate and translate the vast multitude of information into something actionable. Through the filtration of a movement leader, a movement can create easier access to relevant information.

Social media and a host of other technology innovations have also contributed to the instant-gratification nature of our society, reshaping expectations and organizers' methods of feedback. In a world in which one can instantly download and play music, take a picture and share it, microwave a meal, or check in with developments in a friend's life in less than a minute, we have come to expect control over the timeframes of the actualization of our goals. With 24/7 news and individualized content, critical analysis and questioning is diminishing and many individuals are losing sight of the realties of long-term developments necessary in situations like ending a war or fixing the economy. This frustrations also leads to many individual's lack of engagement with large injustice issues that cannot be fixed overnight because participants quickly become disheartened by incremental changes, unable to see their constituent role in a final end. In order to counteract this frustration and retain participants, successful social movements can benefit greatly from helping their contributors to see the immediate effects of their actions. Charity Water, a nonprofit that focused on providing clean drinking water around the world, has excelled at establishing this kind of feedback loop to their contributors, sending pictures of the actual wells contributors have funded.

The Threat of Surveillance

Enthusiasm for social media's abilities to rally individuals is further tempered by several recent developments. The Seattle protests offered a small glimpse into one of the most potentially negative aspects of social media: while it has offered incredible opportunities for amplification and aggregation of individual will, social media has also introduced unprecedented capacities for suppression and

surveillance. Many pessimistic views of technology hinge on this fear of potential anti-democratic control of technology. While many other countries have turned to completely blocking websites that can be used to raise contentious claims. Ethan Zuckerman, fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, argues that the mere popularity of Internet applications can make them valuable. The wise user bases of wildly popular websites like YouTube make it politically difficult for governments to block such websites without unintentionally angering large groups of their citizens. In his blog essay, "The Connection Between Cute Cats and Internet Censorship" he argues that shutting down YouTube, for example, is a highly visible act and interrupting such a popular service can become an international news item. Such an action may even politicize formerly apathetic users. Following this logic, the social costs for the government in censoring popular websites and social networks far outweigh the benefits. Thus, the social costs for government generally outweigh the benefits.[3]

The inability of government's to completely eliminate websites from which contention can breed has resulted in the development of more insidious surveillance tactics. The journalist, blogger, and novelist Evgeny Morozov is one of the most well known proponents of this view. He points out that digital technology provides new methods of control, surveillance, and persecution for repressive governments and may be used by democratic governments as well, under the guise of protecting national security.

The 9/11 massacres of 2001 continue to reshape the American government's treatment of social movements. In the wake of these events United States police and

federal security agencies increased surveillance of individuals and organizations. The swift passage of the U.S. Patriot Act soon after 9/11 also left little room for advocates of civil liberties to protest and has resulted in the steady increase in surveillance. The Patriot Act allows for the secret search and monitoring of private records and communications, often without any evidence of wrongdoing. Additional forms of surveillance have recently been proposed within the greater aims of the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the Protect IP Act (PIPA). These proposed acts have created extensive controversy and many popular websites decry their threats to the open dialogue of the Internet. These recent increases, and attempts at further increasing, the surveillance of individual communications represents the growth of the democratic state's capacity for suppression.

This surveillance is possible due to the physical infrastructure of the Internet. Utilizing this physical infrastructure, governments do not have to rely on blocking access to content in order to undermine movements. Instead, they are able to track the online actions of citizens. In this way, networks enhance the effectiveness of surveillance, as all content must be directed through the same infrastructure gateways. This level of surveillance was unavailable in the days of paper notes and whispered messages. The free and democratic exchange of individual's political opinion on the social web may, therefore, contribute to their repression as such free expressions allow police or secret service to readily map networks of dissent and shut them down. Following this logic, digital technology may serve to actually endanger campaigns that are contrary to the stances of the government more than it can help them. For some organizers and movements that more radically diverge

from the hegemonic opinions of the United States this increased surveillance has resulted in a complete avoidance of all digital technologies.

Social Media Is Here to Stay: A Risk Worth Taking

Regardless of these myriad impediments to organization, movements like Kony 2012 are gaining traction everyday as consumer activism and exchanged political opinions become increasingly prevalent. As the political landscape within the United States continues to shift, ordinary people continue to hold significant power. Through their power to challenge policy makers, produce solidarities, and have meaning to particular population groups, collective action continues to exert an almost unparalleled force in democratic society. With many movements contending for this power of representation, organizations are left to vie for individual's support, transforming mobilization into a numbers game. Prior to the widespread popularity of the Internet, it was claimed that "an individual activist's sense of commitment is highly portable; it can be carried from group to group, in concert with other activists and imagine communities of activists who validate personalized politics."[4] This theory is upended by the fatigue and attention deficit that plagues the movements of today. In a world where attention is scarce, specialization of interests is becoming increasingly prominent and organizations must, through carefully crafted identities and actionable campaigns, vie for attention in order to catalyze and sustain a movement. As social media applications continue to evolve, organizers that are able to keep up with and leverage new advancements already imbedded in society, will benefit from decreased impediments to participation.

[1] Hwang 2010:125
[2] Hwang 2010: 125
[3] Zuckerman 2007
[4] Lichterman 1996: 34

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