

CS 6474/CS 4803 Social Computing: Activism and Social Movements

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Week 13 | April 3, 2023

It started with a retiree. Now the Women's March could be the biggest inauguration demonstration.



Janaye Ingram, center, with Ianta Summers and Ted Jackson at 3rd Street and



"Because of social media we reach people in the smallest corners of America. We are plucking at a cord that has not been plucked forever. There is a network and a hashtag to gather around. It is powerful to be in alignment with our own people"

- Cullors-Brignac, one of the cofounders of the BLM movement, to the CNN

Person *of the* Year TIME

THE SILENCE BREAKERS

THE VOICES
THAT LAUNCHED
A MOVEMENT



Arab Spring – A background



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How the Facebook Arabic Page “We Are All Khaled Said” Helped Promote the Egyptian Revolution

[Kara Alaimo](#)

First Published October 8, 2015 | Research Article |



<https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115604854>

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Abstract

This study analyzes how the owner of the Facebook Arabic page “We Are All Khaled Said” both catalyzed and took advantage of opportunities in the Egyptian political climate in order to help promote the country’s 2011 revolution. Using a content analysis of posts on the Facebook page before and throughout the Egyptian revolution, the case study finds that the owner of the page, Wael Ghonim, served as a long-term trainer or coach, educating his online followers about the abuses of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak’s regime and helping them gradually become more comfortable with political activism, so that when a triggering event—the Tunisian revolution—occurred, he was able to move his followers into the streets to protest. Two other particularly successful tactics were utilized by Ghonim: He capitalized on a powerful personal story—that of a young man brutally killed by the police—in order to elicit emotion and help others identify with the cause, and he used lofty rhetoric to convince his followers that their actions could actually make a

Social Media Participation in an Activist Movement for Racial Equality

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Abstract

From the Arab Spring to the Occupy Movement, social media has been instrumental in driving and supporting sociopolitical movements throughout the world. In this paper, we present one of the first social media investigations of an activist movement around racial discrimination and police violence, known as “Black Lives Matter”. Considering Twitter as a sensor for the broader community’s perception of the events related to the movement, we study participation over time, the geographical differences in this participation, and its relationship to protests that unfolded on the ground. We find evidence for continued participation across four temporally separated events related to the movement, with notable changes in engagement and language over time. We also find that participants from regions of historically high rates of black victimization due to police violence tend to express greater negativity and make more references to loss of life. Finally, we observe that social media attributes of affect, behavior and language can predict future protest participation on the ground. We discuss the role of social media in enabling collective action around this unique movement and how social media platforms may help understand perceptions on a socially contested and sensitive issue like race.

social media¹. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement grew into a social juggernaut following the 2014 deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson and Eric Garner in New York City (Bonilla and Rosa 2015). Over time, BLM has expanded its fight beyond racial police violence to situate itself as “an ideological and political intervention” (Garza 2014; Bonilla and Rosa 2015) that strives to end systemic presence of racial inequality against blacks.

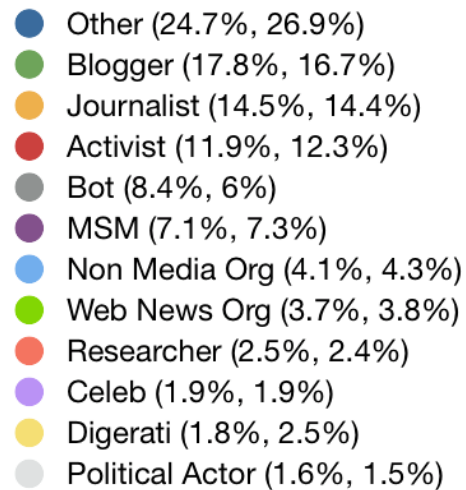
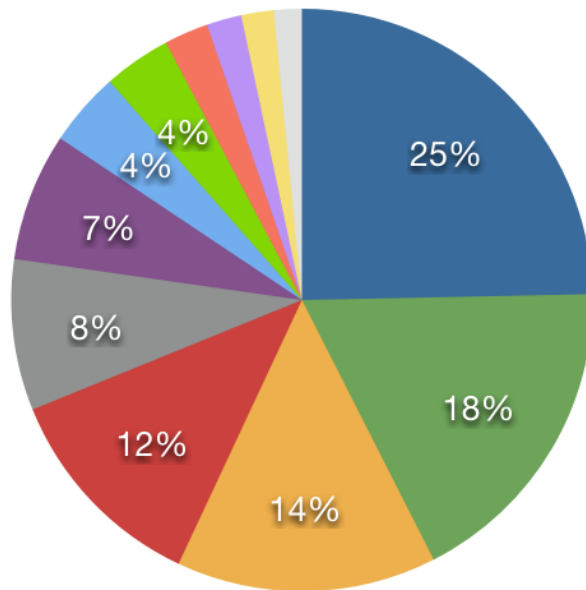
Social media, especially Twitter, due to its pervasiveness and adoption, has provided the fundamental infrastructure to this activist movement. Cullors-Brignac, one of the co-founders of the movement, reported to the CNN²: “*Because of social media we reach people in the smallest corners of America. We are plucking at a cord that has not been plucked forever. There is a network and a hashtag to gather around. It is powerful to be in alignment with our own people.*” Similarly, and in contrast to the Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968), activist DeRay McKesson noted³: “*The tools that we have to organize and to resist are fundamentally different than anything that’s existed before in black struggle.*”

