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"The Internet is an injoke"

Online Organization and the Collective Good

On February 15th, 2009 an Internet user by the screen name glennspam1 posted two videos to Youtube of a masked young man abusing his pet cat named Dusty. Two days later, on February 17th 2009, Kenny Christopher Glenn and his brother, Weston Glenn, appeared in court facing charges of animal abuse (Kenny-Glenn 2010). Youtube had removed the videos Sunday, February 16th 2009, but not before nearly 30,000 Internet users viewed the video and shared it with the thousands of other outraged individuals (Watson 2009). Through forensic and technical skill, users from around the world were able to discover the identity of glennspam1, Kenny Glenn, and within 24 hours notified police of the abuse, 48 hours after the videos were uploaded to Youtube fourteen year old Kenny Glenn was forced to answer for his actions.

The story of Dusty the cat typifies the ability of Internet users to affect the physical world from within the virtual world of the Internet. Instant communication online links users separated by great physical distance; it facilitates immediate dialogue between millions of individuals, allows people to share ideas, experiences, and skills. The Internet has created, and continues to create, a new world where users interact with both other users and their digital environment in a distinct manner. This unique form of interaction has changed the way social movements operate online and in the physical world. Like online movements, the recent Tea Party movement and the protests that removed Hosni Mubarak from presidency in Egypt have had little to no organization (Baker 2011, 9A). Mancur Olson asserts that the collective action requires a "minimum organization cost that must be met, however little of the collective good it obtains" (Olson 1971,

47). In this paper I seek to address what aspects of Internet activism lower this cost of organization and compel individuals to participate in online collective action.

This technologically reliant form of communication has supplanted traditional ideas about movement organizational hierarchy. John McCarthy and Mayer Zald argue that movements need, "some minimal form of organization", but this organization is not present in the collective action of many Internet movements (McCarthy & Zald 1977, 107). Using Resource mobilization theory, pioneered by McCarthy and Zald, this paper seeks to address why Internet communication has fostered activism independent from normal movement institutions.

Previous studies of cyberactivism have struggled to fit the Internet specific interactions into traditional movement theories. Michael Peckham, a scholar of cyber-activism, admits that his field of study requires "conceptual and definitional changes to what traditional resource mobilization theory means by 'resources'"(Peckham 1998, 320). The Internet has created a unique culture of cyber-citizens, a culture that must be understood before movement theory can begin to explain cyberactivism. In this paper I argue that widespread access to the Internet, instant communication, and web culture has replaced movement hierarchy, empowering the individual user to become the most significant resource in social activism.

Traversing the Web: Understanding Cyber Culture

The Internet is a communicative tool that allows unrestrained dialogue. It is a Wild West society where the outlaws can sidestep an under developed policing body and ignore state sovereignty. There is a level of technical skill required of Internet users, even for the simplest of online dialogue. Users with greater technical skill can participate in levels of discussion and online activity that other users and policing authority cannot access.

User anonymity is simple to preserve in most online discussion that allows individuals to take contradictory positions without considering accountability. Accountability is an ever-present problem in online debate, but online posts tend to be accurate reflections of the ideologies held by the users (Warf & Grimes 1997). As a means of communication, the Internet influences user interactions with and perceptions of other users by hiding their physical identity.

Ideally this kind of interaction would free online discourse of racial, class or gender norms, offering an open forum free of these social limitations. While negative stereotypes based on physical identity are not present in online discourse a majority of Internet users fall under a white, male, middle to upper class demographic (Warf & Grimes 1997). More recent data shows that this demographic has shifted slightly to provide a more heterogeneous spread of users, see table 1 in Appendix B, but well educated, middle to upper class individuals still dominate the online population. As a communicative tool the Internet has been able to connect individuals from across the world, but these data suggest that the potential reach is actually limited to relatively homogeneous groups of people.

Unique Internet identities limit the effect that this homogeneity has upon Internet dialogue. In their study, Samuel Best and Brian Krueger discovered that demographics only modestly influence actual participation in online activism, which suggests that other variables, like the non-disruptive nature of most web pages and Internet social skill has significant influence over the dissemination of information online (Best & Krueger 2005) Instead of physical traits, a user's understanding of the Internet and its culture has a greater influence upon online dialogue.

The interests of a user plays a greater role in the dissemination of information online than

the identity of the user, the naturally non-disruptive nature of websites[1] requires user interest in the information before knowledge or insight is gained from a web page (Warf & Grimes, 1997). When users come across information that makes them uncomfortable or radically differs from their opinion they can simply leave the web page. Online forums are easily accessible and provide a wealth of public opinion, but such communications are easily ignored, avoided, or are never discovered.

The topic of dialogue online has a significant effect upon the average Internet citizen. Manuel Castells observes the power of issue framing within the Internet community: "it is in the realm of symbolic politics, and in the development of issue-oriented mobilizations by groups and individuals outside the mainstream political system that new electronic communications may have the most dramatic effects" (cited; Warf & Grimes 1997, 270). Here traditional theories on social movements and the study of cyberactivism overlap. Warf and Grime's earlier observation, that individuals retain their personal ideologies in online discourse, follow Castells' assertion that politically powerful dialogue resonates with Internet users. The Internet influences interactions between individuals but they are relatively unchanged from the same individuals that social movement theory has observed offline. While there is a lack of expert opinion and reliable information on many Internet sites, individuals will react to grievances and injustices as they would in person.

The Internet has influenced movements by enabling users to connect with other individuals or groups permits access to information that an activist would otherwise be unaware

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[1] This is not to say that disruptive techniques do not exist online, such actions will be covered in depth. Websites themselves can be very disruptive to Internet users (advertisement "pop-up" windows are a common example). However, the function of most websites is not disruptive in nature

of: "[the Internet] allows a local struggle to establish links with other, occasionally similar, local struggles...Coordinated local struggles are able to exert more pressure than are isolated efforts." (Warf & Grimes 1997, 268). While this seems obvious to today's social movement scholars, it is still important to note when discussing the efficacy of cyberactivism. Physical distances between groups of like-minded people are bridged by the open forum of the Internet. Activists can become pseudo-academics with the wealth of scholastic information available to the average Internet user. Warf and Grimes' examination of the Internet argues that cyberactivism can play a significant role in mobilizing isolated groups of individuals into a loosely organized and coherent movement.

The Internet facilitates not only an expansive but also an easily accessible community for individuals to participate in unrestrained social dialogue. Movements online need very little, if any, organizational structure. Often the opportunity to share ideas and experiences online is enough to organize a movement of like-minded individuals. The power of online dialogue is able to replace the "minimal form of organization" that movements have traditionally been thought to require. However, because participation in this dialogue has been simplified movements must now compete for the time of users in order to get participation.

The costs of participation in dialogue and political participation have been lowered through various techniques online; consequently websites compete fiercely for the attention and time of users, often lowering the cost of participation to gain more users. With the bar lowered for entry into political participation one has to question the significance of these low cost groups online have upon movement tactics and goals. Facebook, the social networking website, is used by many users to create unique pages dedicated to a cause or objective. These pages are a

potentially useful source of information for interested individuals, but the level of participation required of individuals is only limited to pressing a "like" button on the page. A Facebook page dedicated to President Barack Obama's health care reform is "liked" by over 39,000 people, but the number of active members in such groups is unclear and the effect that these groups have upon a movement, beyond information sharing, is limited. While this participation is not significant the Facebook pages are indicative of the competition online for user participation, even insignificant participation, and how the Internet has lowered the cost of participation.

Developments in Cyberactivism Understandings

Peckham's 1998 article on cyberactivism takes a direct approach to the study of online social movements. His study adapts resource mobilization theory to explain his observations of the conflict between Scientology and Anonymous. Peckham repeats the claim made by Warf and Grimes that there is no policing body or state equivalent online to mediate the disputes between movements and counter-movements. He expands upon this idea to fill the void left by the lack of governing authority.

