COLLECTIVE MOVEMENTS, DIGITAL ACTIVISM, AND PROTEST EVENTS: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONCERNING THE ORGANIZATION OF LARGE-SCALE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRACT. This article reviews recent literature concerning collective movements, digital activism, and protest events. Using data from AP-NORC Center and Pew Research Center, I performed analyses and made estimates regarding the percentage of social media users who say they have publicly expressed support for campaign on social media, contacted elected official, contributed money to campaign, attended political rally or event, attended local government meeting, and worked or volunteered for campaign; the percentage of teens who have volunteered for a cause they cared about, worked or cooperated with others to try to solve a problem affecting their school, city, or neighborhood, raised money for a cause they cared about, expressed their political beliefs online, signed a paper or online petition, and/or taken part in a peaceful protest, march, or demonstration; the percentage of U.S. adult social media users who say social media is at least somewhat important to them personally when it comes to finding others who share views about important topics/getting involved with political or social issues/giving them a venue to express their political opinions; the percentage of U.S. adults who say they changed their views on a political or social issue because of something they saw on social media in the past year; and regional median saying it is very important that people can say what they want/media can report the news/people can use the internet in their country. Empirical and secondary data are used to support the claim that protest organizers may employ social media platforms to supply decisive logistical backing for participants.

Keywords: collective movement; digital activism; protest event; social media; politics

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1. Introduction

Social media use may result in involvement via bringing about attitudinal support. Participation may be generated only when citizens collect information about the operations, come across a call for action, or identify a scandalous image that causes indignation. Social media represent a realm for the distribution of such messages and pictures and its use may have a behavior stimulation effect, giving rise to participation even after position is considered. (Lee, Chen, and Chan, 2017) Social media users may opt for more legitimizing reporting of protesters than established media generally provide. (Harlow et al., 2017)

2. Literature Review

Users in social networking sites are steadily informed about their contacts' operations and may advance personal investigations when they require more information about matters in question. Social networking sites reinforce demands for information or view-sharing, and networks typically react to information or messages posted by participants. The indirect consequences of social media platforms on involvement function via internal and shared performance. Political distribution of messages on social media mobilizes participants' sense of personal and conjoint operation (Ionescu, 2017; Lăzăroiu et al., 2017a, b; Nica, 2017; Pera, 2018; Syaglova, 2017; Vodak and Mikesova, 2016), which amplifies their chances of political participation. (Halpern, Valenzuela, and Katz, 2017) Protesters set up tactics to involve the media and employ established news media agencies' resources to beef up their influence, with the two-fold goal of catalyzing new advocates and adding their opinion to shared, mediatized dispute. (Bailo and Vromen, 2017)
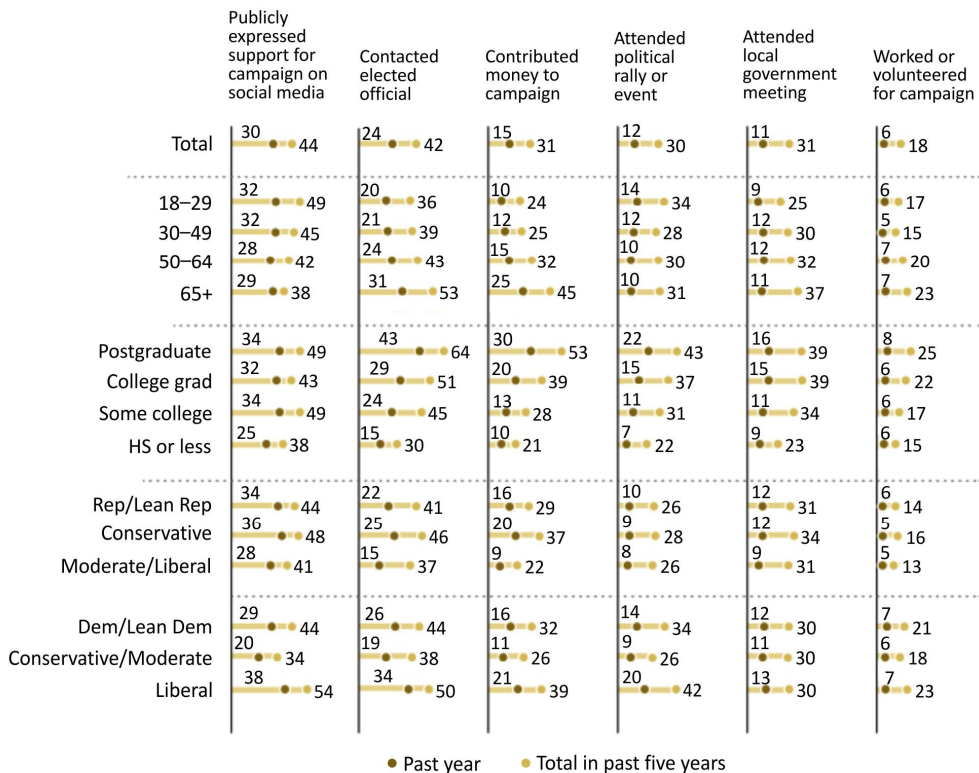
3. Methodology

