This is (Not) What Democracy Looks Like:

How Ideology, Hierarchy and Inequality Shape Digital Activism

By

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Abstract

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This dissertation addresses longstanding sociological questions about organizational democracy in the context of contemporary advances in digital technology. To date, most of the scholarship on digital activism suggests that the Internet enables social movements to be less hierarchical, more participatory, and more egalitarian. However, such claims are weakened by researchers' tendency to study only high levels of digital activism, rather than investigating digital practices across a range of organizations with differing levels of digital engagement. In contrast, I explore political, labor and social movement organizations across an entire political field. My units of analysis are the 34 groups in North Carolina active on both sides of a political issue: public employee collective bargaining rights. The organizations range from Tea Parties to rank-and-file labor unions and from conservative think tanks to progressive coalitions. I collected data on over 60,000 Tweets, Facebook posts and Web site metrics of the organizations. I then created an index to measure the extent of digital engagement of each group, and I developed a typology of online social movement activities and platforms. An analysis using this index indicates that rather than digital technologies simply shaping social movements, I find that social movement organizational differences affect Internet use. Groups that are more hierarchical, conservative, reformist and composed of middle and upper class members are much more likely to have higher digital activism levels than less hierarchical, progressive, radical and working class organizations. Using in-depth interviews, ethnographic observations, and content analysis, I also uncover the mechanisms of these digital differences. First, contrary to the literature that suggests that digital activism is tied to non-hierarchical groups, I find that groups that are more hierarchical and bureaucratic have the infrastructure to develop and maintain online organizational engagement. Next, rather than the typical image of the digital activist as a left-wing radical, the highest digital activism levels are among right-wing groups because of what I call their *organizing ideology*: their ideas and practices of liberty and spreading the truth align with their Internet use. In turn, reformist groups embrace the Internet to reach those in power in their lobbying efforts while radical groups simply treat digital technology as one of many tools for mass organizing, resulting in lower digital activism levels. Finally, digital activism is not an egalitarian participatory space due to low costs of entry because of a social class gap, which derives from the high costs of online participation, as well as power and entitlement differences between working-class and middle-to-upper class groups. This study demonstrates that the Internet does not render obsolete sociological theories of collective action, oligarchy, and stratification. Instead, this research points to how ideology, hierarchy and inequality shape Internet use, challenging the theories of digital democracy.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction
What is the Relationship between Organizational Democracy and Internet Use?

Digital democracy, online participation, social media revolutions, Internet activism—with the advent of digital technologies and a densely networked Internet in the last two decades, a host of new terms have cropped up to refer to collective action in the digital realm. Scholars of modern social movements suggest that digital media produce more egalitarian forms of action, broadening political participation (Bennett and Segerberg 2012; Castells 2012; Raine and Wellman 2012). These descriptions of a new democratic politics are based on the assumption that older modes of political action are rendered obsolete as new technologies can replace traditional organizational functions and erode social distinctions among participants.

This assumption has been taken for granted by a body of scholarship focused on extraordinary moments of political organizing such the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement. In this study, I shift the research terrain to examine the everyday practices of collective action in organizations. Instead of looking only at how the Internet shapes social movements, I also examine how social movements shape Internet use. I do not find a digital flattening of organizational hierarchies, ideology or class; instead, substantial variation exists in Internet use among different labor, political and social movement groups. This dissertation explores these differences to address the questions: How do various organizational characteristics shape digital engagement? In turn, how does digital engagement affect democracy within social movement organizations?

My research design takes a *field level approach* to examine all organizations involved with one issue in a political field; in this case, collective bargaining rights for public employees in North Carolina. I studied 34 political, labor and social movement organizations that constitute the political field on both sides of this issue (Table 1). The groups varied greatly in organizational hierarchies, political ideologies and social class make-up, ranging from Tea Party groups to rank-and-file unions. This design addresses a flaw in the literature, which has focused on emergent, ephemeral, left-wing online movements of the elite, thus creating selection bias by ignoring existing organizations and their offline practices. Contrary to the claims of most theorists of the digital age, I find that organizations with greater Internet engagement and online participation are in fact *more* hierarchical, bureaucratic, conservative, reformist and elite than those with less. These findings have thus far been overlooked by the scholarship on digital organizing but they align with theories of bureaucracy, ideology, class and power.

New Media, New Social Movement Organizations?

Many scholars previously contended that the recent widespread diffusion of information technology created a "new networked" society (e.g. Castells, 2010; Raine & Wellman, 2012). In this digital era, some forms of political and protest activity have moved online, producing a new form of digital activism. As digital networks and platforms have accelerated the dissemination of political news, information and debates, political and social movement activists have embraced their speed and efficiency. These digital tools include the Web, as well as more recent developments in social media and peer-to-peer platforms such as Twitter or Facebook. This transformation of organizing tools, many argued, produces systems of social action that are more democratic and participatory. For instance, many theorists (Benkler 2006; Jenkins 2006; Kahn and Kellner 2005; Westen 1998) suggested that digital technologies redistribute power from a

concentrated few into the hands of the many to create a more democratic and inclusive society. But the claim of digital technology's revolutionary democratic power within and across social movement organizations requires further investigation.

Researchers have pointed to digital technology's new affordances as the mechanism that has altered how social movements operate. Affordances are the ways in which material objects—in this case, online platforms—allow people to do things they were not able to do before. Based on the literature, we might expect newer social and political organizations to take advantage of these new online affordances more extensively. Previous studies suggested that older, offline social movement organizations are resistant to digital change (Earl and Kimport 2011; DiMaggio et al 2001). In contrast, newer groups operate using more networked "connective action" (Bennett and Segerberg 2013).

Castells (2012) argued that the Internet created a "new species of social movement." This claim draws on long-established theories of the relationship between the era of a group's founding and its organizational structure. Most prominent in this vein is Stinchcombe (1965), who contended that "the organizational inventions that can be made at a particular time in history depend on the social technology available at that time... both because these organizations can function effectively with those organizational forms, and because the forms tend to become institutionalized, the basic structure of the organization tends to remain relatively stable" (1965: 153). In other words, external factors shape institutions into forms that continue throughout their lifetime. Although Stinchcombe was specifically analyzing industries, his theory has been applied more broadly in general organizational theory.

Castells and other digital activism theorists extended implicitly Stinchcombe's argument in their claim that groups that emerged in the digital era use the Internet more and in more participatory ways than older groups. This study tests this claim by examining whether organizations founded in different eras engage differently online.

1995—The Web Era

Before the early 1990s, the military and academia were the creators and primary users of the Internet. However, even in this early era, some social movement organizations used the Internet for communication through e-mail and discussion forums, such as usenet groups. In 1995, the web browser "Mosaic" became publicly available, and growing numbers of social movement organizations began using the Internet. Soon thereafter, scholarship emerged arguing that the Internet had (or in a few cases, that it had not) transformed social movement organizations.

The first scholars to laud the advantages of the Internet for participation primarily referred to the predominant technology of early digital activism—Web sites. Groups used these "public faces" (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012) to post "brochureware" (Earl et al. 2010)—information that would previously have appeared in print materials but could be published much faster and cheaper online. For example, the Zapatistas—a Mexican revolutionary group—made novel use of a Web site when they posted their proclamations online (Cleaver 1998). These early efficiencies are also known as "Web 1.0" technologies, which were designed under a "one-to-many" framework: one organization could project information to all who visited their site. At that time, Web sites acted as gatekeepers of information, and the technology did not allow interactive many-to-many participation by multiple people at the same time (Stein 2009), like usenet groups did in that era or social media do now.

One of the most cited events in the early line of scholarship on digital social movements was the anti-globalization movement's resistance to the World Trade Organization (WTO)

meeting in Seattle in 1999. The protest launched Indymedia, a Web site where activists posted their own accounts of demonstrations. IndyMedia centers around the world built platforms to encourage participation in what is now called "citizen journalism" to counteract mainstream media coverage of the WTO protest. Most scholars who cited this event described it as a pivotal moment that launched the digital activism era (Aelst and Walgrave 2013; Chadwick 2007; Garrett 2006; Juris 2005). However, most of this scholarship focused on the emergent groups that harnessed the Web, rather than also investigating the unions and other legacy organizations that were also involved in the WTO protests and may have not engaged with the Internet as much as IndyMedia.

2006—The Social Media Era

In 2006, "social media" became a buzzword. TIME Magazine named "You" as the person of the year, referring to the ubiquitous American who produced and posted online content in the digital public sphere (Benkler 2006; Jenkins 2006; Schradie 2011). It was also the year when Facebook expanded beyond college campuses and when Twitter launched its micro-blogging platform. After 2006, the digital activism literature also expanded to include more discussions about participatory, networked and non-hierarchical social movements in the digital age with an added emphasis on the individual (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Castells 2012; Velasquez and LaRose 2014). In the process, the democratic poster child of this era became the so-called Facebook revolution in Egypt and the Twitter Revolution in Iran (Allagui and Kuebler 2011; Howard and Hussain 2013).

The shift from one-to-many to many-to-many platforms, such as Facebook or Twitter, transformed the static nature of Web sites, allowing more participatory user interfaces. These newer social media tools are generally more free-flowing, instantaneous and interactive, with many-to-many creation and re-creation of ideas, issues and information. Scholars argued that these new affordances broadened participation in online social movement activity (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Castells 2012). However, these analyses generally described the emergence of new groups and organizations around new media while ignoring the universe of groups that pre-existed the digital era but still dominate the arena of activism. Thus, this study examines online engagement across all of the groups in one political field, not just the digitally active.

From Modernity to the Digital Era – New Technologies and New Theories

This study demonstrates that high levels of online participation are not always associated with organizational democracy. To understand this empirical disconnect from the existing literature on digital democracy, it is useful to trace the intellectual development of theories of the Internet and collective action. In particular, I focus on the implicit theoretical tension among Michels and Castells regarding the role of organizations in the digital era. I then discuss the Gramscian theory of digital practice-centered ideology in political movements alongside Olson's theory of collective action and the costs of online participation.

Michels vs. Castells

For a century, scholars have debated Michels' (1911) claim that organizations—even those committed to democracy and equality—eventually become more centralized and less democratic: "He who says organization, says Oligarchy," wrote Michels in 1911 (365). Michels contended that leaders and staff would inevitably dominate and consolidate power in political organizations, even organizations that started out as participatory with democratic aspirations. He

argued that eventually a few people, even those elected to office, will make backroom decisions, producing more bureaucracy and ultimately hierarchy and oligarchy. This "Iron Law of Oligarchy" has been highly influential in the sociological study of contentious politics and organizations.

Much of the digital activism literature contrasts starkly with Michels' iron law: the Internet, with its networked architecture and many-to-many communication platforms, has transformed not only how social movements operate but the groups themselves. Most notably, Castells argued the availability and architecture of networked communication disrupts hierarchy and oligarchy in social movements. Castells' viewpoint rests on the claim that the bureaucratic, vertical organizational structures that Weber saw as key to modernity are now obsolete. In one respect, then, Castells answered technology studies theorist Winner's question of whether artifacts have politics (Winner 1980). Aligning with other digital activist scholars, Castells contended that digital activism is less reliant on organizations and more individualized; less hierarchical and more egalitarian; less centralized and more participatory and less ideological and more public in debate and decision-making (Bimber 1998; Castells 2010, 2012; Earl and Kimport 2011; Raine and Wellman 2012; Shirky 2009). He claimed that social movements in the digital age often have different characteristics (Castells 2012) than those from late modernity. I present these characteristics of social movements in the digital age in Table 2 as Castells' digital democracy theories (See Table 2). I unpack these concepts below.

Digital Democracy? Overcoming the Iron Law with Participation and Debate

Before the advent of the Internet, some scholars investigated how participation and debate, two measures of democracy within organizations, can overcome the Iron Law (Munck and Verkuilen 2002). Regarding participation, Polletta (2002) noted that organizations with high levels of participation have marked the American social movement landscape since the time of Michels' writing. Poletta agreed with Michels that oligarchy often develops in organizations, but she found (2002), as did Mansbridge (1983), that contemporary activists are more aware of participatory processes. Other scholars challenged the Iron Law by revealing conditions that defy oligarchic tendencies in social movement organizations, particularly trade unions. The most influential was Lipset et al. (1956) who analyzed the International Typographical Union (ITU), a distinctly democratic organization that partially owed its members' broad participation to their homogeneous middle class backgrounds and a work-community support system.

Some scholars presented debate within organizations as counterevidence to the Iron Law. A key mechanism for contestation has been communication tools. Osterman (2006) found that a group's culture of debate challenged the iron law of oligarchy. Both Lipset et al. (1956) and Levi et al. (Levi et al. 2009) suggested that union newspapers, as well as other labor education materials and forums, empowered members to challenge leadership. We might expect that digital communication tools would have the same effect on the Iron Law.

I measure hierarchy by the number of decision-making levels in an organization, which can shape members' ability to contest and debate decisions in an organization. A handful of studies examined how Indymedia and other anti-globalization efforts involved a broad array of activists who participated in online planning and policy debates, contradicting the iron law (Pickerill 2006), though Pickard (2006) found that in some instances within the anti-globalization movement, over time, groups that began with non-hierarchical organizational structures eventually became hierarchical. A few case studies explored digital contestation within organizations. Pickerill (2006) found that Indymedia celebrated differences among members

online and facilitated consensus. In contrast to Michels' argument, minority views were embraced rather than stifled. In another case study, Greene and Kirton (2003) showed that online discussions within a union provided a voice for marginalized members, particularly women, who were often unable to participate because of childcare and other constraints. Still, some studies suggested that the elite dominate debate over knowledge in social movements (Grignou and Patou 2004), and Bimber (Bimber 2001) found that an increase in digital engagement did not automatically lead to more political engagement.

What is missing in all of these studies is a comparison of organizations with different levels of hierarchy to evaluate the extent and process of online participation and debate. Such a comparison would reveal whether high levels of Internet use are actually associated with low levels of hierarchy to test if the Internet can overcome the Iron Law, or at least put a dent in it.

Individuals Rather than Members

These questions of democracy within organizations contrasts with the direction of the digital activism literature, which has moved away from researching organizations as an object of study because of the tendency to treat organizations as increasingly irrelevant.

The basis for this shift derives from an overall trend in both Internet and civic participation in the United States. First, online communities have a history of promoting individual rights, rather than organizational bureaucracy. In his historical account of the political and cultural origins of the Internet, Turner (2006) chronicled how the New Communalist movement—part of the San Francisco hippie counterculture movement of the 1960s—spawned participatory Internet communities, including the WELL, an early online discussion forum. But Turner took issue with claims that the New Left and other radical movements inspired techno-utopianism. Turner explained that while both movements rejected hierarchy, it was the New Communalists who challenged the bureaucratic order with collaborative technology rather than reject the technical/military-industrial complex outright. In fact, Turner said that early Internet pioneers such as Stuart Brand, founder of the WELL, were inspired as children by the face-off against the USSR in the cold war. For these pioneers "the liberation of the *individual [emphasis added]* was simultaneously an American ideal, an evolutionary imperative, and, for Brand and millions of other adolescents, a pressing personal goal" (2006: 45).

Scholars have also traced how individuals, rather than organizations, have flourished with civic participation before the digital era, yet the Internet has accelerated this transformation. For instance, Skocpol (2004) described how civic organizations in the last century began to wane as advocacy organizations emerged. Similarly, other scholars argued that the digital age altered political participation such that citizens do not act as *members* of an organization but as individual *users* participating in activism (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl 2012; Castells 2012; Earl and Schussman 2003). In a recent book comparing individual experiences across three social movement organizations, Bimber et al. (2012) did not dispute that organizations still play a role in social movements. However, they contended that because political engagement online is individualized, organizational factors do not shape individualized online space and culture. This feature of the digital age or "network society" (Castells 2010) is what Wellman and Rainie called "networked individualism" (2012). Internet use does not begin from a collective and networked starting point (i.e., through organizations); instead, it is up to the individual to go online to participate. Similarly, Bennett and Segerberg (2013) argued that what marks activism in the digital era is the increasing personalization of contentious politics. This line of thinking contends the Internet reduces the need for organizations—which are inherently

hierarchical and bureaucratic—in protest movements.

Not all scholars believe that organizations will be transformed by the Internet to become more democratic. Nor do all scholars of the digital age reject organizations' role in political and social activism (Bimber et al. 2012; Kimport 2012; Kreiss, Finn, and Turner 2010). For instance, Karpf (2012) argued that organizations are no less relevant in the digital age; instead various *kinds* of organizations now exist, some of which are less reliant on traditional offline spatial needs. Others found that the Internet has little or no effect on an organization's structural capacity (e.g. Donk et al. 2004) or that a new organizational "hybridity" emerges when organizations combine traditional and digital practices (Chadwick 2007). Similarly, Bennett and Segerberg described three types of Internet-era organizations, ranging from more traditional organizations to more network-oriented movements (2013). Overall, then, the literature has focused on explaining how the Internet has altered or eliminated organizations, so we know little about how different types of organizations shape Internet use.

Ideology - To Be or Not To Be

Political ideology is a key organizational characteristic, but its role in digital activism processes remains undertheorized. In the digital activism literature, the scholarship tends to 1) ignore ideology or contend that it is not an issue in the digital era; 2) frame digital activism as mostly a left, libertarian or radical endeavor; 3) provide little ideological comparison and when it does, frame ideology only as counterposed left/right political orientation rather than as involving strategies of practice.

First, political ideology is under-theorized in digital activism and politics scholarship. This is not unique to studies of technology, as Walder argued (2009) that ideology has often been left out of social movement analyses more generally. Digital activism scholarships stands as an extreme case of this tendency, however; some scholars have even gone so far as to critique the notion of including ideology in digital activism analysis at all. Castells (2012) contended that unlike older organizations in which ideology was instituted from above via organizational channels, individuals in a networked society operate differently. He argued that ideas only matter when they derive from people's concrete experiences and not when they are imposed from above by a hierarchically situated cadre of organizational leaders. Similarly, Bimber et al. (2012) stated that organizational attributes, including ideology, do not matter for analysis of digital activism because the Internet and political experiences are simultaneously universal and based in a collective of individual experiences.

Second, scholars assume that left, libertarian or radical politics have a strong affinity for the Internet, and it is these groups that have been the focus of digital activism scholarship. According to some scholars, the radical philosophy of the Internet derives from the 1960s American counterculture movement (Rheingold 2000; Turner 2006), which spawned online communities in the 1980s. Castells described these peer-to-peer online groups as more libertarian than left but still disruptive politically (2010). Early scholarship examined left wing, participatory groups including peacenet (Downing 1989) but primarily Indymedia and other WTO anti-globalization activist groups (Meikle 2002; Pickard 2006; Pickerill 2006). Soon after, studies of MoveOn.org—a progressive, mostly online, organization—proliferated (Karpf 2012), and more recent scholarship has focused on the Arab Spring (e.g., Howard and Hussain 2013) and Occupy (e.g., Bennett and Segerberg 2012) movements. In fact, most studies on digital activism have taken the research path of examining similarly constituted movements. The data are heavily weighted toward the new, elite, radical and left components of participants, so we

have limited information about how strategies might vary across groups or about the Internet participation of more long-standing organizations, such as labor unions. Nor do we know much about how these ideologies tie into their digital technology practices.

Third, few studies provide comparisons among political groups with different ideologies. Those that do tend to look simply at two groups with right and left political orientations, rather than develop a broader understanding of practices in organizations with a range of ideological orientations and practices (Agarwal et al. 2014; Bennett and Segerberg 2012; Kimport 2012; Rohlinger, Bunnage, and Klein 2011).

Therefore, this study investigates these comparisons of online participation and democracy across groups with different ideologies. Drawing on Gramsci (2005), I define ideology in this context as an *organizing ideology*, comprising ideas and practices within organizations. Ideology involves an organization's political orientation (left/right) and strategy for social change (radical/reformist). This approach allows me to evaluate the digital activism literature's focus on radical left groups by comparing the ideas and practices of groups on the radical right, reformist right, and reformist left.

Olson and Costs

Yet another theoretical consideration regarding participation and democracy addresses the foundation of collective action theories—Olson's view on the costs to participate. Most of this literature, though, has overlooked variation in costs based on social class. Many suggest that the key factor allowing online social movements to achieve high participation and recruitment rates is the declining relevance of Olson's free-rider dilemma: costs of participation are close to zero because of savings in time, the need for physical presence and organization (Bennett and Segerberg 2012; Bruce Bimber & Cynthia Stohl 2005; Earl et al. 2010; Leizerov 2000). But Olson's original formulation did not assert that self-interest and costs motivate activism. In fact, he argued that people free-ride simply because they will reap the benefits of a public good without participating; participation itself does not yield personal advantages. Still, most digital activism scholars who re-interpret Olson offer a classic binary rational choice model in which individuals decide whether to engage in collective action based on their own costs of participation, such as time and personal investment (Bennett and Segerberg 2012; Bruce Bimber & Cynthia Stohl 2005; Earl and Kimport 2011). The result is that fewer people participate in a cause than believe in it because of participation costs.

A number of digital activism theorists argued that Olson's theory does not fit the case of Internet-based social movements. First, some scholars suggested that the Internet eliminates the free-rider dilemma because with online-only organizing in particular, participation is cost-free or carries drastically reduced costs. For instance, Earl and Kimport (2011) described how most theorists of digital activism and costs have put costs into either a *resource mobilization* or a *Theory 2.0* framework. Under the resource mobilization framework, social movements are able to do more with less in the digital age, representing a theoretical "scale change." In this way, the Internet allows more participation due to efficiencies of time and resources so that people can engage online much more easily than they could offline. Earl and Kimport (2011) called this a "supersizing" effect because costs to participate still exist, though these are decreased. Under the Theory 2.0 framework, online-only activism eliminates the free-rider dilemma because people are not required to be present in the same place at the same time, implying virtually no costs. Thus, under this framework, Olson's formulation regarding costs would not apply. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) also challenged Olson by proposing their own theory of *connective action,* a

play on Olson's original *Logic of Connective Action*. The theory of connective action asserts that the digital era has spawned new forms of activism that do not always require formal organization. Under this theory, cost variation is not part of the equation.

Contrary to much of the literature on digital activism and costs, Olson did not focus on the costs of participation, nor did he argue that some people take on all of the costs while others choose not to. Regardless of his original formulation, many scholars draw on Olson to argue that costs no longer matter in the digital era either because they are virtually eliminated in some instances or because organizational costs are not the primary issue for this type of movement. However, we do not yet know how mobilization costs might matter for either individuals or organizations with different levels of resources. This study extends scholarship that rethinks collective action by comparing existing organizations that vary in their social class composition. It also expands the idea of costs beyond simple financial calculation to include a fuller qualitative understanding of cost/benefit analysis.

Digital Inequality - Online and in Movements

Despite low costs to participation in terms of physical presence and time constraints, online participation—in general Internet use and in digital politics—indeed incurs individual and collective costs. Often called the "digital divide," inequalities exist in various groups' use of the Internet and other technologies. In the United States, social class is the most persistent and primary factor driving both the Internet access and production gap (Martin and Robinson 2007; Robinson 2009; Schradie 2012). In 2012, 94% of college educated Americans had used the Internet, but only 43% of people without a high school education were online (Zickuhr and Smith 2012).

The literature on the general digital divide is extensive, yet a key finding related to online activism concerns inequalities in digital production. Class gaps exist not only in terms of who can access or consume content but also in terms of who creates online content. One critical mechanism of online production inequality relates to time and labor. Online content production, such as posting to a daily blog or maintaining a Web site, is labor intensive and requires leisure time because in the digital economy, such work is often unpaid (Fuchs 2013; Schradie 2011; Terranova 2000).

Inequality in online social movements is also related to factors that pre-existed the dawn of the digital age. Movement resources can determine movement success (McCarthy and Zald 1977) but "lower-stratum groups" have very few resources available to them and must resort to other tactics (Piven and Cloward 1978). Working class social movements often face not only a lack of resources and other elite tools but also powerlessness related to their class position (Croteau 1995; Gaventa 1980). This relationship between class and power in movements has a long history in broader scholarship on social movements but has yet to be explored in relation to digital activism.

How do individual digital inequalities and historical class divides in social movements apply to Internet use? The scholarship on digital inequality and politics focuses more on individuals than organizations. It suggests that people with more income and education are more likely to participate in online civic engagement activities (Van Laer 2010; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2010; Smith 2013). Similarly, digital activists are more likely to come from elite backgrounds (Brodock, Joyce, and Zaeck 2009). One survey of online occupy activists found that over 90% had some college education (Cordero-Guzman 2011).

Most studies of digital activism and class have relied on case studies (Carter et al. 2003; Grignou and Patou 2004; Pickerill 2003). Still, a few studies used a larger sample of

organizations to show some differences across organizations based on resources (Denison and Williamson 2013; Eimhjellen, Wollebæk, and Strømsnes 2013; Merry 2011) and others found none (Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen, and Wollebaek 2012; Stein 2009). This study provides unique data to adjudicate between those arguing that digital activism transcends class differences and those who insist that the "digital divide" perpetuates class differences in political mobilization. Moreover, the data speak to the particular factors of class—resources, skills, power relations—that account for differences in digital activism.

Research Design and Methods of Digital Activism Scholarship

Before describing the methods of this research, I will lay out the common methodological characteristics of much of the digital activist literature. First, the Internet is often the independent variable and social movement mobilization is the dependent variable, and the relationship between these two variables is often situated in an affordances framework. As a concept, affordances are not a strict form of *technological determinism* in that there is no single universal *direct* effect of technology on society, yet affordances rarely account for broader structural issues (Winner 1980). As an antidote, some scholars (Anstead and Chadwick 2009; Kreiss 2012; Rohlinger 2013) suggested that an analysis of Internet politics requires examining broader institutional contexts.

Next, scholars who have argued that the digital era allows for increased participation in collective action generally select on the dependent variable of high levels of digital activism (Bennett, Breunig, and Givens 2008; Caren and Gaby 2012; Earl and Kimport 2011).[1] It made sense initially to study these unique cases, but current findings in the scholarship on technology and activism may reflect this selection bias. This critique of existing studies' research design aligns with McAdam and Boudet's (2012) suggestion that social movement scholarship should analyze more than just successful social movement groups. Some scholars have indeed looked more broadly at groups that are both on and offline. For instance, Eimhjellen et al. (2013) examined a variety of organizations in Norway. However, they only looked at these groups' online engagement, which brings up the separate but related issue of the tendency to study digital activism exclusively using online methods. As a remedy, Stein (2009) suggested that multi-method research could help illuminate the various social movement organizational dynamics that shape Internet use.

Finally, as described earlier, the scholarship on online participation has generally focused on the individual user or an ephemeral movement as the unit of analysis. Earl and Schussman (2003) suggested that digital activism involves individual *users* rather than *members* of organizations. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) studied organizations but contended that social movements in the digital era are moving toward a new form of connective action that is more personalized and networked. Further, many have argued that organizations are not as relevant for activism in the digital age (Castells 2012; Earl and Kimport 2011; Shirky 2009) and are overstudied. While some scholars have recently taken up organizational comparisons (Agarwal et al. 2014; Bimber et al. 2012; Karpf 2012; Kimport 2012), without a field-level approach, harnessing variation across organizations has been difficult. In addition, most emerging scholarship on digital activism examines what Stein calls vanguard movements (2009) or episodic events or activities. Analyses that cover one, two or four week time periods are common

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[1] Earl and Kimport (2011) suggested that studying groups with high levels of online engagement is a corrective to scholars who sampled from predominantly offline cases and found little difference in how the Internet shapes activism.

(Caren and Gaby 2012; Earl et al. 2013; Hanna 2013), so we know little about longer term organizational use.