While BLM began online, the organization has since branched out into chapters in 31 cities and held protests,

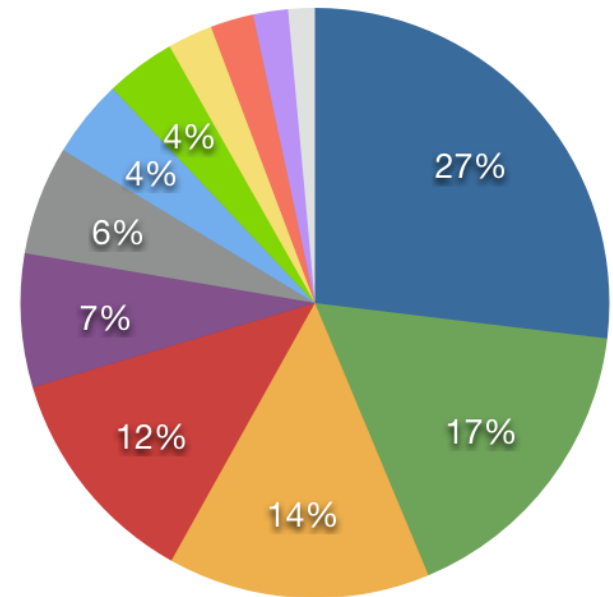
Twitter's transformation -- once the domain of "a bunch of bored hipsters who had an irresistible urge to share their breakfast plans," turned into "an engine of political revolution." (Morozov 2011)

The Revolutions Were Tweeted: Information Flows during the 2011 Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions

Actor Type Distribution (Tunisia)



Actor Type Distribution (Egypt)



	Median Tweets/Day	Median # of Followers
Organizations	15.98	4004
Individuals (excluding Others)	11.45	2340
Others	9.35	340

What is Twitter, a Social Network or a News Media?

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ABSTRACT

Twitter, a microblogging service less than three years old, commands more than 41 million users as of July 2009 and is growing fast. Twitter users tweet about any topic within the 140-character limit and follow others to receive their tweets. The goal of this paper is to study the topological characteristics of Twitter and its power as a new medium of information sharing.

We have crawled the entire Twitter site and obtained 41.7 million user profiles, 1.47 billion social relations, 4,262 trending topics, and 106 million tweets. In its follower-following topology analysis we have found a non-power-law follower distribution, a short effective diameter, and low reciprocity, which all mark a deviation from known characteristics of human social networks [28]. In order to identify influentials on Twitter, we have ranked users by the number of followers and by PageRank and found two rankings to be similar. Ranking by retweets differs from the previous two rankings, indicating a gap in influence inferred from the number of followers and that from the popularity of one's tweets. We have analyzed the

1. INTRODUCTION

Twitter, a microblogging service, has emerged as a new medium in spotlight through recent happenings, such as an American student jailed in Egypt and the US Airways plane crash on the Hudson river. Twitter users follow others or are followed. Unlike on most online social networking sites, such as Facebook or MySpace, the relationship of following and being followed requires no reciprocation. A user can follow any other user, and the user being followed need not follow back. Being a follower on Twitter means that the user receives all the messages (called *tweets*) from those the user follows. Common practice of responding to a tweet has evolved into well-defined markup culture: RT stands for retweet, '@' followed by a user identifier address the user, and '#' followed by a word represents a hashtag. This well-defined markup vocabulary combined with a strict limit of 140 characters per posting conveniences users with brevity in expression. The *retweet* mechanism empowers users to spread information of their choice beyond the reach of the original tweet's followers.

