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Social media and social movements: Facebook and an online Guatemalan justice movement that moved offline

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Abstract
In May of 2009, a posthumous video surfaced in which prominent lawyer Rodrigo Rosenberg blamed Guatemalan president Alvaro Colom for murdering him. The accusations prompted the creation of numerous Facebook pages calling for Colom's resignation, and for justice for Rosenberg. Using interviews and a content analysis of Facebook comments from the two most-active Facebook groups, this study found that the social network site was used to mobilize an online movement that moved offline. Users' protest-related and motivational comments, in addition to their use of links and other interactive elements of Facebook, helped organize massive protests demanding justice and an end to violence.

Keywords
Facebook, international communications, justice, social media, social movements, social network sites

The 10 May 2009 murder of Guatemalan lawyer Rodrigo Rosenberg at first was seen as just another shooting in one of the deadliest countries in Latin America. On the day of Rosenberg's funeral, however, a video surfaced that plunged this Central American country into political turmoil, sparking public protests and threatening to further destabilize the already fragile democracy. In the 18-minute video, filmed just days before his death, a grim-faced Rosenberg stares directly into the camera and claims, 'If you are watching this message, it is because I was assassinated by President Álvaro Colom.'

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Within hours, the postmortem video was posted on Facebook and YouTube, spreading across the internet with alacrity typical of the Information Age, and demonstrating the interoperability between Facebook and other internet sites, enabling the viral, simultaneous cross-posting of messages (Bodle, 2010). Turning to online social media like Facebook and Twitter, in much the same way as has been done in Colombia, with peace marches, and Iran, with election protests, Guatemalans began changing their homepage statuses to call for Colom's ouster and demand justice for Rosenberg.

Users created Facebook Fan Pages and Groups, popular applications allowing anyone with shared interests to become a 'fan,' or join a 'group,' and participate in discussion forums and threads. Fan Pages are similar to an individual's typical profile page, except content is visible to even non-Facebook members. Group pages, in contrast, can control who is or is not invited or accepted to be a member, and unlike an individual's typical personal profile page, Group pages have an administrator. Such pages included Justicia Rodrigo Rosenberg and Héroe Rodrigo Rosenberg, both typical profile pages, and Movimiento Cívico Nacional, which started as a Fan Page and then converted to a Group. It did not take long before thousands of Facebook users had joined these pages – Justicia Rodrigo Rosenberg boasted 28,000 friends in just three days (Fieser, 2009). These pages, open to anyone with a Facebook account, included 'friends' not only from Guatemala, but from throughout the world. Through these Facebook pages, users joined forces, initiating an online movement that moved offline, prompting a series of large-scale protests. More than 50,000 demonstrators gathered for the first massive protest on 17 May (Fernandez, 2009). Dubbed by the press as the *tsunami blanco* for the white t-shirts they wore, demonstrators continued protesting, thousands at a time, for weeks (Carvill, 2009; Portillo, 2009).

Using a content analysis of comments posted to two Rosenberg-related Facebook pages, and interviews conducted with the page creators, this article examines how the Facebook comments were framed to mobilize and advance an online justice movement that activated an offline movement. In addition to the framing of comments, this exploratory study also considers what role the various interactive Facebook features, such as the ability to 'like' or respond to another user's comment, played in the online 'virtual' movement and the offline 'real' protests that took place in downtown Guatemala City. Such research is important because while researchers have studied the development of traditional offline social movements (Gerhards and Rucht, 1992; Gitlin, 1980), or looked at how the internet facilitates social movements (Atton, 2003; Ayres, 1999; Castells, 2001), little has been written about how social media are organizing online activism that moves offline (Wojcieszak, 2009). Further, much is unknown about who uses social network sites, and to what end (boyd and Ellison, 2007). A survey of US Facebook Group users, which suggested Facebook could encourage youth civic and political participation, called for more research into Facebook 'in other contexts and diverse communities' (Park et al., 2009: 733). Few researchers have content analyzed user posts on social network sites, or interviewed the sites' creators, providing a unique opportunity to explore this relatively new interactive medium.

Background

With a population of about 13.5 million – more than half of it indigenous – Guatemala is the largest country in Central America. In December 1996, the signing of peace accords

marked the end of a bloody 36-year civil war that left more than 200,000 dead and another 50,000 disappeared (Commission for Historical Clarification, 1999). According to the 1999 Truth Commission report, the United Nations declared the killings 'genocide,' as most of the victims of the state-sponsored violence were Maya. In the years since the war, the violence has not subsided. With an average of 18 people killed each day, Guatemala ranks as one of the world's deadliest countries (Latin American Herald Tribune, 2010).