> the radical democracy of the Internet places more importance on popular opinion and attempts to sway disinterested bystanders...if a movement is to meet its goals on the Internet, then it must appeal to the only real authority extant: Internet users (Peckham 1998, 321)

"Power" on the Internet is a function of online popularity and appeal. The contest for this power may be won with significant time and effort on the part of an individual or small group and requires relatively little capital. Large structured organizations are not necessary for the mobilization of a large movement. The ease with which individuals can access large audiences levels the playing field for smaller movements that would otherwise be unable to compete with the money and resources held by larger groups.

Michael Peckham's study examines the "hacktivist" group Anonymous against the church of Scientology and the tactics they employed. Peckham notes the serious modifications required of traditional movement theory when observing this group and the limitations of his findings when applied to cyberactivism as a whole.

Peckham focuses his study on adapting resource mobilization theory to online movements, asserting that "resources" need to be redefined for the online setting. In his case study, Peckham chooses to define two "virtual resources" specific to the movement he observed. He settled on the terms "bandwidth" and "anonymity". The tactics and goals of individual movement groups determine the relevance of these "virtual resources" to specific movements. This is one of the many challenges facing studies of online activism; understanding the Internet's influence on social interactions in the context of movement theory. Best and Krueger's 2002 study examines the ways in which the medium specific resources separate online activism from traditional forms. The analysis by Best and Krueger is a far more comprehensive study of the Internet's effect upon individuals' decision making. Their analysis focuses on political participation online, but their data contains variables that observe general Internet participation. Such variables provide measured insights into cyber culture, which must be understood before studying cyberactivism.

Critical to understanding cyberactivism are the technical requirements for participation in any online activity. *Bandwidth* is a computer specific term that refers to the amount of information that can be transmitted across a medium; fibre optic, for instance, is superior to copper wire transfers. Posting online articles, videos, or simply accessing websites uses bandwidth. Allocation and proper rationing of bandwidth is sometimes a concern that websites

face. Today, most websites are adequately equipped to address concerns over natural use of bandwidth. There are exceptions and groups have developed ways to exploit weak bandwidth capacity but these tactics will be discussed later in this paper.

Manipulation of bandwidth requires significant technical skill and is illegal in most countries. However, as stated earlier, Internet policing is a difficult task. Individuals with a relatively simple understanding of Internet mechanics are able to get away with such actions. In specific and often extreme circumstances, bandwidth can play a major role in online dialogue and cyberactivism. In general, though, the data suggests that accessibility to bandwidth does not significantly alter online activism as a whole. Those who wish to participate in online activism often have the necessary tools to do so, *i.e.* a computer and Internet connection, or they will find a way to engage in online protest (Best, Krueger 2005, 192).

Anonymity was incredibly important in Peckham's study of the anti-Scientology movement. This empowered individuals in a number of ways, but it specifically protected Scientology's Internet critics from legal repercussions. The ability to operate anonymously on the Internet was important for this online criticism, coined "Project Chanology", since former members of Scientology posted copyrighted information to public Internet forums. Hidden identity allowed open criticism of Scientology online and protected such online critics from retaliation.

This kind of anonymous Internet participation influences the online society at large, but websites are increasingly identifying users through persistent forms of identification. Persistent identity online is the idea that an Internet user can adopt a unique identity that can be accessed by user at any time and from any device with an Internet connection. Facebook and Twitter are

popular examples of persistent identity online, these social networking tools are venues where individuals willingly share their personal information with Internet audiences. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, has attributed the development persistent identity to the evolving culture of information sharing online.

> When I got started in my dorm room at Harvard, the question a lot of people asked was "why would I want to put any information on the Internet at all?"...People have really gotten comfortable not only sharing more information and different kinds, but more openly and with more people. That social norm is just something that has evolved over time (Kirkpatrick 2010).

Such is the difficulty when defining "virtual resources", there are few naturally stable virtual resources, in fact, the nature of virtual resources appears to be one of constant flux, changes occurring because of innovation, through tools like Facebook and Twitter, and the development of Internet norms, *e.g.* the willingness that people expose their personal information to Facebook and Twitter Profiles.

While anonymity can be preserved by some it is not a concern for others, it may also be a resource that is altogether irrelevant for a particular movement or the key to success for another. Some individuals and movements online reject the option to remain anonymous if their identity carries prestige or influence, but revealing one's identity online always has consequences.

Roger Ebert received considerable backlash for a blog article he wrote stating that video games could never become art. His fame as a popular movie critic subjected his article to the scrutiny of thousands. Revealing or protecting one's identity online is a serious consideration for any user about to bare their opinion to the critical eyes of Internet citizens. In Ebert's case the overwhelming negative response to his article led him to write a rare follow up article, partially conceding some of his argument to his critics' claims: "At this moment, 5,547 comments have

rained down upon me for that blog entry…Perhaps 300 supported my position" (Ebert 2010)

Best and Krueger did not have a comparable variable to anonymity in their study, which shows that there is not a consensus on what is significant for online activism. Instead, they examined the impact of medium specific skills both on and offline. Higher levels of technical, Internet, skill led to increased political participation; alternatively, civic skills did not encourage offline political participation, in short "the Internet requires medium specific proficiency to overcome the unique hurdles encountered online"(Best & Krueger 2005, 193). This is a variable of considerable significance when examining any Internet movement. Best and Krueger's study stresses the importance of Internet skills in online movement participation, "the likelihood of participation in at least one political act caused by moving from a low to high level of Internet skill far exceeds any other variable's impact" (Best & Krueger 2005, 193). Online social skills and an understanding of the Internet as a communicative tool directly influence political participation.

The varied technical understandings of Internet users unlock different levels of interaction among this society. For instance, Anonymous is able to remain a relatively exclusive group because the technical ability of an individual user determines how well he or she can protect their identity and effectively remain a part of Anonymous. These users have created their own Internet sub-culture and language. This web culture often references itself through the use of Internet "memes"[2], a term taken from Richard Dawkins' theory on evolution, but here refers to viral bits of social information quickly spread among Internet users. Memes can be benign bits

[2] See Appendix A

of humor, such as "lolcats"[3], and at other times they may make light of humanity's darkest moments, as is the case with "anhero"[4]. These memes are both powerful metaphors and immature jokes, the duality this particular part of Internet culture can be confusing and offensive to outsiders. For the participants, this self-referential no boundaries form of interaction has become second nature.

Beyond technical knowledge or Internet social understandings, like memes, the proper framing of issues is powerful in online dialogue, particularly when a movement presents threats to individual rights and freedoms. Peckham builds from David Meyer and Suzanne Staggenborg's article on movement, counter-movement interactions when discussing the power of issue framing online:

> The likelihood that opposition to a movement will take the form of a sustained counter-movement is directly related to the opposition's ability to portray the conflict as one that entails larger cleavages in society (Peckham 1998, 332).

Peckham takes this observation beyond movement-countermovement theory. Issues surrounding freedom of speech, for example, resonate powerfully with Internet users[5]. Individuals sympathetic to a movement can be quickly found through online word-of-mouth, this viral spread of information is the reason why individual bloggers are able to gain such large

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[3] Lolcats are popular pictures of cats, with some text to provide an imaginative context for the image

[4] Anhero was created following the suicide death of a young boy, Mitchell Henderson. Henderson's parents created a tribute myspace page. Upon it were grammatically incorrect comments from friends describing him as "an Hero". Internet users quickly shared the link to the myspace page and created the meme "Anhero"

[5] Perhaps because freedom of speech has, historically, been quite difficult to restrict on the Internet

audiences. Topics addressing threats to popular rights and freedoms grab the attention of Internet users and can quickly spread across the online citizenry.