A Field-Level Approach

To overcome these limitations (taking the Internet as the independent variable, selecting on the dependent variable, and studying users rather than organizations), this dissertation offers a field-level approach to compare digital activism and democratic practices across different types of social movement organizations. The logic of the research design begins with a single issue that was of interest to a broad spectrum of existing organizations to capture how different organizational characteristics shaped Internet use, and, in turn, how this engagement shaped democracy. This multi-method study draws on a hotly contested issue in North Carolina: collective bargaining among public sector employees. The units of analysis for this field-level study are the 34 social, political and labor organizations that actively supported or opposed these labor rights during the period of study, 2011-2014 (Table 1). This issue was an ideal case because it engaged a broad array of groups that varied in terms of organizational age, hierarchy and ideology as well as members' socioeconomic class, levels of Internet use and participation. It is uncommon for a study of digital activism to capture such variation.

Unlike most other studies of digital activism, this study neither privileges nor begins in online spaces. Thus, the research design did not select on the dependent variable. I included all groups exhibiting active participation in the issue of collective bargaining through action including legislative work, public protests and information and media campaigns. To capture the entire field, both advocacy and membership organizations were included as part of the analysis. I developed the list of organizations under study from in-depth interviews, site visits, news media reports and online searches. To make sure I included groups without any searchable Web presence, I used snowball sampling. Each group I studied had been in existence for at least a year at the time the study began in 2011, and most were much older. Each group had a presence as a local or statewide organization and some had ties to national organizations. I did not exclude any group that fit these criteria from the study, so the sampling frame includes the entire field or constellation of organizations involved in this issue, even those that were loosely structured.

To address the tendency in the literature to focus only on online practices, I combined both online and offline data collection procedures. I also used in-depth qualitative analysis to understand the mechanisms of any differences. Taken together, this multi-method study involved:

1) 65 semi-structured interviews with expert informants from the organizations;
2) Ethnographic observations of organizational meetings, protests or other events;
3) Analysis of each organization's age, social class makeup, ideology, structure, goals, strategy and staff;
4) Qualitative content analysis of each group's Web sites, Facebook, and Twitter posts (for groups that used these platforms);
5) Quantitative measurements of how each organization's digital platform use, the extent to which platforms were designed for participation, and whether people made use of these digital platforms to participate online. This includes an original dataset of over a year's worth of organizational Tweets, Facebook posts and Web site metrics.

North Carolina & Public Employee Collective Bargaining Rights

North Carolina represented an ideal site for a field-level approach to digital activism

because the state had 1) a mix of Internet connectivity rates; 2) broad variation in political ideology regarding this issue of collective bargaining rights; and 3) a spectrum of different types of labor, political and social movement organizations to allow comparison and to capture an entire field.

First, to study digital politics, it was useful to go beyond the borders of the Silicon Valley bubble. North Carolina boasted the Research Triangle Park, a mini-Silicon Valley of technological innovation in the middle of three high-ranking universities. However, the state was marked by wide variation in the amount of Internet connectivity. Studying a state with a mix of high Internet connectivity in technology hubs and extremely low Internet access in some extremely poor areas enabled me to avoid bias based on over- or under-connectivity.

Second, North Carolina was a robust site for a field-level approach to research digital activism because of the wide spectrum of political organizations with opinions on unions in general and on collective bargaining in particular. In the years leading up to my research, the state showed increased political polarization while maintaining some groups in the political center. This variation in political opinions on collective bargaining provided fertile ground for comparison. North Carolina crossed from red to blue by a small margin in the 2008 presidential election, but this shift was reversed in 2012, the year that ushered in a conservative supermajority in the North Carolina General Assembly alongside a Republican governor. This shift in state politics resulted in a deluge of Tea Party-sponsored legislation to curtail voting rights and refuse federal Medicaid and unemployment insurance. Progressive organizations responded with non-violent civil disobedience at the capital and across the state with weekly "Moral Monday" protests that brought national attention to the state. Many of the organizations that are integral to this study were major actors on both sides of these protests.

The issue of collective bargaining rights for public employees was central to many of the state's political battles. A coalition of organizations began work to repeal a ban on public employee union contracts in 2001. As the host of the 2012 Democratic National Convention, the state came under fire from union activists in the state and across the country, and eventually even from the Obama administration for its anti-union policies, particularly those regarding public employees. At the time of the research, North Carolina was one of only three states where public workers did not have collective bargaining rights (Freeman and Han 2012). Researchers repeatedly polled the North Carolina electorate on their views of public workers' rights to bargain collectively and found mixed views, though a majority of voters have supported a state legislative repeal of the ban (Perrin 2008).

Third, the purpose of constructing a field-level approach was to compare organizations with substantial variation in their characteristics. North Carolina was an ideal site for this purpose due to the rich variation in labor and social movement organizations in the state. Whereas much of the literature on digital activism focuses on more spontaneous online organizing, collective bargaining rights for public employees was an issue that had been a focus of organizing for two decades. However, the bulk of the activism took place during the decade before my research, when unions representing public employees came together for the first time to exhort the state legislature to lift the ban on collective bargaining for state, county and municipal employees. Both rank-and-file unions and more professionalized unions participated. These unions initially formed a coalition when the legislature appeared sympathetic to collective bargaining rights, but in later years, their efforts focused on halting any further erosion of public employees' union rights such as dues check-offs on employee paychecks. Despite the longstanding efforts, then, this case shows the ebbs and flows of organizational activism.

The case of collective bargaining in North Carolina was ideal because it engaged groups on both the political right and left with members from different classes. The issue involved many types of organizations, including new and old organizations. Beyond unions, multiple organizations were actively involved in supporting these rights, including North Carolina's NAACP chapter, a workers center, and student groups (Table 1). Opposing collective bargaining rights were public official and government associations, the state's chamber of commerce, grassroots Tea Party organizations and other patriot groups.

Given this setting and the existing literature, one might expect the groups that supported collective bargaining and that employed more egalitarian practices to organize their members democratically—such as the rank-and file unions—to have the highest levels of digital activism. One might also expect the right-wing groups who opposed public employee unions, especially those that were older, more reformist and top-down in their organizing, to have the lowest levels of digital activism. Regardless of political orientation and organizational structure, following research on the digital divide, one might expect groups with more resources to use the Internet the most, though given the literature's focus on the low costs of participation, this difference might be minimal. However, the findings in this study generally contradict these expected outcomes.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Two delves more deeply into the historical context of the North Carolina case. It briefly describes the state's labor movement history to explain why unions are marginalized, which helps explain why state politics are characterized by extreme stances on the issue of collective bargaining.

Then, Chapter Three investigates how organizational characteristics shape Internet use among the groups in this study. Specifically, it asks how a groups' founding year, level of bureaucracy, ties to national groups, size, political ideology, and the social class composition of its membership all shape its online activism levels. This chapter takes digital engagement as the dependent variable (as opposed to the independent variable), unlike much of the literature, which tends toward a technologically deterministic understanding of the Internet's effect on social movements.

Most scholars of digital politics and activism have focused on one of the most commonly used digital platforms that have marked the digital era: Web sites, Facebook and Twitter (Caren and Gaby 2012; Earl et al. 2010; Hanna 2013), but scant research has compared the use of these different types of online platform across organizations (e.g. Agarwal et al 2014). We do not yet know how various digital tools are associated quantitatively with different levels of online participation across social movement organizations in a political field. Nor do we know if and how different types of groups develop these platforms or design them for participation. This type of variation is often missing from the literature on digital activist affordances. While each interface serves a unique function, understanding online activities together, instead of focusing on any one single platform, enables findings that do not privilege an individual user interface that may decline in popularity. To address these issues, I develop a typology of three digital activism activities, focusing on the *development* of online platforms, their *architecture* and whether groups design them for participation, and actual online *participation* levels, or how much people post, comment, Like or Tweet on these sites. I then examine how organizational characteristics affect these three activity measures.

As noted previously, scholars have suggested that organizations in the digital age are a different breed from pre-digital legacy organizations (Castells 2012; Earl and Kimport 2011;

Karpf 2012). Drawing on Stinchcombe's (1965) argument that organizations are imprinted by the date of their founding, I compare organizations formed in three different time periods: before the launch of the public web in 1993; between 1993 and 2006, the pivotal birth year of social media; and after 2006. I find that an organization's date of founding was not associated with levels of digital engagement.

Next, because the hallmark of digital activism is that it is non-hierarchical and horizontal, I construct a measure of organizational hierarchy using Gamson's concept of hierarchical levels and Weber's concept of bureaucratization based on roles. In contrast to enthusiastic writing about a flat digital world, I find that organizations that were *more* hierarchical had higher levels of digital engagement and participation levels. This strongly suggests that digital practices do not reduce hierarchy within organizations. In addition, to include ideology as a factor of social movement organizing in the digital era and to avoid replicating research focused solely on left-leaning, radical organizations, I coded each organization by political orientation (left/right) and strategy (radical/reformist). In opposition to much of the literature, I find that right wing and reformist groups developed digital platforms more than left-wing and radical groups did. Finally, drawing on Olson, as well as more recent scholarship on decreasing costs are in the digital era (e.g., Earl and Kimport 2011), I compare groups from different social classes. I find persistent and pervasive digital activism inequalities. This finding suggests that Olson's collective action theories are still very much at play in the digital era.

The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters use qualitative data to explain the mechanisms behind the quantitative findings in how these various organizational factors shape online participation. Chapter Four explains why more organizational infrastructure was correlated with higher digital activist scores, focusing on hierarchy, bureaucracy and other organizational factors. Hierarchy is measured by the levels of decision-making in each organization while bureaucracy is operationalized as the number of staff members. I return to the discussion of Michels' Iron Law, under which scholars have generally counterposed oligarchy with democracy. Drawing on Michels (1911) and Munck and Verkuilen (2002), I create a parsimonious definition of democracy based on two concepts: participation and contestation/debate. Regarding the first concept, my findings show that greater online participation—measured as clicks, posts, Likes, re-Tweets, etc.—from a broader array of people was associated with groups that were *more* hierarchical and bureaucratic groups, not less. Regarding the second concept, very little debate occurs on public online forums or in private e-mails. Regardless of the level of hierarchy, the Internet simply was not used by groups in this study for decision-making purposes.

I therefore find no evidence that the Internet overturns the Iron Law. Even controlling for date of founding, Michel's Iron Law of Oligarchy seems to hold for the organizational processes in this study, even among those groups with high levels of digital engagement and participation. I argue that the relationship between digital activism and organizational bureaucracy has little to do with the democratization of digital participation and more to do with bureaucratic factors such as staffing that enable stable and consistent digital engagement.

Chapter Four explored the association between higher digital activist scores and greater organizational hierarchy and bureaucracy; Chapter Five builds on this finding by examining why organizations that are more bottom-up in terms of their beliefs and practices cared less about the Internet than top-down groups. Top-down, reformist groups saw the Internet as a conduit to people in power while bottom-up, radical groups saw the Internet as just one of many tools to get people involved. The reformist groups with higher digital activist scores tended to use the Internet in a Web 1.0 (top-down) rather than Web 2.0 (bottom-up) way. Further, many groups on

the left tended to use the Internet less because they believed in equality and held collective participation as their primary goal, which did not necessitate digital engagement. In contrast, groups on the right often used the Internet more because they believed in liberty and prized disseminating information as a primary goal.

This chapter looks at groups' particular perceptions of participation and democracy based on their political orientation (left versus right), political strategies and goals for social change. That is, I examine groups' *organizing ideologies*, or ideologies based on practices that structure how groups organize themselves, their members and the public. Drawing on the Gramscian notion of ideology as more than simply ideas, I contend that organizing ideology shapes digital practices. I investigate organizing ideology by looking at the high levels of engagement among the right and by comparing two groups on the left (two unions) to explain how, in terms of digital activism, organizing ideology involves more than ideas or orientation.

Chapter Six, the final empirical chapter, explains the social class-based digital activism gap. Previous studies argue that hierarchical distinctions are flattened by digital technology, allowing broad access to and participation in social movement activism, but this is contradicted by my finding that groups with more middle and upper class members had higher digital activist scores than those with more working class members. What these previous studies miss is that even when organizations have more resources, participation requires individual members/users to take the initiative to participate online. The costs of online participation for groups with more working class members were high for both members and the organization as a whole, challenging new theories of democratic action. In addition, in line with Bourdieu and Gaventa, people of different classes had varying experiences of power/powerlessness and entitlement in relation to the Internet.

The most active grassroots organizations involved in the issue of collective bargaining rights for public employees had no active Web sites or Twitter feeds. One-third of these organizations did not have Twitter accounts, and most of them did not Tweet. In mixed class groups, more organizational effort is required to include all participants, resulting in a digital activism gap. These findings challenge the assertion that participation costs are virtually eliminated in the digital era. Theories of collective action and the free-rider dilemma are thus still relevant, even in the digital age.

Chapter Seven concludes the dissertation by reviewing the findings. In light of the existing literature on digital activism and organizations, my results are surprising. Whereas earlier studies suggested that non-hierarchical organizations should be associated with high levels of digital use and participation, I find the opposite. Groups that are more hierarchical, conservative and reformist used the Internet more and often in more participatory ways than less hierarchical, radical, left-wing groups. Also, digital practices were often top-down, rather than bottom-up: they were Web 1.0 (one-to-one communication) rather than 2.0 (participatory). And a digital activism gap by class calls into question theories of the Internet as an egalitarian activist space.

These findings contribute to the fields of organizations, political sociology and social and labor movements by answering the key question of whether or not Castells' theory of digital democracy in the digital age trumps Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy: not really. Based on the groups in my study, the Internet era does not necessarily enable organizations to be more democratic.

Historically, media have mattered for social movement organizations. The telegraph, the telephone, TV and fax machines have all had a role to play in the development of social

movements. But theorists of the digital era tend to argue that there is something special about the Internet—distinct from other technological developments—because of its ability to enable *many-to-many*, horizontal interactions. However, I do not find that organizations used the Internet as much, and in the same ways, as the digital architecture might allow. The extent and nature of digital activism are constrained by the structure and practices of activist organizations, making this "new" media less novel.

Organizations' hierarchical levels, bureaucratic structures, social class compositions and ideologies trump technology. Democracy is seldom part of the digital process. Instead, an organization's existing democratic practices—and not its technology—determines the form that participation will take. Groups that want to reach journalists and politicians use the Internet for that purpose while groups that want to reach their members and supporters use the Internet to that end—though often to a lesser extent and in combination with other forms of outreach. Simply put, social movement organizations often do with new media exactly what they did with the old.

CHAPTER TWO
North Carolina as a Context for Action Around Collective Bargaining

The history of labor organizing in North Carolina is marked by some of the bloodiest battles in the country—from the 1929 Loray Mill Strike in which workers were beaten, evicted, killed and tried for murder (Salmand 1995) to the 1979 Greensboro Massacre in which labor organizers were gunned down by the Ku Klux Klan during a protest (Boger, McDowell, and Gwynn 2009). Ron**,** one of the state's leading anti-union advocates, a key figure in the effort to prevent collective bargaining rights for public employees, recalled growing up in North Carolina with a father who also sided against the formation of unions. When he was 12 years old, he went with his dad to an anti-union meeting:

> *My father was an outside adviser to one of these committees... There were gunshots, I mean I don't think anybody was shooting at us individually, but trying to scare you… I don't mean to paint that as a typical union or management activity, but what it did was cement in me that this is high stakes, it's emotional, and it's an interesting field.*

At the time of my research in 2011-2014, it had been years since gunfire erupted over a labor dispute, but labor unions remained marginalized in the state. At 3% union density, North Carolina had fewer unionized workers than any state in the country according to the Department of Labor. Numbers aside, the word "union" was met with derision among conservatives who believed that unions take away employees' and employers' individual freedoms. Among labor and progressive activists in this study, the word elicited a mixed response of hope and fear—hope that a union might improve the low wages and poverty in the state and fear that unionization would trigger job loss and other reprisals, including violence.

In 2011, North Carolina was one of only three states where public workers did not have collective bargaining rights (Freeman and Han 2012) and public sector unionization rates are as low as in the private sector. Drawing on secondary sources, as well as interviews and organizational literature, this chapter briefly traces the historical origins of the public employee collective bargaining debate, which constitutes this study's political field. The chapter also identifies and explains the various groups involved in the debate and how they fit into the field at the time of my research. Conservative politics are entrenched in North Carolina, but the state also has a strong history of left politics. In short, due to its textured variation in politics and economics, all tied to its public employee labor history, North Carolina is fertile ground for a field-level study of digital activism.

Historical Context and Public Employee Unions in North Carolina

In the 1920s and 1930s, union organizing spread like wildfire throughout North Carolina, as it did in much of the nation. But by the end of the Red Scare of the 1950s, unions faced severe repression by anti-communists (Griffin and Korstad 1995). This setback was particularly dominant in North Carolina where the violence was harsh, especially against organizations of black workers (Griffin and Korstad 1995). One of the effects of this repressive era was a crackdown on public sector union organizing.

In 1958, Jimmy Hoffa made a public proclamation that he planned to recruit ten million public workers into the Teamsters' Union, especially firefighters and police officers (Burton and

Zonderman 2002).[2] This proclamation was threatening to Charlotte city leaders, who feared both the Hoffa name and the idea that a powerful police union might side with other striking workers, resulting in civil strife that they could not control. The city council passed a resolution that banned the Teamsters, and though it did not have legal teeth, the Teamsters quickly backed off of organizing in Charlotte. Fearing they would lose their job, Charlotte police officers and firefighters, who had been organizing with other unions, announced that they would not strike. The city approached the state's Attorney General for a ruling about banning union membership among police officers, and the Attorney General agreed that North Carolina labor laws only applied to private employees, so the City Council also passed a resolution that would dismiss any police officer who joined a union. Unions were (and still are) viewed in North Carolina as northern outside agitators, a spillover from the Civil War, according to many of my interviews on both sides of the issue.

The fear and tension surrounding unions was not isolated to Charlotte (Burton and Zonderman 2002). In 1959, the governor called in the National Guard to stop violence at a strike at the Harriet Henderson cotton mills in Vance County. At the same time, public workers staged actions such as the Raleigh city bus driver strike. These strikes and others that the state wanted to quell made the idea of police officers and other workers organizing a threat to political and economic elites.

In 1959, in the wake of these union battles, the North Carolina House and Senate passed Statute 95-98 outlawing public employee collective bargaining. Originally, the bill included a complete ban on public worker union membership, but this was eventually overturned as unconstitutional. Still, the key provision of banning collective bargaining remained. The statute reads, "Contracts between units of government and labor unions, trade unions or labor organizations concerning public employees declared to be illegal."[3] Thus, this legislation barred any public employee union from being able to bargain collectively in contracts with from city, county or state governments. Statute 95-98 persists into the contemporary period: "The provision outlawing contracts between public workers and governmental units remains to this day a cornerstone of North Carolina's public sector labor laws, and a continuing challenge to labor activists throughout the state" (Burton and Zonderman 2002).

Statute 95-98 did not stop public employee unions from forming, but the pace of union growth slowed dramatically over the next few decades, with an especially chilling effect on public sector labor organizing. One pivotal national event epitomized this fear of organizing among public workers. During the federal air traffic controllers strike in 1980, President Ronald Reagan threatened to fire any worker who did not come back to work, effectively dismantling the union (McCartin 2011). As union density rates dropped nationwide during the Regan era (Rosenfeld 2014), it became even more difficult to organize public workers in North Carolina where retaliation for union organizing was and continues to be severe, according to many of my union activist respondents.

Groups Supporting Collective Bargaining for North Carolina Public Sector Employees

While I give all of the organizations in this study equal weight in the empirical analysis, a few organizations were critical in the origin of the modern movement for public employee

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[2] I draw largely from a historical analysis from Burton and Zonderman (2002) in the next few paragraphs on the story of collective bargaining restrictions on public employees in Charlotte.
[3] From the North Carolina General Assembly Web site:
http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/PDF/BySection/Chapter_95/GS_95-98.pdf

bargaining rights, and their role in the movement merits discussion here. As union density rapidly decreased during the 1980s, some rank-and-file union activists in North Carolina were publicly critical of international unions for not putting more effort into "organizing the unorganized," according to interviewees and early documents from that time period. Many of these union advocates were part of Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ), a workers center based in North Carolina. Activists from the Black nationalist movement from the 1970s founded BWFJ in the 1980s in the wake of the Greensboro massacre, where five labor activists and members of the Communist Workers Party were killed at a protest against the Ku Klux Klan. This event fomented a crisis of fear of labor organizing. BWFJ saw "Organizing the South" as a key strategy for the national political movement on the left because of the extreme repression of black Americans, particularly workers, in the South. They believed it was essential to organize the most marginalized and to confront racism head on. BWFJ's focus was on organizing communities, churches, workplaces and local politics to mobilize a broad coalition based on mass participation.

One of their efforts involved organizing the North Carolina Public Service Workers Organization (NCPSWO) in 1996 to lay the groundwork for a statewide public employees union. They saw public workers as an important sector because some of the lowest paid and most mistreated black workers were public employees, including university housekeepers and sanitation workers. At the same time, local community activists formed Citizens Against Racism (CAR) in Greenville, a rural town in the eastern part of the state. CAR helped organize school bus drivers and other public workers in eastern North Carolina who faced racial discrimination on the job. Another key organizing committee consisted of housekeepers at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill (UNC). All of these groups—the Raleigh City workers, the Durham city workers, the Greenville bus drivers and the UNC Housekeepers—all joined together in the NCPSWO.

During the 1990s, efforts to organize factories that had moved from the northern and Midwestern US in pursuit of cheaper, non-union workers resulted in these companies moving overseas as part of the exodus of American manufacturing jobs at the end of the last century. But the state could not move public employees overseas. The NCPSWO also organized with existing unions of employees, such as an American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) local of Durham city workers. They also organized new public employees workplaces, so when BWFJ and the NCPSWO helped unionize Raleigh sanitation workers, they called in support from the Communication Workers of America (CWA). However, the Raleigh sanitation workers ultimately ended their affiliation with CWA because of what they perceived as non-participatory top-down practices. Meanwhile, the AFSCME local in Durham was not happy with their own union bureaucrats, who were not using their dues for mass organizing. To gain access to the resources and collective power of an international union, the workers represented by the NCPSWO chose to join with United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America (UE), which had a reputation for rank and file organizing and mass participation in their union. NCPSWO became UE 150.

Of course, not all public employee unions had the same goals or strategies. For instance, the State Employees Association of North Carolina (SEANC), a state employee organization, spent its first seventy years not as a union at all. It was not until 2008 that the association affiliated with the Service Employees International Union, and even after this transition, SEANC leaders hesitated to call themselves a union. SEANC aspired to be an independent professional association focused on lobbying, not collective bargaining. But in 2001, a critical political shift occurred within SEANC. For the first time, the association publicly announced its support for

collective bargaining. In the past, SEANC and UE 150 had been at odds with each other. Todd, a historian and early activist in this movement recalled his role in this shift in tactics with other academics:

> *I proposed that we pick up on a SEANC move (which I considered quite significant in North Carolina labor and politics) and make public sector collective bargaining the focus of our meeting. This suggestion produced an outpouring of interest from a variety of organizations that rarely sat in the same room and often had a lot of bad blood between them. [We] could serve as "neutral territory," honest broker, facilitator to bring these disparate groups together in the same room to see if they had common ground around the basic idea of collective bargaining for public sector workers. Through the winter of 2001/2002, working groups with reps from these various labor organizations drafted a statement of principle and a statement of structure to form a coalition to secure collective bargaining rights to public workers (state, county and local).*

In an effort to overturn this Statute 95-98, a number of organizations created the HOPE (Hear Our Public Employees) Coalition in 2001. Both rank-and-file social movement unions and more professionalized unions participated. The founding of the coalition sparked a broader wave of activism around public employee organizing than NCPSWO/UE 150 had been able to mobilize on their own. For instance, in 2007, Raleigh sanitation workers went on strike, the first such public employee action in years.

The unions in HOPE varied in their class makeup, reflecting the diversity of the public employee demographic. In addition to UE 150, working class unions included the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Local 391, which represented school bus drivers and public school food service employees. Mixed class unions included the Charlotte Firefighters Association, the North Carolina American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), and SEANC. Middle to upper class unions included the North Carolina Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, the American Association of University Professors, NC Chapter, and the North Carolina Association of Educators.

A critical rule of this HOPE Coalition was that all major decisions had to be made with the unanimous consent of the core member groups, lest any one group leave in protest over tactics. This study included all of the core groups and any member or support organizations still active around this issue in 2011. Key support groups included BWFJ and CAR, as well as the Institute for Southern Studies, an advocacy group that published research on southern progressive political issues; Jobs with Justice – North Carolina, a group that organized workers; University of North Carolina – Student Action with Workers (UNC-SAW), a student group that supported the HOPE Coalition and UE 150 in general and UNC Housekeepers in particular; the Durham branch of the Workers World Party, which supported the rank-and-file organizing of public workers; and the North Carolina NAACP, which not only supported collective bargaining rights for public employees in general but through the Historic Thousands on Jones Street (HK on J) Coalition, organized annual protests on the issue in particular. The North Carolina NAACP was the leader of the Moral Monday movement, which held protests focused specifically on workers' rights issues, including the repeal of Statute 95-98.

In 2012—six decades after Statute 95-98 banned public sector workers from collective bargaining in state contracts—the Democratic National Convention came to Charlotte. Sanitation workers staged public actions during the convention to protest unjust treatment. Members of the HOPE Coalition, led by the Charlotte Firefighters, tried to negotiate, but the city refused all

negotiation. As the host of the convention, the city and the state came under national scrutiny when the city workers responsible for cleaning up after the convention and protecting the DNC attendees were unable to secure contracts. Eventually, the Obama administration intervened to prevent national labor unions from pulling their money out of the DNC because of North Carolina's anti-union policies, particularly in relation public employees.

When the HOPE Coalition was formed in 2001, coalition members believed they could repeal Statute 95-98. At that time, the state had a Democratic governor and a Democratic General Assembly. But the political tide turned. The 2012 election swept in a Republican supermajority in the General Assembly and a Republican governor, a combination not seen since Reconstruction. As a result, as well as because of other disputes across the unions, the Hope Coalition became less active and lost its small staff. Despite the loss of the political opportunity to repeal Statute 95-98, the HOPE Coalition continued to meet, albeit less frequently. In the years leading up to this research, their efforts focused on maintaining public employees' existing rights, such as dues check-offs on employee paychecks.

Groups Opposing Collective Bargaining for North Carolina Public Sector Employees

From the perspective of the anti-union groups in this study, the Reagan years of the 1980s introduced a golden era of free markets. They believed that public employee unions were a problem for the economy, especially in light of the fiscal crisis of 2008, which many conservative interviewees blamed on public sector workers. Since the passage of Statute 95-98, state laws favored anti-union groups. The North Carolina Chamber of Commerce was proud of the low levels of unionization in the state, boasting on their Web site that, "One key component of North Carolina's attractive business climate is its longstanding status as a right-to-work state. North Carolina has the lowest rate of private-sector union membership in the nation at just 1.5 percent." In 2011, North Carolina was one of 24 states with "right to work" laws, meaning that employees at a unionized worksite were not required to join the union. As many respondents described, these laws allowed an employee and employer free will, as opposed to the shackles of collective power.