Álvaro Colom, a social democrat elected in 2007, is Guatemala's first left-leaning president since Jacobo Arbenz was overthrown in 1954. Even as the Rosenberg video accusing Colom of murder was spreading across the internet, the government was launching an ad campaign with Colom denying the accusations and promising a thorough investigation. In the following weeks, tens of thousands of Guatemalans converged on the square in front of the National Palace, demanding justice and an end to violence with impunity – 96 percent of crimes in Guatemala go unpunished (Fieser, 2010). Facebook and Twitter users circulated an online petition, collecting in less than a week more than 5000 signatures calling for President Colom to step down. The public outcry led to the establishment of an independent commission to investigate Rosenberg's murder. In January 2010, the commission concluded that Rosenberg, who had been depressed over the death of his girlfriend, planned his own murder in order to frame Colom (Fieser, 2010). Still, bloggers and many of those involved in the movement continue to doubt the veracity of the commission's findings (Avila, 2010). At least two Facebook Fan Pages since have been created, stating a disbelief in the conclusion that Rosenberg orchestrated his own murder. Also, one pro-Rosenberg group that started via Facebook, Movimiento Cívico Nacional, has expanded to a general pro-justice/anti-violence group that continues to stage collective action events.

As seen by the way the Facebook movement in Guatemala so quickly gained momentum, prompting more than 50,000 people to protest, social media have the ability to instantaneously spread messages to the masses, unrestricted by time or space. The emergence of an internet-based 'Activism 2.0' alongside the Web 2.0 provides an opportunity to use the framing approach and social movement theories to explain how an online activism organized by social network sites gave birth to an offline activism that took to the streets.

Web 2.0, known for its interactive platform, includes blogs and social network sites like Facebook and Twitter. The scholars boyd and Ellison (2007) defined social network sites (SNS) as an online service for users to create a public or semi-public profile, build a network with other users with whom they share a common link, and navigate other users' profiles and networks.

Unlike some SNS that are private and charge a fee, or others that target a particular audience (i.e. LinkedIn is aimed at connecting professionals), Facebook is free and open to all, and is 'playful,' more about providing a way for friends and acquaintances to stay in touch than a platform for meeting new people (Papacharissi, 2009). Facebook is now the largest social network site with more than 500 million active users – about 70 percent of whom are from outside the United States (Facebook, 2011). A Spanish version of the site went online in February 2008, and by September 2009, the number of Facebook users in Latin America and the Caribbean had topped 35.5 million (Facebook, 2009).

In Guatemala, where roughly 56 percent of the population lives in poverty and about 27 percent of those aged 15 and older is illiterate (United Nations, 2009), Facebook's penetration rate is one of the lowest in the world. As of August 2009, 229,820 Guatemalans – just 1.64 percent of the population – regularly used Facebook (Del Castillo, 2009). By comparison, Facebook users from the United States number about 85.6 million, or about 28.5 percent of the population (Del Castillo, 2009).

Literature, theory and research questions

Broadly defined, 'activism' is the actions of a group of like-minded individuals coming together to change the status quo, advocating for a cause, whether local or global, and whether progressive or not (Cammaerts, 2007; Kahn and Kellner, 2004; Lomicky and Hogg, 2010). Activism can encompass social movements and moments of collective action. Social movements involve a prolonged contestation of authority with interactions between the challengers and powerholders (Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 1978), with the end goal of ultimately achieving some kind of social change. Collective action, which Tilly defined as 'joint action in pursuit of common ends' (1978: 84), such as a protest or petition campaign, can be employed as part of a social movement, or it can be a one-time event. Whether a long-term social movement or an outburst of action, successful mobilizations depend on the degree of a group's common interests and shared identity, its available resources, its political power, its opportunities and threats, and the level of governmental repression (Tilly, 1978). In this Digital Era, access to and familiarity with technology have become an important resource for a successful movement (Rolfe, 2005). In Guatemala, what started as a massive protest organized via Facebook around Rosenberg's murder has evolved into a more general pro-justice and anti-violence movement.

The way in which Guatemalans rallied via Facebook to demand justice is characteristic of what Castells (2001) called a 'networked social movement' of the Information Age. This networked social movement was based on cultural values (justice); was a loose and semi-spontaneous coalition relying on internet technologies (Facebook); and was a locally based movement aiming globally (Castells, 2001). Even as Guatemalans protested in downtown Guatemala City, Facebook users in the United States and Europe organized their own demonstrations, hoping global attention would prompt the US government and the United Nations to get involved. What made this networked social movement unique, however, was that it was not simply a case of activists turning to the internet to assist a pre-existing movement. Instead, the movement originated entirely online and then moved offline – a concept for which much social movement literature does not account.