One more finding from the Best and Krueger study should be noted. Their study shows that online participation is effective in reaching the young adult population as well as activating this demographic in online political activity. This is a part of the population that has been raised with the Internet in their lives. Some critics of Anonymous dismiss the group as immature teenagers with too much time. These assumptions about the average age of these activists are far from inaccurate. Recently, five British citizens were arrested in connection to the web attack in January of 2011; the youngest was fifteen and the oldest twenty six (BBC January 27, 2011). The age of these individuals does not matter on the Internet, only their technical ability. This is a generation that is very familiar and comfortable with online interactions and from this online society they have created a new form of social activism.

Literature review

Movement Theory Background

In the 1970s John McCarthy and Mayer Zald pioneered a new understanding of social movement theory in response to the social activism of the 1960s and '70s. Resource mobilization is somewhat misleading name, as the theory goes beyond the mere examination of resources in social movements and extends to: "linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements".(McCarthy& Zald, 105) There are three broad categories of understanding in resource mobilization: (1) the aggregation of resources by a movement (2) the social psychology behind a movement's mobilization (3) the relationship between movements and formal institutions (Jenkins 1983). These understandings of resource

mobilization theory have their own successive debates and critiques; in this paper the topics of resource mobilization most related to cyberactivism will be examined while the debates surrounding resource mobilization's argument are acknowledged but will not be expanded upon.

Movement's aggregation of resources links the interests of disorganized individuals through an entrepreneurial model, one put forward by McCarthy and Zald arguing that mobilization is advanced by individual entrepreneurs (Jenkins 1983, 531). This differs from traditional models that believed social grievances to the dominant influence behind movement mobilization. Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian examined collective behavior and found that social grievances are present "in any society to supply the grass-roots support for a movement" (cited McCarthy & Zald 1977, 107). The entrepreneurial model proves useful for explaining collective mobilization online, especially when focused on addressing major social and political divisions.

Under resource mobilization theory the aggregation of resources and mobilization to activism is more effective when supported by centralized, institutional forms of organization. Jenkins takes this a step further in his review of resource mobilization theory stating that, "the basic goals of movements are defined by conflicts of interest built into institutionalized power relations" (Jenkins 1983, 528). Such ideas about centralized organization fail to explain the mobilization and success of movements online.

Without a need for institutional movement organization, Internet movements require a simple definition of *social movement*. The sine qua non of cyberactivism is the network of Internet users, who are compelled to action through viral messages and ideas that shift large shares of this virtual population. The mobilization of a movement online is a simple phenomenon; the complexities of cyberactivism are seen in the process by which users develop a

collective consciousness on the Internet.

With these considerations in hand McCarthy and Zald are still able to provide a definition of *social movement* to be a "set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society"(McCarthy & Zald 1997, 109). This definition is particularly useful for examining online movements while still providing room to apply relevant aspects of mobilization theory to the study of cyberactivism. The Internet has advanced to such a state that it has become a mini-society of its own with particular rules and norms governing social interaction as well as social protest.

Best and Krueger argue that resource theory is useful for cyberactivism because it "deduces the corresponding resources necessary for a particular form of engagement"(Best & Krueger, 2005: 187). But the dynamic nature of online society means that new resources are created through social networking sites, "like" buttons, Facebook apps, hacking programs, email spam, and volumes of technical jargon for Internet based activities. At the end of his study Peckham stresses that adapting traditional social movement theories are only relevant in the proper context:

> Resource mobilization must take into account the context of movement/counter-movement interaction in order to maintain effectiveness as an analytical tool...Internet conflict would seem to indicate that future work that examines movement/counter-movement interaction must recognize the context-specificity of resource values (Peckham 1998, 342).

Resource mobilization theory cannot account for the vast number of "virtual resources" available. Online, the "corresponding resources" are only limited by the creative talent and technical skill of online activists. Resource mobilization is most useful in a virtual setting for

understanding the manipulation of human resources, the users, and the motivations that compel these individuals to activism online.

Methods

Much of my analysis in this paper is qualitative, based on observations of online behaviour supported by qualitative analyses tracking the conversational trends of online users. My analysis of the gaming-as-art movement focuses upon the video lecture series Extra Credits, created by Daniel Floyd and James Portnow. The data contained in this analysis examines the length that a video has been available online for viewing and the topic of each video to examine which is more likely to influence the number of comments from Internet users associated with each video. They y-axis of this graph will represent the number of comments left for a video while the x-axis represents the air date and topic of the video lecture. Based on my observations of Internet dialogue I hypothesize that the topic of the individual video lectures will have a greater impact upon the number of comments left by users. While a video that has been available online provides opportunity for more discussion on the contents of each lecture, I believe that the initial reaction to the lectures, based on their topic, will have a greater influence upon user participation in the dialogue of each lecture.

My analysis of the group Anonymous is more complex but looks for the most common variable present in the observed interactions rather than a relationship between a dependent and independent variables. I observed the dialogue in Anonymous chat rooms for twelve-hour increments, recording the data in a text file and divided each entered line of text by inserting it into a spreadsheet in chronological order. Each line of text was assigned a random number and

then reordered by the first 100 cases. Using the time stamp next to each line of text I took the five lines of text before and after my initial 100 lines to create 100 blocks of 11 lines of text, ensuring that there was no repetition among my 100 initial cases. I assigned action-oriented and non-action-oriented classifications to each line of text. Action-oriented variables included: data sharing (DS) for links pertaining to target information, IP addresses, and other technically relevant data for the operation; system attack (SA) for actual calls or references to an attack upon a system or website; and operation development (OpD) for dialogue focused on creating new Anonymous operations. Non-action-oriented variables included: chat (chat) for text not related to Anonymous operations and not referencing Internet memes and web culture; recruitment/instruction (Rec/Ist) for dialogue that instructed users on the use of IRC channels, Internet etiquette or for recruitment to other operations outside of the IRC channel observed; operation chat (OpC) for text related to the operational focus of the IRC channel observed but not directly related to operational actions, this included debate and differing opinions amongst the users; information sharing (IS) for information shared amongst users either not relevant to the operation in the channel observed or information related to operation chat; and meme (meme) for text that referenced Internet memes or where unique Internet language was used in conversation.

All eleven lines in each block of 100 cases was examined for the three most present categories of dialogue and the case received an overall primary, secondary, and tertiary characterization of the three categories most present. I hypothesize that the language of the Internet, what I broadly refer to as meme in my analysis, will be present in almost all of my cases and acts as an organizational substitute to guide the operational dialogue of Anonymous.

Case Studies:

There are several important distinctions to make before discussing the gaming movement. There is a difference between the gaming industry and the gaming community. The gaming industry is divided into three main sectors: the development studios which employ artists, writers, musicians, and programmers to actually make the game; production studios which fund the development teams, manufacture the games, and sell them to large distribution chains who are the final part of the industry, selling copies of games to the public. This synopsis does not do the complexities of the gaming industry justice, but this simplified version is adequate for the purposes of this paper. Important to understand is that "gaming industry" is not synonymous with "gaming community".[6]

The gaming community, or "gamers", is becoming increasingly difficult to define. Gaming systems and the game content has become more accessible to individuals of all ages, while the term "gamer" used to refer to the stereotypical model of a teenage male playing video games late into the night the term "gamer" today can refer to influential adults today like Conan o'Brien and Tracy Morrow (Floyd & Portnow, 2011). The "gaming community" referred to in this paper narrows this now expansive demographic to the individuals who are deeply invested in the community for non-economic reasons, those who wish to see the medium legitimized and furthered as an art form.