Using data from AP-NORC Center and Pew Research Center, I performed analyses and made estimates regarding the percentage of social media users who say they have publicly expressed support for campaign on social media, contacted elected official, contributed money to campaign, attended political rally or event, attended local government meeting, and worked or volunteered for campaign; the percentage of teens who have volunteered for a cause they cared about, worked or cooperated with others to try to solve a problem affecting their school, city, or neighborhood, raised money for a cause they cared about, expressed their political beliefs online, signed a paper or online petition, and/or taken part in a peaceful protest, march, or demonstration; the percentage of U.S. adult social media users who say social media is at least somewhat important to them personally when it comes to finding others who share views about important topics/getting involved with political or social issues/giving them a venue to express their political opinions; the percentage of U.S. adults who say they changed their views on a political or social issue

because of something they saw on social media in the past year; and regional median saying it is very important that people can say what they want/media can report the news/people can use the internet in their country.
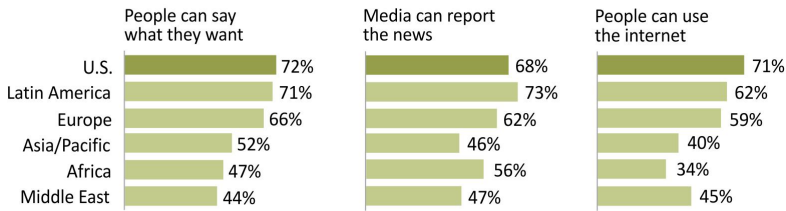
4. Results and Discussion

Protest movements have effectively embraced media technologies to announce their campaigns and activate massive numbers of adherents. (Kaun, 2017) Social media posts are disseminated in electronic form via a setup that is commonly supervised by the government. (Qin, Strömberg, and Wu, 2017) The consequences of repression on protest expansion are based on the occurrence of social media accounts reinforcing the movement. (Suh, Vasi, and Chang, 2017) Social movement operation via social media may assist in drawing elite awareness because their interests are communicated through established news outlets. The latter may attract considerable amounts of undivided observers at times when notable narratives emerge. (Freelon, McIlwain, and Clark, 2018) (Figures 1–5)

Figure 1 % who say they have done each of the following in the past (age, education, and party)
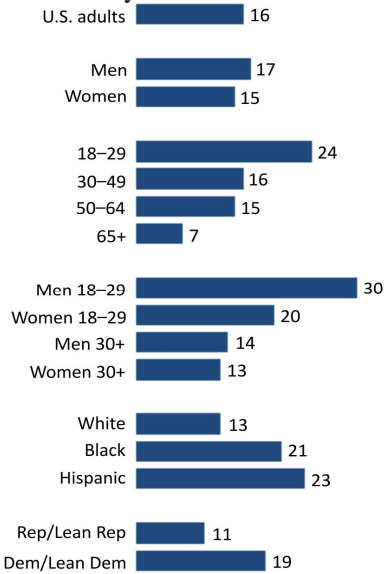
	Publicly expressed support for campaign on social media		Contacted elected official		Contributed money to campaign		Attended political rally or event		Attended local government meeting		Worked or volunteered for campaign	
	Past yr	5 yr	Past yr	5 yr	Past yr	5 yr	Past yr	5 yr	Past yr	5 yr	Past yr	5 yr
Total	30	44	24	42	15	31	12	30	11	31	6	18
18–29	32	49	20	36	10	24	14	34	9	25	6	17
30–49	32	45	21	39	12	25	12	28	12	30	5	15
50–64	28	42	24	43	15	32	10	30	12	32	7	20
65+	29	38	31	53	25	45	10	31	11	37	7	23
Postgraduate	34	49	43	64	30	53	22	43	16	39	8	25
College grad	32	43	29	51	20	39	15	37	15	39	6	22
Some college	34	49	24	45	13	28	11	31	11	34	6	17
HS or less	25	38	15	30	10	21	7	22	9	23	6	15
Rep/Lean Rep	34	44	22	41	16	29	10	26	12	31	6	14
Conservative	36	48	25	46	20	37	9	28	12	34	5	16
Moderate/Liberal	28	41	15	37	9	22	8	26	9	31	5	13
Dem/Lean Dem	29	44	26	44	16	32	14	34	12	30	7	21
Conservative/Moderate	20	34	19	38	11	26	9	26	11	30	6	18
Liberal	38	54	34	50	21	39	20	42	13	30	7	23

● Past year   ● Total in past five years

Sources: Pew Research Center; my survey among 3,100 individuals conducted October 2017.