To better understand how Facebook users mobilized tens of thousands of people to participate online and offline, this study employed a framing approach. Entman (1993) suggested that media frames, derived from Goffman's (1974) notion of schemas, define an issue through selection, exclusion, emphasis and elaboration – in other words, frames tell the audience how to think about something. Framing studies typically consider frames at an issue-specific (i.e. topical or episodic) or generic level, including thematic frames such as values, adversarial, consequences, or human interest frames (Iyengar, 1991; Matthes, 2009; Price et al., 1997). However, frames are more than just categories – they organize and structure, helping illuminate meanings embedded within the text (Reese, 2007).

Within social movement literature, Gerhards and Rucht (1992) identified three collective action frames: diagnostic, which define a problem or assign blame; prognostic, which detail possible solutions; and motivational, which incite individuals to act or mobilize. McLeod and Hertog (1999) referred to a 'protest paradigm' way of framing wherein news stories' themes and a reliance on official sources de-legitimize protesters.

Examining Facebook comments allows for a unique ground-up approach to analyzing how Facebook users framed the justice and reform movement. The way these online comments were framed helps explain how a social movement was mobilized online by comments that pointed out the problem, identified solutions, and motivated people to participate offline.

The internet's impact on social movements

According to a 2009 survey by DigiActive, social network sites (SNS) are the most common entrance to online activism, despite the fact that SNS were not created with activism in mind (Brodock et al., 2009). Considering that much still must be learned about how the internet is impacting mobilization (Rolfe, 2005; Wojcieszak, 2009), this study is important for exploring what SNS, particularly Facebook, mean for social movements (Cleaver, 1998; Diani, 2000).

Scholars tend to view the internet's role in social movements as two-fold: the internet can facilitate traditional offline activism, enhancing a movement's existing repertoire by adding email campaigns, online petitions and even virtual sit-ins to activists' existing toolbox (Castells, 2001; Juris, 2005), or it actually can create new forms of activism and resistance (Cardoso and Pereira Neto, 2004; Rolfe, 2005; Van Laer and Van Aelst, 2009). When it comes to supporting traditional techniques of social movements, whether protests or signature drives, the internet, unlike any other medium, allows for fast, easy and cheap transnational action not limited by time, space or distance (Castells, 2001; Juris, 2005; Ribeiro, 1998).

A perpetual problem of social movements has been how to obtain enough highly motivated individuals to initiate a mobilization, and attract more participants and resources (Opp, 2009), but with SNS, all it takes is a click of the mouse for participants to be recruited globally. Quite prophetically, Oliver and Marwell identified the need for 'some social mechanism that connects enough people who have the appropriate interests and resources so that they can act' (1988: 6). Facebook users and their social networks – users have an average of 130 friends (Facebook, 2009) – provide an easily and instantaneously accessible critical mass, as evidenced by the 28,000 friends the 'Justicia Rodrigo Rosenberg' group amassed in just three days.

Still, if it is so easy to click 'Join Group' or 'Sign Petition,' it is worth considering whether members of online social movements truly are dedicated to the cause, or just jumping on the bandwagon. Van de Donk et al. (2004) argued that the internet will complement, not replace, existing social movement tactics. In fact, it is the widely lauded simplicity of online activism that scholars have suggested could undercut a movement's value, creating a half-hearted, meaningless activism, or 'slacktivism' (Morozov, 2009a; Van de Donk et al., 2004). Further, while Morozov (2007, 2009b) acknowledged that the internet can facilitate mobilization and collective action, and that the latest generation of

activists and protesters might as well be based out of Facebook, he cautioned against technological determinism that glosses over the importance of offline participation. Similarly, other scholars have questioned whether virtual interaction could prompt the levels of trust among participants needed to support sustained collective action (Diani, 2000). Without trust, members are not deeply dedicated, so while a movement's support might grow quickly initially, that support is likely to soon fall off (Diani, 2000; Van Laer and Van Aelst, 2009). Some have found that virtual ties alone, without 'real' face-to-face interaction, are doubtful to be strong enough to successfully mobilize or sustain a social movement, as real relationships are considered more valuable and effective than impersonal electronic communication (Diani, 2000; Ribeiro, 1998).

However, in an analysis of an online bulletin board for lesbians in Hong Kong, Nip (2004) found potential for the internet to help construct identity and build online trust, which then could lead to offline mobilization. Wojcieszak's study of online neo-Nazi and radical environmentalist groups found collective identity was strengthened through these online groups, resulting in online participation being the 'strongest predictor' of offline political action: the more participation in these online discussion groups increased, the more involvement in political activities increased (2009: 573). Hara (2008) likewise showed in a study of MoveOn.org's political actions during the 2004 US presidential campaign that the sense of community that members felt – even without face-to-face communication – actually contributed to offline mobilization.