Legal Background

The recent surge in online activism by the gaming community is a response to the recent Supreme Court case, *Schwarzenegger v. EMA*. This case reviewed the California district court's decision to overturn Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's 2005 law restricting the sale of "violent"

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[6] This paper recognizes that despite this distinction there is considerable overlap between the gaming industry and community.

video games to those under the age of eighteen. In 2008, the district court struck down the law as unconstitutional. Judge Consuelo Callahan wrote in his opinion:

> The Act violates rights protected by the First Amendment because the State has not demonstrated a compelling interest, has not tailored the restriction to its alleged compelling interest, and there exist less-restrictive means that would further the State's expressed interests (Callahan 2008, 4)

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) is the "less-restrictive means" to which Judge Callahan refers. Senators Joe Lieberman and Herb Kohl urged the gaming industry to create an independent board to address concerns over minors' access to violent video games. In July of 1994 the industry leaders presented congress with the ESRB, a group independent from both the government and the game industry. Senator Lieberman praised it as "the most informative and comprehensive rating system for any entertainment medium in this country"(Activision Blizzard 2010). The ESRB rates video games as follows: EC for children ages three and older, E for everyone ages six and older, E10+ for ages ten and older, T for teen ages thirteen or older, and M for mature ages seventeen and older (*Ibid*., 13).

Despite the popular reception of the ESRB, Senator Leland Yee of California has expressed concern over the effect of violent video games on the mental health of minors. The easy access that minors have to mature rated games, despite the ESRB is also among Senator Yee's concerns. He concluded in his brief to the court that the Supreme Court, in the past, has recognized children to be viewed differently in the eyes of the law. Therefore, Senator Yee believes restrictions on the sale of violent video games fall under the constitutional limits of the state.

The industry has disputed Senator Yee's claims, arguing that the ESRB's partnership with distribution companies successfully limits minors' access to mature rated games. The

debate over the ESRB efficacy is not at the heart of this paper, but indicates some of the initial goals of the gaming movement. The ESRB was created because gamers felt that they deserved First Amendment protections from state intrusions under the precedent set by *Miller v. California*. This was, in part, to protect the business of the industry but also to enhance the image of the gamer sub-culture. This also guaranteed that the regulation of video games would not change on the whims of a voting public. The ESRB is made up of "trained, demographically diverse 'raters' who have experience with children and who are not affiliated with any entity in the video game industry" (Activision Blizzard 2010). If game regulation were left to a voting public the industry would have to face a constantly shifting system of regulation. This would vary from each state and would change with every voting cycle; such turbulent conditions would have made a completely different video game industry and community than the one we see today.

The enthusiasm with which the industry took Senator Lieberman and Kohl's challenge suggested that video game producers were very concerned with their image and reception. The comprehensive rating system presented the public with a responsible industry that took the effects of their medium on consumers seriously. The ESRB insulated the video game industry from immediate political pressure and forced video games and their success to be determined by the consumer public. Games that sold well would become representatives of the industry. As the graphics of games advanced to fully render, three-dimensional animations, the studios began to experiment with game genres. Violent games were used to showcase the visual advances and sold incredibly well. Studios quickly reproduced these controversial titles, often using their offensive reputation for advertisement (Floyd & Portnow, 2011). However, the gaming

community began to change. Those who grew up with games throughout their lives have now reached adulthood[7] and have begun to demand games that appeal to mature interests instead of products with gratuitous violence, this demand for legitimate recognition of games as a form of art will be expanded upon in later discussion.

Gamers as a Movement

Politically savvy gamers are aware that legal defense of video games has relied on First Amendment protections since 2001 to keep legislation from limiting the sale of games deemed "violent" (ESA 2011). The framing of this issue as protecting constitutional rights has mobilized already existing groups such as the Entertainment Software Association (ESA), Entertainment Merchants Association (EMA), and the Entertainment Consumers Association (ECA) while also creating new groups like the Video Game Voters Network (VGVN).[8] The opposition to the California ban on violent video games relies upon institutional forms of activism, challenging the state in the Supreme Court and lobbying sympathetic groups.[9] The gaming movement uses shared interests to gather support from groups outside the industry to defend the precedent set down in 1973 Supreme Court case *Miller v. California*.

In *Miller,* the Supreme Court determined what constitutes "obscene material," which can be legally restricted even under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The decision established the three part "Miller test" to determine if a work is obscene: (1) if under "community standards" an average person would find that the work as a whole would appeal to the prurient interest in sex; (2) Depicts/describes patently offensive sexual conduct specified

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7 The average age of game players is 34 (Industry Facts, 2011)

8 see the ECA *amicus* briefs for a full list

9 This includes organized groups such as the National Association of Broadcasters and sympathetic individuals in the general public

under state law; (3) lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value (*Miller v. California*, Burger). Opponents to the gaming movement understand that the *Miller* test is concerned with sexually obscene works and want to see this test include works of violence. Advocates of video games are confident that the justices will not extend the definition of "obscene" to include violence (Macris 2010). While the Justices continue to deliberate, online gaming activists have focused their efforts on convincing Internet audiences that games do not satisfy the Miller test of obscenity, even if it were to include violence.

There is no doubt that video games have contributed to scientific developments in electronics. The fully rendered characters of games have required innovative graphic design and programming. The Kinect for Xbox uses motion capture technology for its games, tracking the body motions of the players to control action in the game. The Kinect has already become the fastest selling electronic device and Microsoft opened up Kinect's software for third party research and development (BBC March 10, 2011). A team at MIT has created an electronic interface that uses the motion of a user's hand to control a computer (*Ibid* 2011). The advances in technology have brought added realism to video games, which have encouraged development studios to broaden the topical range of video games. Advocates argue that this can allow games to address deep subject matter normally reserved for film and literature. Critics believe that the video game industry has too often used these high level graphics to provide images of obscene violence (Yee 2010).

Games that sell well have, by the nature of their popularity, been representatives of the industry and culture of video games. Violent video games that sell well send a message to society that the community of gamers is inherently violent, or at least celebrates irresponsible

depictions of violence. Meanwhile critically acclaimed but poor selling games go unnoticed by the non-gaming public and lawmakers. Online advocates of video games do not merely address the critiques of their opponents on the violent nature of games, advocates also call upon the gaming industry to produce games with greater artistic value and for consumers to demand such change from the industry.

Dialogue in Internet Advocacy

The gaming industry, community, and society at large are being presented with a question: are video games art? This question sounds ridiculous to some, but gaming developers, consumers, and academics have recently begun to seriously consider the artistic potential of video games. Until games achieved graphic realism they had limited narrative potential, which narrowed their target audiences. Often titles would be developed for the adolescent consumer more often than the adult. But this gaming generation is growing up and has begun to demand game with the narrative legitimacy of literature and film. Now games have begun to address topics on war, gender, sexuality, and even politics. Scholars have begun to notice and study the role of this interactive media for storytelling.

The controversy surrounding video games has, ironically, lent a hand in encouraging scholastic study of this medium. Kathy Sanford and Leanna Madill, researchers from the University of Victoria, were drawn to video games when examining their effect upon the studying habits of children. The two recognized the immediate impact games have upon the lives of today's youth and their article actually encouraged the use of video games as a narrative tool for teaching (Sanford & Madill 2007, 433). Academic interest in video games has even advanced beyond practical study. In his book "The Art of Video Games" Grant Tavinor attempts to define

the role of video games in art. This scholarly discussion is suddenly taking place online in forums and the "comments" sections at the end of online articles.