Everyone's an Influencer: Quantifying Influence on Twitter

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we investigate the attributes and relative influence of 1.6M Twitter users by tracking 74 million diffusion events that took place on the Twitter follower graph over a two month interval in 2009. Unsurprisingly, we find that the largest cascades tend to be generated by users who have been influential in the past and who have a large number of followers. We also find that URLs that were rated more interesting and/or elicited more positive feelings by workers on Mechanical Turk were more likely to spread. In spite of these intuitive results, however, we find that predictions of which particular user or URL will generate large cascades are relatively unreliable. We conclude, therefore, that word-of-mouth diffusion can only be harnessed reliably by targeting large numbers of potential influencers, thereby capturing average effects. Finally, we consider a family of hypothetical marketing strategies, defined by the relative cost of identifying versus compensating potential “influencers.” We find that although under some circumstances, the most influential users are also the most cost-effective, under a wide range of plausible assumptions the most cost-effective performance can be realized using “ordinary influencers”—individuals who exert average or even less-than-average influence.

Keywords

Communication networks, Twitter, diffusion, influence, word of mouth marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Word-of-mouth diffusion has long been regarded as an important mechanism by which information can reach large populations, possibly influencing public opinion [14], adoption of innovations [26], new product market share [4], or brand awareness [15]. In recent years, interest among researchers and marketers alike has increasingly focused on whether or not diffusion can be maximized by seeding a piece of information or a new product with certain special individuals, often called “influentials” [34, 15] or simply “influencers,” who exhibit some combination of desirable attributes—whether personal attributes like credibility, expertise, or enthusiasm, or network attributes such as connectivity or centrality—that allows them to influence a disproportionately large number of others [10], possibly indirectly via a cascade of influence [31, 16].

Although appealing, the claim that word-of-mouth diffusion is driven disproportionately by a small number of key influencers necessarily makes certain assumptions about the underlying influence process that are not based directly on

Social media and the decision to participate in political protest: Observations from Tahrir Square

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ARTICLES

Social media, social movements and the diffusion of ideas in the Arab uprisings

Halim Rane & Sumra Salem

Pages 97-111 | Received 27 Sep 2011, Accepted 05 Jan 2012, Published online: 05 Apr 2012

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In this article

Abstract

INTRODUCTION

Abstract

This article studies the 2011 Arab uprisings as social movements for political reform and regime change. Social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, are perceived to be playing a central role in these events, which have even been described as 'Facebook' and 'Twitter revolutions'. Using diffusion theory, this

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The Dynamics of Protest Recruitment through an Online Network

Sandra González-Bailón¹, Javier Borge-Holthoefer², Alejandro Rivero² & Yamir Moreno^{2,3}

SUBJECT AREAS:

PHYSICS

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MATHEMATICS

¹Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford, 1 St. Giles OX1 3JS, Oxford, UK, ²Institute for Biocomputation and Physics of Complex Systems, University of Zaragoza, Campus Rio Ebro 50018, Zaragoza, Spain, ³Department of Theoretical Physics, Faculty of Sciences, University of Zaragoza, Zaragoza 50009, Spain.

The recent wave of mobilizations in the Arab world and across Western countries has generated much discussion on how digital media is connected to the diffusion of protests. We examine that connection using data from the surge of mobilizations that took place in Spain in May 2011. We study recruitment patterns in the Twitter network and find evidence of social influence and complex contagion. We identify the network position of early participants (i.e. the leaders of the recruitment process) and of the users who acted as seeds of message cascades (i.e. the spreaders of information). We find that early participants cannot be characterized by a typical topological position but spreaders tend to be more central in the network. These findings shed light on the connection between online networks, social contagion, and collective dynamics, and offer an empirical test to the recruitment mechanisms theorized in formal models of collective action.

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Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere: Social media, public space, and emerging logics of aggregation

Jeffrey S. Juris

First published: 08 May 2012 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2012.01362.x> | Cited by: 383

SECTIONS



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TOOLS



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ABSTRACT

This article explores the links between social media and public space within the #Occupy Everywhere movements. Whereas listservs and websites helped give rise to a widespread logic of networking within the movements for global justice of the 1990s–2000s, I argue that social media have contributed to an emerging logic of aggregation in the more recent #Occupy movements—one that involves the assembling of masses of individuals from diverse backgrounds within physical spaces. However, the recent shift toward more decentralized forms of organizing and networking may help to ensure the sustainability of the #Occupy movements in a posteviction phase. *[social movements, globalization,*



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Twitter for Sparking a Movement, Reddit for Sharing the Moment: #metoo through the Lens of Social Media