Online and offline activism

Sandor Vegh's (2003) classification of online activism includes: (a) awareness/advocacy, and (b) organization/mobilization. First, when it comes to awareness and advocacy, the Web allows a social movement to bypass traditional media gatekeepers. For example, anti-neo-liberal activists created a network of Independent Media Centers to provide alternative news coverage of the World Trade Organization protests in 1999 (Atton, 2003). Postmes and Brunsting (2002) also found 'alternative' news disseminated via the internet influenced mobilization.

Second, Vegh (2003) said the internet facilitates organization and mobilization by three means: a) calling for offline action via email or a Website; b) calling for online action for something typically done offline, such as sending emails to Congress members instead of letters; and c) calling for online action that is possible only via the internet, such as a computer spam campaign.

Vegh's conceptualization of online activism, however, does not go far enough. In the aftermath of the Rosenberg video, what came forward was not a movement merely 'relying' on the internet. What developed in Guatemala was an activism born online, where offline activity was dependent on what happened online. Vegh's classification limits the internet to a purely supplemental role in offline activism.

Schussman and Earl (2004) criticized much of the existing literature, maintaining it was faulty to conclude the internet was not creating new modes of activism when most research was based on the ways in which already existing social movement organizations were incorporating Web-based techniques, rather than examining movements born online. This study answers their concern, examining how Facebook comments helped push an online movement offline.

Still, when considering this new electronic repertoire of action, is the internet functioning as the cause or merely a catalyst for online activism? Castells (2001) said dramatic events or crises are what tend to trigger social change. Jasper posited that 'moral shocks,' defined as an event or piece of information that 'raises such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined toward political action,' are prerequisite for mobilization of a social movement (1997: 106). Similarly, a 'suddenly imposed grievance' or a 'critical event' can motivate ordinary citizens to get politically active (Opp, 2009: 96). A video from beyond the grave in which a murder victim points an accusatory finger at the president is exemplary of a critical event prompting moral shock.

Thus, based on the preceding literature regarding mobilization, framing, the internet's impact on social movements, and online versus offline activism, this study interrogated the following research questions:

RQ1: Who were the organizers of Guatemala's Facebook justice movement, and what were their motivations and expectations?

RQ2a: When considering Gerhards and Rucht's (1992) three collective action frames, were Guatemalan Facebook users more likely to employ diagnostic, prognostic or motivational frames?

RQ2b: Which thematic frame was most stressed among Facebook comments: an agency frame, values frame, adversarial frame, or a reflective frame?

RQ3: What topical and functional subframes emerged among Facebook comments?

RQ4: How is the frequency of users' posts related to the frames and subframes of a comment?

RQ5: What kinds of news information did Guatemalan Facebook users post?

RQ6: What kinds of interactive comments and interactivity between the 'real' world and 'virtual' world did Facebook engender?

Methodology

To understand this social movement that began online and moved offline, two research methods were used: depth interviews and content analysis. The interviews, conducted in Spanish, took place in Guatemala City during the summer of 2009 with four leaders of the Facebook movement. Interviews were followed up with emails sent in March 2010. Content analysis was used to examine comments posted to two Facebook pages leading the movement, 'Justicia Rodrigo Rosenberg' and 'Movimiento Cívico Nacional.' These pages were chosen because they were created after the release of the Rosenberg postmortem video, their 'friends' lists were most substantive, and their 'walls' contained more postings than other similar Facebook pages. Although most content analyses of social network sites like Facebook or MySpace have studied standard profile information that is input when an account is created, this study examined comments users posted (Stern, 2007; Waters et al., 2009).

Depth interviews were used to answer RQ1, which asked who the organizers of Guatemala's Facebook justice movement were, and what were their motivations and expectations. During the interviews, the four movement leaders were asked why they decided to get involved with the Rosenberg case, where they got the idea to use Facebook, and what they believed the outcome of using Facebook would be.

The content analysis used Facebook users' comments as the unit of analyis. A census of all comments posted to the 'Justicia Rodrigo Rosenberg' and 'Movimiento Cívico Nacional' pages from May to August, 2009, was analyzed. This time frame was chosen because both pages were created in May, and the Facebook-generated protests continued throughout the summer.

To answer RQ2a, which asked whether Facebook users were more likely to employ diagnostic, prognostic or motivational frames, comments were placed into one of Gerhards and Rucht's (1992) collective action frames: diagnostic (how did the comment define the problem?), prognostic (what solutions were suggested?) or motivational (was the comment a call to arms or motivating?). For RQ2b, comments were coded according to thematic frames: an agency frame (related to participating or inciting action), a values frame (related to high-level abstraction ideals of justice, democracy, national security, patriotism, familial safety, or good of the community), an adversarial frame (portraying the movement as good versus evil, or specifying heroes and villains), a reflective frame (related to discussions of antecedents, consequences, or media coverage), or other (Matthes, 2009; Noakes and Johnston, 2005). Verbatim quotes of comments were used to illustrate the various frames and topics.