Interested individuals use the availability of scholarly opinion, like that of Tavinor, Sanford, and Madill to support or develop their own opinions. The Internet has galvanized the works of individuals who have not received higher levels of education. Scholastic information is available online for anyone that looks hard and long enough. Academic documents are published online for widespread distribution where information and opinion can then be presented in a manner that non-experts can understand. Websites such as JSTOR and Lexis Nexis were designed with specific purposes, to facilitate the distribution of academic and legal articles. This information available for all subscribing individuals to access can then be published, cited, adapted, and presented freely to all Internet users. Wikipedia is an excellent example of how this wealth of knowledge is being presented through a simple, yet effective medium. There is little need for an exhaustive search for information on almost any topic. Google searches, Wikipedia articles and websites dedicated to particular topics allow users limitless access to information and opinions that they would not normally experience. Based on how much effort an individual will put into finding this information a user can join a discussion on practically any topic. Activism becomes an activity easily accessible to individuals normally limited by physical distances, age, gender, and race. Users with enough time can develop arguments and find supporting or dissenting opinions. Such information can encourage mobilization of individuals and cyberactivism.

Presenting opinions through video and text articles has become popular among Internet users who wish to voice their opinion on matters they feel strongly about. "Blogging" allows

individuals to voice their opinions in the relaxed online society, but still allows the "bloggers" to use academic studies, opinions, and the wealth of information online to support their opinions. Blogging can also be a profitable business, as many corporations will hire a staff of individuals to routinely post to their blogs and generate traffic to a website, which in turn generates profit for that URL through advertisements. This can become a way to make a living presenting compelling or entertaining information and opinions on any topic. Imagine Games Network (IGN) is a video game journalism website that employs a staff of under 100 individuals but has millions of online visitors per month (http://www.ign.com/staff.html). Many of the editors are given podcasts and online blogs where they express their opinions on games and the development of games as an entertainment and artistic medium. Internet users are encouraged to register a unique username and participate in the dialogue with the IGN staff. The users who leave comments on blog posts become an integral part of this online dialogue simply by taking the time to type in their own opinions.

These posts by users can spark new conversation and debate that will often become animated by these users who care deeply about a topic and feel compelled to make their voice heard. Despite having to register a username the identity of the user is still protected through a strict privacy policy (http://corp.ign.com/privacy.html). The freedom allowed by this kind of privacy allows for conversation on the blog posts to take any direction and pursue any topic. Users that register do so because they have an invested interest in these discussions. The opinions and beliefs reflected in the user comments on IGN indicate the changes users wish to see in a particular game or the industry. Using McCarthy and Zald's definition of a social movement, these comments become a minute form of activism.

An online video lecture series known as “Extra Credits” exemplifies how the Internet can elevate the opinions of a few inspired individuals from mere blogging to online activism.Daniel Floyd and James Portnow produce a weekly video lecture series, “Extra Credits”, hosted by a web corporation very similar to IGN called The Escapist Magazine. The Escapist does not receive a similar amount of traffic as IGN but it operates under a similar model, paying individual bloggers from all over the world to regularly post articles and videos for entertainment and news. Individuals with the technical understanding to participate skill to create web videos can share their opinions with a wider audience and make money while doing so.

“Extra Credits” exemplifies the individual empowerment of the Internet and the reward system that online culture has cultivated for technically skilled individuals. If a user can generate web traffic to a particular site they can find opportunity for personal gain and social change. While Floyd and Portnow are not directly associated with activist groups like the VGVN they use their video lectures to influence the habits of a social group with the broader goal of instituting, or at least encouraging, widespread change in the video game Industry and community.

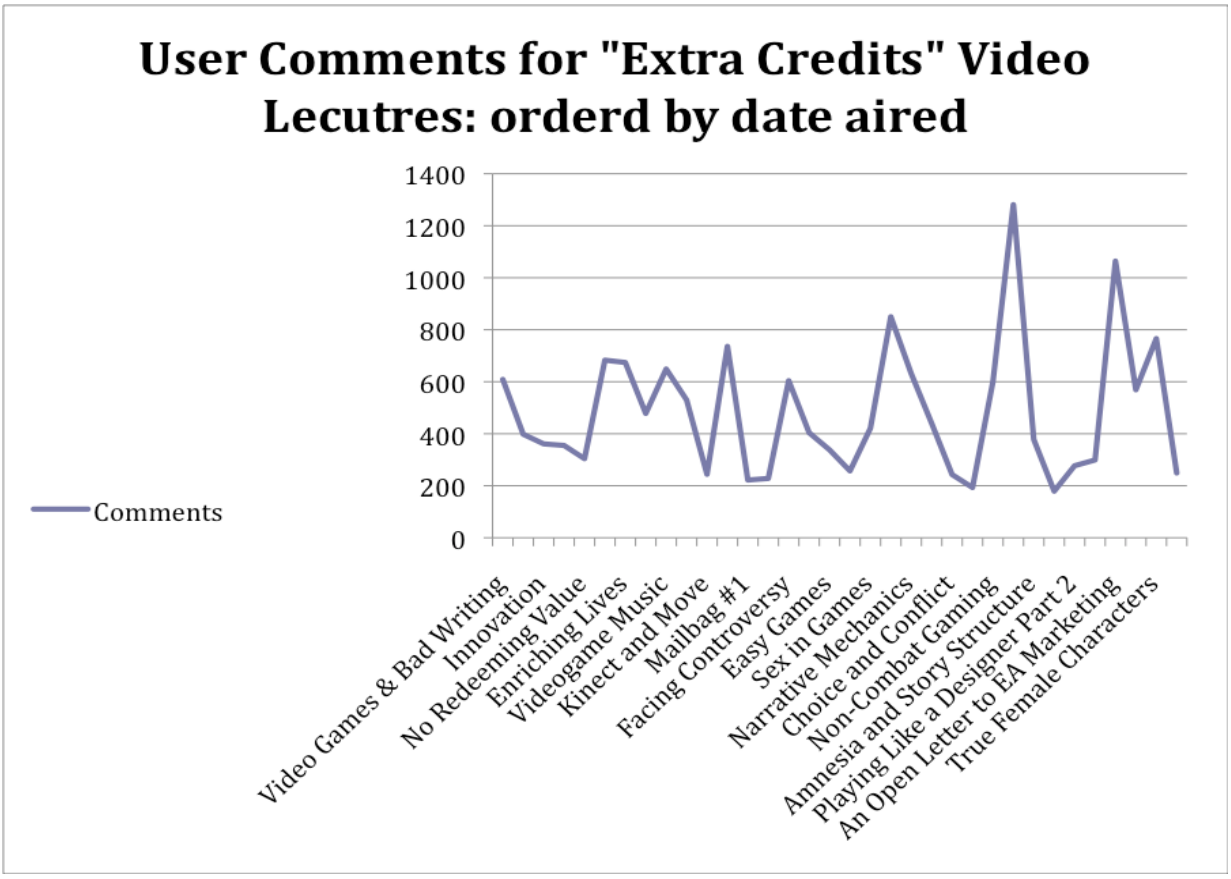
A Soapbox Over time

These video posts are a type of ongoing protest, as these are ideas that can spread at any time to individuals who happen to discover them. The comments section allows users and the video creators to continue the dialogue started in a blog post indefinitely, discussion started and maintained online furthers the goals of activists like Floyd and Portnow who want their viewers, video game purchasers, to demand change from the gaming industry. It is difficult to determine the point at which these posts become significant. What do activists do to reach larger audiences,

recruit more individuals to join in this dialogue? In the example of Extra Credits, it appears that the topic of each video post, not the date they were put online, has more influence on the video's popularity, see figure 2. Each video lecture competes for the attention of Internet users, the content needs to contain a message that compels users to engage in debate over the issues discussed in the video lectures and video games at large.

Curiously, the length of time that a video lecture has been available does not influence the number of comments associated with a particular video. Instead, video content that addresses major interests of the gaming community invites increased participation from the community. If the issues discussed in a lecture do not engage the interests of the gaming community then these videos will not become the venues of sociopolitical dialogue on video games that Floyd and Portnow wish to create. As seen in Figure 2, particular topics seem to resonate more strongly with viewers than others, encouraging increased participation in dialogue on the message boards and the "comments" section of these video posts. The more comments that a video post receives indicates that the content of the post engages topics important to the viewers, which in turn indicates greater cleavages within the gaming community over the subject of the video lecture.