Free market advocates in this study explained their opposition to collective bargaining in the following manner: In any kind of bargaining, both parties must be invested. In the private sector, the employer owns and directs the capital and the worker owns his labor, and in general, the worker and employer need to work together. However, in their view, this concept does not apply in the public sector, where the owner is not at the bargaining table. One patriot group member, Jane, explained:

> *Well, I think that this is one of the few things that Franklin Roosevelt got right—he said we should never have the public employees unionize. If I own a company, and you're my employees, okay, you can negotiate with me. It's my company, and okay, you want more wages, but you'll take less vacation days—okay, we'll work that out. Now you take teachers, policemen, firemen, you know, God bless them. I've dated firemen and policemen, love them, love their cute little uniforms (laughs). But they're negotiating against the taxpayers. So who's there? It's this nameless blob of people that have to pay their taxes, we don't have a choice. It's not like me, I'm the CEO, and I can say "No, you go on strike all you want, I'm not gonna do XYZ." We don't have a choice. And even Franklin Roosevelt, communist lover that he was, he understood you can't do that.*

So private unions, you got a knit mill or something you wanna unionize, fine. Public sector, no, absolutely not, there's no reasoning for it. So now they're being paid these ungodly amounts and benefits… Now public sector unions negotiating, and the politicians, you get this vicious catch-22 that your liberal politicians will take the taxpayers money and say "Sure, you can have all that." Then the unions turn around and raise money and give it to that politician. He raids our taxes and gives it to the union, they raise money, and give it to the crooked politician.

Like Jane, many anti-collective bargaining respondents opposed public sector unions in particular. They viewed public employee unions as involving too much collusion between unions and politicians, and they believed that the taxpayer was left to foot the bill for this collusion, especially for contracts that remain valid, even after a new election. One North Carolina patriot group used this chart, which succinctly summarized the free market, liberty-focused view of public employees:

This sentiment was widespread in North Carolina during the 1980s and 1990s. Combined with existing anti-union laws and the national trend toward lower union density in the Reagan era, these groups felt secure that little could be done to unionize public employees and so made little effort to combat public employee unionization during that period. Except for some efforts to reduce the power of the teachers union, most anti-union efforts focused on stopping local private sector union campaigns, especially in the textile and poultry worker sectors.

The groups that opposed collective bargaining rights over the years changed in name and form, but all tended to be politically conservative. Three types of organizations opposed unions in 2011, the start of this study: patriot groups, conservative advocacy think tanks and government and business associations. Just like the groups supporting public employee unions, the organizations in this political field were outspoken and active on this issue during 2011 and many of these groups had a long history of activism on this issue.

While the HOPE Coalition worked to repeal Statute 95-98 in the early 2000s, business and government leaders formed the North Carolina Coalition for Jobs to oppose the unionization of public employees in the legislature. The North Carolina Coalition for Jobs was a loosely organized group that worked closely with CAI, a human resources membership organization that helped employers address legal and other employee issues. This study also includes associations of public officials that were signatories of the North Carolina Coalition for Jobs, such as the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, the North Carolina League of Municipalities, the North Carolina School Board Association, and the North Carolina Board of Governors, as well as the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce, another umbrella organization.

Most of these institutions existed for decades before the study period and had opposed collective bargaining rights throughout their history.

Opposing collective bargaining rights for public employees did not involve nearly as much contention or effort as supporting them, given the existence of Statute 95-98. Ron, the head of the North Carolina Coalition for Jobs, said that their work mainly involved business and government representatives meeting in the CAI's conference room to figure out who needed to make what calls to which legislators to make sure the law did not change. In addition, the CAI and the North Carolina Coalition for Jobs offered anti-union information to government associations around the state. Ron said:

> *Most public employers in the state don't know much about unions, you know, and so we're there to analogize it to the private sector to give them some idea of what it's like, what it would bring, what it could bring. [A city government] will have a fire chief or something who was in another state at one time and was in the union and then became a captain in the fire department. And [I explain to city officials] what it's like trying to manage within[a union]. So we've done that kind of programming.*

Another set of organizations involved in anti-collective bargaining activism were conservative think tanks and advocacy groups. Specifically, the John Locke Foundation, founded in 1990, ran the conservative newspaper the *Carolina Journal*, which frequently ran anti-union articles. Another North Carolina think tank, CIVITAS, was an active advocacy group that prided itself on being "North Carolina's conservative voice" and had issued reports against public employee unions. Finally, the Koch brothers-funded Americans for Prosperity had a North Carolina chapter that worked closely with CIVITAS and the John Locke Foundation around private enterprise information and political campaigns, including against public employee unions.

Grassroots-organized patriot groups are the final set of conservative organizations that publicly opposed public employee unions. Eight such organizations existed in North Carolina in 2011, and they educated their members about public sector unionism at their meetings and in their publicity materials. They also attended and organized protests, such as those opposing the HOPE Coalition events in support of the occupiers of the Wisconsin statehouse. In reference to this 2011 battle over collective bargaining rights for public workers in Wisconsin, one Patriot leader said of their counter-protests, "We wanted to face off with them." Patriot groups included local Tea Party groups: the Caldwell (County) Tea Party, the Moore (County) Tea Citizens, the Crystal Coast Tea Party, North Carolina Tea Party Revolution and the North Carolina Tea Party. Other Patriot groups included the Moccasin Creek Minutemen and two more loosely organized "Prepper" groups led by influential patriot leaders in the state: North Carolina Freedom and North Carolina Renegade. Preppers have embraced this once-derogatory term to describe themselves as individuals who are preparing for an economic, government or infrastructure catastrophe with arms, home-grown food and political education.

All of these groups, on both sides of the public sector union organizing issue, constitute a political field. As a result, they vary not only in their views and practices on labor issues but also their social class composition and their organizational structures. These differences provide a rich and textured site for comparative analysis of digital activism.

CHAPTER THREE
Organizational Factors Shape Digital Activist Scores

        This chapter presents the quantitative differences in online activism use among social movement organizations in the political field of public sector collective bargaining in North Carolina. I look into how the following factors shape online engagement and participation: year of founding, organizational infrastructure, political ideology and social class composition. Results show substantive variation in the levels and types of Internet use related to organizational characteristics.

        I develop a new index of three different online activities: the *development* of online platforms, the platforms' *architecture*—or how much participation the platforms are designed for—and actual online *participation* levels. This index can be applied in the future to measure digital activism levels in other contexts. In subsequent chapters, I combine interview and ethnographic data with qualitative content analysis of the postings to investigate the mechanisms underlying the quantitative findings reported below.

Theories of Social Movement Activism and Online Participation
        The Internet has been hailed as a democratic, non-hierarchical space for political participation. In short, much of the research on digital politics suggests that the Internet helps erase the constraints of top-down ideology, organizational infrastructure and class inequality. In addition, conventional wisdom holds that online tools such as Web sites and social media are integral to political action. A broad array of scholars has contended that the Internet has brought about broader and more egalitarian participation in social movements (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Castells 2012; Donk et al. 2004; Garrett 2006). What we do not yet know, however, is whether these predictions about online political participation hold for different organizations that vary in age, infrastructure, ideology and class.

        As I outlined in the Introduction, most researchers in this area have treated the Internet as an independent variable and social and political movements as a dependent variable. I turn the tables to examine how organizational characteristics might shape the ways that a group makes use of digital technology. I investigate the ways in which organizational structures shape Internet use, as well as the reverse—how the Internet affects activism. I argue that studies claiming that digital tools necessarily democratize social and political movements either lack empirical evidence or support their argument through cherry-picked examples. A true test of this claim requires the systematic comparison of the online participation of groups with different measures of internal democracy and other organizational differences.

Era of Organizational Founding
        Scant research compares groups' era of their founding with their levels of digital engagement. Researchers tend to limit their discussion of organizational age to broad statements about how existing groups' practices changed in the digital era. For instance, some scholars compared national organizations founded pre and post digital age and found that after the advent of the Internet, organizations did more with less and were more efficient in their organizing (Bimber et al. 2012; Earl and Kimport 2011; Karpf 2012). One exceptional study evaluated Norwegian groups by age and found that older voluntary organizations were less likely to have social media sites than newer groups (Eimhjellen et al. 2013). I build on this literature by analyzing the founding era of the organizations based on three time frames—pre-Web era, Web

era and social media era—to see if newer organizations indeed use the Internet at greater levels and in a more participatory way than legacy organizations.

Organizational Infrastructure

Another possible source of variation in digital activism is differences in organizational infrastructure. Many scholars contended that membership-based groups that are less hierarchical and bureaucratic in their decision-making and operations characterize the digital era (Castells 2012; Earl and Kimport 2011; Raine and Wellman 2012). For instance, one study found that a group with less bureaucracy has a more successful online presence in terms of participation than a more bureaucratic group (Karpf 2012), but little comparative quantitative data exists to evaluate these claims. The few studies that statistically compared the online use of different types of groups found that more formally structured and larger groups were more likely to use social media (Anderson 2011; Eimhjellen et al. 2013; Obar, Zube, and Lampe 2012). These findings open the door to investigate how size, bureaucracy and hierarchy map onto digital activism levels

Ideology - Political Orientation and Strategy

For the purposes of the quantitative analysis, I operationalize ideology as groups' political orientation (left/right) and their political strategy (radical/reformist). In Chapter Five, I use qualitative data from fieldwork to expand on that definition by examining both the practices and ideas involved in these two organizational factors. Given the existing literature, we might expect more radical, left organizations to have higher digital engagement scores, especially around participation. However, because previous studies' data are heavily weighted toward this demographic of participants, we know less about conservative and reformist groups, nor do we know much about how differences in orientation might map onto digital use. A few studies compared right and left groups (Agarwal et al. 2014; Rohlinger et al. 2011), but these studies did not describe digital use and participation levels or provide comparisons of groups with different strategies. Another set of scholars argued that ideology is irrelevant in the digital age (Bimber et al. 2012; Castells 2012), so we might expect to find no difference in the quantitative analysis around ideology. This chapter evaluates these two sets of claims: (1) that radical, left organizations have higher digital engagement scores and (2) that ideology does not have an effect on digital engagement. In addition, this chapter evaluates how a group's strategy—or organizing theory—affects digital engagement.

Digital Activism Inequality

We know little about differences in Internet use among social movement organizations with different social class compositions. The scholarship on digital activism on the one hand and digital inequality on the other provides us with two different predictions: studies of digital activism suggest egalitarian Internet use while studies of digital inequality suggest disparities in online engagement. Regarding digital activism, much of the scholarship focuses on activists or potential activists who already have consistent Internet connectivity and high levels of digital engagement (Castells 2012; Earl and Kimport 2011; Karpf 2012). The consequence of this focus is that we have little empirical data to understand how class and activism interact in an organizational context despite claims of egalitarianism.

Two sets of studies shed light on how class-based inequality might shape online activism. First, a wide body of scholarship on digital inequality shows socioeconomic gaps in many forms

of online participation beyond basic connectivity divides (Correa 2010; Schradie 2011; Zillien and Hargittai 2009), and these gaps might be expected to shape digital activism activities, such as posting to social media sites. In addition, a set of studies show that organizations with more economic resources use Web sites more (Eimhjellen et al. 2013; Merry 2011) as well as higher rates of social media use (Eimhjellen et al. 2013), yet we know little about how groups' social class composition may shape online activism. Instead of looking exclusively at resources, this chapter evaluates how the socioeconomic class of an organizations' membership affects its social media use.

Research Design and Methods for Digital Activist Scores

The issue of whether public sector employees have the right to bargain collectively is an ideal case for this quantitative analysis because it engages a broad array of groups that all target the same issue but vary in terms of socioeconomic class, ideology, age, organizational structure and levels of Internet use and participation. Few previous studies capture such variation. The units of analysis for the independent variable are the 34 social, political and labor organizations outlined in Chapter Two (Table 1) that either supported or opposed these labor rights in the state. This study captures the whole field to access meaningful comparative data regarding the organizational characteristics that influence digital activism.

Data Collection

With the help of a research team, I gathered original data from over 60,000 Tweets, Facebook posts and Web site metrics of the organizations under study. These data are used to compare the quantitative differences in groups' Internet use. Data collection procedures involved writing scripts and code using the Facebook and Twitter Application Programming Interface, commonly referred to as an API. An API is a way to access an Internet platform's data, and both Facebook and Twitter publish information on their APIs. To access the Twitter data, we downloaded the data directly in real time using Twitter's API and with NodeXL, a plug-in for Excel that enables the user to access and analyze social media data. We also directly scraped the data because of the limitations that Twitter has to prevent historical access to their data. Some organizations' digital presence was not captured via Internet searches but instead via interviews. Rather than lead to systematic biases, this approach produced more robust measures of organizations' online participation. Collecting the quantitative measures of online data produced a comparative measure of online activity.

Operationalization of Organizational Characteristics

The variable descriptions below are based on interviews, observations and online content analysis.

    Era of Founding

I coded each organization based on the year it was formed. In addition, I coded groups into three categories based on the following time periods: a) *Pre-Web Era:* Before 1995, the launch of the public Web; b) *Web Era:* Between 1995 and 2006, the launch of social media; and c) *Social Media Era:* After 2006. I use this variable to examine Stinchcombe's claim that organizations are influenced by the era of their founding, as well as the claim of digital activism scholars such as Castells (2012), who contended that the digital era launched a new "species" of social movement. Seventeen groups started in the pre-Web era, six started in the Web era and eleven in the social media era (Table 4).

Organizational Infrastructure

I use five measures of organizational infrastructure in the analysis: whether a group is 1) more or less hierarchical; 2) membership or advocacy-based 3) more or less bureaucratic; 4) has national ties or not; and 5) is statewide or local.

The measure of hierarchy is the organizations' levels of decision-making. My operationalization of this variable is based on Gamson's definition of bureaucracy in *The Strategy of Social Protest* (1990), in which he analyzed 54 organizations and categorized them in a variety of ways. As part of his definition he defined bureaucracy as having three characteristics: a written document that states the purpose of the organization, maintaining a formal list of members (for membership groups) and having three or more levels of internal hierarchy. The first two definitions were met by nearly every organization under study, so I used the last defining characteristic—three or more levels of internal hierarchy—as a dummy variable reflecting whether an organization is more hierarchical. I also drew on Gamson's idea of centralization and tied it to this measure so that a dominant leader accounts for one decision-making level.

Second, I also categorized groups as membership or advocacy organizations (Skocpol 2004). This category may act as another proxy for hierarchy because groups that want their members to be a critical part of their organization may be structured to encourage non-hierarchical participation.

A third organizational measure is that of bureaucracy. Going beyond Gamson, I harnessed Weber's broad definition of bureaucracy, which includes the number of specific roles necessary to carry out tasks in organizations. Therefore, I constructed a measure of bureaucracy based on the number of staff in an organization. The staff variable was measured continuously, with a range of 0 to 130. This variable is also a measure of organizational resources and is considered in the analysis of class composition as well.

Fourth, because national organizations have the ability to provide structural support to North Carolina groups in the form of digital tools, I coded for whether groups belonged to a national organization. Finally, I coded for whether a group was statewide or local as a proxy and control for size because statewide groups were larger. I also controlled for size by including the number of members or Likers on Facebook in the digital activist scores. Some respondents confirmed that this Facebook activity was indeed complimentary to their group's size.

Political Ideology

For the sake of parsimony, I operationalized the political Right as opposing public union collective bargaining rights and the political Left as supporting them. The organizations on each side of the issue broadly consisted of two types of groups, as outlined in the previous chapter. In short, on the Right, one category consisted of professionalized organizations that actively opposed collective bargaining within the state legislature. These groups varied from local governmental associations to the Chamber of Commerce. The other category of right wing groups consists of grassroots patriot groups. Along with the Tea Party groups (in name), there are also survivalist or "Prepper" groups, which prepare for a collapse of the government and economy. On the Left, the two organizational categories were labor groups and coalition groups standing in solidarity with public employee unions, ranging from the NAACP to a student group.

Next, I coded each organization's strategy as either radical or reformist. I coded an organization as radical if it mostly focused on organizing its membership and engaging in contested activities—such as protest and picketing—to broadly change the political landscape. A group was reformist if it sought incremental systemic reform, primarily through lobbying. This

variable was based on Gamson's (1990) "unruly" categorization of protest groups. He categorized groups as "unruly" if they resorted to violence, but given the non-violent nature of all of my groups, I instead used the terms radical and reformist. While organizations did not always fit neatly into either category, I used this binary variable as a parsimonious way to compare different organizational strategies and their organizing theory.

Social Class

I categorized groups into three types on the basis of their members' social class: working class, mixed class and middle/upper class. Class operationalization is by the types of jobs held by members, using Wright et al.'s (1982) classification of employees' control over their work environment. I also used members' educational level (Mare 1980). If more than 75% of an organization's members had working class jobs and had a high school education or less, I categorized the organization as working class. If 75% of the members had middle/upper class jobs and had a college education or more, the organization was categorized as middle/upper class. If a group met neither threshold, I considered it as mixed class. This coding was based on interviews and queries during observations. For the groups consisting of public employees, this information was readily accessible as public information. For other organizations, I gathered information from staff and respondents regarding their members' employment statuses and used interviews to verify my initial classifications. The working class groups included the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE 150), which represented state employees ranging from sanitation workers to nurses' aides. Mixed class groups included most of the Patriot groups, a firefighters union and the State Employees Association of North Carolina (SEANC). The middle/upper class groups included the North Carolina Chamber of Commerce and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). Some organizations had working class members and upper middle class staff or leaders, and I still categorized these groups as working class. The results will show, however, that having college educated volunteers does not counteract the class effects on digital activism scores.

Digital Activist Scores

The primary dependent variables measure a) how much organizations and users engage with the most commonly used public Internet platforms for organizing, and b) what organizations and their constituents actually *do* with these platforms. I developed an index of a group's digital activism based on a typology of their *development* of, *architecture* for, and *participation* in Web sites, Facebook and Twitter. These three platforms dominated the digital activism literature and were the most commonly used *public* interfaces at the time of the study. The index I constructed provides a measure (Table 3) for the dominant services of the moment, but it could easily be adapted to any media format.

The time period for observing and calculating online engagement was at least a year for each platform. A research team and I surveyed Web sites monthly over 18 months to note any changes across six-month intervals, and we gave each organization a score over that time period. It was not possible to obtain Web site data before the beginning of the study. Facebook scores were based on the total time the organization was on the platform. Twitter scores were based on the total time the organization was on the platform for basic development scores, but because Twitter data were not available for the entire time each organization was on the platform, we collected other measures of Twitter participation such as mentions and hashtags over a one year period from July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013 and were averaged. This time period allowed for fluctuations in a group's offline and online activities, such as an annual conference or event, which

often resulted in a spike in an organization's activity.

1) *Development*—The *development* score was a measure of how much groups had built and developed a platform. It included a measure of whether a group had each platform and how much they had developed these platforms. For the social media platforms, the *development* measure included the number of posts divided by the number of days on the platform to enable comparisons. Because Web sites are different from social media tools and are often more static, a more conservative measure determined whether groups updated their Web sites over the course of a six-month period. This calculation also provided variation across groups.

2) *Architecture*—This is a measure of the extent to which each organization designed each platform for online participation. For example, did an organization use hashtags and mentions in their Tweets to encourage participation, or did they allow anyone to post to their Facebook page? Facebook was structured for different types of interfaces: some were open while others were closed but designed as a group's home base—much like a Web site but with more interactivity. I assigned a score to each group based on the openness of the participation. Building on the work of Stein (2009) who described organizational web content as "interaction" and "lateral linkages," I assigned a higher *architecture* score to Web sites with more interactive features. Though a slightly different measure was used for each platform, together they captured how a group set up and maintained its digital tools for continued participation

3) *Participation*—This is a measure of how much people participated in a platform. For instance, on Facebook, it measured the average number of "unique" posters, Likers and commenters. A common measure of "influence" on Twitter is the number of individual people who interact with a Twitter account, so I used the number of "re-Tweets," "favorites" and "followers" a group received to construct a participation measure. I did not measure participation for Web sites because "hit" data on Web sites do not represent participation like social media do.

Analytic Strategy

I constructed a total *digital activist score* for each organization by standardizing each organization's development, architecture and participation on each platform (Web site, Facebook and Twitter). I then averaged all of these scores and standardized them again to create the total digital activist score (Table 2). This unifying score was further verified through factor analysis of each measure in each cell of Table 2; all factors loaded onto one latent variable. This approach had the advantage of not privileging one online platform over another. I used this standardized activism score as the dependent variable throughout the analysis.

The findings are based on two levels of analysis: 1) The mean differences of the scaled digital activist scores, evaluated with t-tests. The sample size is small (34 organizations), but it captures an entire field, so tests of statistical significance are robust. In addition, I used a regression analysis with the organizational characteristic under investigation as the primary independent variable and including one other possible variable to test for any difference. A large multivariate analysis was not appropriate for this analysis because with a sample size of 34, each additional variable in a regression analysis would eventually just describe the characteristics of each organization—or unit of analysis—so this type of analysis would describe each case rather than overall trends. In addition, many of the arguments around digital activism are single-variable arguments, so I chose to analyze the questions one by one. However, in the subsequent chapters, I provide further discussion of the associations between the factors that act as mechanisms of digital activism. 2) As a further robustness check, I also confirmed differences by measuring the effect size using pooled variation. This technique is commonly used in

psychology and related social science fields to analyze the relationship between two variables and can be used to complement p-values. Pooled variation allowed a standardized measure of any effect of the primary independent variable under study relative to variability in the political field. For the pooled variation, I used both Cohen's d and Hedges' g because of the sample size. I corrected both for uneven groups when appropriate. For the comparison of class composition, I used working class as one group and combined mixed class and middle/upper class as the other. Cohen (1988) argued that any effect size that is more than 0.8 is considered "large."

Organizational Variation in Digital Engagement

At the most general level, the analysis suggests that organizational structures, political ideology and class inequality shape digital activism. Groups that were more hierarchical, conservative, reformist and middle to upper class had higher digital activist scores than their counterparts. It is useful, however, to break these findings down by each variable to see how different online platforms and activities drive these overall differences. I turn now to examine organizational differences in the use of Web sites, Facebook and Twitter as well as these platforms' development, architecture, and online participation from members.

Not that Imprinted

Table 4 shows that half of the organizations emerged in the pre-digital era, before the launch of the Web, and the other half in the digital era. A few more of these newer groups launched in the social media era than in the Web era. Table 5 shows the average standardized total digital activist score for each group (each era of founding), and the coefficient of the difference between two groups. For era of founding, the differences in the coefficients show no statistically significant difference across the eras based on the average total score for each time period[4]. Simply put, organizations that were founded in the digital era did not have higher digital activist scores than groups that were formed before the public launch of the Internet browser in 1995 or the social media launch in 2006. Digital era groups were not more likely to use the Internet for their organizing. Figure 1 shows a scatterplot of the total digital activist scores by year of founding and illustrates no significant correlation between scores and date of founding. Groups founded in the digital era were not more likely to have higher scores as previous literature suggested. The average means of the digital activist scores are very similar across the three eras and hover around the standardized mean of zero with no statistically significant difference or effect size[5] between different eras (Table 5).

But what if we break down the categories of scores, looking especially at the basic platform *development* scores across Web sites, Facebook and Twitter? Tables 6a-6i show the t-test differences in standardized score by platform and activity for all of the independent variables under study. Table 6a shows the differences according to era. In each box of the table, the first score is the difference between the pre-Web era groups and Web era groups. The second score in each box is the difference between pre-Web groups and the social media groups. It might be more likely that the era of an organization's founding would be associated with what *type* of digital platforms it develops than with overall digital platform development. For instance, perhaps newer organizations were more likely to integrate social media into their Internet use. To

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[4] Any difference reported in the findings is statistically significant at the p <0.05 level and has a large effect size, unless otherwise indicated.
[5] Effect sizes reported are large if the coefficient is above 0.8, medium if it is less than 0.8 and greater than 0.5, and small if it is less than 0.5, as is the standard.

test this, I analyzed development scores—as well as the architecture and participation scores—and found no association. Further, I found no statistically significant or substantial effect size across era of founding for Web sites, Facebook or Twitter. The only difference was in the Facebook architecture score. Newer groups were much more likely to set up Facebook groups, rather than Web sites. There was a 0.91 standard deviation difference between pre-Web era and social media era groups on this particular measure, as shown in Table 6a. However, the overall architecture score and the participation score showed no difference. Overall, then, the age of an organization was not associated with higher or lower levels of digital engagement and participation. Simply, an organization is not imprinted by the era of its founding.

Hierarchy Prevails

Some measurements of organizational infrastructure point toward an association with digital politics and activism while others do not. First, regarding hierarchy, the level of organizational hierarchy was associated with digital activist scores, but in a direction that differed from that suggested in the literature. More hierarchical groups had higher total scores, on average. The standardized average total digital activist score for less hierarchical groups was 0.53 standard deviations below the mean, and for more hierarchical groups, it was 0.22 standard deviations above the mean for a 0.74 gap with a large effect size (Table 5).

What happens when this total digital activist score is broken down into its constituent parts? Table 6b shows the standardized differences across activities and platforms. First, the social media platforms appeared to show more parity between less and more hierarchical groups, and Web sites had the largest gap. However, after distilling out the latent variables of online activities, a different picture emerged.

Even though no statistically significant difference emerged between hierarchical and non-hierarchical groups regarding the development of the platforms or their architecture, both scores showed a medium effect size. More hierarchical groups had, on average, a 0.69 standard deviation higher development score than less hierarchical groups (Table 6b). In turn, more hierarchical groups had a 0.48 standard deviation lead over less hierarchical groups in terms of architecture. The biggest gap, though, was the statistically significant difference in online participation. More hierarchical groups had on average, a 0.78 standard deviation lead over less hierarchical groups in online participation (Table 6b). Given the smaller gaps for social media, how is this difference possible?

The Facebook architecture score sheds light on this seeming discrepancy. While not statistically significant, it is the only gap that shows the reverse of all of the other findings on hierarchy levels (and its effect size is medium): less hierarchical groups had higher scores in designing Facebook for participation. Specifically, this means that less hierarchical groups tended to have Facebook "groups" rather than Facebook "pages." More hierarchical groups had a lower score for architecture because they restricted the *type* of participation through their ability to control what happens more on pages (vs. groups). Ironically, these more hierarchical groups had higher participation scores on social media, despite limiting how people participate.

Advocacy vs. Membership Groups

Another measure of infrastructure is the type of organization—whether a group was an advocacy group or a membership organization. Table 5 shows a strong relationship between digital activist scores and type of organization. Advocacy groups had higher digital activist scores than membership organizations with an average difference of 0.90 standard deviations.

The platform and activity scores show slightly mixed results as outlined in Table 6c. Membership groups had lower average Web site and Facebook digital activist scores than advocacy organizations (0.62 and 0.48 standard deviations respectively) with a medium effect size, although these differences were not statistically significant. Twitter, however, showed a large gap of 1.01 standard deviations between groups, with advocacy groups having the lead.

Table 6c shows that the architecture score was the only activity that demonstrated a bit more parity, with a medium effect size of 0.51 standard deviations. However, advocacy groups had a development score that was 1.01 standard deviations higher. Further, membership groups' participation scores were 0.83 standard deviations lower than advocacy groups'. Simply put, advocacy groups did not always design their platform for participation like hierarchical groups, but they did get more people involved online than membership groups.

Bureaucratic Resources

The next measure of organizational infrastructure is the number of staff, which tells us whether an organization was more bureaucratic or had more organizational resources. Groups with more staff had a statistically significant higher digital activist score than groups with less staff (Table 5). And groups with more staff had higher Web site and Twitter scores, as well as higher online participation levels, as Table 6d shows. However, the difference in the total average digital activist score is only a 0.01 standard deviation difference for each additional staff member, as both Table 5 and the scatterplot in Figure 2 show. This increase is largely due to the outlier of the North Carolina Americans for Prosperity, which had high staffing levels and the highest overall score. When this outlier is removed, the finding is no longer significant.