To answer RQ3, which asked what topical and functional subframes emerged from the Facebook comments, comments were placed into the following topical categories: protest/action related, anti-president/government, petition-related, specifically mentioning Rosenberg, media coverage/article/blog, justice/impunity, related to other crimes/problems in Guatemala, solidarity with Guatemala, Facebook/Twitter related, general encouragement/support for movement, and other. Similar to the procedure for coding open-ended survey questions, approximately 10% of the comments were reviewed to identify recurring topics (Poindexter and McCombs, 2000). The coding categories represent the most frequently appearing topics. To determine function, coders specified whether the comment primarily conveyed information, called for action, referenced past or future participation in a protest, stated an opinion, sought information, or generally offered support/encouragement. Again, these categories related to the comments' function were identified after reviewing a sub-sample of comments.

For RQ4, how frequently users posted comments, comments were coded for how many times the user posted a comment that same day. Users then were divided by how often they posted comments. Those who posted once in a day were considered low-frequency posters, those who posted two to three times in a day were medium-frequency posters, and those who posted more than three comments in the same day were considered high-frequency posters.

To answer RQ5, which asked what kinds of news information Guatemalan Facebook users posted, the media coverage topic variable was combined with a variable coding how many and what kinds of links users posted. Comments that included audio, visual or textual hyperlinks were counted.

To answer RQ6, about the kinds of interactive comments and interactivity between the 'real' world and 'virtual' world Facebook engendered, comments were coded for unique variables unavailable for analysis in static newspaper content. For example, comments were coded as an original comment or as a response to a comment. Such responses to an original post are easily identifiable on Facebook pages, as they are broken out in smaller type size. Another interactive element Facebook offers is a feature allowing users to click a 'thumbs-up' icon to 'like,' or endorse, a comment that another user has posted. As such, comments that other users 'liked' also were recorded. Additionally, posts were coded as citizen journalist comments if the Facebook user provided an eye-witness account or photos from a protest.

Coders and inter-coder reliability

Four English/Spanish bilingual coders, including the author, coded comments. Approximately 10 percent of comments were assessed to determine inter-coder reliability. Using Holsti's formula, the number of coding decisions agreed upon divided by the total number of decisions made, the mean inter-coder reliability was calculated at 93 percent, which is higher than the established minimum acceptable rate of 80 percent (Poindexter and McCombs, 2000). For individual variables, the mean inter-coder reliability ranged from 83 percent to 100 percent.

Results

In answer to RQ1, who were the organizers of the Facebook movement and what were their motives and expectations, the interviews revealed the organizers were young males in their 20s, educated at the country's elite private universities. When they created these Facebook pages, they did not intentionally set out to mobilize the Guatemalan public to protest. Instead, they wanted to inform the public about Rosenberg's murder. When thousands of people began joining the various Facebook pages, the organizers realized that the public, fed up with the escalating violence, was ready to take to the streets in protest.

One organizer, a 26-year-old male, said Facebook was the obvious tool as it has 'become a common communication means among much of the youth in Guatemala. It has converted into part of ordinary life' and 'from there surged and formulated the idea to take to the streets.'[1]

Another organizer, a 21-year-old male who said he grew up using computers, said SNS have become one of the main ways he communicates and interacts with others. So when he found out about Rosenberg's murder via YouTube, he decided to form a Facebook Group to share everything he had learned, and to give himself an outlet for the 'indignity' he felt:

> I was curious to see if other people were interested in what I had to say …. It surprised me so much to see in the first days dozens and then hundreds of people joining … and it gave me a certain sense of responsibility. I never thought Facebook would end up being such an important tool in this movement.

A 20-year-old Guatemalan male who began using his personal Facebook page to post updates about the Rosenberg case, before eventually creating a page, said he was not sure Facebook could create such a large protest movement for any other murder or societal problem in Guatemala:

> The person who was killed was not a bus driver. He was a lawyer from the upper-middle or upper class, so it hit home with all these people who had internet, because they could relate more to him than to a bus driver or a bodyguard. And it is not everyday a lawyer is killed and then leaves a video, so this was a very particular case. It was the perfect storm.

The 26-year-old said that as more people use Facebook everyday, he is optimistic about social media's potential for encouraging political participation. 'Really, Facebook can change the country's situation,' he said.

The responses of organizers, thus, show the surprise they felt at how quickly Facebook mobilized so many people. Initially they created the Facebook pages because they were appalled by Rosenberg's allegations and frustrated with the violence and impunity. The movement that emerged, they contended, was spontaneous and organic, made possible by Facebook. While some organizers were hopeful Facebook could be utilized similarly again, others were less optimistic, seeing the Rosenberg case as unique.