Fig. 1



Video game advocates believe that games have the potential to become a new form of narrative and visual art. The gaming industry has been trying to convince the general public of games' artistic merit since the formation of the ESRB and continues to do so through political processes, namely the *Schwarzenegger v. EMA* case. The online gaming community wants to change the industry's products so that the public appreciates games for their artistic value, not because of a legal ruling from the Supreme Court. The industry listens to the buying habits of its consumers, activists within the online gaming community, like Floyd and Portnow, call upon the consumers demand the artistic production of video games by changing what games they purchase. *Psychonauts* was a critically acclaimed game that still receives high ratings from most game reviewers, but poor hurt its publisher, Majesco, who had to revise their fiscal projections

for the year and soon after the game's release chief executive officer of Majesco, Carl Yankowski, was forced to resign (Majesco, 2005). Despite its critical reception, *Psychonauts* has become an unfortunate example of how the gaming community is dependent upon the industry's commercial success in order to enjoy tasteful, artistic works like *Psychonauts*.

This gaming "movement" has attempted to take a loosely associated, politically inactive group of gamers and mobilize them through Internet websites that already grouped these individuals by their interest in the medium. Without a need to organize this online gaming community, which is already achieved by sites like The Escapist and IGN, activists like Floyd and Portnow are able to launch this collective into social activism, if they can appeal to enough of the users. As Peckham noted, movements must appeal to the true authority on the Internet, its users.

The competition online for users' time is the virtual resource that Floyd and Portnow fight for in their video lectures, achieving success depends upon how well they can compete in this virtual environment. Can a movement grow independently from the virtual environment of the Internet? The gaming movement and games as an art argument are developed from debates already made in the case *Schwarzenegger v. EMA*. Is there an independent web culture than lends itself to activism and social justice in the virtual world? Members of the Internet consciousness "Anonymous" would say such a culture already exists.

Virtual Activism

Social Consciousness in Virtual Space

The gaming-as-art movement and the rise of Anonymous share two similar, and replicable, traits: (1) they are loosely associated communities of individuals connected through

the Internet (2) neither movement has a formal organizational hierarchy. In the gaming-as-art the Internet acted as a necessary tool to facilitate the communication necessary for the spread of advocates' ideas to a previously existing association, gamers. Alternatively, Anonymous is a movement born of the Internet.

The webgroup Anonymous is a sub culture of the Internet with as many definitions as it has members. There are no official records, no widely recognized leaders, no formal organization, and no limits. They are best described as a collective consciousness. Like a flock of birds, they are made up of individuals who move together as a unit, but at anytime, the individuals of the group may split from their flock to form a new group or set out on their own. The term "Anonymous" itself is an Internet meme, the term became popularized on the image board web-forum, 4chan.org. Users who did not register a unique user name with the website would be referred to as "anonymous" by default. Internet users would jokingly attribute the comments to a single entity, as though Anonymous were a real person, or perhaps the Internet itself.

Anonymous changed from an Internet meme to the "hacktivist" webgroup of today in 2008 following the removal of a video interview with Tom Cruise on Scientology. The Church of Scientology removed the video from Youtube on January 14, 2008 claiming copyright violations (Vamosi, 2008). On January 21, 2008 Anonymous uploaded a video of its own to Youtube, declaring war upon the Church of Scientology for its act of Internet censorship and shut down the Church of Scientology's website using a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack[10] claiming that they acted, "for the good of your followers, for the good of mankind, for

[10]See Appendix A

our own enjoyment...We are Anonymous, we are legion, we do not forgive, we do not forget, expect us" (Youtube, 2008). These final lines became the manifesto of Anonymous and endemic of all future press releases from Anonymous. The origins of this webgroup in 4chan heavily influenced their defense of free speech and their aversion of censorship.

The website 4chan, created by Christopher "Moot" Poole, was where the group Anonymous officially began. Technically speaking, there are rules governing material posted to certain discussion threads of 4chan, but often forum users blatantly ignore these rules. The website's design, complete anonymity and no archival records, has lent a hand in allowing 4chan users to post anything from copyrighted material to illegal pornography. 4chan requires no registration for users to leave comments and provides a blanket of protection for user identity that allows the darker side of the Internet, and possibly human nature, to manifest. During a TED talk presentation Poole was questioned about his decision to preserve user anonymity on 4chan given the controversial and morally questionable nature of the website's content. Poole argued that his website is one of the few places left where people have complete freedom of speech, accepting the good and bad that comes with such freedom (TED 2010). This preservation of free speech is one of the few concrete beliefs that members of Anonymous agree upon, their view on completely free dialogue is not dissimilar to that of Mr. Poole's. According to both Anonymous and Mr. Poole, nothing should be censored on the Internet, even morally and socially reprehensible images and speech, so long as it does not lead to the direct physical harm of an individual(s).

The immediate questions surrounding a group like Anonymous are, how does such a group operate? How does this anarchic group of individuals coordinate action as a collective unit

when they do not even appear to have an agreed upon set of beliefs, clear purpose, and no central goal? Finally, are the methods of Anonymous effective?

The first two questions will be covered in detail later in the analysis of Anonymous operations, but the final question requires some discussion. There can be no doubt that the actions of Anonymous have had an impact upon the world of cyber security and cyber protest. While illegal in most nations, Anonymous considers their DDoS attacks to be a peaceful form of protest, like a virtual sit-in (BBC 2011). The technical attacks of Anonymous have proven effective against the websites of the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) and the Church of Scientology, but as forms of social protests these tactics are overshadowed by an inherent contradiction between the only fundamental belief of Anonymous, free speech, and their actions, attacks that limit public access to targeted websites. Unfortunately, Anonymous' tactics will have to be the study of a different paper, I seek to examine *how* Anonymous operates not the effect of their operations, but this contradiction is an important indicator of the ambiguous moral philosophy of Anonymous.

Anonymous is filled with contradictions, as a group they have thrived on the individual decisions of each member to offer potential avenues of protest and attack upon selected targets. A majority of Anonymous operates in Internet Chat Relays (IRCS) [11], from here individual members try to persuade others to invest their time and efforts into the goals of an operation. In these IRCs members will share information relevant to operations, sites to attack, and data to share; they also coordinate their attacks and develop new operations from general chat with other members from these channels. In these chat rooms the discussions remain relevant to the

[11]See Appendix A

operation for only as long as the active participants wish to remain upon the topic, often drifting in and out of conversation relevant to the operation of an IRC channel. Once again, the question raised is, how does Anonymous coordinate action in such a chaotic environment?

Any user in an IRC can create a new channel, provided they posses the technical knowledge, and by creating a channel they have administrative rights. Creators of operation channels have the ability to kick users from a channel, ban them permanently, and bestow similar administrative privileges to other users. While these moderators could user their privileges to kick users not actively participating to further an operation's goals this happens rarely, if ever, in most Anonymous operations. Users are booted for advertising products in IRC channels or for leaving their CAPS lock on and often these users receive a warning before such action is taken. Instead of using this limited authority to guide and coordinate operations, members of Anonymous rely upon the web culture of memes and unique Internet language to move fluidly from coordinating operations to banal chatter.