National Ties Don't Bind

The next organizational factor is whether a group was part of a national organization. Table 5 shows that groups that were chapters of national groups, such as a union local, did not have significantly higher or lower levels of digital engagement. The effect size of the average difference between groups that were part of a national organization and those that were not was small. While all of the platform and activity measures show a slight increase in standard deviation toward members of national groups, the small effect size holds, with no statistical significance (Table 6e).

Big or Small, State or Local

Finally, whether a group was statewide or local was a variable that both measured structural ties and acted as a proxy for size, with statewide organizations considered as larger and local organizations considered as smaller. Table 5 demonstrates that this measure was not associated with higher digital activist scores, either with a t-test or with effect size. Similar to the other factors of advocacy and hierarchy, the one caveat remains that local groups had higher Facebook architecture scores with a 1.01 standard deviation difference, meaning they were more likely to have Facebook groups, rather than pages (Table 6f). Other than that, whether large or small, statewide or local, groups used the Internet at similar rates and levels.

Summary of Organizational Findings

Organizational infrastructure shaped digital activism levels. Groups that were more hierarchical and bureaucratic, as well as groups that were advocacy-based, had higher levels of digital engagement and online participation scores, as did advocacy groups. Combining these

different organizational factors provides an even deeper understanding of how infrastructure can shape digital engagement. A key factor here is the connection between hierarchy and organizational type: more hierarchical advocacy groups had much higher scores than less hierarchical membership groups (Table 7). In a regression analysis with the total digital activist score as the dependent variable, both levels of hierarchy and the type of organization were statistically significant, as outlined in the regression analysis in Table 8 (Models a & b).

Political Orientation

Tables 5 and 6g show differences in digital engagement between groups who supported collective bargaining rights for public employee unions (left) and groups that opposed these rights (right). Groups on the political right had, on average, higher digital activist scores than organizations on the left. The average score for groups on the right was -0.33 standard deviations from the mean and the average score on the left was 0.33 standard deviations above the mean with a 0.66 difference (Table 5).

All platforms show a medium effect size in the difference between right and left groups. Right groups had higher scores across all three platforms, though these differences were not statistically significant. Web sites, Facebook and Twitter respectively show a gap between right and left groups of 0.54, 0.44 and 0.62 standard deviations (Table 6g).

The development score measured whether groups utilized the three types of platforms and, if so, how much they updated or posted to each. The average score for left groups was 0.72 standard deviations lower than for right groups (statistically significant) with a large effect size (Table 6g).

As with other variables, the architecture score shows a bit more equality, as I show in (Table 6g). This is a measurement of how much organizations designed their platforms for participation. For Web sites, this indicates whether they had interactive features, for example. Groups earn a higher architecture score if they encouraged participation with social media, including mentioning someone on Twitter, or when a group's Facebook page openly allowed anyone to post. I found a half standard deviation difference between right and left on the average architecture score. Similar findings appeared for participation, with right wing groups having higher participation scores. The effect size is "medium" but not statistically significant for either architecture or participation.

Strategy

Reformist groups had higher digital activist scores than radical organizations (Table 5). A 0.66 standard deviation difference exists between groups based on strategy. Table 6h shows that across platforms, Web sites show the biggest difference at 0.93 standard deviations, but social media platforms show more parity, with small effects under 0.5 standard deviations. Regarding activities, both *development* and *participation* show a 0.52 gap among reformist and radical groups for a medium effect size. The biggest gap based on strategy is with architecture—reformist groups had a 0.71 standard deviation higher average digital activist score than radical groups.

Looking at interactions among political orientation and strategy, radical left wing groups had the lowest average *digital activist scores* while reformist right wing organizations had the highest with a difference of one standard deviation.

Social Class

Figure 3 and Table 5 shows that groups with predominantly working class members had lower levels of digital engagement than their middle class and upper class counterparts. A statistically significant difference existed across all platforms and activities (Table 6i) with a large effect size for the standardized digital activist score between working class groups and mixed class groups, as well as between working class and middle/upper class organizations. Middle/upper class groups had scores 1.23 standard deviations below the mean while middle/upper class groups had average scores 0.33 standard deviations above the mean for a total difference of 1.56 standard deviations, the largest gap of any of the variables so far and a large effect size. The lowest score was 2.06 standard deviations below the mean (working class group) and the highest was 2.39 standard deviations above the mean (middle/upper class group). On average, mixed class groups scored 0.27 standard deviations lower than middle/upper class groups, but this difference was not statistically significant, and the effect size was small in results not shown.

For platforms, the disparities continue. With Web sites, Table 6i shows that on average, a 1.1 standard deviation class gap existed between working class and middle/upper class groups. An even starker contrast occurred across groups that used social media platforms and those that did not. The total standardized Facebook scores (Figure 4) show that organizations with members of higher social classes had much higher scores than those with working class members. Middle/upper class groups had average Facebook scores that were 1.43 standard deviations higher than the scores of working class groups. Working class groups were less likely than mixed and middle/upper class groups to develop a Facebook presence. Looking specifically at Facebook's architecture score, however, these class differences shifted a bit. Mixed class groups were likely to have higher scores than working class groups in how they designed the platform for participation, but middle/upper class groups did not show a statistically significant difference from working class groups. For the participation score, middle/upper class groups also did not show a statistically significant difference from working class groups.

Nine of the 34 organizations did not have a Twitter account, and half of all labor groups did not have an account. In terms of total Twitter score—based on criteria such as numbers of Tweets and followers—none of the working class organizations fell among the highest 25 scores. In fact, none of the working class organizations even used Twitter; four of the five working class groups had no Twitter account and only one of the approximately 23,000 Tweets in this analysis came from a working class organization. Organizations with mixed and middle/upper class members were more apt not only to have a Twitter account but also to use the platform. Thus, the extent of Twitter engagement varied based on social class. The average differences between the total Twitter score of working class groups and that of middle/upper class groups is almost as extensive as with Facebook, with a 1.34 standard deviation gap (Table 6i).

When I aggregated all three platforms into a typology of development, architecture and participation (Table 6i), statistically significant inequalities persisted across organizations with different class compositions. In addition to inequalities in organizations' development and architecture of these platforms, differences in participation levels were also pronounced. We might expect that the biggest hurdle to online engagement would be getting the platform up and running, but that did not seem to be the case, as the architecture and participation scores also varied greatly across class lines (Figure 5).

Results outlined in Table 6i and Figure 5 show differences in how groups created, built and developed these three platforms. Both mixed and middle/upper class groups had higher

development scores than working class groups—a difference of 1.34 standard deviations. Similarly, the extent to which the groups designed these platforms for online participation, or their architecture, showed a difference of 1.56 standard deviations. Finally, differences in participation levels were also significant. Working class groups had fewer people Liking, commenting, re-Tweeting and following them as compared to upper/middle class groups, with an average 1.20 standard deviation difference from middle/upper class groups, though not from mixed groups, which actually fell below the mean for participation.

I included groups with minimal online presence or groups that had only posted a few times in the overall analyses, but as a robustness check, I excluded the single outlier group that had no online presence. After excluding this outlier, all of the differences associated with class composition remained.

To summarize the main findings of this analysis, middle/upper class groups showed more online engagement than working class groups; groups that were more hierarchical, bureaucratic and advocacy-oriented (rather than membership-based) had higher scores, though national ties and size did not make as much of a difference; conservative reformist groups were more likely to use digital platforms and have higher levels of online engagement than radical left wing groups. However, whether a group was founded in the digital era did not make a difference. What happens, though, when the four factors of age, infrastructure, ideology and class combine?

Multiple Factors

The following three chapters will use qualitative data to provide a detailed explanation of the mechanisms of these differences, but it is first useful to examine any quantitative associations among the statistically significant factors of infrastructure, ideology and inequality. This step can shed light on whether some factors compete with each other in creating differences among organizations' digital activism. To examine competing effects, the regression analysis in Table 8 uses one additional variable, as outlined in the analytic strategy, and Table 9 shows all of the scores in descending order and the organizational characteristics of each group to provide a sense of the emerging patterns.

It is clear from all of these statistical analyses that social class was the most consistent and persistent source of differences in digital activism (Table 8). Class remained significant in regression analyses with every other variable. While some may argue that resources, rather than class, created the observed effect, this is refuted by the inclusion of the resources/bureaucracy variable of staffing. Including this variable showed only mixed results and did not take away the significance of the class gap. Ideology was associated with class, however. Table 10 presents t-tests across each class category and each ideology category in a 3 x 2 table; I found no difference across and down the table when isolating categories. For instance, there was no gap between right and left among mixed class groups. This is likely because class composition and ideology were highly correlated: not only were there no working class right wing groups in this political field, but all of the working class groups were also left. However, ideological differences do not entirely explain the class inequality in the digital activist scores. In the next few chapters, I show that that rather than ideology influencing class differences in online engagement, the reverse was often true.

The variables of hierarchy, organizational type, and ideology remained important on their own, and these categories did not entirely overlap. In other words, not all left groups were non-hierarchical. Still, ideology was associated with hierarchy in terms of digital activist scores, and both remained significant in the regression analysis (Table 8, Model d). Groups that were

more hierarchical and conservative had much higher digital activist scores than those that were less hierarchical and left. Strategy and membership type also had a strong association with online engagement (Table 8, Model e). Reformist non-membership groups had higher digital activist scores than radical membership groups. All of these findings stand as a corrective to the digital activism literature, which has presented the Internet as an egalitarian, non-ideological space for non-hierarchical groups.

Not-so-new media

Even though youth is generally associated with more social media engagement, this is *not* the case in this political field. "Legacy organizations" did not fail to modernize due to their old style of activism and their older membership; instead, early adoption of digital media and high digital activist scores were related to infrastructure, ideology and class. At the same time, most Tea Party members were elderly, but these groups tended to have higher scores, contradicting the supposed correlation to members' youth.

This study challenges a prevailing explanation for social movement organizing in the digital era. Stinchcombe (1965) claimed that an organization is imprinted by the era of its founding. Many scholars since have suggested that the Internet paved the way for new forms of organizations and that newer organizations are more digitally focused. Not only did this study not find an association between digital activism and a group's founding but these findings suggest that Stinchcombe's imprinting theory cannot be extended to digital activism. Whether a group began in the pre-Web era, Web era or social media era did not affect its digital activist scores.

Just because you build it doesn't mean they'll come

In evaluating the platforms and activities as a whole, two patterns emerge. One is that groups can have high Facebook architecture scores, designing their online tools for participation, but this does not mean these groups will actually *have* more participation. For instance, more hierarchical advocacy groups had much higher levels of online participation overall compared to less hierarchical membership groups, even though these groups differed little in terms of Facebook architecture scores. The high participation scores for middle/upper class hierarchical groups also contradict the suggestion that digital media flatten hierarchies and democratize participation.

Conclusion

Differences in how and how much political, labor and social movement organizations used public digital tools for participation reflect the class composition of the groups, their political ideologies and their infrastructure. Specifically, working class groups that used public protest to support collective bargaining rights for public employees used the Internet for organizing much less than middle/upper class groups that used lobbying and other reformist strategies to oppose public worker unions.

This chapter has demonstrated the importance of using a field-level approach to measure the everyday online practices of organizations. Contrary to the existing literature on digital transformations of social movements, it points to elite, hierarchical and conservative organizations as the groups that made the strongest use of digital media. The next chapters will integrate qualitative data into the analysis to explain why this is the case.

CHAPTER FOUR
Iron Law 2.0
Bringing the Organization Back into Digital Activism

Many digital activism scholars (Castells 2012; Earl and Kimport 2011; Raine and Wellman 2012) have suggested that bureaucracy and hierarchy are superseded in the digital age. For example, Manuel Castells (2013: 15) argued:

> *The characteristics of communication processes between individuals engaged in a social movement determine the organizational characteristics of the social movement itself: the more interactive and self-configurable communication is, the less hierarchal the organization and the more participatory the movement… This is why the networked social movements of the digital age represent a new species of social movement.*

Castells' argument is that high levels of Internet use are associated with social movement organizations with low levels of hierarchy and bureaucracy. However, this implication has rarely been tested empirically because most of the literature on digital activism focuses on high levels of digital engagement and does not ask directly about how organizational features of social movement groups might shape their online activities. Still, a body of literature has provided some nuance to these theories, suggesting that organizations in the digital age are "different kinds of organizations" from the hierarchical groups of the past (Karpf 2012) or that they are hybrids between old and new (Chadwick 2007). Others argued that the digital transformation has produced fewer formal groups and more self-organizing and personalized networks that are disconnected from traditional organizations in a form of "connective" rather than "collective" action (Bennett and Segerberg 2012).

Chapter Three presented the finding that the most hierarchical and bureaucratic organizations had the highest levels of online participation in this political field. This finding contradicts the current literature, even those studies that have taken a more nuanced view. This chapter takes up the question of *how* a social movement organization's infrastructure—such as its hierarchy, bureaucracy and other organizational factors—shape these differences. I do so using qualitative data taken from interviews, observations and content analysis with organizations in the political field of collective bargaining rights in North Carolina.

Findings and Mechanisms of Digital Organization

By examining how the everyday practices of political, labor and social movement organizations operate, we can see that digital technologies have been integrated into organizations with the division of labor and the infrastructure to maintain, encourage and foster online communication and participation. This section examines why and how this occurs.

Hierarchy and Decision-Making

Chapter Three showed that hierarchical groups made greater use of the Internet than less hierarchical groups. As we saw in that chapter, organizations with three or more decision-making levels had a higher average *digital activist score* than groups with two levels or fewer. How does a group's hierarchical level shape its Internet use? Recall that hierarchy was measured as a categorical variable based on the number of levels of decision-making in each organization. Drawing on Gamson's (1990) operationalization, I coded groups with three or more levels as *more* hierarchical and groups with only one or two levels of decision-making as *less* hierarchical. To

explain how these levels worked in practice, it is useful to examine both membership and advocacy groups. For hierarchical membership groups, the levels of decision-making included a mechanism for members' involvement. These groups thus included levels such as a board of directors or even chapters in addition to key staff and/or an executive committee that wielded decision-making power as well. Hierarchical advocacy groups often had similar levels of decision-making, including a board of directors, but staff were a more important layer for these groups, and these groups did not include a level of membership in their decision-making.

We might expect that more participatory, horizontal decision-making and digital activism would go hand-in-hand. After all, this is the claim of the digital democracy literature. However, in interviews, all respondents—from less hierarchical and more hierarchical groups—reported that decisions of import happened during face-to-face meetings. This was true of even statewide groups, which had to send representatives to Raleigh, the state capital, for meetings.

Table 11 shows the results of a content analysis, in which a research team and I coded Facebook posts for whether the post was a discussion or debate about the organizational direction or decision-making processes.[6] The data in the table show that for all groups, the average percentage of posts that were about organizational democracy was only 1% with no statistically significant difference between hierarchical and non-hierarchical groups. These findings show that very little discussion or debate about the organizations occurred on their social media sites. Why was this the case? Why would groups not use the Internet as an integral part of their decision-making processes?

Despite the expectation for transparency on digital media, one might expect that activists would not want the messy decision-making process to be publically broadcast. But this was not the sole reason that groups did not engage in discussion or debate about decisions on publically open sites. Even in the case of email, which is more private, groups of all types said they rarely used email for decision-making and debate. In explaining their face-to-face decision-making practices, a key word surfaced throughout the interviews: trust. For example, Margaret, a leader in Student Action with Workers (UNC SAW) explained why face-to-face interaction was so important to them, even at a time when the Internet could theoretically facilitate decision-making during a high-paced campaign. At the time of our interview, the students, in coalition with workers, faculty members and the community, were pressing the university administrators and the Board of Governors to maintain employees' protections as State Personnel. UNC SAW had to make quick decisions to respond to the University's own decision-making process, and they opted to do so through face-to-face meetings, not email or social media:

> *So this campaign, I think, has been really an interesting challenge because a lot of the times decisions have to be made almost immediately, and so we have had the difficulty of like, how long do we wait for feedback on this? Because just a part of our politics and the way we identify with ourselves, we want to be as transparent as possible. We don't want a few people knowing everything and not sharing with the group and not taking other opinions into account. That's really important to us, but I think sometimes it is challenging when you're balancing urgency and timeliness. So I think in meetings we get a lot done. We meet several times a week because there's so much that we need to talk about and we need to*

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[6] For a group's Facebook account, all of these posts were coded twice by trained undergraduate research assistants. For groups with more than 300 posts, a systematic sample was used for coding. Intercoder reliability showed over 90% agreement, and the average was used for the final results.

plan. I mean even just for this week, [on] Thursday and Friday different parts of the [UNC] Board of Governors are meeting, so we need to talk about what do we say to the Board of Governors, who's emailing who, who's doing publicity, who's reaching out to workers; all these different little pieces have to come together for us to succeed. So we meet a lot and in the meeting time, I really, really appreciate how present everyone is, but online I think it's really just a matter of who's checking their email really regularly.

In other words, the Internet was not deemed a reliable mechanism for decision-making, and nor was it seen as a forum for trust-building, even among non-hierarchical groups like UNC-SAW. This sentiment resonated across the groups.

However, some groups did make some of their decisions online. Interviewees described these as low-stakes decisions. For instance, Parker, a leader in a professional government association said that their executive committee *can* make certain decisions over e-mail, but that doing so a multi-stage process. First, he would send an e-mail to their board members asking if they were okay making a decision over e-mail. If anyone objected, a conference call was scheduled. If the issue was still not resolved, the group saved the decision for a face-to-face meeting. Parker discussed why these in-person meetings were useful, especially for controversial issues: "[Board members] need to know each other. They need to learn how to deal with each other productively and respectfully. And it's just harder to do that if you don't get together every now and then face-to-face as a group to do it."

Arlo, an activist involved in the HOPE coalition, an early and avid Internet adopter, and a Web site developer, elaborated on this human connection that he did not think was possible online. He talked about how with online discussions, he did not have the benefit of the interactions that occur *after* an in-person meeting:

One of the most important organizing strategies is what happens afterwards, when you debrief or talk in the parking lot, talk about how someone's mother is doing, where to get a bite to eat. It's that sort of human connection. It can happen in mediated communication, but the online is an arm's length connection. It's important to see and hear people. You need to leave an hour and a half after a meeting to give yourself time, as an organizer, to do that after-the-meeting talking, which can lead to better connections. [Organizing is not just] 20,000 people clicking a link... To get people to understand what we need to do together, and to take big risks, we need to do it together, in person. I'm not seeing it over the Internet. I'm not saying it couldn't be done, but you need trust, a common understanding of the world and [to know] that we share this common understanding.

Many respondents shared similar experiences with discussions that occurred before and after meetings that they believed helped build and develop their group. Chatting about family or other personal issues or even the organizational dynamics helped build trust that group members said could not be developed online.

Another issue of trust was that some groups did not trust who might be listening in on their decision-making processes, such as their opponents or the state. They also worried about online security. Kai, a 66 year-old activist from a radical left group said, "So there's always the thing, you know, never discuss online what you don't want the authorities to know."   Prepper respondents expressed similar sentiments. A left coalition member, Josie, who helped workers with job discrimination issues, said she did not feel safe putting organizational information

online. Josie is a school bus driver and school staff member, and she said that she was an avid Facebook user, but she could not imagine putting any details about her discrimination case against her school district on the social media site. "It's not safe," she said.

Conversations about organizational decision-making happened online and away from formal meetings, sometimes through individual e-mail. Surprisingly, few groups—even those that were less hierarchical—used listservs or discussion forums in which anyone could post a question or comment in a many-to-many format. Instead, most groups who did not or could not prioritize digital technology simply had a "reply all" method of email communication; other groups with more sophisticated technology used software packages to organize their top-down email communication.

Most organizational representatives responded to questions about what the Internet meant to them with "communication" or "information." No one said that it was an organizing or decision-making tool, although announcements to encourage participation in events or meetings were often put online. Content analysis shows that about 20% of Facebook posts (for both hierarchical and non-hierarchical groups) encourage participation in organizational activities, whether face-to-face meetings and other events or online activities with the group (see Table 11). But public debate was rare, even on more restricted online sites. In fact, one union (hierarchical), had a login area on their Web site where members were supposed to post workplace grievance issues, but when people began posting requests and comments encouraging the union to be more openly participatory, the union shut this area down. Calvin, a union staff member described what happened with the site:

> *It got undermined a little bit by the reformist type attitude that exists among some people, that it became more internal union politics, as opposed to actually helping to educate stewards and activist members about actual approaches to grievance matters . . . But the pettiness of the participation just undermined what we thought would be a building process where it would be more inclusive, it actually became less (laughs) because of the simple lack of value of what was going on.*

Another viewpoint about why the Internet did not foster democratic debate and participation was that it did not encourage open dialogue. Margaret, the UNC-SAW student leader summed up a common view of the Internet among groups on both the right and the left, but especially among non-hierarchical groups:

> *With the necessary evil aspect to [the Internet], I become very frustrated or disturbed—or concerned maybe is the best word for it—that organizing has become less relational, less personal. I think Internet activism has really kind of taken on all this identity and all this meaning but I really, truly believe that talking to people face to face is just the ultimate organizing tool. I think that's, to me, what I see as the most meaningful and most useful. And so, I use the Internet all the time. I, again, can't imagine life without it. But I don't want to get to a place, and I think we're already halfway there, where signing an online petition means that I am an activist. To me being an activist is knowing the community, on the ground, that you want to operate within and stand in solidarity with. Otherwise I don't see what really separates you from a Tom Ross [university administrator], who kind of sits in his office and has all these plaques from progressive organizations but doesn't really know what's happening to workers at his own universities. So that element of out-of-touch-ness is something that I hope we always strive to struggle against, and that's what the Internet kind of means to me.*

This sentiment was common. Interviewees saw the Internet is an efficient and necessary tool that also distances people from the interpersonal connections that are vital to their groups. Margaret was not a technophobe. She was extremely Internet savvy and used Facebook, Twitter, Web sites, texting and email for organizing on a daily basis. But her response reflects the theme that the Internet was broadly viewed as a tool for information dissemination rather than organizing.

This is not to say that respondents did not appreciate the Internet. Many were enthusiastic about digital media. Sam, a labor coalition staff member in charge of social media said, "The Internet is awesome. The awesomeness of the Internet was most recently displayed to me in something that I found yesterday. And I don't know if you've seen it yet, but Cane's Arcade. Cane's Arcade is going viral." Cane's Arcade was a viral video documentary of a working class nine year-old in East Los Angeles who made an arcade out of cardboard boxes. It is noteworthy, yet common, that he used this type of whimsical example of how vibrant the Internet is because the video has nothing to do with organizational decision-making processes, or NC politics for that matter. Some respondents did talk about the Internet providing information connecting them to struggles around the country or the world. A frequent example among grassroots right groups was the Tea Party movements and among left groups, Occupy. Yet these descriptions of information were not about their own organizational democratic practices.

Others described the Internet much more cautiously, or saw the information presented by the Internet as mundane and watered-down. For instance, Ron, the leader of the coalition that opposed unions responded to the question of what the Internet meant to him with three words: "commoditization of information." With some probing, he went on to say,

> And that's good and that's bad—it's good in terms of access, how quickly you can get something that was hard, impossible, delayed, difficult, nailed, etc. to get before. But it's bad in the sense that commodities are not special. So what you find there increasingly I really don't trust it, don't like it. It's becoming so repetitive. I mean what you see is so light and so surface and so top-5 oriented.

Regardless of whether participants saw online information as exciting or mundane, both of the views presented here represent a general sentiment that the Internet exists to disseminate information, not provide opportunities for democratic discussion and dissent.

Even if organizational staff members did not view the Internet as a means to participation, one might expect the Internet to allow members (or potential members) to participate directly, bypassing layers of bureaucracy. Of all of the platforms examined in this study, Facebook is the one tool that had both the design and capacity for maximum online participation. In contrast to Facebook, Web sites are not very interactive, although some Web sites include participatory features, like online polls. Twitter was the tool that was used by the fewest groups, and it did not have the group features of Facebook. It is not surprising that more hierarchical groups did *not* design their platforms for participation, as shown in Chapter Three (Table 6b, Architecture score). At first glance, this platform's interactive features appeared to trump hierarchy. What *is* surprising, however, is that more hierarchical groups had higher levels of online participation than their less hierarchical counterparts, even with the lower participatory architecture scores shown in Chapter 3. So even though hierarchical groups did not design their Facebook presence for online participation—by creating Facebook pages that restrict who can post and how posts appear on a timeline—these groups had *more* online participation. It is not simply that organizations with higher levels of hierarchy developed their digital platforms more, they also had higher levels of participation. How could this be? The answer lies in the

connections between hierarchy and other key organizational variables. First, I turn toward bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy and Hierarchy

Hierarchy and bureaucracy work together. More hierarchical groups also have higher levels of bureaucracy. Groups with more staff, or bureaucracy, had higher digital activist scores (Table 5). When both hierarchy and bureaucracy were included in a two-way regression analysis, neither was significant (Table 8, Model b), which indicates that the two variables worked together. This association appeared in the field as well. Weber articulated that institutional roles are key to bureaucracy. Within this particular political field, groups' infrastructure and bureaucratic Weberian roles were essential to Internet use, both in general and for online participation in particular.

Social movements without full-time staff or multiple levels of decision-making were able to create and sustain online platforms. Overall, however, this study found that hierarchy and bureaucratic infrastructure help to sustain online platforms over time. For example, Peter, a staff member of a conservative group with a high digital activist score, including for participation, explained the intentional effort involved in his job maintaining the organization's social media as part of a hierarchical system:

> *We had people tweeting and doing Facebook, but it wasn't being done in really an organized fashion, because it was being done by the communications director, who was also doing like 15 other things. And we've also tried to do more multimedia stuff recently—video, especially the pictures, things like that. And a lot of that is because Facebook, their algorithm, if you have a picture, you're more likely to be seen by more people. There's an editorial process that almost all our writing goes through. We have an editor and then a policy director, so it goes through that. And then I'll do kind of the promotion of it. And then I also tend to watch Twitter during the day to see what's going on at the General Assembly, what's going on in politics.*

Some of the organizations that had lower levels of hierarchy talked about not having the capacity or division of labor to maintain engagement. Because engagement was tracked over time, this seemed to be the case with groups that started various platforms but did not have the staff or volunteers to keep them going. For example, one labor group leader commented, "We try to do as many types of messaging as we can, you know, which is difficult given that we have a small staff here, and it's labor-intensive… I keep saying I would like to learn to use Twitter, but it's like it never seems to rise to the top of the list."

Bureaucracy entails more than the number of staff to describe the labor involved organizational new media practices. A few—but not all—Tea Party groups were hierarchical in that they had different levels of organization and a clearly delineated division of labor, but they did not have the staff that other groups had. What they did have, however, were retired or other full-time volunteers who acted like a staff, though their numbers were not measured in the quantitative analysis. One such volunteer said she spent ten hours per day online, communicating with other Tea Party groups, posting to the organizations's Facebook page and Web site and checking email and other electronic correspondence. Another Tea Party leader, Max, explained how he also worked nearly full-time on his group's online presence. In addition to Facebook and Twitter, he said of the Web site work that he was able to do as a retired person:

I took over the website back in mid-November and I've done little else except this. Winter is a good time since I can't do much anyway outside. Working on the site, I certainly hope the amount of time I spend on it tapers off. It's extensive now because I have to spend and do spend several hours [of] surfing in order to find topics that I think will be of some interest to our readership and of course you have to draft some intro to it of that nature.