Figure 2 Regional median saying it is very important that …
without state/government censorship in our country

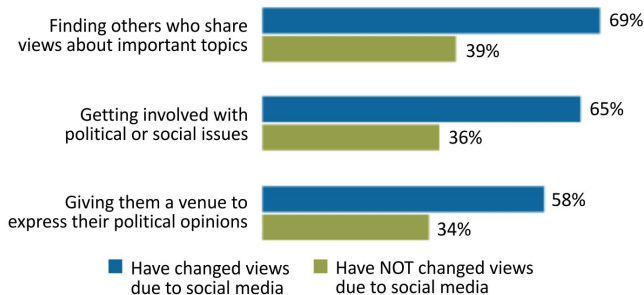|	People can say what they want	Media can report the news	People can use the internet
U.S.	72%	68%	71%
Latin America	71%	73%	62%
Europe	66%	62%	59%
Asia/Pacific	52%	46%	40%
Africa	47%	56%	34%
Middle East	44%	47%	45%

Sources: Pew Research Center; my survey among 4,600 individuals (44 countries) conducted December 2017.

Figure 3 % of U.S. adults who say they changed their views on a political or social issue because of something they saw on social media in the past year
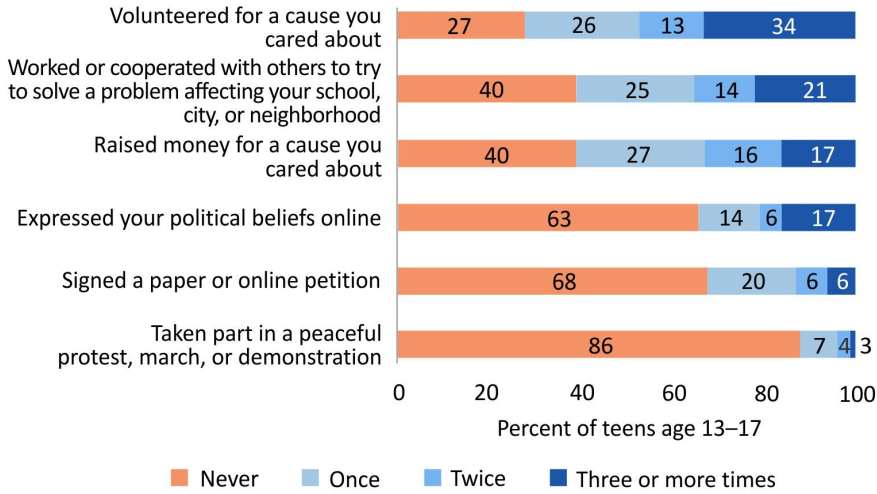
U.S. adults	16
Men	17
Women	15
18–29	24
30–49	16
50–64	15
65+	7
Men 18–29	30
Women 18–29	20
Men 30+	14
Women 30+	13
White	13
Black	21
Hispanic	23
Rep/Lean Rep	11
Dem/Lean Dem	19

Sources: Pew Research Center; my survey among 3,200 individuals conducted November 2017.

Figure 4 % of U.S. adult social media users who say social media is at least somewhat important to them personally when it comes to …

	Have changed views due to social media	Have NOT changed views due to social media
Finding others who share views about important topics	69%	39%
Getting involved with political or social issues	65%	36%
Giving them a venue to express their political opinions	58%	34%

Sources: Pew Research Center; my survey among 3,400 individuals conducted December 2017.

Figure 5 Over the past year, how many times have you …?

Percent of teens age 13–17

Legend: Never · Once · Twice · Three or more times

	Never	Once	Twice	Three or more times
Volunteered for a cause you cared about	27	26	13	34
Worked or cooperated with others to try to solve a problem affecting your school, city, or neighborhood	40	25	14	21
Raised money for a cause you cared about	40	27	16	17
Expressed your political beliefs online	63	14	6	17
Signed a paper or online petition	68	20	6	6
Taken part in a peaceful protest, march, or demonstration	86	7	4	3

Sources: AP-NORC Center; my survey among 2,700 individuals conducted October 2017.

5. Conclusions

Social media may be an essential tool for the constitution of two key aspects of social movements, i.e., the organization of informal networks and shared identities. (Zhu, Skoric, and Shen, 2017) Social media groups are digital vanguards – concerted and unconventional leadership structures that are instrumental in the guidance of collective undertakings via the employment of digital communication. (Gerbaudo, 2017) The net consequence of social media may be to hamper political involvement by making it more effortlessly for governments to obstruct oppositional operations. Protest organizers may employ social media platforms to supply decisive logistical backing for participants. Social media may exert purposeful consequences on political involvement that are dissimilar from those inferable to the conveying of elementary information, e.g. the time or setting of a demonstration. Citizens who are exposed more often to online information concerning protest activity are more inclined to participate in the movement. (Jost et al., 2018)

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