The Accolades of Activism: Doing it for the "Lulz"

Why is the unique nature of Internet language and meme culture important to the activism of Anonymous? In their initial press release to the Church of Scientology, Anonymous declared that they were assaulting the Church not only for the preservation of free speech online but also, "for our own enjoyment." The fact is that while many members of Anonymous believe in free speech online and reject censorship they also pursue this activism for fun. Internet memes are created through viral spread, the online culture of referencing these well known bits of information rewards those who can think of clever new ways to reference these memes. Often the "reward" is no more than receiving a comment from another user saying "+1" but it is an

integral part of this online society. What does this have to do with the coordination and actions of Anonymous' members? An example of Anonymous' relationship with the WBC illustrates the role of Internet culture in Anonymous' cyberactivism

On February 16, 2011 an Anonymous press release was issued on anonnews.org, inviting Anons, members of Anonymous, to an operation targeting the WBC. Any Internet user is allowed to post a "press release" and it is widely believed that a member of the church used anonnews for the church's gain, in a press release issued four days later responded to the earlier post:

> Dear Phred Phelps and WBC Phriends...You observed our rising notoriety and thought you would exploit our paradigm for your own gain. And then, you thought you could lure some idiots into a honeypot[12] for more IPs to sue. This is not so foreign to us; as you may have heard, we trade in Lulz (Anonnews February 20, 2011)

The term "Lulz" is often used in Anonymous chat, it references the Internet abbreviation "lol" which stands for "laugh out loud", for Anons it is a kind of commendation for a well executed action. "Lulz" are accolades gained by Anons for executing an action against a target, like the WBC or the Church of Scientology, in such a way that references memes or amuses other Anons, it is colloquialism for the Internet activists' way of counting coup. The collective actions of Anonymous are not solely motivated by a desire to achieve a greater public good. Olson's argument on collective action demands, "coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest" (Olson 1971, 2). Organizational hierarchy is supplanted by the web culture that gave birth to Anonymous, the personal gain experienced by an Anon participating in this activism, by achieving accolades or "Lulz" within this society, outweighs the

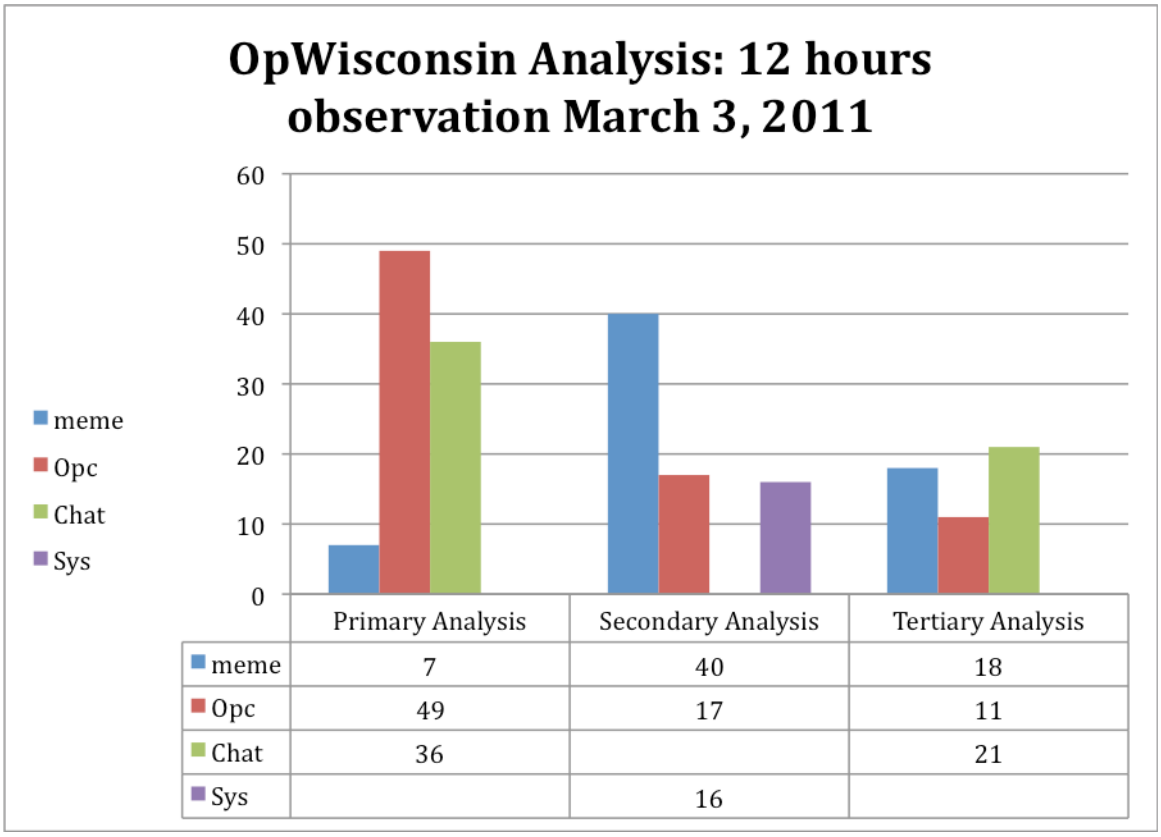
[12]See Appendix A

costs associated with participation in a collective good.

Categories of Conversation in Anonymous Operations

The operation observed for this analysis was OpWisconsin, observed for twelve hours on March 3, 2011 between the hours of 10:05 and 22:05 central standard time with approximately 65 unique users logged into the IRC channel. Figure 2 contains the three dominant variables within each level analysis; Figure 3 in Appendix B contains all the unique variables. The two most present variables in each level of analysis are meme references and operational chat, with unrelated chat significant in two of the three analyses. This data, along with earlier observations, suggests two key assumption can be made about the organization of Anonymous operations: (1) Internet culture, language, and memes does not detract from Anons' ability to engage in dialogue relevant to specific operations and (2) Anonymous IRCs are not only tools for activism but also socialization.

Fig. 2



	Primary Analysis	Secondary Analysis	Tertiary Analysis
meme	7	40	18
Opc	49	17	11
Chat	36		21
Sys		16	

While Anonymous lacks a formal organizational hierarchy their philosophy of activism for their own benefit, for "Lulz", provides motivation for the individual user to participate in a collective movement. The significant presence of memes in the dialogue of Anonymous operations indicates that this group of cyberactivists has created their own unique motivations for social activism. This culture is reinforced by the second observation, Anonymous is a not only a group for activism but also socialization. The nature of communication in IRC sets a minimal cost of participation for the individuals observed in Anonymous, all of those observed have a technical understanding of the Internet which allows them to access the IRC channels. While each individual has their own personal reasons for becoming involved in Anonymous they each share a technical understanding of the Internet as a communicative tool, and it can be assumed, a shared understanding of Internet culture.

Conclusion

"Rule 38. No real limits apply here – not even the sky"

The effectiveness of online activism is difficult to determine due in part to the limited effect a movement can have when it limits itself to cyberspace. The unofficial Rules of the Internet, created on 4chan, lists what users have observed of the Internet, what they believe can and cannot be achieved online. Some members of Anonymous believe that their group is the next generation of social activism that will change the world, as rule 38 suggests, while others might candidly point to rule 11, "all your carefully picked arguments can easily be ignored." The observations I have made in this paper build upon already existing social theory to understand cyberactivism when an entirely new approach may be required to comprehend this new development in social movement theory. Based on my analysis and those of other movement theorist, though, cyberactivism exhibits these key distinctions from traditional forms of social activism.

There is a lowered cost of participation online; the ease with which a user can "participate" in online activism is remarkable, but leaves room for consideration about the significance of such participation. The lowered costs of participation have augmented competition online for the time and interests of users, demanding a reform in a movement's approach to recruitment. Online movements that are able to target groups of loosely associated individuals with a shared interest, not necessarily a shared grievance, can use the instant communications online to mobilize these individuals. In fact, with the expanded reach of online communication, movements online can consist of single users to recruit activists and mobilize virtual resources. Measuring the success of movements online is difficult to determine, while it is

clear to me from this study of cyberactivism that the Internet has displaced formal organization in social movements, the effectiveness of online activism depends upon the goals of individual movements.