Using the Internet to Advocate

In addition to hierarchy and bureaucracy, the third organizational factor that had a statistically significant relationship with digital activist scores was whether an organization was a membership or an advocacy group (Table 5). One might expect membership groups to have higher online participation levels, but that was not the case. Advocacy groups had higher levels of participation at almost a one standard deviation difference (Table 5). Also, there was a strong statistical relationship between more hierarchical groups and advocacy organizations. More hierarchical advocacy groups had the highest level of digital engagement, and non-hierarchical membership-based groups had the lowest (Table 7), even though advocacy groups did not have membership-driven agendas. This finding seems to support Rainie and Wellman's (2012) assertion that the digital era is defined by individual users because advocacy groups may serve as a vehicle for individuals instead of organizational members. However, it was high levels of organizational infrastructure, not an individual user, that developed, promoted and sustained the group's online presence, so in this sense, individuals are tethered to organizations. Overall, though, this finding contradicts the claim that mass participation is tied to greater Internet use because advocacy groups did not include their members in their decision-making.

Instead, my interviews suggest that one reason for this finding is that advocacy groups used the Internet to inform and educate their constituents. These groups' stated goal was to advocate for their issue, and the main way they did this was through communication. In the past these groups mailed out newsletters, magazines or newspapers, and all of the advocacy groups still used print to some degree. But the Internet replaced and supplemented earlier forms of print media as an outlet for information and communications.

The advocacy groups tended to be very hierarchical, though this was not always the case, as some of the Patriot or Prepper groups were also advocacy-oriented but less hierarchical. But it was the hierarchical advocacy groups that had the highest digital activist scores. Peter, the social media staff person for one such organization, a conservative think tank, was proud that his organization had the highest number of Facebook Likes of any state think tank in the country. He had studied social media use at the Pentagon as an undergraduate and had gone to a number of trainings to understand how to garner a wide audience on social media. He commented that social media lent itself more easily to the organizational purpose of education:

I think it depends on what your goal is, you know, as far as an organization just trying to move the policy frameworks, I think there's a lot that we do on social media that's pretty effective. But if your goal is winning elections . . . I think it's a different thing, and it requires a different mindset and a different way of using social media than just pushing out information and engaging in conversations.

I will discuss this focus on disseminating information further in Chapter Five when I discuss the right wing groups and ideology, but it also resonated with advocacy groups on either side of the spectrum. For example, a left advocacy group integrated their Web site, Twitter, Facebook and e-mail for information dissemination in addition to occasional print publications.

Bill explained why these multiple media were useful to their organization: "In terms of having that concrete impact, the stuff that we have found most useful is either really in-depth stuff that they can then use... And so it's taking all this information and finding, you know, packaging it in different ways." For instance, Bill described how media in general are great organizing tools. His advocacy group used a lot of online tools and devoted most of its communication resources to digital platforms, but he described that the tool varied, and it was not always the Internet. He said,

> It's one thing for somebody in a meeting to say [that you should] read an article online. It's another for them to actually have it in their hand when they go to the meeting (laughs) and be able to pass out copies of the magazine. And we had these awesome stories where we'd ship down 2,000 copies of these reports about watchdogging the Katrina recovery and ship them down to all these activist groups. And then we'd fly down a month later, and we'd go to the neighborhood planning meeting, and we'd see people from the People's Hurricane Relief Fund passing out stacks of our reports and saying "This is what you have to read before this neighborhood planning session." And we didn't tell any of these groups to do this, but they just decided that this was gonna be the tool they used as they were trying to engage in the whole rebuilding process, you know, so that was awesome.

Bill described a common theme, then, among advocacy groups. They had higher scores not because they focused exclusively on the Internet but because they focused more generally on education and their organizational structure enabled them to take advantage of how the Internet could be a strategic tool to that end.

National Ties Don't Bind

Three organizational factors are surprisingly unassociated with higher digital activist scores—national ties, era of founding, and size. What might account for this lack of a relationship? First, a group's membership in a national organization was not correlated with its digital activist score (Table 4). Nonetheless, the style of the Web presence was sometimes influenced by the national group, as some unions had a layout identical to their national union's site. This similarity did not necessarily make for a vibrant site. For instance, Local 391 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters had a site that was full of dead links and outdated announcements. Not all groups mimicked their national affiliation's online presence however. For instance, one very hierarchical statewide union was a local of an international union, but all of their digital engagement was done in-house by a communication staff. The visual difference between their Web site and Facebook page and that of their international union reflected an uneasy alliance with their international union and that the organization predated this affiliation. According to their national union's social media staff person, the local was unique in not needing the assistance of the national union because it had a more independent and middle-class membership compared with other locals of the same union.

Another union was provided a Web site template from the national union, but the staff believed that it did not have enough local information so they used the Web site very little. Calvin, a staff leader from this union said,

> The local union's website has become stultified, it's become dormant. So there's not a reason for a normal member to go there anticipating that they're going to find out new information. What's been up there has been up there for months,

typically. Now it's still an information resource, and it's still used in that way. But there's a vibrancy that we had anticipated that has just not transpired.

At the same time, the North Carolina chapter of Americans for Prosperity (NC AFP) was provided with Web site and social media development by the national organization. The NC AFP Web site was very slick, polished and interactive. Indeed, this organization was an outlier with their scores in general, scoring highest across many of the platforms and activities, which demonstrates their level of organizational infrastructure to sustain digital engagement. The NC AFP was a Koch brothers-funded organization and was the only group in the study for which all of their social media and online presence is *not* conducted in the state but in Washington, DC. Their Web site and social media feeds had a similar look to chapters around the country. The NC AFP represented a hierarchical advocacy organization with strong national ties. The extraordinary high percentage of people "Liking" their Facebook posts is most likely due to their understanding of social media and their ability to pay for promoted posts; when Facebook introduced this policy, their percentage of Likes skyrocketed. This type of organizational infrastructure explains the unusually high levels of participation among more hierarchical groups.

How Size Doesn't Really Matter

Two factors explain the lack of a difference in digital activist scores between statewide/larger groups and local/small groups, but size and geography are not as important as other organizational factors in the online development, architecture and participation levels of organizations, as we see in Table 5. The first explanation runs counter to expectations. Many of the larger, statewide groups were hierarchical, and most of the hierarchical groups were statewide. Given the need for coordination across a larger geographical area, this association is not surprising. But the implication is that statewide groups should *need* to use the Internet more for organizational functioning because staff and members are spread out geographically. But as reported above, major decision-making was still conducted face-to-face in these organizations. In other words, based on observations, all of the statewide groups still conducted major meetings in person, even though the drive across the state took up to eight hours.

In addition, one might reasonably expect that the sheer number of social media metrics would be higher in larger, statewide organizations. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, this is not the case (Table 5). One explanation is simply that other factors of organizational structure, ideology and class are more important. Another reason for this lack of association is that some of the smaller, local groups have very high digital activist scores. In particular, Tea Party groups engaged with the Internet at high rates, so their higher digital activist scores canceled out any small effect of size or statewide organization.

Era of Founding Does Not Shape Its Digital Imprint

The data from this research (Table 5) show that the era of a group's founding was not associated with higher *digital activist score*s. It is useful to probe this lack of a relationship, especially given that the rise of the right wing has coincided with the rise of social media over the last decade. Tea Party organizations emerged in 2009 at the height of the social media explosion, so according to Tea Party respondents starting a Facebook page was a natural step. However, for other organizations whose date of founding is much earlier than the social media age, many also started Facebook pages when they saw others doing the same. Instead of newer organizations using the Internet more, groups who were founded in a variety of time periods had integrated technology into their everyday practices, at least those with a mixed or middle/upper class

membership base, as I explain in Chapter Six. Respondents often talked very matter-of-factly about digital use as a part of their work, regardless of the era of founding. For instance, one Patriot Group member said, "Our Facebook group… that's our membership roll."

What if the observed lack of association between date of founding and digital engagement is because I was asking the wrong question? Perhaps digital engagement is not a question of organizational age but of the age of a group's members. Internet use among youth is consistently higher than those from older age levels (Velasquez and LaRose 2014). Respondents did talk about how younger members spent more time online more than older members, but two key findings suggest that the association of youth with digital engagement did not hold in this political field. First, the Patriot groups tended to have relatively high digital activist scores but also typically involved mostly members who were senior citizens. Second, the one organization whose members were almost all younger than 25, the student organization, had average to low digital activist scores.

As outlined in previous chapters, this finding is a corrective to recent scholarship on digital activism (e.g., Castells 2012) and to more traditional organizational theory. Stinchcombe's theory of how organizations are imprinted by the era of their founding cannot be extended to digital engagement in this case. This aligns with what Nielsen's argument that digital tools are now mundane among social movement groups (2011).

The Iron Law and Organizational Structures Prevail

Hierarchy and bureaucracy as measured here could also be interpreted as oligarchy in organization. Thus, this study has direct implications for Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy. In analyzing the Iron Law, scholars have generally counterposed oligarchy with democracy. Recalling our parsimonious definition in Chapter One, democracy involves two factors: participation and contestation/debate (Michels 1911; Munck and Verkuilen 2002). First, more online participation—measured as clicks, posts, Likes, re-Tweets, etc.—happen *more* and from a broader array of participants among more hierarchical and bureaucratic groups. Second, the organizations engage in very little debate in public online forums or even on private email channels. Regardless of the level of hierarchy in an organization, these groups simply did not use the Internet for major decision-making purposes. Thus, there is no evidence that the Internet causes organization to defy the Iron Law, becoming more democratic and less hierarchical.

But might the Internet tear down the Iron Law of Oligarchy over time? The law suggests that political groups inevitably become more bureaucratic and hierarchical and less democratic the longer they are in existence. If this were the case, we might expect older groups to be more hierarchical and bureaucratic than newer groups. All but one of the 17 groups founded before the Web era were hierarchical, which seems to support this claim. However, of the groups founded in both the Web and social media eras, the groups were equally split between groups that were more hierarchical and those that were less so. Also, of the 11 groups founded in the social media era, only two had full time staff members, although the volunteer labor in Tea Party groups complicates this finding. The NC AFP also troubles this finding because it was founded in the Web era and had the highest number of staff of all of the groups, as well as the highest level of digital engagement across all platforms and activities. We do not know how these groups will evolve over time or whether they will add staff and hierarchical levels.

It is possible that groups could have low digital activist scores and high levels of offline participation. Perhaps offline participation is fueled by even a bit of online engagement. However, in the online content analysis of Facebook posts, the measure of *participation* included

using the platform to encourage people to come to events or participate in any organizational activity. Here, no association existed between online calls for participation and oligarchy measures. Therefore, the content analysis measure of democracy—whether groups used online tools to encourage participation in and debate about the organization—did not align with the theory that digital activism defies the Iron Law. In addition, the groups with the highest levels of offline participation, such as UE 150, had the lowest digital activist scores. I discuss this finding in greater depth in the Chapter Six. In this study, then, no evidence exists to suggest that online digital engagement allows organizations to defy Michel's Iron Law of Oligarchy.

How do these findings reconcile with existing scholarship on organizational transformations? Bennett and Segerberg (2013) suggested that the digital era spawned organizations that take the structure of more personalized networks, but my findings do not reflect this, even among the newer groups. Bennett and Segerberg looked at a snapshot during a technological transition. Likewise, the new social movement debate involved scholarship that was based solely on young social movements. These may not have actually grown into a different breed of "new" social movements. Perhaps this study reflects a more mature use of the Internet, rather than groups' initial excitement over new technologies.

Conclusion

Most of the literature on social movements in the digital era has argued that in a new network/ed society, organizations matter less than individuals, creating more democratic forms of networked and personalized social movements that are tethered to digital technology. This philosophy is part of a Silicon Valley Ideology (Schradie forthcoming) that is opposed to old-fashioned organizations, which are often equated with hierarchy or bureaucracy (Table 6). This study shifts the terrain by looking at groups with different levels of formal organizational infrastructure. This research shines a light on which types of groups have higher or lower levels of digital engagement. Given the literature, one might expect that high levels of digital engagement are associated with less infrastructure. This study finds the opposite. Generally, groups that were more hierarchical and bureaucratic had higher levels of online presence and participation. The mechanism for this unexpected finding is simply that high levels of organization are required to maintain online engagement.

In contrast to Bennet and Segerberg (2013), who contended that Internet use in digital era social movements is characterized by the *connective action* of more individualized networks, I found that organizational factors influence online digital engagement. This raises the question of how personalized factors may relate to broader organizational ones. After all, most group members interviewed in this study believed that personalization was crucial to their organization's work. However, they argued that this need for personalization could only be satisfied through face-to-face interactions, *not* Internet connections. This study not only challenges newer theories of digital activism but also reinforces Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy as persisting in the digital era. Studies that contested organizational theory were based on the evaluation of Internet use as a novelty, rather than as part of everyday organizing. By looking at a political field that transcends online/offline dichotomies, I show that the labor of in-person organizing remains incredibly important.

Democracy is the touchstone of whether social movements in the digital era are more or less hierarchical. The contemporary literature on social movements has often assumed that democracy is not. Likewise, scholars have argued that old, bureaucratic organizations are non-democratic and new, networked digital movements are democratic. This chapter has shown

why and how the most participatory movements *online* are those that are more hierarchical, bureaucratic and advocacy-based rather than membership-based. However, hierarchical decision-making levels are not the direct engine driving these differences. In fact, little decision-making is done online. Therefore, my findings suggest that hierarchy in and of itself is neither democratic nor undemocratic and neither participatory nor non-participatory. Instead, what constitute a democratic organization are the practices, both online and offline, that ensure participation. And it is groups that have more organizational infrastructure that can do just that.

CHAPTER FIVE
Organizing Ideology
Patriots, Radicals, Unions and Reformers

Is digital activism a politically left radical concept of equality and egalitarian direct participation? Is it a conservative reformist process of individual freedom and personal liberty? Or are Internet politics free from organizational ideology? The quantitative findings presented in Chapter Three showed that reformist right-wing groups had higher digital activist scores than radical left-wing organizations. In addition, my qualitative fieldwork showed that digital practices differed between right and left and between radical and reformist groups. This chapter explores these ideological differences in Internet use.

Most people understand ideology as a left and right political *orientation,* but I also observed in my interviews and ethnographic work that ideology involved more than left/right political leanings. A group's organizing theory, or political *strategy* for social change, also differed across groups and factored into their online engagement. As described in Chapter Three, some groups were more radical and others more reformist. I also observed a strong relationship between an organization's *ideas* around their political orientation and strategy and their *practices*. Therefore, I define *organizing ideology* as the articulation of ideas and practices related to both political orientation (right/left) and political strategy (radical/reformist). The term encompasses an organization's beliefs about the best method to organize people and how they put their beliefs into practice as they organize members and potential members to bring about social change. In my definition, ideology is about more than ideas. Organizing ideology involves the connection between doing and thinking in an organizational context. The intersection of ideas, practices and organizations create the boundaries of ideology in this definition.

Organizing Ideology
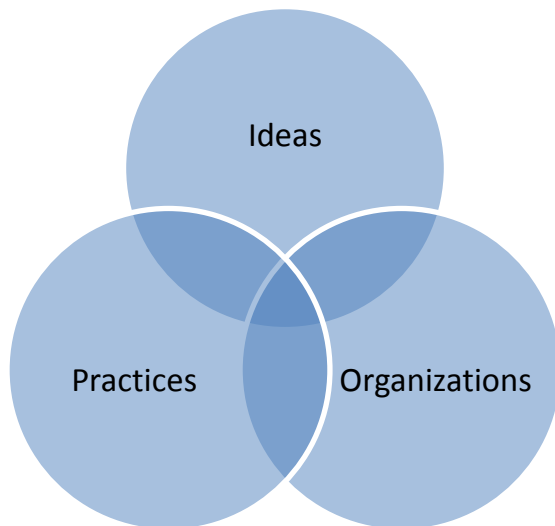
In Chapter Three, I showed that a group's organizational infrastructure and social class composition shaped its Internet use. In this chapter, I demonstrate that ideology was another

critical mechanism underlying a group's use of Internet technologies. Chapter Three showed the statistical connection between class and ideology, and Chapter Six describes the mechanisms behind that association. However, in this chapter, I demonstrate that ideology has an independent effect on digital activism beyond the social class of its members.

After addressing relevant literature related to the question of how ideology shapes digital activism, this chapter tackles organizational differences in the ideas and practices associated with political orientation. I find that right-wing groups used the Internet more than left-wing organizations because conservative ideological beliefs about liberty inspired members to make heavy use of the Internet to disseminate information that they believed would cause other to act. To explain this finding, I focus on patriot groups in particular, as a window into this ideology.

The next part of this chapter unpacks the differences in strategic ideas and practices between radical and reformist groups. This section focuses on two organizations, both on the left. They are two unions that serve as are ideal types of groups with different political strategies for social change. One is a public employee radical union. The other is a public employee reformist union. By focusing on two groups that are on the same side of the political spectrum—in this case, the left—I highlight ideological differences regarding strategy and examine how these differences in ideology mapped onto differences in digital activism. The radical union was more bottom-up and participatory, and it viewed the Internet as one of many tools to organize workers. The reformist union practiced representative democracy and embraced the Internet primarily as a conduit to those in power.

Theorizing Ideology and Digital Activism

In this section, I examine scholarship on the relationship between digital activism and political ideology with a focus on research that explains digital variation based on ideological differences. Much of this literature assumes either that left-wing groups use the Internet more or that an organization's ideology makes little difference to how members use the Internet. Thus, to date, little research has been done on how and why groups from various political and organizing orientations might use the Internet differently.

Some scholars have suggested that because organizations are less important for activism in the digital age, the ideology tethered to these organizations is also less relevant. The contention was that ideology matters less with digital activism than it did for pre-Web era social movements because of the more personalized and individualized ways that people now participate in movements as *users*, rather than as organizational *members* (Bennett and Segerberg 2012; Bimber et al. 2012; Castells 2012). For these scholars, digital activism enabled an exchange of independent views, bypassing all organizational dogmas (Castells 2012). Bennett and Segerberg (2013) described these individualized opinions, communicated as Facebook or Twitter posts, as "personalized action frames" that contrast with old-fashioned collective action frames. In short, this literature suggested that because organizations, and therefore ideology, matter less for participation in social movements, groups that bring different ideological stances to their activism should show no differences in the level of digital activism.

Other scholars suggest that radical groups on the left have the advantage in the digital age and thus that left groups will have higher levels of digital activism. This scholarship overwhelmingly focuses on progressive movements and contentious left-wing radical protest events, ignoring lobbying reforms and moderate politics (Aelst and Walgrave 2013; Bennett 2001; Bennett et al. 2008). As a result, we know more about left and radical organizations than about organizations on the right or those that are reformist. Some of the first and loudest public

protest groups to harness digital technology were WTO anti-globalization activists, and studies of these groups soon followed (e.g. Meikle 2002) as did studies of MoveOn.org (e.g., Karpf 2012) and then Occupy (e.g., Bennett and Segerberg 2012). With some exceptions (Agarwal et al. 2014; Kimport 2012; Rohlinger et al. 2011), this focus limited our comparative understanding of groups that espouse different ideologies. In addition, even research on leftist digital activism primarily focused on emergent and elite groups, rarely examining labor unions or other established organizations (Carter et al. 2003; Diamond and Freeman 2002; Greene, Hogan, and Grieco 2003 excepted).

Although the literature has largely neglected the relationship between Internet use and organizational ideology, the existing scholarship does suggest a few mechanisms for exploration in this chapter. Agarwal et al.'s (2013) comparative study of Tea Party and Occupy groups suggested that ideas about egalitarianism and liberty shape how groups used various online platforms. Rohlinger et al. (2011) described how a Tea Party group had more egalitarian practices within their organization than a MoveOn.org chapter. Both studies indicated that beliefs and practices around democratic participation were likely to factor into online engagement. Finally, Karpf (2012) suggested that groups who opposed the political status quo tended to have higher levels of digital engagement because of what he called "outparty innovation incentives." I explore all of these possible mechanisms in the case studies below.

Political Orientation: Liberty over Equality

Organizations' right/left political orientation shaped their digital engagement. This section examines how the ideas and practices related to organizational *political orientation* influenced Internet use. As I show, many left organizations embraced *egalitarianism* and *equality* as principles of participation in their organization and in society as part of a small "d" democracy. Right groups often upheld a belief in *liberty* and *freedom*: free markets, freedom from the state and free speech. As I show, they believed strongly in getting the "truth" out about these concepts through sharing information, and their practices corresponded to these beliefs. First, I explain and compare the content from these two types of groups.

The content of conservative groups' online activity often described the importance of these freedoms from control of the economy and the government. Common themes included posts against Obamacare and gun control.[7] In addition, Table 11 shows that the percentage of Facebook posts were either about a political issue or about encouraging participation in the group. Conservative groups were a bit more likely to provide links to articles or videos (78%), as compared to progressive groups on the left (68%).[8] We coded these articles, videos or other links for whether they took a stand on a contentious political issue, as opposed to, for instance, a human interest story.[9] For right groups, 45% of their links concerned contentious political issues and opinions while 34% of left groups' links were about such issues. In addition, 54% of Patriot groups' posts had links to articles or videos featuring these debateable political issues. In other words, the difference between right and left is partially attributable to conservative groups sharing information—or what they call the "truth"—about politics. Groups on the left posted fewer links and often posted photos of members gathered at events, rather than articles, news and information.

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[7] Content analysis of 8063 Facebook posts. Coders described main content of each post with 1-3 words.
[8] Each percentage shown that I report as a difference is statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.
[9] This was coded yes if it contained a strong editorial opinion that is part of a larger political debate either nationally or locally but not necessarily about the organization's own work.

One of the Patriot groups, a Prepper group, was an outlier in terms of the links it posted on social media. This group posted links to articles 95% of the time. This was unusual; whereas most groups posted commentary or text to social media, and only occasionally posted article links accompanied by a comment, this group almost exclusively posted links only, without any commentary. Paul, the group's leader, posted multiple links each day, but when I asked him about the role of the Internet in his work, whether planning protests or workshops, he said that he did not think the Internet "plays a big role." I followed up by asking Paul why he bothered to spend so much time posting articles. He said, "Because you still can help people. I mean, the government is not gonna come and help the people in the future." He argued that people need to know the truth and he was helping with that by posting links about the national debt, political collapse, nuclear electricity outages or other imminent threats.

But what of encouraging participation with this content? If conservative groups posted more links to articles, what does that mean for how the organization views this digital dissemination of information in relationship to getting people to get involved in the group? As Table 11 shows, groups on the left (20%) were more likely to post links on social media to encourage participation in the organization (both online and offline) as compared to right groups (13%).[10] This aligns with left groups' belief in and practice of a more egalitarian ideology. However, groups on the right had higher online participation scores. Conservative groups' high digital activist scores were not simply related to the number of posts but also to high levels of online participation with these posts, such as the number of comments on Facebook or the number of re-Tweets on Twitter. This suggests that conservatives do not simply like sending out information about "truth," liberty and freedom, they also like receiving such information and interacting with it. Groups on the left, though, are more likely to connect information directly to organizational participation. This implies that the Internet is *intended* as more of a tool of information for right groups and more of a tool for participation for left groups, but actual *online* participation is actually higher for right wing groups. This finding also suggests that online activists, particularly on the right, are more interested in debating issues than responding to calls for organizational participation.

The Right Wants to Share What's Right
Organizational Ideas—The Truth is Out There

Next, with my interviews and observations, I will further examine the ideas and practices of political orientation by focusing on right-wing groups. I begin by explaining how these groups articulated this political orientation and then I describe how they practiced it online. These ideas and practices help explain the higher rate of online engagement among groups with a right political orientation. The data I use below draw primarily from Patriot groups, as they were the most outspoken on the issue of liberty and freedom, though other conservatives embraced these ideas as well. As outlined in Chapter Two, Patriot groups include both Tea Party and Prepper groups. I selected interviews that most represented the overall ideas and practices of the political leanings among all of the right wing groups in my study.

The *ideas* of liberty and individual freedom were prevalent among conservative groups. As I described in Chapter 2, these ideas and values coincided with opposition to public sector unions. "Democracy is three wolves and a lamb deciding what to have for dinner," said one

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[10] This was coded yes if the post was an announcement about a public event, conference, rally, meeting, fundraiser or another way for someone to get involved in the organization (or another organization's activities). Based on the words in the post, a call to action of any kind was coded as encouraging participation.

Patriot group leader in what she said was a quote from Benjamin Franklin.[11] This type of quip was one of many occurrences in which conservative respondents corrected me for using the term "democracy." A leader from another Patriot group said to me, "And you said democracy. And remember, we're a republic. Now, the people forget that democracy is where 51% can take away from 49%—that's all a democracy is." Conservatives often used the term democracy with derision and equated it with misguided egalitarianism. Its opposite was individual liberty and freedom, and they often reprimanded me with a gentle chuckle that the two were very different.

Patriot interviewees spoke passionately about their view of American history, which held the key to their ideas of liberty and freedom. They often gave me copies of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights and asked what I thought about political issues. Patriot leaders were happy to talk at length about why their political views, which they saw as grounded in history, were correct. One patriot activist, Tom, said,

> We're losing our patriotism, we're losing our values, we're losing our Constitution. They are trying to make changes. We've already heard people talk about how the Constitution should be more dynamic... bullshit. If you study history at all . . . I didn't know all of that until I got [involved in the group]. It's the most unbelievable document, other than the Bible, that we've got. It has made us the greatest nation on the face of the earth, and… what are we doing now? We're turning away from the Constitution, we're turning away from God. Free sex, I missed that part [of the Constitution].

Patriot group members often romanticized the past to describe their ideas of liberty and freedom, which helped explain their current work to restore that which had been loved and lost. Elizabeth, a leader of a Tea Party organization, described how she helped found their group right after Obama's inauguration, which she and other conservatives believed accelerated this flight from the country's founding principles:

> I had always believed in the importance of the Constitution. And what it [the Constitution] says to me is that I have the right to be a free citizen in this country. And that the rights that are given to us are given by God. And I sensed that what was being proposed [by Obama] would have the effect of putting asunder our rights.

Elizabeth had built her organization based on the idea of individual rights to freedom and liberty. In fact, members of Patriot groups like this one did not know what to make of my initial phrasing of a question about their views on "social change." To them, "social change" sounded too much like socialism and implied something very left and liberal. When I asked Elizabeth that question, she responded, "Well, you know, social change to me means things like personal decisions about the ways that we behave, the ways that we either accept or reject the morals of our society."

The American Constitution and moral representations of right and wrong represented the *truth* to members of organizations on the right. Patriot and professional conservative groups often emphasized the importance of educating people about the truth of what is happening with the economy and government, more so than other groups. "Truth," they said, was a way to understand the importance of liberty. One patriot group leader said of his main task: "I fight for liberty and truth."

In fact, as pointed out in the previous chapter, the most common way that conservative

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[11] There is no record of Franklin saying this.

respondents described what the Internet meant to them was a source of information dissemination, specifically concerning the "truth." They found that the mainstream media often distorted events and did not represent reality. At the same time, they often talked about how these media formats were instrumental to their politics. For instance, one leader said,

> *My parents always watched the news, so I was always in the habit—they were just very interested in what was going on. So I got that from them: pay attention to what's going on. All we used to have is ABC, the big networks. But when 9/11 happened, that was my big wakeup call. I watched that happen live on TV. I happened to have Good Morning America on, because I didn't know about Fox back then.*

Like many respondents from both sides of the political spectrum, Patriot leaders talked about consuming news content every day from a variety of sources. However, Patriot group leaders more often said that they read and watched more than just the news outlets that aligned with their beliefs to understand what was really happening. They constantly monitored the media to make sure they were accurately representing the truth; even Fox did not escape their scrutiny. One respondent said, "I prefer Fox, but they are not foolproof." A mainstream media journalist and editor, Chris, who left a daily newspaper to work for a conservative advocacy organization added, "You sorta have to work for it, you know, getting at the truth, which is really sad because in journalism you shouldn't have to. You should be given the truth."