Collective action and thematic frames

Considering RQ2a, which asked whether Facebook users were more likely to employ diagnostic, prognostic or motivational frames, results showed that when comments were placed into social movement theory's collective action frames, most (38%) were motivational, or a call to arms. One motivational comment posted by a male said, 'Let's go Guatemala, let's continue in the fight.' About 22 percent of comments were prognostic (suggesting a solution), and 13 percent diagnostic (defining a problem). In a prognostic comment, one male wrote, 'What we want is for the president to resign from office.' A diagnostic comment, also posted by a male, said, 'That there are 17 murders daily is not something normal as say the country's authorities.'

Further, when comments were coded according to thematic frames per RQ2b (see Table 1), the majority (57%) fell into the agency frame (related to participating or inciting action). For example, one comment with an agency frame, posted by a female, said, 'I will be present one more time!!!! Let's keep fighting, people!!!!!'

Topics and functions

In answer to RQ3, asking what were the topical and functional subframes of the Facebook comments, the most frequent topics of users' posts (see Table 2) were 'protest or action related' (31%) and 'support for the movement/general encouragement' (11%). For example, a male posted the following 'protest or action-related' comment:

> SUNDAY 24, DEMONSTRATION IN CENTRAL PARK AFTER 10 AM. Congratulations Guate for a historical civic movement!!!! Prepare yourselves for next Sunday. We are going to have a march and/or protest even more massive!!!!

Table 1. Frequency of thematic frames in comments on Facebook pages.

Thematic frame	Frequency (%)
Agency (action related)	57
Reflective (media coverage, thoughtful)	21
Values (ideals, like justice)	11
Adversarial (heroes versus villains)	9
Other	3
	101* (711 valid cases)

*Does not add to 100% because of rounding.

In relation to the function of comments, most called for action (29%) or conveyed information (25%). Eighteen percent stated an opinion, 11 percent referenced protest attendance, 7 percent sought information, 5 percent supported the movement, and 5 percent were 'other.' One comment calling for action, posted by a female, said: 'Come on!! Let's attend again and as many times as is necessary!!!' Among comments that called for action, most (39%) encouraged others to attend a protest. Approximately 30 percent were for general action/encouragement, 10 percent related to signing a petition, 8 percent encouraged others to spread the word about the movement, and 8 percent were 'other.' About 7 percent of comments called for Facebook action, such as posting protest information in an individual's profile status. For example, one female posted:

> 'We are not alone, let's go demonstrate our opposition to this government!' Copy this message in your status so that all can find out!!!

Table 2. Frequency of topic of comments on Facebook pages.

Comment topic	Frequency (%)
Protest/action-related	31
Support movement/general encouragement	11
Other	11
Media coverage/article/blog	10
Petition-related	8
Anti-president/government	8
Solidarity with Guatemala	7
Demand for justice/end to impunity	5
Specifically mentioning Rosenberg	3
Facebook/Twitter related	3
Other crimes/problems in Guatemala	3
	100 (711 valid cases)

Frequency of posts

Examining how frames and subframes varied according to how often a user posted comments, per RQ4, most users (58%) were classified as low-frequency posters who posted just once in a day. About 23 percent were medium-frequency posters who posted two-three comments in a day, and 19 percent were high-frequency posters who posted four or more times in a day. While high-, medium-, and low-frequency posters were equally likely to post comments with a protest/action-related topic ($\chi^2 = 90.33$, $df = 20$, $p < .001$), more high-frequency (18%) than low-frequency posters (5%) wrote petition-related comments. However, more low-frequency (15%) than high-frequency posters (4%) supported the movement or offered encouragement.

The function of comments also varied by according to how often the user posted in a day (see Table 3). High-frequency posters (44%) were more likely than low-frequency posters (26%) to call for action ($\chi^2 = 46.95$, $df = 12$, $p < .001$).

Frames also differed by frequency of posts. Among collective action frames, more high-frequency posters (46%) than low-frequency posters (37%) wrote comments with a motivational frame ($\chi^2 = 15.54$, $df = 8$, $p < .05$). For thematic frames, more comments from high-frequency (67%) than low-frequency posters (54%) received an agency frame, although results were not significant ($\chi^2 = 15.38$, $df = 8$, $p = .052$). Also, more comments by low-frequency posters (14%) than high-frequency posters (7%) had a values frame.

Informational links

In answer to RQ5, what kinds of information Guatemalan Facebook users posted, 24 percent of comments contained links, of which 69 percent linked to textual information, such as newspapers or blogs. Of the textual links, 35 percent linked to online mainstream news articles, such as from the *Wall Street Journal* or the Guatemalan newspaper *Prensa Libre* (see Table 4). Approximately 15 percent linked to non-mainstream/alternative news articles.