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Appendix A

DDoS is an acronym for Distributed Denial of Service, which is a web attack that has become popular over the past year. This is an electronic attack that bombards a website with requests for information to the point that the site cannot respond to legitimate requests. If the website's servers cannot handle the bandwidth requirements of the requests, the attack can result in the website crashing. There are two reasons for why movements would want to employ a DDoS attack. The costs associated with putting crashed a website back online after server space has already been purchased can be significant, especially for small organizations. Larger organizations that have enough bandwidth to withstand these attacks do not have to worry about the costs but access to their websites can be noticeably slowed. Attacks are then a symbolic form of protest, meant to gain media publicity or to send a message to the group that is attacked.

Low Orbit Ion Canon (LOIC) is the name of an easily downloaded program that has a simple user interface for launching DDoS attacks. This has been the primary tool used by Anonymous. It has a simple interface that can be used by individuals with no prior hacking experience. Often times it is referred to as simply "canon" or "laser". Often LOIC takes control of the computer to remotely target a website. A group of computers remotely controlled by a single person is known as a botnet.

Botnet refers to a group of computers under the remote control of a single person. Often this was used to describe machines that were hijacked through email viruses and hacking. Recently individuals have voluntarily joined botnets to participate collectively in DDoS attacks. Members of Anonymous refer to this as "The Hive" or "Hivemind". These voluntary botnets tend to be small when compared to earlier botnets that contained tens of thousands of stolen

computers (Ward 2006).

Internet Relay Chat (IRC) is one of the most popular online text based chat systems. IRCs often allow users to chat without any form or registration allowing them to remain anonymous. Anonymous often uses IRCs to coordinate their actions.

Honeypot is used to describe a computer, IP address, or computer network designed to be a target of DDoS or other web-based attacks. A honeypot is usually poorly defended from attacks (thus inviting the attack) but has sensitive recording tools to track attacks. Honeypots can be used to discover the identities of individuals who carry out web based attacks and have been used by groups seeking legal action against Anonymous and other hackers.

Meme is a term that comes from the Greek word *minëma* and was developed by evolutionary study to describe "an idea, behavior, style, or usage that spreads from person to person within a culture"(Merriam-Webster Dictionary, m-w.com)This term has been taken by Internet users and applied to concepts spread online. A meme is simply an idea that is spread through the Internet, is easily recognizable, and has many permutations. Memes are spread organically, from peer-to-peer . Internet memes tend to be comical and frivolous, gaining rapid, widespread popularity and often losing its appeal just as quickly.

Troll is a term used to describe online users who either spam message boards or post dissenting and often disparaging remarks on Internet boards. Trolls try to overwhelm conversation and often repeat themselves to excess. Labeling an individual user as a troll is subjective but the term carries a significant amount of weight in online forums and discussion. Like most of Internet society, if enough users feel that an individual is a troll then that user is ignored, insulted, or banned from further discussion.

Appendix B

Table 1

Demographics of internet users

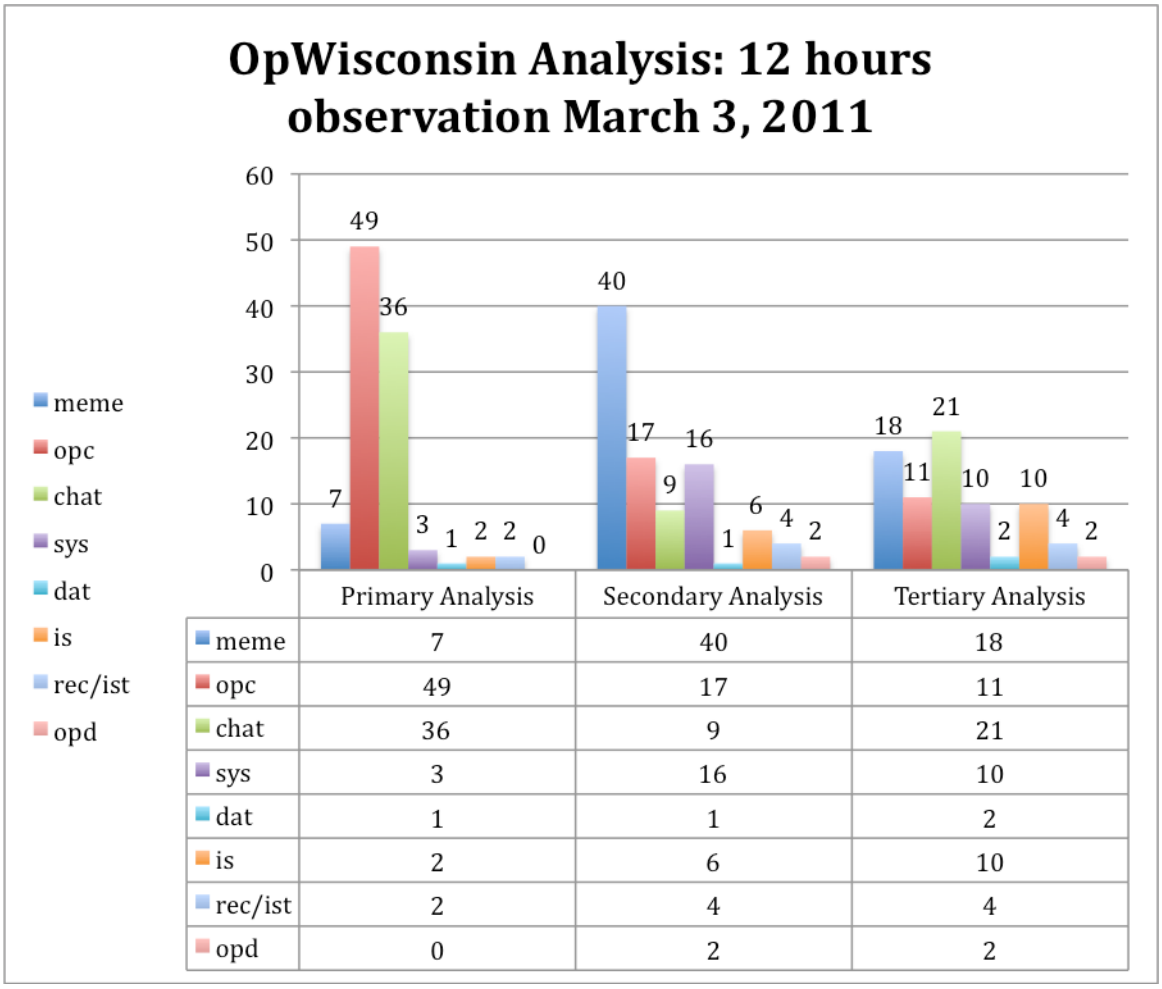
Below is the percentage of each group who use the internet, according to our May 2010 survey. As an example, 79% of adult women use the internet.

	Internet users
Total adults	**79%**
Men	79
Women	79
Race/ethnicity	
White, Non-Hispanic	80%
Black, Non-Hispanic	71
Hispanic (English-speaking)	82
Age	
18-29	95%
30-49	87
50-64	78
65+	42
Household income	
Less than $30,000/yr	63%
$30,000-$49,999	84
$50,000-$74,999	89
$75,000+	95
Educational attainment	
Less than High School	52%
High School	67
Some College	90
College +	96
Community type	
Urban	81%
Suburban	82
Rural	67

Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, April 29-May 30, 2010 Tracking Survey. N=2,252 adults, 18 and older, including 744 cell phone interviews. Interviews were conducted in English. Margin of error is ± 2%.

Pew Internet

Fig. 3



	Primary Analysis	Secondary Analysis	Tertiary Analysis
meme	7	40	18
opc	49	17	11
chat	36	9	21
sys	3	16	10
dat	1	1	2
is	2	6	10
rec/ist	2	4	4
opd	0	2	2