Organizational Practices—Truth, Liberty and Freedom

"Paul Revere had a horse. We have the Internet," said one Patriot group leader. The practices of conservative groups reflect an imperative to get truthful information out so people could learn about, organize for, and defend their liberty. Respondents expressed a passion for these ideas and beliefs that then transferred to their offline and online activities.

When I visited a Tea Party meeting in a rural county of central North Carolina, the leaders were very welcoming and wanted to share their information with me, as well as everyone in attendance. This Tea Party group reserved an entire restaurant for their weekly meetings. Their members, mostly elderly, packed the large steakhouse. I entered the restaurant through a long hallway with a welcome table adorned with a patriotic puppet and sign-in sheet. The table also had information about voting and an upcoming trip to Washington, DC. As I walked into the large eating area, another line of tables were filled with more leaflets, flyers and organizational materials, as well as a donation jar. The night's agenda included organizational business, as well as a film that featured a citizen who spoke up against a town rule that banned nativity scenes on city property. A number of leaders also spoke about upcoming activities.

Many left groups had similar educational materials at their meetings, but the conservative groups, especially the Patriot organizations, were emphatic about the connection between these informational materials and liberty. They were less concerned about the old left community organizing mantra of "starting where people are at"[12] and more concerned about telling people the truth based on "founding father documents." Their practices of reading and watching a broad spectrum of news media also translated into sharing this information online with their social media community. One Tea Party leader described how she spent most of her day sharing information with other Tea Party members "because I owe it to these people to know what I'm doing, and to be informed" on the many political issues that she posts, such as Obamacare (the Affordable Care Act of 2010) or the attack on the American consulate in Bengazi, Libya.

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[12] This was a mantra developed by organizer Saul Alinksy.

The high digital activist scores among conservative groups, then, partially derive from liberty and truth as an organizing ideology; that is, these groups embraced the *ideas* and *practices* of communicating liberty and truth, both online and offline. These practices aligned with advocacy groups' purpose of communicating their message. Certainly, right wing groups with the infrastructure to do so were hyper-focused on delivering their truth to people. But this was not always the more scripted and strategic messaging of more professionalized advocacy groups that enabled high levels of online information sharing. For Patriot groups, information dissemination was a question of organizing ideology and their online practices of getting the information out were part of how they articulated their ideas of truth and liberty.

Tea Party membership groups in particular had some of the highest levels of digital engagement. Although they coordinated with better-funded advocacy groups, the large number of people who attended their weekly meetings in small towns around the state were not being paid or coerced to come by funders like the Koch brothers. According to respondents, some groups received minimal funding from the Tea Party Patriots. One Patriot leader, Paul, described a conversation he had with an Occupy activist about the accusation that Tea Party groups were funded by the corporate right:

> There was an older gentleman [the Occupy activist] about my age, and he said, 'the Tea Party is Astroturf,' and I said 'really?' He goes, 'Yeah.' 'So how do you know?' He says, 'I know the Koch brothers.' And I said, 'I was told by the head of the Republican Party in the state that I was the head of the Tea Party in this state, in his mind at least.' I said, 'I put on major town hall events that we've even put on TV.' And I said, 'I funded those out of my pocket and eventually got money back selling t-shirts.' I said, 'I never got a penny from anybody, other than donations and selling t-shirts.' So I said, 'This idea of Astroturf,' I said, 'We're here one-on-one'" I said, 'You can ask me any questions,' but, I said, 'we never got any money from anybody.'

Patriot group involvement both offline and online was genuine and grassroots. I observed small, local fundraising at Patriot meetings, often to pay for communication materials. Even though class and resources make a difference in digital activism engagement, ideology was an important factor on its own. It is simply not the case that all conservative groups paid to promote their posts. Even though an organization's founding date was not associated with higher scores more generally, Patriot groups normalized social media into their practices. Because the Tea Party emerged at the height of the social media explosion in 2009, their Web sites tended to have social media button links and were also often based on blogging software. These sites present many opportunities for activist leaders to post content and updates through interactive features. The Tea Party organizations were the most likely to have high levels of diverse Facebook engagement, and some of these groups started to use Facebook as a substitute for updating or even having Web sites, which may explain the lower Web site scores in this category. Facebook use was also common among other membership groups, but Facebook was usually just one of many organizing tools and strategies that Tea Party groups used.

For instance, a local Tea Party group in a rural county in the foothills of North Carolina was an active organization with several committees, a steering committee and elected leaders. They met weekly at the local library. One member, Chad, talked about the role of Facebook as part their organizing:

> Two years ago, I wasn't on Facebook. But because of the campaign I got on, I've been on it ever since. My sister told me I had to. I used to look at it as girl stuff. I

> *remember this other county commissioner saying 'You ought to be on Facebook.' I*
> *said, 'It's girl stuff.' He said, 'there are men on there,' but I said 'girly men.' So I*
> *got on Facebook. I didn't take Facebook seriously [at first], but it really kind of*
> *defines who the Tea Party is.*

For this Tea Party organization and others, their strong use of Facebook did not mean that they did all of their organizing online. Instead, Chad's comment reflects that Facebook "defines who the Tea Party is" in its information-sharing capacity, the central aspect of their organizing ideology.

Overall, then, the ideas and practices of political orientation help explain the differences in digital activist scores between left and right political leanings.

Political Strategy and Organizing Theory - A Tale of Two Unions

I now examine two left labor unions to show how the ideas and practices of political *strategy* are factors explaining digital use gaps. The 2012 general election ushered in a conservative takeover of the state government, with a supermajority in the North Carolina General Assembly and a new Republican governor. This political shift resulted in a deluge of legislation that curtailed voting rights, refused federal Medicaid and unemployment insurance, restricted reproductive health services, and proposed restrictions on public employee unions. A broad coalition of organizations responded with non-violent civil disobedience at the capital and across North Carolina with weekly "Moral Monday" protests in the spring of 2013 that brought national attention to the state. These protests were led by the state's chapter of the NAACP. Staff and members of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America Local 150 (UE 150), one of the state's public employee labor unions, regularly participated in the protests and were among the first arrestees. A second public workers union, the State Employees Association of North Carolina (SEANC) did not participate in Moral Monday; in fact, the director of this union posted to Twitter his view that this protest strategy was detrimental to public sector unions.

UE 150's participation in more radical actions like the Moral Monday protests suggest that this group should have been more likely to embrace the disruptive many-to-many networked aspects of the Internet than reformist groups like SEANC, which pursued more incremental change. However, the digital activist scores showed the opposite difference: SEANC had a strong digital presence while UE 150 had virtually no social media presence

To examine the relationship of ideological strategy and digital practices, I compare these two public sector unions. This close analysis of two organizations will shed light on broader differences in digital activism. Both unions represent ideal types in terms of strategy: UE 150 was typical of left groups with a radical strategy and SEANC was typical of left groups with a reformist strategy. Both SEANC and UE 150 were key unions involved in the HOPE Coalition. SEANC promoted more reformist, lobbying unionism, and UE 150 agitated for more social movement unionism. Even though both unions worked on the same issue as part of the HOPE Coalition and even though both were statewide unions of public sector workers, their political strategies were quite different, presenting an ideal comparison.

SEANC was a statewide union representing state employees across the state. Established in 1940, SEANC affiliated with SEIU, a national union,[13] in 2008. Despite this affiliation, SEANC leaders preferred the term "association" over "union" because of "union's" negative

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[13] These unions are often called "international" but for all intents and purposes are national.

connotation in the state. SEANC successfully won pay raises for employees, educated members about state government issues and provided discounts at various business establishments.

As described in Chapter Two, UE 150 had a different history: The local grew out of a broader political movement in the early 1990s that mobilized public protests and strikes around the class, race and gender inequalities of university housekeepers in Chapel Hill, school bus drivers in Greenville and sanitation workers in Raleigh. The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers called itself "a rank-and-file union" that defied what they considered the business unionism of the AFL-CIO.

Digital Engagement Differences

To understand the mechanisms behind differences in these two union's Internet use and digital politics, it is first useful to examine how, and how much, they engaged with digital technology. SEANC was a heavy user of Internet technologies. In terms of Web presence, they had a complex and sophisticated site with many layers of content for the viewer to learn about the organization and respond to the union's call for participation. The Web site featured a way for people to sign up with the organization and calendar of events that was updated at least once a week and that served as a main communication portal.

SEANC's social media presence was both broad and deep. They updated their Facebook page throughout each day with posts about legislative news and to feature the personal stories of public employees. They started their Facebook page in early 2011. Between that time and June, 2013, they had over 1100 posts, 1200 comments and 4300 Likes. They had a main Twitter account, which they also opened in early 2011, and they had posted over 500 Tweets. Three prominent key staff members—the Executive Director, the Chief Lobbyist, and the Communications Director—also had Twitter accounts with over 1000 Tweets among them, and these accounts were also used as a public face of the organization.

SEANC also communicated with members through e-mail blasts and print publications. The Communications Director, Jill, described how the SEANC's strategy of intentionally integrating multiple media:

> It's our goal here to have a seamless integration of old and new media. So what we do is, we want to have our news go across the entire enterprise in a variety of platforms. So if you look up on my whiteboard [points to whiteboard], I want it to start, to first be generated on our website, to push it to Twitter, then to Facebook, then to our weekly E-newsletter, The Scoop, and finally to our printed publication, The Reporter, to make sure that we hit all of those mediums.

In short, SEANC has very high levels of managed digital engagement. In contrast, UE 150's online engagement was sparse. They had one static Web page that simply said "under construction." An affiliated organization occasionally hosted some content for UE 150, but no staff member was dedicated to updating this content. UE 150's social media presence was also less robust than SEANC's. UE 150 had a Facebook page since April 2012, but they only had 40 posts, 20 comments and 180 Likes between the page's creation and June, 2013. Most of their posts were photos of participants posing during events. Some of the staff organizers did not have personal Facebook accounts, but a few organizers used Facebook quite a bit and posted a variety of information about the union and other political activity in addition to personal posts. The union had no Twitter presence. Overall, UE 150's media production was haphazard. They produced print publications such as occasional newsletters, flyers and buttons. They did not have formal email software, listservs or texting processes, but they did use e-mail and texts to

communicate. A lead organizer and staff member commented about this minimalist approach to digital engagement, *"There's no updating, there's no real coherency to it, you know, I mean, either subject-wise or organization-wise."*

A number of variables may factor into these stark differences in the levels of digital engagement between these two statewide public employee unions. First, one might expect the younger union to have higher levels of engagement if it were founded in the digital era. However, this was not the case. Aligned with the quantitative findings presented in Chapter Three, UE 150 began in the early Web era, but SEANC, founded in 1940, had higher scores. In addition, the ages of the members and staff were similar across the two unions, so an age gap cannot explain these differences. A second possible explanation is that the size difference between SEANC, which has about 55,000 members, and UE 150, which has approximately 5,000 members, accounts for this difference. However, when digital engagement levels are calculated by posts per Likers or members online, these stark differences persist. In addition, 5,000 members is still a sizeable enough number that a functioning Web site and Twitter feed should still have been a useful form of outreach.

One way that membership may have factored into these groups' digital engagement was through resources, which are tethered to class and ideology. SEANC had a much bigger budget than UE150, largely due to its bigger base of dues-paying members. This allowed SEANC to dedicate four staff members to communication out of a total staff of 40, whereas UE150 had only five staff members and none of these focused exclusively on communication. This difference reflects not only the monetary resources of these organizations but also the different strategies that factored into their decision-making about where to allocate funds. The resource gap between the unions may also have been related to differences in the two unions' social class composition. Even though both unions represented working class members such as groundskeepers for the Department of Transportation, most of UE 150's members were working class while SEANC had a number of middle-class white-collar state employees in its ranks. Such members often worked in administrative positions and were more likely to be union leaders.

These social class differences were reflected in the unions' distinct ideologies. UE 150 did not allow managers to be part of the union while SEANC had many managers as members and as leaders. One active SEANC member, Frank, wanted the two unions to work together more. He explained how each union's distinct approach to social change and organizing related to their social class membership:

> *I've always felt that UE was somewhat better—actually, perhaps a lot better—in terms of educating members around issues of race and gender and class and providing a little bit more of a theoretical framework regarding capitalism and the role of public workers in a capitalist society. SEANC still retains a stronger management orientation. And of course UE has just the opposite—you can't be a member if you're a manager, you know, or you can only be an affiliate or something like that.*

Strategy as Part of Organizing Ideology Shapes Digital Politics

SEANC and UE had different ideologies and strategic repertoires that led them to use the Internet in very different ways. Although SEANC had some mechanisms for democratic decision-making, it was primarily run as a top-down organization. SEANC viewed social change as generated from above, via changing the hearts and minds of those in power, such as elected officials and the media. SEANC's use of the Internet was generally geared toward achieving

these goals. In contrast, UE 150 was a grassroots-run organization that viewed social change as a bottom-up process. In terms of Internet use, this view manifested itself in the UE staff's rejection of the Internet as a primary organizing tool.

SEANC—Top-Down Representative Democracy

SEANC used technology in a Web 1.0 (top-down and one-to-many) rather than Web 2.0 (bottom-up and many-to-many) manner. This was reflected in its political strategy and tied to its organizational structure. SEANC was involved in many statewide legislative efforts to support state employees, as well as local fundraising efforts. Its organizational structure provided many ways to get members involved in union activities. SEANC had districts across the state and an annual convention with delegates from each district; however, most decision-making occured among three levels of decision-makers along with staff leadership. One chapter meeting showed that members were very active in electing officers, planning social events and educating each other about the legislative information that SEANC had distributed. Each district had some autonomy in how it conducted itself. For instance, two districts had some overlap in terms of employees working at the same university. One of these districts operated more independently from SEANC directives while the other's work aligned more directly with suggestions from SEANC staff. Despite this autonomy, the real political and policy decisions were made in Raleigh by the top leadership.

Top SEANC leadership shaped the union's conversations and debates at both the statewide level and district level. As a result, local districts tended to follow the script from Raleigh regarding programs and projects. Members voted for the top 10 policy objectives during the annual convention, which then became part of the annual agenda. This process may appear democratic, but, as one member commented, the voting actually distanced members from their daily challenges at work and did not allow for a more dynamic, responsive union. A few members tried to get SEANC to address their on-the job grievances as part of the union's agenda, but if the grievances were not part of the top ten list, then the union would not work on these issues. In other words, SEANC focused on getting raises and other key benefits for state employees through legislation and statewide channels, issues that had the support of a broad array of workers in the union. The tasks of the local districts tended to focus more on social events than union agitation at workplaces.

An example of this top-down structure occurred during my fieldwork at the SEANC annual convention in 2012. The convention was in large hotel ballroom the size of a football field. Delegates sat at round tables throughout the room, with a large stage, podium and video screens up front. Most of the agenda consisted of inspirational videos, awards for service, acknowledgments of past presidents and food. However, some moments were set aside for delegates to speak at special microphones set up for public comment. During one such moment, no one initially stood up to speak. But then a member went up to the microphone to talk about how difficult it was to pay her bills as a cancer survivor. She then talked about a member in her district whose son had leukemia and who also struggled paying her bills. Soon the lines to speak grew, but instead of political points, questions or proposals, delegates from nearly every district used their time on the microphone to say how much money they would donate to this member whose son has cancer. The implication here is that debate and discussion among the mass membership is focused on more social and charity work, rather than political work. It also reflects the top-down character of SEANC.

Local districts did have some level of independence and autonomy. During one local meeting, SEANC leadership made a decision regarding what to do with the charity money the

local had raised. One member who wanted to choose a charity different than the one the president hand chosen argued, "We can do our own project." But locals' ability to make their own decisions' seemed limited to issues like these that fell outside of real political battles.

SEANC's culture of top-down representative democracy was reflected in the organization's communication practices and Internet use patterns. In a Web 1.0 approach, leaders and staff talked about the need to educate members and keep them up to date about events in the General Assembly (the state legislative body) rather than getting information or input *from* members. This translated into SEANC's practice of unidirectional email communication and the union's use of social media. Even though many districts had their own listservs or Facebook pages, the communication staff in the Raleigh office described making sure that social media discussions remained on-topic. Jill, the communications staff member, said, "Yes. So we actually have staff involvement that monitors all of that. And it rises to our level if there's a problem, you know, or some issue of concern." This management of the union's social media did not reflect a "big brother" approach of constant monitoring and control but an organizational approach of staying connected to social media. Jill continued :

> *This is my new Tweetdeck. So we have our constant feed running throughout the day, although this is me. I also have my own handle in addition to the Twitter handle here. And so we're monitoring, of course, my own personal account, which mostly media is following me because of what I do here... And then we also run our campaigns from here, which are separate from SEANC as well, both in terms of Facebook and Twitter. And so here [she shows me he monitor with Tweetdeck up on her screen], we can click them across all of them, plus keep track of who's mentioning us as well. So we're fully aware of who's talking about us.*

The executive director of SEANC, John, who had been in the position for a decade, reported that he wielded his communication power very judiciously,

> *So the way I control my voice in this whole process, is that I use it sparingly. So I'm not on there 24/7—I don't use it all the time —but when they get a tweet in my name, even though it's not me doing it, or they get a Facebook or a special email with my picture on it, they know "oh, oh, something is going on because [the director] has now did this." So I will do that maybe once a month or less... So communication for me is more read than it is anything else we send, because you know, there's meaning for it because it's used sparingly.*

Because of the union's top-down representative democracy structure, as the head of the union, the executive director knew that his position was one of profound influence, even more than that of the union president, so his communications to members through email or Twitter, took the form of one-to-many communication.

Using Web 2.0 in a Web 1.0 Way: Reformist Lobbyist Unionism

SEANC's executive director told me that the book that most inspired him in his youth was *Showdown at Gucci Gulch*, a non-fiction narrative about how corporate lobbyists shaped tax policy in the 1986: "I thought when I was in high school I wanted to be a lobbyist, so I read Gucci Gulch and fell in love with it—and the alligator shoes—and I said 'that's me!'" His recollection reflected the lobbyist strategy that was the union's approach to social change. The union's primary goal was to win financial benefits for its members, and raises for public employees required the vote of the state's General Assembly. Even though most labor unions had strong ties to Democrats, SEANC also formed affiliations with Republicans if the union believed

that these candidates would win in the long run. At their annual convention, SEANC had both the Democratic and Republican gubernatorial candidates speak, and SEANC ended up endorsing McCrory, the Republican candidate, who went on to win the election. Their chief lobbyist foresaw the 2012 Republican sweep and attempted to build relationships with Republican candidates before they entered office. But SEANC did not limit itself to building relationships with candidates the organization thought might win. The union also started a PAC to raise money for state-level political candidates. In sum, the union staff focused its energy on following events in the state legislature, lobbying state-level politicians and educating its members on upcoming bills and how to contact representatives. Their digital media strategy was tied to these three tactics.

Keeping track of events in the General Assembly was key to SEANC's political strategy, and they needed technology to do so successfully. Jill said that SEANC monitored all of the bills and upcoming votes online: "So we know right away because mainly of Twitter, we know precisely what's happening in the General Assembly, even if we're not there." Social Media were also a key vehicle to reaching legislators, as noted by John, the executive director:

> *[The Internet has] revolutionized [lobbying] in a lot of ways... [There] used to be a physical barrier between a lobbyist and a legislator, so when an item of discussion was on the debate, when I was over there lobbying, if you really had to get somebody, you had to go in and send a note and wait. Now they're on the floor of the House or Senate, and you can actually text them and tell them what's on your mind. And the ramifications of that are enormous... If there's an issue on the floor, you can actually influence the actual... words coming out of their mouth... because you can text them exactly what to say. And we all know lawmakers, no matter what level, can't know everything about every issue—that's why you have lobbyists. So the lobbyists are the real expert debaters—it's not the members on the floor—they're kind of the mouthpiece behind the issue. The expert debaters are in the gallery. And now we have immediate access to them to give them the words to use in the debate. Now, whether any of them will admit that or not, I don't know.*

But it was not just legislators that SEANC believed digital technology could reach. Staff lit up with excitement when talking about how new media connected them to another powerful group—the mainstream news media. SEANC leaders saw digital technology as a direct conduit to journalists. Jill, the communications director, said, "Twitter is the best way to talk to the media hands-down."

SEANC was very thorough with its top-down member education, informing their members on what was happening and how to act. While the SEANC leadership sometimes used social media to find out what was happening on the ground, the focus of the group's social media activity was aimed in the opposite direction. As John commented,

> *[The Internet] has radically changed the benefits of us using it as a tool to educate our members. And spurring them to instant action exactly when it's needed… The quicker we know [about a new bill in the legislature]... the quicker we can mobilize our members. If something bad is potentially going to happen, then we can get on our emergency system and let people know, 'Hey, you need to call representative, you know, X and let him know why what you do, and why this program is so important, because they are potentially thinking about cutting it.' So in the lobbying world, because of this instantaneous communication… we can*

mobilize a group of people [to swamp legislators] with calls and letters... It will
affect how they vote and how they deliberate, even though it's manufactured.

Members reported appreciation for this up-to-date legislative news and information from SEANC staff. At one local meeting, members discussed how "SEANC" (a term often used to refer to the union leadership) let them know how to communicate with legislators, and they actively made phone calls to these legislators even while the meeting was in progress.

One incident during the height of the Moral Monday summer weekly protests epitomized this reformist unionism and lobbying focus over other more radical forms of protest for social change. This example also introduces the differences in strategies between SEANC and UE 150. SEANC members were attempting to lobby their legislators at the same time that hundreds of Moral Monday protesters had taken over the Capitol Rotunda. Even though the Moral Monday movement had been well underway for a few months and had made the national news as well as local papers and TV stations, SEANC members were caught off-guard and said they were frustrated at not being able to speak to their legislators. The executive director, John, then sent out the following Tweet, which created a social media firestorm:

SEANC not part of #MoralMonday we think it unwise to break the law &
overburden fellow public employees. Prefer to sit down/talk policy! #ncga

All of the replies to this Tweet critiqued SEANC, and John responded to the barrage of tweets criticizing SEANC for not getting involved in Moral Monday:

Your so wrong and you with two other democrat hack wannabes don't speak for
SEANC. SEANC is non partisan. [sic]

One response to SEANC's executive director reflected the social movement unionism that was more typical of UE 150:

You might be talking to #NCGA, but they're not listening. #MoralMondays voices heard
all across country! We need union solidarity.

In fact, UE 150 leaders and members were even arrested for their participation in Moral Monday. However, this last Tweet did not come from them. UE 150 did not take to digital media at all to promote their position, as that union's digital practices were not essential to its organizing ideology as SEANC's were.

UE 150—Bottom-up Practices With Limited Digital Media Use

UE 150's role in the Moral Monday protest did not start with arrests of the union's key activists. Members' participation in this civil disobedience demonstrates their long-term political strategy, organizational structure and digital media practices. UE 150 participated in HKonJ (Historic Thousands on Jones Street, a broad-based coalition of progressive organizations headed by the North Carolina NAACP) since its inception in 2007. HKonJ hosted an annual march through Raleigh to the General Assembly. When the Moral Monday demonstrations began in the spring of 2013, one of the weekly protests focused on statewide labor rights issues because of UE 150's input, and the union decided to participate.

The arrests of UE 150's members during this protest were significant for the union. Though the union had prepared for this type of bold challenge, the state had not seen this type of radical labor resistance since the Red Scare of the 1950s McCarthyism. One UE activist described how "business unionism"—which is how UE members described unions like SEANC—had prevailed in the state since the repression that began in the 1950s: "instead of raising the political consciousness of the working class, they've limited any kind of political action, except for the most base electoral kind of politics to some degree." The Moral Monday

coalition pushed these limits to political action. Perhaps because the state was unused to such a challenge from labor, an experienced UE organizer was the first Moral Monday protester to be tried, and he received the harshest penalties. UE 150 members and leaders described this as a fear tactic by the state, and many questioned why they targeted such a prominent labor leader.

Even on public property, North Carolina unions were constantly challenged by state officials and police regarding leafleting and organizing. I observed countless instances in which public employers from the City of Charlotte to a state mental hospital in eastern North Carolina, restricted UE 150 labor organizers from getting information to members. One might therefore expect that the Internet would provide an ideal safe space for UE 150 to share information with their members and potential members. This was not the case, however. To understand why, one must first understand the organizational structure of the union.

UE 150 had a similar number of decision-making levels to SEANC, but these two unions approached their decision-making differently. UE 150 staff members and lead organizers saw involving members in political decision-making as a primary goal. They were interested in participatory democracy, as opposed to representative democracy. One event demonstrated this approach. At a number of statewide "Southern Worker Assembly" meetings in which UE 150 was an active part, union members—not just leaders—participated in forging the direction of this coalition of unions across the South. Members spoke up about challenges in the workplace—especially gender discrimination—and how to overcome these challenges collectively and link local struggles to a larger movement. This is an illustrative example because it not only shows how members participated in decisions and direction of the union but also how the union viewed itself as part of a larger movement. One organizer, Tanya, summed up her perspective on how the union fit into what she and other union activists called "social movement unionism":

> *Social movement unionism means that, first of all, that the rank and file leadership is developed and the rank and file have to be directly involved in making decisions and leading the building of the trade union movement. It means that the issues being taken up by the trade union encompass the total conditions of the working class and not just of a few members in this or that workplace, and it connects internationally and shows solidarity with workers all over the world who are fighting for the rights of the working class internationally, directly attempts to address questions of racism and sexism, patriarchal social relations, and conditions that impact immigrant workers, and tries to unite workers – but on the basis of opposition to racism and sexism. So that's social movement unionism, you know, the approach is building the labor movement from that perspective, rank-and-file democracy, rank-and-file leadership, as opposed to business unionism.*

UE 150 viewed labor organizing as a process of getting people involved for the long haul, and the union viewed the Internet as one of many tools to use in this process. Organizers talked about how they had multiple ways to communicate and organize depending on the recipient's preferred mode of communication. Respondents often listed all the ways they communicated with people: phone call, email, text, Facebook message, house visit, flyer, newsletter, or workplace discussions.

One young UE 150 member, Rick, who worked as a nursing assistant at a state hospital described his multi-faceted approach to communicating and organizing with other members, especially at his workplace. He said:

We try to use email addresses, if we can get them, and cell phones too. I call many people on the phone asking them, you know, to engage in our meetings that we have every first and second Saturday of the month, that we have at [work], but I feel like to get the point across they need to see me... I feel like I should [see them face-to-face] . . . to let them know I'm here. I'm just not in the background, you know, or I'm just not here just to take your dues.

UE 150's organizing and political strategy matched up with their digital media strategy. They wanted to involve as many people as possible regardless of the tool, and the Internet was not always the best way to reach people depending on their connectivity or preferences, or to have meaningful conversations about high-risk organizing. Most organizers said that the Internet was not a substitute for face-to-face interaction, which was necessary given the level of fear and disempowerment that a lot of workers, especially black workers, faced. Because most of their efforts were not aimed at legislative decisions in Raleigh, digital technology did not make sense for workers who needed to address on-the-job issues. UE 150 members often discussed feeling like digital technology was not a safe medium for communication. Some workers had their phones confiscated at work or their email monitored. UE 150 organizing was more lateral than vertical, producing the unexpected finding that the union considered the Internet as just one of many communication tools, and one that was not always useful due to fears of retaliation or concerns about simple effectiveness.