Table 3. Comparison of frequency of posts and function of comments on Facebook pages.

Function	Low-frequency (%)	Medium-frequency (%)	High-frequency (%)
Call for action	26	24	44
Convey information	21	33	28
State an opinion	19	19	13
Reference past/future participation in a protest	15	5	6
Seek information	8	9	2
Support movement/ general encouragement	5	6	4
Other	6	4	4
	100 (411 valid cases)	100 (165 valid cases)	101* (135 valid cases)

*Does not add to 100% because of rounding Cramer's $V = -.182$; $p < .001$.

Approximately 20 percent of links were to still photos, like photos of previous protests uploaded to Facebook photo albums. About 11 percent of links went to videos, such as from YouTube. Just 1 percent contained audio links, such as to a report on a radio station's Website.

Males were more likely than females (27% versus 19%) to post links ($\chi^2 = 4.83$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). Also, comments from high-frequency posters (37%) were more than twice as likely as those from low-frequency posters (18%) to include links (Cramer's $V = .169$, $p < .001$).

Interactivity and citizen journalists

The results for RQ6, what kinds of interactivity between the 'real' and 'virtual' world Facebook engendered, were determined by whether the comment was a 'response' to another comment, whether other users 'liked' the comment, and whether the user acted as a citizen journalist, such as by posting eye-witness accounts. Approximately 35 percent of comments were a 'response' to another comment, many of which were written in the Spanish informal *tú* verb form used among friends. About 15 percent of comments had a thumbs-up symbol indicating it was 'liked' by another user. More comments by high-frequency posters (35%) than low-frequency posters (4%) were 'liked' ($\chi^2 = 93.57$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$). Also, more low-frequency posters (39%) than high-frequency posters (32%) wrote responses to another user's comment, rather than posting an original comment ($\chi^2 = 7.84$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$).

Approximately 5% of comments were coded as being from users acting as 'citizen journalists,' providing eye-witness accounts of news events and demonstrations, or photos and videos from protests. Citizen journalist comments were two-and-a-half times more likely than non-citizen journalist comments (56% versus 22%) to contain links ($\chi^2 = 19.51$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). Males were as likely as females to act as citizen journalists (5% versus 4%).

Discussion and conclusion

Using depth interviews and a content analysis of Facebook comments, this study explored how Facebook pages mobilized an online justice and reform movement that, because of

Table 4. Frequency of types of textual links included in Facebook comments.

Type of link	Frequency (%)
Mainstream news article	35
Facebook link	23
Non-mainstream news article	15
Petition link	10
Blog	5
Twitter link	3
Other	10
	101%* (116 valid cases)

*Does not add to 100% because of rounding.

the way comments were framed and the way Facebook's interactive features helped create a sense of community, moved offline to the streets of Guatemala.

The depth interviews with the movement organizers showed that the young, educated males who used Facebook to express their frustration with the government and escalating violence did so never imagining the site would prove to be such a powerful force for uniting tens of thousands of Guatemalans in protest and prompting a 'networked social movement' (Castells, 2001). Without Facebook, they argued, such a large movement never would have mobilized.

The content analysis showed the framing, topics and functions of the online comments prompted offline action by emphasizing protests and calling on others to participate and spread the word. Adding further support for Gerhards and Rucht's collective action frames, this study showed that comments were framed in such a way as to motivate others to get involved in the movement and participate in offline activities, whether attending protests or signing a petition. Further, the topical subframe of most Facebook users' comments was protest-related and the functional subframe a call for action, again illustrating that the online component of the movement was focused on generating offline participation. Rather than simply using Facebook as a forum for talking about justice or criticizing the government, users instead posted comments to mobilize an online and offline movement, organize protests, showcase photos of protests, and actively show their support for the movement. Because of Facebook, tens of thousands of Guatemalans regularly took to the streets throughout the summer, protesting, marching, or demonstrating in front of government buildings.

Whereas comments from low-frequency posters emphasized values, comments from high-frequency posters were more about action, emphasizing protest participation. Thus, countering previous research that has contended online activism is unlikely to incite offline action, this study shows that the online Facebook activity of high-frequency posters also translated into offline participation. High-frequency posters likewise were successful in their attempts to engage others, as their comments, which were more likely to be motivational and a call to arms, were 'liked,' or endorsed, more often. Perhaps these high-frequency posters were more actively involved in the online movement because they had a wider network of 'friends' or had been using Facebook longer. Comments from high-frequency posters also gave the impression they were more politically savvy, as their comments showed they understood the rules for collecting signatures on a petition, or requesting permission to hold public demonstrations. It follows that Facebook users with prior participation experience would be more likely to be active both online and offline, suggesting that those citizens already active offline are more likely to also be active online, and vice versa.