Lydia Manikonda, Ghazaleh Beigi, Huan Liu, and Subbarao Kambhampati

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Abstract. Social media platforms are revolutionizing the way users communicate by increasing the exposure to highly stigmatized issues in the society. Sexual abuse is one such issue that recently took over social media via attaching the hashtag #metoo to the shared posts. Individuals with different backgrounds and ethnicities began sharing their unfortunate personal experiences of being assaulted. Through comparative analysis of the tweets via #meToo on Twitter versus the posts shared on the #meToo subreddit, this paper makes an initial attempt to assess public reactions and emotions. Though nearly equal ratios of negative and positive posts are shared on both platforms, Reddit posts are focused on the sexual assaults within families and workplaces while Twitter posts are on showing empathy and encouraging others to continue the #metoo movement. The data collected in this research and preliminary analysis demonstrate that users use various ways to share their experience, exchange ideas and encourage each other, and social media is suitable for groundswells such as #metoo movement.

Contrasting online and offline social movements

Parallels with historical social
movements

"Because of social media we reach people in the smallest corners of America. We are plucking at a cord that has not been plucked forever. There is a network and a hashtag to gather around. It is powerful to be in alignment with our own people"

- Cullors-Brignac, one of the cofounders of the BLM movement, to the CNN

Revisiting Tufeki and Wilson...

Why social media is reinventing activism



- 'Feel good clicking rather than make a change' – Kessler
- 'Slacktivism': The act of participating in obviously pointless activities as an expedient alternative to actually expending effort to fix a problem'

Example of poor activism - Kessler

- Red Cross: 208,500 'likes' on FB
- Online donations accounted for 3.6% (private donations)



The image shows a video player interface for a TED talk. The main video frame shows Zeynep Tufekci on a stage with a large red 'TED' logo in the background. Two inset windows show close-up shots of the speaker. On the right side of the video frame, there is a vertical toolbar with icons for Share, Add to list, Like, and Rate. At the bottom of the video frame, there is a progress bar, a play button, and a timestamp of 15:58. The title of the talk is displayed in large white text over the video.

Zeynep Tufekci at TEDGlobal 2014

Online social change: easy to organize, hard to win

ZEYNEP TUF EKCI

15:58

https://www.ted.com/talks/zeynep_tufekci_how_the_internet_has_made_social_change_easy_to_organize_hard_to_win#t-4052

Class Exercise

What can social media platforms do to support *real* activism, beyond “slacktivism”?

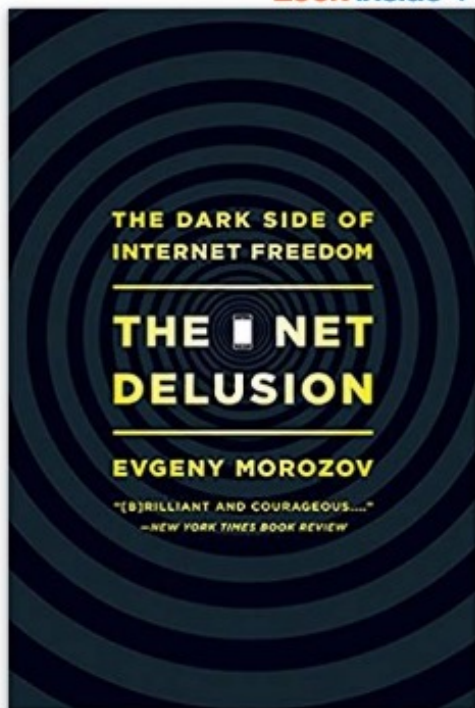
*"[...] Then I saw Brown's body
laying out there, and I said, Damn, they did it
again! [...] I'm not just going to tweet about it
from the comfort of my bed. So I went down
there."*

- Johnetta Elzie, BLM protestor

But, “What if the liberating potential of the Internet also contains the seeds of depoliticization and thus dedemocratization?” (Morozov 2011)

Can social media be abolishing freedom instead?

Look inside ↓



The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom

Paperback – February 28, 2012

by [Evgeny Morozov](#) (Author)

★★★★☆ 42 ratings

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Updated with a new Afterword

"The revolution will be Twittered!" declared journalist Andrew Sullivan after protests erupted in Iran. But as journalist and social commentator Evgeny Morozov argues in *The Net Delusion*, the Internet is a tool that both revolutionaries and authoritarian governments can use. For all of the talk in the West about the power of the Internet to democratize societies, regimes in Iran and China are as stable and repressive as ever. Social media sites have been used there to entrench dictators and threaten dissidents, making it harder—not easier

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Threats to freedom

A few concluding thoughts

Opening Closed Regimes

What Was the Role of Social Media During the Arab Spring?

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Muzammil Hussain, University of Washington

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