Another UE 150 worker, Edith, described the union's strategy of organizing horizontally, which she believed distinguished the union from SEANC's approach:

I'm proud to be a part of UE. We are for the workers, you know, we don't, we're not giving you a coupon at the hotel because you go out of town... If you get in a crisis, they don't got your back, they won't help you fill out a grievance, work on a grievance, they're not going to do that, you know, 'cause they're all about the big bucks and all that kind of stuff. So from there, we've had campaigns that work for workers' rights. We've had protests and marches, and we've dealt with the state doing political actions, stuff like that. All that we've learned how to do being in the union, having the stewards' training, having leadership training, you know, things that the union has done to make us be better at what we're trying to do.

The stewards' trainings and other one-on-one organizing tactics that were replicated across the union were useful to workers' with on-the-job grievances such as being sexually or racially harassed, which were common complaints. While every respondent indicated that they would welcome more pay, this was not the primary issue that motivated UE 150 workers to join the union. Instead, they were more to do with injustices and inequality. And many members believed that such job-related incidents were better addressed when dealt with collectively, through in-person interactions.

UE 150 often used in-person communication practices to disseminate information to members, involve members in participation making and to address workplace grievances; UE 150 also often used non-digital methods to recruit new members. For example, a few hours' drive east of Raleigh, Edith, a 57 year-old UE 150 member for over ten years, carefully parked her car to avoid suspicion from state administrators and security guards at the state-run mental health facility. She got out of her car and walked to the side of the one-lane rural highway. She had a packet of flyers and offered one to each driver of the cars that occasionally pulled up to the state-run mental health facility prior to shift changes. The flyer encouraged workers to come to a "Speakout" to voice their concerns about working conditions. A few minutes later, an armed

guard came over and told Edith and the other union activists standing with her to leave. Edith explained that they could legally hand out flyers to state workers as long as they stayed on the road. The guard made a phone call and acquiesced but then stood near the activists with his arms crossed and his firearm by his side. After the shift change ended, the activists decided to move to another entrance of the sprawling state facility to hand out flyers to other state employees as they arrived or departed.

Soon after, the activists drove 65 miles back to a budget hotel in Greenville where more union members were in a conference room making phone calls to encourage members to come to a big upcoming union meeting to speak out about their grievances. Staff organizers and members came together from across the state and even from "sister locals" to try to increase their membership at a big annual "organizing blitz." The blitz was a lively collective event where organizers conducted motivational trainings, worked in groups to make phone calls and to hand out leaflets at workplaces and finally came back together to debrief about the organizing. Internet technology was not used at all during the blitz; only flyers and phones were used to recruit and organize members. Outside of the blitz, organizers used the Internet to communicate with other leaders but rarely to recruit new members, mainly because they believed that face-to-face discussions were the most effective and trusted way to talk to workers.

A seasoned UE 150 organizer, Mike, explained his view of the limitations of technology for the union's political communication strategy, which was focused on out-on-the-street organizing:

> We can't get into a situation where technology really substitutes from struggle of people, but in terms of a tool and to try to overcome issues of isolation, to try for folks to be able to respond quickly, sharing media, we know it's important... And actually, particularly in reflection the contribution of social media and networking is just so critical because it just allows being able to fight against censorship. But at the same time I have problems with folks over-relying so much on technology... Everything is through Tweeting and Twittering and that kind of stuff, and for me, that helps really accomplish one of the goals really of our class enemy and the people's enemy, is the atomization of folks. It leads to a certain amount of fragmentation that even though people can quickly see struggles, whether it's in Egypt or whether looking in terms of the advances and the utilization of these tools and stuff, and the Occupy movement and all of that, but you still got to have some sense of a coherent development of strategy and strategic thinking and folks being able to at least collaborate with some sense of strategic objectives to maximize the impact of fighting back.

Mike's view that the Internet could be a useful form of communication that could also potentially harm a bottom-up social movement because of the potential for "atomization" was common among UE 150 activists. The union that cared more about participatory democracy cared less about the Internet.

Different ideologies contributed to the differences in Internet between UE 150 and SEANC. The top-down union used bottom-up social media platforms in a top-down way. SEANC fetishized digital technology as a conduit to powerful individuals as well as an efficient means to communicate with and monitor members. But UE 150 union rarely used digital technology because union activists did not believe that it brought people together in a meaningful way. Thus these differences in digital engagement were explained by factors that include resource differences but extend beyond them to encompass each group's organizing ideology.

The bottom-up union needed to overcome the fear and disempowerment that workers in the South faced, and they believed that digital technology was limited in that regard. One might expect that given union repression in the South, the Internet would provide a safe haven for communication and organizing, but this was not the case. The bottom-up union also believed that digital technology contributed to atomization, isolation and individual-based politics that did not connect with UE150's self-concept as a union that engaged with every-day grievances and practiced collective action. The top-down union embraced the Internet as a direct line to power. Its organizing theory of lobbying government officials led to its digital practices that reflected this strategy. The Internet was *perceived* as a very successful tool to that end.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that conservative groups had higher digital activist scores at least in part because they valued the Internet as a tool to disseminate the "truth" about liberty and freedom. It also showed that reformist groups had higher digital activist scores because they saw the Internet as a direct line to lobby those in power.

Reformist unions benefitted from digital platforms while social movement unions did not. Representative democracy aligned well with a managed use of the Internet while participatory democracy often did not align with the Internet at all. In the cases presented above, the radical union believed that the Internet was just one of many ways to reach a broad group of members while the reformist group believed that the Internet was a primary way to reach people in power.

Given digital activism's strong association with political orientation and political strategy, these findings challenge previous scholarship contending that ideology is irrelevant in the digital era. It also challenges the predominant focus of digital activism research on left wing organizations, which has suggested that those groups are more associated with digital activism. Instead, I find the reverse: the conservative groups in my study were the organizations with higher levels of digital engagement.

The finding that reformist groups, whether right or left, had higher levels of digital engagement also goes against the grain of the literature. Rather than viewing the Internet as a disruptive weapon for protesters, in this case it appeared as a reformist tool for lobbyists. This research also contradicts the vision of digital activism as the appendage of radical leftist protesters. The bottom-up, radical activists that engaged with the Internet were more likely to be conservative Patriot group members using online tools to spread the "truth" of liberty and freedom than radical social movement unionists recruiting members or protesting the state.

This chapter demonstrates that ideology involves more than divisions in left/right political or Democrat/Republican orientation. Organizing ideology also involves political strategies in terms of ideas and practice. The concept of organizing ideology provides a more nuanced and complex way of understanding how political ideas operate within organizational practices. Specifically, labor unions are a window into the textured differences among groups that appear to be on the same side of a political issue. By examining the intersection of ideas, practices and organizations, we can better define and understand how organizing ideology shapes digital engagement.

CHAPTER SIX
The Digital Activism Gap
Social Class, Social Media, Social Movements

If you were a scholar or an avid social media data scientist studying public employee unions in North Carolina, you might turn to social media for your data. If you happened to analyze all of the Tweets on this topic during the three years from 2011-2014, you wouldn't find any from some of the leading organizations on this issue. What is the reason for this absence? Some of the labor, political and social movement groups in this study had active Twitter feeds, Facebook pages and interactive Web sites. These groups dedicated time and resources to online activism, and their everyday digital practices were integral to their organizing. Other groups—and even leaders on this issue—had outdated computers and low levels of Internet use; a few had no social media presence at all. This digital activism gap in online organizing is based on social class divisions—a finding that contradicts a large body of literature that describes the Internet as an egalitarian space where average citizens participate democratically in social movements (Bennett and Segerberg 2012; Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl 2005; Castells 2012). Yet for sociologists and social scientists who understand a stratified society, these findings may not be surprising at all. The gap in digital activism by class may reflect larger digital inequalities. What *is* new, though, is a research design that helps us understand how and why these class differences in digital activism persist.

This chapter investigates the mechanisms behind the quantitative result presented in Chapter Three that social class inequalities are a persistent source of differences in digital activism. Most previous research on the topic suggested that digital technology enables egalitarian participation because of lowered costs, such as time or financial resources. I find that costs do matter, such as the costs related to access and the capacity to use digital tools. But I also show that other class-based factors shape the digital activism gap: differences in labor, power and entitlement between working class organizations and middle/upper class groups.

Theorizing Online Costs and Inequality

Scholars have suggested that the Internet increased participation in social movements because of the technology's affordances: its widespread accessibility has decreased the economic and time resources, and even physical presence, necessary for social organizing. As a result, the argument goes, more people become involved. Some scholars contended that the participatory architecture of the Internet, particularly social media, challenges previous theories of collective action (Bennett and Segerberg 2012; Bimber et al. 2005; Castells 2012; Earl and Kimport 2011). In this literature, online-only activism enables social movements to create low to no costs for participation, so the Internet allows for more participation from a broader array of activists, challenging Mancur Olson's (1965) free-rider dilemma. In these interpretations of Olson, online-only digital politics demands new theories of collective action because the costs of participation are so low.

As pointed out in the Introduction, researchers have not yet addressed the question of whether and how social class inequalities and related costs may limit participation in digital political spaces. At the same time, digital divide scholars have found a persistent gap in access to digital technologies and spaces, reflecting broader social class inequalities (e.g. DiMaggio et al. 2001). Given these digital differences, we do not yet know whether political digital spaces are more or less egalitarian. This study, then, resolves a contradiction in this rich body of literature.

On the one hand, scholars contend that the costs of organizing online are close to zero, so participation increases. On the other hand, class differences across social movement organizations have a long history, and social class inequalities are the most persistent source of the digital divide than other factors.

The findings presented in this chapter raise the issue of how more marginalized communities will be included, or excluded, in the digital age as more political work is transferred online. The Internet is not a way to resolve existing political inequalities that have been and continue to be rooted in class and power differences.

How Social Class Composition of Organizations Shapes Internet Use

Differences in how and how much political, labor and social movement organizations used public digital tools for participation reflected the class composition of these groups. Chapter Three showed that groups with predominantly working class members had lower levels of digital engagement than their middle/upper class counterparts across Web sites, Facebook, and Twitter, as well as in the latent variables of development, architecture and participation. I first discuss the content of each platform and then explain how costs and class act as a mechanism for this divide for both organizations and their members.

Web Sites

Twenty years after the launch of HTML into the public domain, Web sites may seem like a basic tool for any organization; however, not all groups even have Web sites. The digital activist scores presented in Chapter Three were based on whether groups had a Web site and the extent to which groups were able to use Web sites to involve their members, update them and provide them with interactive features. In short, working class organizations tended to utilize their Web sites for organizing and online participation purposes at a much lower rate than groups with more middle/upper class members.

The working class organization with the highest Web site score was Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ), a workers' center based in eastern North Carolina and with chapters around the state. The Web site had a number of features, such as video posts, but they did not consistently update the site.

Two organizations, both with working class members, had no working Web site. One of these groups, United Electrical Workers Local 150 (UE 150), the rank-and-file radical state employees union local discussed in detail in Chapter Five had a static placeholder page but no content. While the national UE union hosted some content about the North Carolina local's activities, the organization did not have its own functioning Web site to post information or highlight ways to get involved. At the same time, one of UE 150's local chapters, a rural group of low-wage nursing assistants at a state-run mental hospital, did have a Web site. However, this site was not possible to locate through a Google search because it was a seven year-old site that a member volunteer put together. It was not linked to any other UE site, it had a long Web address and it included outdated information.

Another organization that had no Web presence, nor any social media engagement, was Citizens Against Racism (CAR), which took up quite a few cases of discrimination against public employees and had been a grassroots leader on the issue of collective bargaining rights for public employees for almost twenty years. These two organizations, UE 150 and CAR, both of which have extremely low Web site scores, were among the most active groups leading the efforts for collective bargaining rights.

Groups with mixed or middle/upper class members had more complex Web sites with interactive features and plug-ins, such as subscriptions and donations, as well as links to social media. The CIVITAS Institute was one such organization. This organization ranked at the top of the list of Web site scores. It was a conservative policy organization that advocated for limited government in general, including advocating against public employee unions. Its Web site had a broad array of tools that participants could use to learn about not just the organization and its policy papers but also ways to participate online, such as through polls. Second on the list of groups with the highest Web score was the Charlotte Firefighters Union, which was mixed-class. Their Web site used a somewhat outdated design and underlying HTML structure but it was updated frequently and had many tools to involve members.

Facebook

Of all of the platforms, Facebook was the most accessible for activists. It had a much higher participation rate nationally than either Twitter or individual Web sites. Yet, Facebook gaps persisted between working class and mixed class or middle/upper class groups. One anomalous finding concerns the Facebook architecture score—mixed class groups used the platform more than middle/upper class groups. What can explain this anomaly? Is Facebook a more egalitarian platform for participation for groups that use this platform?

Not quite. Working class groups did not do "better" on the Facebook architecture scores. In fact, ranking the total Facebook scores, none of the working class groups were in the top half of the architecture scores, and two working class groups did not even have a Facebook account All of the working class groups were below the mean. Indeed, none of the working class organizations, even those with Facebook accounts, used them on a regular basis. For instance, no working class group updated their Facebook page for an entire month of the study despite the fact that each groups had actions and events during that time.

Instead, the more professional, government, and business-oriented associations used Facebook, but in a top-down, 1.0 way rather than bottom-up, 2.0 way. Groups with more middle/upper class members were more likely to have Facebook pages rather than Facebook groups, and these pages were often set up to restrict who could post to them; thus, most of the participation was limited to Likes and comments on posts. One communications staff person from a professional right wing groups lamented that they could not turn off the ability for people to post comments on their Facebook page.

People can comment on posts that we put up, but they can't make original posts on our Facebook page. And that's the only thing you can't turn off on Facebook—you can't stop people from commenting on your posts. You can stop them from posting, you can keep them from posting pictures, you can keep them from doing just about anything you want, but you can't stop them from commenting on your posts, so you can't control that.

None of the working class organizations restricted Facebook participation, but online participation was extremely low for these groups. Mixed class groups had the most posts from multiple users, even more so than the middle/upper class groups on average. This variation in Facebook use demonstrates the importance of separating out the development, architecture and participation of these platforms.

The content of the posts also varied by social class. When working class groups used Facebook, they tended to post original photos before and after their events, such as meetings and protests, especially group photos. Middle and upper class groups tended to post more "official"

announcements, especially among the professional groups, while the mixed class groups use Facebook in a variety of ways, from posting and exchanging news articles or political memes to information about group events. With the content analysis results highlighted in Table 11, though, working class groups, when they do post online tend to have a higher percentage of posts with a strong opinion on a political issue compared to middle and upper class groups (29% vs. 20%), and they also tend to encourage more participation in events in their posts compared to more elite groups (27% vs. 20% respectively). The implication from these differences is that working class groups, when they did use Facebook sporadically, tried to create a more collective online identity that encouraged more participation and extreme political debate while middle/upper class groups used Facebook as a more normalized tool for information for the organization on a more regular basis.

Twitter

Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ) was the initial leader in many of the early public employee collective bargaining organizing activities and is the only working class organization with a Twitter account. But since BWFJ opened their Twitter account in 2011, they had only tweeted once as of August, 2014.

Organizations with mixed and middle/upper class members were more apt not only to have a Twitter account but also to use the platform. The extent of Twitter engagement also varied based on social class, with mixed and middle/upper class groups being more active Tweeters. Some organizations dealt with this social media divide by using Twitter even though their members were not generally on Twitter. Sam, a staff person at the North Carolina AFL-CIO, explained how most of the organization's member unions were not on Twitter, so he used Twitter less to communicate with members and more to reach out to other groups with more resources:

> *I try and feed into an echo chamber. We have in North Carolina, we're very fortunate to have several progressive organizations that have frankly better, are better staffed, have more resources, and are able to put out reports and create research and hold events and operate your own online communities and generate media and stuff for what they're doing.*

The two groups with middle/upper class members who did *not* use Twitter were both in academia—the University of North Carolina Board of Governors and the American Association for University Professors, North Carolina Chapter. Middle/upper class groups had the widest variation in standardized digital activist scores. Some of the professional organizations that were the most powerful players in opposing collective bargaining rights did not use social media at all.[14] These groups reported that they prefer face-to-face interaction, but it was also apparent from interviews and ethnography that the groups often had so much power that they did not need or want social media attention

Among groups of all class compositions, Twitter content mostly consisted of tweeting articles. This was particularly true of mixed-class Tea Party groups. Middle/upper class groups were much more likely to use hashtags and mentions, which are a way to maintain and increase Twitter participation.

Mechanisms of the Digital Activism Gap

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[14] While Patriot groups had a lot of political clout in North Carolina, they were not at the top of the legislative decision-making food chain, and most of them were mixed-class.

Many of these class divides point directly to the high costs of online participation and inequalities of organizational resources. More than simple financial costs were at stake in these differences, however. Class divides were stark among both organizations and members. Based on the interviews, ethnographic observations and online analysis, the mechanisms of these inequalities also included member constraints and powerlessness.

The Means of Production - Resources, Labor and Skills

In a sprawling office building in the suburban outskirts of the capital city of Raleigh, four staff members of a mixed class organization were part of a communications team equipped with the latest computers. One staff member's entire job was dedicated to social media. Across the city in downtown Raleigh, in a one-room office, a staff member of a working-class group gave me a tour of each piece of equipment in the room. He showed me a number of broken computers and a fax machine that no longer worked. Everyone in the organization turned to him for technological and communication questions, but his job was not exclusively focused on communications; instead, he was responsible for member organizing all across the state. The union did not have a Twitter feed or a working Web site, and it only occasionally made use of its Facebook page.

Differences in organizational resources were stratified along class lines. Staff and members of working class organizations were conscious of the difference in labor resources. As one labor organizer, David, said *"We didn't always have the staff or volunteers to update [our Web site]. After [transitioning to] Wordpress [a Web site building and hosting company], it was supposed to be easier, but someone has to go and do it. It's not a function of the site but finding people to do it."*

Having more middle/upper class members often translated into more funding and more staff members, which allowed for higher levels of digital engagement. With more staff, organizations were more likely to develop complex platforms with high levels of participation. Staffing was a key factor mediating media consumption and production between an organization and its members and the wider public. Because staff numbers depended on money, fewer funds resulted in fewer staff and less online engagement. Groups with more staff were more likely to have higher scores, but there was still a lot of variation among these groups. For instance, the North Carolina chapter of the Americans for Prosperity (NC AFP) had consistently high scores across the digital activist score index and the highest staffing levels, so as a robustness check, I excluded the NC AFP from the participation score, as well as the total digital activist score, and the class gap was still substantial and significant.

Also, as I reported in Chapter Four, mixed-class and middle/upper class Patriot groups were an outlier in the other direction in the correlation of staffing with digital media use. None had paid staff. The people who operate Patriot groups' social media tended to be volunteer activists, often retired, especially in Tea Party groups. This was also the case for advocacy Prepper organizations, which were smaller and usually relied on one volunteer. In essence, then, their staffing resources were in-kind, rather than paid. These groups tended to fluctuate in the level of their social media output, and one of these leaders mentioned how they sometimes needed to take a break from social media. Thus, even for the mixed class and middle/upper class groups, labor costs still mattered.

Working class organization activists talked about not having a dedicated staff member to update their Web site or engage in social media. Respondents from groups with low levels of digital activity often discussed not having capacity in either resources or skills. In essence,

maintaining an active digital presence imposed high labor costs on organizations. One union organizer, David, from a working class group had this to say about the state of their Web presence:

> *We feel like our Web site is just so pitiful. It's such a clear thing that we really should have . . . I mean, it's just such a weakness and frustration... It's one of those learning curve things—it's like [sighs] what a big thing to learn how to do. And we had our national union technology guy create it back on '02 or something. Some kind of thing where anybody could... post something on this site. And so he must've showed me or walked me through, and a few other people, like three times how to do it. But then every time, we would forget, because we didn't do it often enough and I don't even know if that's still what we got—I just don't know anything about it, so there it is. So that's the Web site.*

For groups seeking mass participation from everyone, the costs of digital use were *higher*: organizations required additional organizer effort to ensure that all members could join in the flow of the organizations' digital communications. The organizing staff and volunteers of some of the mixed class organizations described how much time and labor it took to engage the entire membership when some members had Internet access and others did not. One activist offered up a long list of the various ways to communicate with members who had different life circumstances: house or work visits, phone calls, Facebook messages, text messages, or email. Another staff member, Krea, of a mixed class group described an elaborate strategy she used to make the organizing inclusive:

> *I started listing people under the email list that I would use. I would make a Word document—this just tells you how low-tech I was—and copy it... At the bottom, I would write the names of the people who didn't have email, and people who had come to meetings but didn't have email, and put their phone number on there, who I didn't always get around to calling, but tried to. And they really appreciated it too... So I think that's an important thing for us to figure out, you know—not just to do organizing with people it's easy to do organizing with because that really misses a lot of people.*

Member Constraints

Organizational constraints were not the only challenge to digital activism; members also faced barriers to digital participation. For some members, the costs of online participation were high—maintaining regular, consistent Internet access was a challenge for people who could barely make ends meet. Respondents from working class organizations and those in mixed class groups with working class jobs struggled to access the Internet in various ways: from not having smart phones or high-speed Internet access to not having the skills or time to engage online.

One leader from Black Workers for Justice, Mariah, summed up her experience organizing people with various connectivity levels at both home and at work:

> *For BWFJ ... we can't do everything online, because a lot of workers... don't sit on the computer all day, like I do, you know, they're out, they're working… some type of public service work like sanitation or housekeeping. Or, you know, if you have a state job, you might have some time on the computer, but you can't live there outside of your email for your job… assuming they have Internet at all. Because I talked to a couple of our members this weekend, and they're not working, so they don't have a phone, and they don't have Internet. So it's gonna be a challenge to get up with them over the next couple of weeks because they're disconnected. And that's the struggle,*

like you gotta go to the library to get access to the Internet and catch up on your
emails. You're not gonna be able to do that from the comfort of your own home.

Many working class public employees were not allowed to use their cell phone or the Internet for personal use during the day, which seemed to be less of an issue for white-collar employees. For instance, one nurses' aide at a mental hospital talked about having to forfeit his cell phone before clocking in. Rather than operating on a 24/7 social media clock, some activists who did not have flexible and continuous device time interacted with digital media on a weekly bases or even less often.

Powerlessness and Entitlement—I'm not a Tech Person

This lack of control over where and when to go online fostered a sense of powerlessness and lack of entitlement among staff and activists from working class organizations. This was another mechanism deterring social media activism for these groups.

Interviewees demonstrated this lack of entitlement to use the Internet through the phrases they used to describe digital technology. Many respondents in working-class groups often contrasted themselves to digitally savvy people. They tended to see digital activism as something "other" people would do. About a dozen people said, "I'm not a tech person," even a volunteer who had written some HTML code years ago. One young labor activist, Jean, said, "I'm not computer-ready, you know. It took me two hours just to set one bill up, so, you know, I'm not computer-ready. But you know you have the cell phones, you know, mail, so you can get the information out there."

This respondent was not talking about smart phones that can access the Internet—when members of working class organizations referred to cell phone use, they more often meant the work of placing phone calls or texts to members.

To explain their limited digital activism, members of working-class organizations often told me, "We make do with what we have." One young union member said of her lack of social media use, "I don't get *up* there" implying that these social media platforms were *above* her abilities. Respondents often laughed uncomfortably when asked about Twitter and said that this just was not something they did. One union member said, "That's too fast for me. I can't keep up. No, I ain't never did that. I just can't keep up with Twitter. I've seen them on there and they just, they be talking to too many people at a time." Most people from organizations that did not use Twitter expressed a vague desire to use platform, but it seemed out of reach. One working-class organizer, in response to a meeting being videotaped, quipped, "Of course, this won't be on YouTube." In other words, he later explained, posting the video to YouTube was not something that their organization would or could do.

Organizers in groups with less digital engagement, fewer resources and more working class members talked about how overwhelmed they were with the digital nature of their work, even though their organizations were not publicly online as much as other groups. Two organizers of equal skill would have to dedicate different levels of labor to facilitate online participation depending on the class composition of their organization. Working class organizations usually tasked general organizing or program staff with communication duties. Many respondents talked about the email deluge and other information to sift through online. At the same time, they also noted the benefits of the Internet in terms of efficiency. Respondents often expressed the conflict between the Internet's potential for efficiency and its overwhelming reality as Paula, a union organizer describes:

People think the Internet takes... pressure or stress off of organizers, which really

what that means, it means that you can do more (laughs) right? It's not like okay, I can relax and what not, right, because it's really like, so you pile on more, because you know that you can more quickly and expeditiously do this certain thing, you know?

Some activists believed that the digital divide should not keep their organizations from doing more online. In fact, most leaders from organizations with lower levels of digital engagement expressed a desire to do more online. One union member, Edith, expressed frustration that their organization did not have more information online to share with potential members.

I think if we had [more social media], it would be an asset for the local if we had somebody that would, that was real good with that kind of stuff you know. Just like the Occupy stuff. If we, whatever pictures, if that could be posted or, you know, just kind of hook it all up and petitions and all that kind of stuff. And, I think we've done a poor job of capitalizing on the materials that we have. The tools that we have, we haven't really put them out there in the public.

On the other hand, groups with more mixed and middle/upper class members expressed more entitlement and confidence in how they used social media to formulate and share their political opinions. One Tea Party member, Roan, used common phrasing among active social media users from mixed and middle/upper classes. A number of times, he referred to himself as a "scientist" who, "of course," uses the Internet to learn about and share information in order to make an "intelligent decisions." These types of organizations more often normalized digital technology into their social movement practices, or, more precisely, their existing activist practices normalized their digital engagement.

Overall, then, the mechanisms of organizational resources, member constraints and class differences in power and entitlement all produced the digital activism gap. These factors worked in tandem, as groups with less organizational resources often had more working class members who had a harder time accessing and using the Internet, as well as feeling entitled to use it. In turn, groups with more middle/upper class members frequently had more resources and entitlement to use digital technology. These class and power differences, then, reproduce power differences online.

The Digital Activism Gap – The Variable Costs of Participation

Digital activism is not egalitarian. Class matters for online participation across social movement organizations. Neither an organization's era of founding, nor its political ideology, nor its organizational structures mediate the digital activism gap. Instead, the mechanisms of this social class inequality derive from a wide variety of organizational costs, member constraints and power relations. Other scholars missed these findings because of their methodological approach that selected on the dependent variable of digital media participation and missed class markers. By using a field-level approach that incorporates both online and offline data collection, this study provides a corrective that demonstrates the importance of social class in the digital era. The digital is not democratic if those at the bottom do not have a voice.

There is an inherent assumption in much of the literature that everyone can use technologies in the same way, rather than a recognition of structural constraints affecting how different groups use the Internet for online participation. Whereas others argued that the Internet defies Olson's collective action theories due to reduced costs, my findings suggest that the costs of participation in the Internet era are not always lowered, let alone eliminated for all types of

organizations or their members. Instead, the costs of participation vary. All groups face costs for being online, including the economic resources of digital connectivity for members and the labor costs involved for organizations. But these costs are much higher for working class groups. Organizations with working class members are less likely to use the Internet for organizing than those with members from middle and upper classes. In fact, the costs may be even higher for working class members who belong to organizations with high levels of digital engagement because without focused assistance from other staff or activists, they will be excluded from participation. In addition, this study suggests that organizational costs mediate individual participation costs, invariably affecting so-called online-only movements. To consider the influence of class on social movements, scholars must consider variation in participation costs on both the individual and organizational levels.

In addition, it is useful to understand how these costs operate within organizations. While technological infrastructure and access to digital tools are important for organizations, my data show that digital activism inequality is about more than gadgets. Skilled labor for digital content production and participation was a critical mechanism. While Twitter and Facebook appear to be spontaneous digital tools, the organizations that had the highest level of online and social media activity also had staff dedicated to using these tools. With the emergence of social media professionals and tools like Radian6, HootSuite and Adobe Marketing Cloud, it is clear that digital use has moved past the point where academics can reasonably assume that organizational social media management is spontaneous.