Analyzing Facebook content also provides insight into how users took advantage of Facebook's interactive elements. Many users' comments included links to videos, photos and texts, such as to non-mainstream news sources that provided alternative coverage of the Rosenberg case, giving Guatemalans a perspective they might not get watching television news or reading mainstream newspapers. Also, Facebook's option for users to 'like' or respond to a comment helped generate debate and create a sense of community and collective identity, furthering the likelihood of users participating offline. Beyond providing content, these links and 'like' functions also serve to attract attention from

users, further contributing to online participation and, eventually, offline participation. When commenting on each other's posts – another interactive feature Facebook affords – users referred to others by name, or used the Spanish informal '*tú*' verb form – used among friends and equals –, even though many never had met face to face. Such interaction can help strengthen ties among movement participants, potentially creating trust and building a community identity that past research has shown is essential for a movement's success. Thus, these Facebook features that allowed for interactivity among users helped create a collective identity that served to push the online movement offline to the streets in the form of week after week of protests, demonstrations and petition drives.

Although few Facebook users acted as citizen journalists, offering their own protest coverage or commentary on the news, arguably this is because the use of social network sites to publish eyewitness news accounts still is a relatively new way of thinking about online social media. Additionally, in a country with a history of repression, perhaps Facebook users were wary of acting as journalists. Still, for those users who did post citizen journalism comments, Facebook provided the means to bypass traditional news gatekeepers, allowing movement participants to publish their own information and publicize activities a traditional newspaper might deem un-newsworthy. Such first-hand accounts of Facebook users who participated both online and offline indicate that online citizen journalists, much like the Facebook interactive features, also contributed to the transition of the online movement to offline action.

This study adds to an understanding of the recent phenomenon of online social media social movements. While previous literature has focused on how the internet facilitates existing movements, this research shows how the internet was used to create offline activism, and suggests new thematic frames (i.e. agency and reflective) for analyzing future online movements. Additionally, as this is an analysis of a movement in understudied Latin America, it brings a new cultural perspective to social movement theories, demonstrating that the presence of collective action frames is not country specific, as the three collective action frames (diagnostic, prognostic and motivational) all emerged in the Guatemalan Facebook comments. Also, by examining how often comments were made, what kinds of informational links were posted, the interactive features of Facebook, and the kinds of comments citizen journalists made, this study contributes to burgeoning literature analyzing social network sites' impact on social movements.

As this was an examination of just two of several Rosenberg-related Facebook pages, further studies could consider differences among the various pages. Future research also should compare other social media social movements in Latin America and the world, exploring Facebook's role in a movement's success. Also, further research could look at the digital divide in online movements, and how social media are impacting the knowledge gap.

Although Guatemalans successfully used Facebook to create a justice movement and marshal many people who never before had protested, the massive offline action that brought 50,000 people at a time to a march has not been sustained. By August, three months after Rosenberg's death, the protests had died down and the number of posts to the Facebook pages had dwindled. While one group formed via Facebook, Movimiento Cívico Nacional, has continued to fight for justice, organizing anti-violence demonstrations and other activism events, the movement has faded, losing momentum, participants,

and visibility. As such, it seems online social media like Facebook have the potential to spur moments of collective action, but SNS may not yet be enough to provoke long-term social change in poor, unequal countries like Guatemala, where most people still do not have internet access. Until the government and society succeed in closing the digital divide, any further social media social movements, while sure to cause a stir, may be limited in both scope and impact, wielding little long-term social power. As long as the bulk of the population is digitally excluded from online activism, any online social movements will be deprived of a key resource: people. Still, although the Guatemalan Facebook movement has diminished, the pro-justice movement continues, making it rash to dismiss entirely the potential of using social media sites like Facebook for social change.

Thus, this study suggests the internet has the capacity for actually creating – not just enhancing – political activism in Latin America. This was not a movement organized offline where the internet served merely as a tool to facilitate mobilization. Instead, the interviews and content analysis demonstrated that it was via the union of tens of thousands of Guatemalans on Facebook that a justice and reform movement was born online and then moved offline. Collective action and thematic frames, the inclusion of links, interactivity among users via Facebook features such as the ability to 'like' a comment or respond to another's comment, and the use of Facebook for posting citizen journalism accounts all seem to have contributed to the transition of the Guatemalan movement from the online, virtual realm to the offline, real world. While those Guatemalans initially turned to Facebook because of their outrage over the Rosenberg video, it is not being too technologically deterministic to contend that while the video was the spark, it was the online Facebook movement that spurred offline protests, igniting a pro-justice/anti-violence movement that struggles on today.

Note

1 All quotations from interviews and Facebook comments were translated from the original Spanish into English by the author.

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