Even though individual member constraints influenced the digital activism gap in the overall political field, these individual costs must be contextualized. In many ways, the free-rider dilemma and the concept of affordances are an imprecise framework to understand digital activist engagement. Individualized frameworks assume that decisions are made based on personal financial costs. They do not consider the existing structural constraints in the digital realm. If one has high levels of consistent Internet connection and other resources, costs may be somewhat low, but if one does not have this access, the costs of digital participation are high Interviewees talked about wanting to do more online but not having the time, resources, capacity or even the entitlement. This was true for both organizations and their individual members.

This study reveals the limitations of studies that focus exclusively on online movements. It also uncovers the behind-the-scenes offline practices, costs, and class-based constraints that are part of any organizing initiative. Building on the work of Karpf (2012)—who discussed the organizational mechanisms behind the online-only movements—this study shows that a supersize efficiency model does always hold. Costs were sometimes *higher* for mixed-class organizations that wanted to help people without Internet access involved than for those who did not. In one respect, the social movement theory of resource mobilization is a theoretical fit for the digital age because costs and resources do matter when considering class differences in digital activism. However, as McCarthy and Zald (1977) wrote, this is only a partial theory. We also need to understand broader class, social and power relations in a societal and structural context.

A key mechanism was how class power operated, and this factor is not captured by traditional measurements of costs. People from working class organizations frequently talked about how *other* people are technologically savvy. In other words, they expressed feeling powerless around technology and did not feel entitled to it, regardless of actual skill level. This finding reflected Bourdieu's (1984) explanation of how expressing political opinion requires a sense of entitlement, not just political literacy. Similarly, digital competence was not simply tied

to understanding how to operate a computer and social media platforms. Drawing on Bourdieu, digital divisions should be explored as markers of technological incompetence. To formulate a political judgment online, one needs not only technological capital but also a feeling of entitled duty, which the dominated lack and can only be acquired through the practice of producing digital content and mastering the language and discourse used by the digital elite.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter demonstrates how variation in resources and power factors into digital activism. It uncovers a deepening digital divide based on social class. Future research and theories need to address the digital activism gap.

These findings also have implications for class and movements in the digital age. Groups can be quite active offline but not so online. This fact is neglected in a literature that critiques those who do little except liking or posting about an issue, sometimes called "slacktivism" or "clicktivism." Rather than evaluate every "Like" on Facebook or Tweet on Twitter, scholars should understand that commitment can come in many forms and that these actions mean different things to different people and organizations. Whereas posting to a social media site may be a low form of commitment for someone with more resources, it may require intense commitment from someone with less resources. As activism continues to move online, this variation in costs may exacerbate inequality within and between social movements. The digital activism gap may make collective action and organizing politically harder for some groups than others as political targets and actions continue to transition to having online gateways. Groups with fewer resources and more working-class members will not be able to participate at the same rate, possibly becoming less effective. While diffusion theory suggests that eventually all social movement groups will "catch-up," in the digital realm, new technologies are constantly being created. My data suggests that digital technology creates a treadmill that reproduces inequality.

Rather than the Internet collapsing organizational and individual costs to participate in politics, as some scholars have contended, this study reveals the hidden costs of participation in the information age. Not only are costs not zero, they are variable, and they vary systematically along class lines. This produces a have a digital activism gap. Money can buy high levels of online participation, but the issue goes beyond money. Power mechanisms are also at play. Engaging in social media requires more than digital access and digital labor because class constraints limit members' online involvement. Digital activism inequalities persist based on the resources, labor and entitlement of both organizations and individual activists and members. Simply put, the societal context matters, not just the technology itself.

By focusing on groups that are active online, the existing research obscures the stark variation in Internet use. The findings reported here show a high level of digital participation among middle/upper class groups but not among working class groups. This suggests that inequalities are reproduced within and among movement organizations on the Internet, in contrast to the literature suggesting that the Internet ameliorates inequality. Because so many political organizations and activists do not participate in the latest forms of social media, social movement researchers who just examine Tweets, for example, may be miss out on digital activism from more low-income activists that may be more intermittent or occur on older platforms. Internet searches are also not sufficient to capture the full array of modern activism, as some of the most active groups are not online at all. Scholars focused on activism in the "digital era" may miss organizing that still takes place on the ground. Digitally invisible groups can still be an important actor in the 21st century. A lot of organizing still happens offline, as we have

seen throughout this study. But working class groups may need to work harder to get attention outside their circles, as well as continue to engage in disruptive tactics.

The digital activism gap identified in this research demonstrates the importance of field-level qualitative research to understanding the mechanisms and processes of digital inequality. The lack of an online presence did not necessarily imply less social movement activity, as many of the most active groups offline were the least active online in terms of participation in the issue of collective bargaining.

Earl and Kimport (2011) contended that privileging legacy organizations was not representative of digital activism. I show here that studying only online data is not representative of activism, online and offline. In effect, Big Data is too small.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion
Digital Activism in a Societal Context

From the IndyMedia peer-sharing website during the Seattle anti-globalization protests against the WTO to the so-called Facebook and Twitter revolutions of the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, many scholars highlighted in this study have suggested that digital technology in general and social media in particular, have shepherded in a new way for activists to organize with less organization.

After the initial reports of the role of Twitter in the Green Movement in Iran, a now (in)famous debate ensued between Malcolm Gladwell, the *New Yorker* writer and bestselling book author, and Clay Shirky, a prominent author and lawyer. Gladwell wrote that claims that the revolutionary protest arising out of Twitter's weak ties failed to acknowledge the role of strong organizational ties in the history of protest movements from the civil rights movement onward (2010). Shirky responded that social media and technology were critical tools for political participation in the digital era (2011). This wasn't simply a tiff between two Manhattan intellectuals. Activists, new media pundits and techno-enthusiasts of all stripes dove into this debate over whether formal strong-tie organizations are passé and individualized weak-tie digital networks are the new movement prototype. If you believe the blogs and the tweets, Gladwell was taken down in this tête-á-tête as an old school movement analyst. His name brings derision at tech conferences, where formal organizations are considered as universally bad and individual digital networks as universally good. While this is now an old debate in Twitter time, its effects still resonate in current popular and intellectual conversations about the role and relevancy of organization(s) for digital activism today

Missing in this debate is any empirical analysis of how organizations actually operate in social movements in our digital era. Why should sociologists care about this topic? This dissertation shows that organizational power, inequality, ideology and hierarchy shape digital technology use. That society shapes how we operate is not news to sociologists. As cultural theorist Raymond Williams argued, "A main characteristic of our society is a willed coexistence of very new technology and very old social forms" (2005: 191). Indeed, I found that the Internet does *not* wipe out barriers to activism; it just reflects them and reifies longstanding philosophical differences in organizing models.

The findings in this study also contradict the picture of a radical left leaderless movement so often associated with digital activism. Given the claims made over the past twenty years about the Internet's democratizing and participatory effects on politics and social movements, it is essential to construct an empirical analysis of not only *what* digital differences arise from social forces but also *how* they operate. I demonstrate that it is the more hierarchical groups that use the Internet more because organizational infrastructure is needed to develop and maintain digital participation. Working class groups use the Internet less, both because both organizations and members lack the resources to maintain this infrastructure and because they feel less entitled to use it. Right wing and reformist groups, in contrast, use the Internet more and they do so to get their message out about liberty or to reach those in power, respectively.

These factors shaping digital activism also work in tandem with each other. For instance, elite groups are much more likely to have the bureaucratic infrastructure to encourage participation. Right wing groups are more likely to have a middle-to-upper class membership base that can readily use the Internet. And reformist groups are more likely to be more hierarchical to sustain

digital engagement. Therefore, in this political field, the prototypical picture of a digital activist might be better represented as a Tea Party member than a progressive activist.

Ultimately, this dissertation speaks to questions of participation, debate and democracy. I found no connection between the Internet and the internal democracy of social movement organizations. What I found was that the Internet is used for information sharing, communicating and other tasks formerly done by print and phone. Digital engagement was more efficient, but some activists also found it more burdensome "to keep up." Rather than participatory democracy, I found that digital activism is simply embedded in some, but not all, organizing efforts, much like other media tools. What was new and different 10-20 years ago is now simply embedded in organizational processes, however democratic or undemocratic they were to begin with or continue to be.

Groups with more organizational infrastructure, class power, and conservative reformist leanings had more Facebook posts, Likes and comments and more Tweets, re-Tweets and favorites on Twitter. It is not simply that these more hierarchical and bureaucratic groups build and develop more digital platforms but also that they have more online participation. They build it and people come. Some well-funded groups can pay Facebook to promote their posts to build higher levels of online activism, but differences in online engagement go beyond resources alone. This dissertation also raises the question of what it means to participate in a social movement. As I examined the field of activism around public employees' collective bargaining, I found that all activists or leaders on this issue were tied to an organization. It is possible that this phenomenon was related to the particular political issue under study, as the topic of *collective bargaining* rights might be expected to spur organizational collective action. However, it also calls into question the claim that activism is individualized and personalized in the digital era. I argue that most people are influenced politically by an organization, whether through a co-worker, friend or even a Facebook post. The findings from this study also imply that online and offline forms of participation are connected, and that an emphasis on one or the other relates to one's organizational and demographic background. Digital democracy is a concept that can only be understood within the complex ecology of both the offline and online worlds. In order for us to have robust collective action theories it is essential for future research to incorporate what is happening behind the screen.

Digital Organizing Theory

These findings shed light on the four strands of theory that I raised in the introduction. First is the question of how new and novel digital activism is and what this newness might mean. Young people who grew up with the Internet are often dubbed "Digital Natives." These youth are supposed to be more digitally savvy than their predecessors. Applying Stinchcombe's Imprinting theory (1965) to the literature on age and digital engagement suggests that groups founded in the digital era should be "Digital Activism Natives." However, as pointed out in Chapters 3 and 4, this is not the case. The digital activism in this study defied Stinchcombe's theory that organizations are imprinted with the era of their founding. In addition, the argument that new organizations operate differently in the social media era is akin to contentions made by "new social movement" theorists two decades ago when they claimed that modern social movements were categorically different from old movements because they were decreasingly challenging the state around capitalism and increasingly stressing cultural goals (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008). But just as these scholars realized that new movements may have simply seemed different because they

were young movements rather than a new type of movement, it is possible that my findings reflect a more mature digital activism than that observed in more utopian early days.

A second broad question addressed in this study is whether or not Olson's theories of collective action and the costs of participation have become less relevant with online-only activism. The research reported here demonstrates that the cost of participation still matters. It matters very much. Class-based costs remain very significant in determining differences in digital activist scores across organizations. Although scholars use the term affordances to provide nuance to studies of new technologies by suggesting that individuals may or may not use a technology as it was intended, an affordances framework fails to adequately consider broader structural constraints for digital activism, especially class divisions. In the process, I shed light on how sociologists interested in power and class might learn from the reproduction, and even exacerbation, of inequality from this study of digital activism. Overcoming inequality is not simply a question of having the tools or skills but also the privileged power.

Finally, what of the Michels vs. Castells argument? If we revisit Table 2, we find that the data from this study do not support Castells' theory of digital democracy. Castells (2012), alongside many other scholars cited in this paper (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Earl and Kimport 2011; Raine and Wellman 2012) contended that in the current era, the Internet is attached more to individual agency than to bureaucratic roles; that organizations factor less in movement building; that social movement decision making is less hierarchical, decentralized and horizontal; that movements are less ideological and more personalized; that decisions are made more publicly and online; and that the result is more participatory democracy. My findings run counter to all of these contentions. For the political field I studied, the Internet does not overturn the Iron Law of Oligarchy, nor does it result in more internal democracy in political, labor and social movement groups.

How Methods Matter with Digital Activism Research

This study develops a new method to analyze online activism in the digital era. By analyzing a broad array of organizations within a single political field, this research shows that Internet use is a dependent and not just an independent variable, as societal structures shape Internet use for activism. This study reverses the causal direction of traditional findings regarding the relationship between technology and social movements to examine how social movements shape the use of technology. While it made sense for early research to examine flashpoints of digital activism, this study builds on an emerging scholarship (Bennett and Segerberg 2012; Karpf 2012; Kreiss 2012) that presents a more complex picture of the Internet and politics. By studying an entire political field of groups involved in one issue, this research introduces a new framework to study activism and politics in the Digital era. The diversity of organizations in this study allows for analytical leverage because it encompasses the entire organizational population around a single issue.

My findings were opposite to popular and academic portrayals of digital activism as radical, leftist, egalitarian and non-hierarchical. Several aspects of my research design revealed processes that had been previously unobserved.

First, using the multi-method approach of quantitative analysis of Internet use alongside qualitative fieldwork with all 34 organizations enabled me to measure differences among organizations' digital activism and to understanding the mechanisms motivating these differences. My findings demonstrate the relevance of studying the everyday practices of organizations, which offers a window into how most political work happens. Second, while previous scholars may have been entranced by the Internet's novel affordances, my researched moved beyond the study of

technological possibilities to understand the complex societal factors that influence how people and organizations interact with new affordances. It was only by beginning from the level of the political field—rather than the level of digital participation—that I was able to incorporate groups with little to no online presence. Whereas previous studies may have left working class groups out of a Twitter network analysis, this field-level research enabled me to discover that virtually all of the Tweets from organizations in this political field came from middle to upper class groups.

Third, the timing of my study may explain some of the difference between this and previous research. It is possible that as digital tools become more sophisticated, more resources are required to effectively mobilize them. Perhaps the diffusion curve of digital technology is even steeper than scholars previously thought. It is also possible that digital engagement has entered a mature stage where money matters, unlike the early days in which online activists pioneered new ways of organizing. Would these findings be different if the same study had been conducted five years ago or even five years from now? As scholars, we do not have a crystal ball, but my analysis of groups' dates of founding suggests that other organizational factors exerted a stronger effect on their placement on the diffusion curve than simply a group's age.

Further, by looking at both the state and the local level, this study is able to go beyond the extraordinary political movements celebrated in the national press to explore how many practice activism in North America in the 21st century.

The digital platforms included in this study may wax, wane or even disappear, but the organizational functions that these platforms serve will persist. My introduction of a new typology to understand platforms based on development, architecture and participation will be broadly applicable to new user interfaces as they develop. Future studies may evaluate further the meaning of online activism within a political field, including the connection between class, comments, content and contestation. The connection between member mobilization and online participation also merits further study. Nevertheless, this study shows that digital technologies, much like other communication tools, are embedded in the fabric of social movements. For some groups, these technologies are rendered "mundane" (Nielsen 2011), but how they are normalized varies based on social class. They remain novel to some groups, not for their "newness," but because their effective use is out-of-reach.

This study found a digital activism divide based on class, hierarchy and ideology, but this should not be taken to mean that social media have not changed social movements. For organizations with the resources and ideology to use it, social media represented an efficient and effective tool. And for working class organizations, non-hierarchical groups and radical left organizations, the Internet still mattered as part of a broader toolkit, just not to the extent anticipated by the literature.

Silicon Valley Ideology and North Carolina Collective Bargaining

The rise of the attachment of the Internet to egalitarian and horizontal movements has not only coincided with the rise of technological advancements or the influence of the movements from the 1960s. It has also run parallel to the rise of neoliberal, market-based politics and economies with individual rights at their core. Digitally networked activism is often tied to free markets, free speech, free labor and freedom from the state in what I call Silicon Valley Ideology (Schradie forthcoming). Silicon Valley, part of the San Francisco Bay Area of California, is 3000 miles from North Carolina. A century ago, Silicon Vally was a fruit farming area; today, it is the fertile ground for the corporations that control the most popular Internet platforms, such as Google, Facebook and Apple. It is home to Silicon Valley Ideology.

This ideology extends far beyond the geographic space of Silicon Valley company headquarters. It privileges the *individual* in exercising freedom of expression in a (neo)liberal system disconnected from hierarchical structural positions, such as membership in political organizations. It assumes that individual activists are all untethered Internet *users* instead of organizational *members* of political movements. Silicon Valley Ideology posits that individuals make their own decisions regarding when and where to get involved politically and that they connect through digital networks, not through top-down organizational bureaucracy. While the proponents of social movement transformations in the digital age do not all embrace the neoliberal aspects of Silicon Valley Ideology, their claims are tied into this broader view of the digital age.

Barbrook and Cameron (Barbrook, Richard and Andy Cameron 1995) critiqued *Wired Magazine* for promoting what they called a California Ideology, a "profoundly anti-statist dogma." They argued that California embodied an Internet utopian philosophy of individualism and the free market at the expense of individuals from more marginalized classes. I build on and refine their argument by specifying a Silicon Valley Ideology that is tied to the corporate headquarters of digital neoliberalism and that includes a belief in non-hierarchical, diverse participation in online spaces, especially for political purposes.

Silicon Valley Ideology may have been at play in the field of political activism around public employee collective bargaining in North Carolina, yet my data show the contradictions inherent in this ideology. My findings showed that more conservative groups, which embraced personal liberty, had higher rates of online engagement, aligning with the individualistic characteristics of Silicon Valley digital activism. At the same time, the most radical and participatory of the left groups I studied had the lowest levels of online engagement. While that may seem to contradict the idea that the Internet *allows* for broader, more horizontal participation, the left groups in this study did not describe their public digital engagement as tied to this type of democratic participation. These groups still privileged offline participation. In particular, the radical left groups directly opposed the neoliberal value of a free market and freedom from the state, and they discussed the potential downsides to embracing a technology that could isolate working class people, rather than bring them together.

I find that the "free market fundamentalism" (Somers 2008) of Silicon Valley Ideology, which developed symbiotically with the rise of the Internet, inherently clashes with efforts to ameliorate social class inequalities. When working class groups have almost no digital trace, it is not possible to claim that the Internet levels the playing field. This has political and policy implications. If the Internet influences journalists' and policymakers' views of what issues are most important, then working class people will be left out of the political equation. At best, other voices will speak for them, rendering a belief in direct democracy through the Internet even more untenable. If it is up to networked individuals to go online and participate in politics, a state without support for Internet access, electronic gadgets and literacy training leaves people in marginalized communities to pull themselves up by their digital bootstraps. The Internet is networked and non-hierarchical by design, but it presupposes that people are already wired, engaged and have the skills, practices and social, political and economic support to be active digital citizens. Thus, digital elites exist at the core of any supposedly non-hierarchical digital network. These elites are early adopters who have more resources and dominate the digital public sphere. In effect, it is, indeed, a hierarchical system. A networked neoliberal society privileges the individual user, leaving it up to personal circumstances to determine whether an individual will have the resources and motivation to engage in digital politics. As politics move into the digital realm, those people left off of the digital landscape will be left out of democracy.

It is possible that the rise of the Internet enabled the development of not only Silicon Valley Ideology but also the early social and political movements that quickly harnessed the power of the Internet. These movements were anarchistic in philosophy, typified by the anti-globalization movements. Perhaps the organizations that were most likely to critique bureaucratic and hierarchical modernity projects also happened to be early activist adopters of the Web. This is an epistemological question that deserves further study. But history may provide some clues. As Turner (2006) pointed out, the Bay Area counterculture movement influenced these early digital social movements. This counterculture was founded on the rejection of bureaucracy and hierarchy in favor of individualism, not simply egalitarianism, and it was intrinsic to the development of Silicon Valley Ideology,

Adhering to Silicon Valley Ideology does not enable participatory and democratic political organizations. This post-Fordist ideology of distributed, non-bureaucratic systems in which we can all be ourselves, communicate, network, share information and even engage in online political action without organizational support or interference did not apply to many of the groups in this study. In this study, organizations with higher levels of hierarchy fostered more participation, digital and other-wise, and participation is key to democracy. In this case, the architecture of the Internet did not replace the need for organizational architecture. So even though Silicon Valley Ideology mapped onto the left/right political orientation and even the practices of liberty observed in this study, in the end, the ideology did not apply to the more horizontal groups that Silicon Valley embraces, nor did it map onto the egalitarianism that it purports to foster. Therefore, the organizing ideology framework of organizational ideas and practices provides a window into the actual practices of digital activism on the ground, underneath the veil of Silicon Valley Ideology that dominates the digital discourse.
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The Digital Future is the Past

This study builds on a broad body of digital activism research through the comparative empirical study of the relationships among technology, democracy and organizations. This research has implications not only for theories of organizations, social movements and politics but also for social policies related to digital technology and the Internet. In the era of "hashtag activism" and "clicktivism," building and sustaining a movement, even an online movement, still requires organization. Pulling back the online curtain in the digital activism land of Oz exposes a structured organizational landscape.

During my study of the political field of activism around collective bargaining in North Carolina, many of the groups I studied became involved in the Moral Monday movement, which quickly grew into a statewide movement with national implications. The groups involved in this protest did not use Twitter to spread news about the first handful of protests or to organize this movement. Instead, the Tweets that emerged about Moral Monday and ultimately gained nationwide attention *reflected* the high level of organization that the North Carolina NAACP and other groups had already put into this movement through face-to-face decision-making and organizing across multiple media. While technology companies such as Facebook or Twitter want us to believe that their platforms are a form of disruption, liberation and even revolution that flatten economic and political hierarchies, this simply was not the case on the ground. A Silicon Valley Ideology masks the collective and organizational action—rather than networked individualism—necessary to effect political change.

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APPENDIX

Table 1
The Political, Labor and Social Movement Organizations that Constitute the Political Field of Activism around Public Employee Collective Bargaining Rights in North Carolina

Left—Support Collective Bargaining	Right—Oppose Collective Bargaining
American Assoc. of Univ. Professors - NC	Americans for Prosperity-NC
Black Workers for Justice	Caldwell Tea Party
CFFA-660 Charlotte Firefighters Assoc.	CIVITAS
Citizens Against Racism	Coalition for NC Jobs
Historic Thousands on Jones St. Coalition	Crystal Coast Tea Party
HOPE Coalition	John Locke Foundation/Carolina Journal
IBT-Local 391 Teamsters	Moccasin Creek Minutemen
Institute for Southern Studies	Moore TEA Citizens
Jobs With Justice - NC	NC Association of County Commissioners
NAACP - NC	NC Board of Governors
National Association of Social Workers- NC	NC Chamber of Commerce
NC AFL-CIO	NC Freedom
NC Association of Educators	NC League of Municipalities
State Employees Association of NC	NC Renegade
UE Local 150	NC School Board Association
UNC-Student Action with Workers	NC Tea Party
Workers World Party-Durham Branch	NC Tea Party Revolution

Table 2
Claims of Organizational Characteristics: From Michels To Castells

Modernity—Michels' Iron Law	Digital Age—Castells' Digital Democracy
Bureaucratic roles	Individual initiative and agency
Focus on organizations	Organizations matter less
Hierarchical	Non-hierarchical decisions
Oligarchic	Decentralized and horizontal
Ideology tethered to organization	Non-ideological and personalized
Backroom decisions	Public & transparent online decisions
Less participatory	More participatory
➔ Less democratic	➔ More democratic

Table 3
Digital Activist Score Computations by Activity and Platform - Standardized

	DEVELOPMENT If you Build it…	ARCHITECTURE And you design it for participation…	PARTICIPATION Will they come…?	
	How much has the group developed and built the platform?	*How much of the platform is designed for participation?*	*What is the extent of participation on the platform?*	
Web Site	Does the group have a Web site = 1 + Has the group updated it the last 6 months? = 1 + Does the Web site have video, as a measure of complexity? = 1	1 for each of the following features of the Web site. Is there a place for: donations, signing up for membership, signing up to subscribe for alerts, social media links, comments, calendar of events and a petition or other interactive feature. Max #=7	N/A - Do not have unique visitor numbers for Web sites	**Web Site Score**
Facebook	Does the group have a Facebook = 1 + # posts/days on Facebook + #days on Facebook/1000	Have FB group = 2; or Open page=1; or No one can post on page=0	#posts/members or likers + unique posters/posts + unique posters/members or likers + #comments/#posts + #comments/members or likers + #likes/#posts + #likers or #members/1000	**Facebook Score**
Twitter	Does the group have Twitter = 1 + #Tweets/day + #days on Twitter/1000	Mentions/Tweets + Hashtags/Tweets + Following/days on Twitter	Retweeted/Tweets + Favorites/Tweets + Followers/Days on Twitter	**Twitter Score**
	Development Score	**Architecture Score**	**Participation Score**	**TOTAL Digital activist score**

Each of the 8 cells is standardized with a z score. All of the scores for each row and for each column are averaged to determine the platform (Web site, Facebook and Twitter) or activity (development, architecture, and participation) scores. These activity scores are then standardized as well and averaged for the total digital activist scores, which are also standardized. Web site evaluations took place over 18 months; Facebook for the lifespan of the platform; Twitter for both lifespan and 6/12-6/13, depending on the measure.

Table 4

Number of Organizations by Founding Era

Era	Frequency
Pre Web (Before 1995)	17
Web (Between 1995-2005)	6
Social Media (After 2006)	11

Table 5
Average Standardized Total Digital Activist Scores by Organizational Characteristics

	Average Standardized Total z score	Coefficient Difference
Pre Internet Era	-0.04	0.00, 0.12
Web Era	-0.04	
Social Media Era	+0.08	
Less Hierarchy	-0.53*	0.74*
More Hierarchy	+0.22	
Membership	-0.21*	0.90*
Advocacy	+0.68	
Staff	NA	0.01*
No National Ties	-0.27	0.44
National Ties	+0.17	
Not Statewide	+0.05	-0.06
Statewide	-0.01	
Left	-0.33*	0.66*
Right	+0.33	
Radical	-0.41*	0.67*
Reformist	+0.25	
Working Class	-1.23*	
Mixed Class	+0.06	1.30*
Middle/Upper Class	+0.33*	1.56*

-Shows statistical significance at the p <0.05 level between the other variable with a t-test.
-All values are standardized scores based on Table 2 and the plus signs indicate above the mean of 0 for the total score and the minus signs indicate below the mean.
-Bureaucracy, as measured by staff, does not have an average score by a category because it is a continuous variable.
-Under the coefficient differences column, the value reflects the difference between the two types of organization. In the case of era and class, the differences noted are between the pre-Web era and working class groups, respectively.

Table 6a
Era of Founding: Standardized Digital Activist Score Differences by Platform and Online Activity

	Development	Architecture	Participation	Total Platform
Web site	-1.10*	-0.54	NA	-0.88
	-0.04	-0.14		-0.10
Facebook	-0.06	0.66	0.68	0.56
	0.16	0.91*	0.47	0.67
Twitter	-1.89	0.14	0.04	0.00
	0.38	-0.20	-0.75*	-0.22
Total Activity	-0.56	0.13	0.44	**0.00**
	0.20	0.29	-0.17	**0.13**

-The fiirst score reported in each box is the standard deviation difference in total standardized score between
pre-Web era groups and Web era groups. The second score in each box is the difference between pre-Web era groups
and social media era groups.
-Asterisk indicates statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.
-The bolded number is the total digital activist score difference.

Table 6b
Hierarchy: Standardized Digital Activist Score Differences by Platform and Online Activity

	Development	Architecture	Participation	Total Platform
Web site	1.12*	1.06*	NA	1.17*
Facebook	0.38	-0.54	0.51	0.15
Twitter	0.14	0.43	0.77*	0.53
Total Activity	0.69	0.48	0.78*	**0.74***

-The score reported in each box is the standard deviation difference between hierarchical and non-hierarchical groups. Positive
numbers indicate that more hierarchical groups have a higher average score.
-The asterisk indicates statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.
-The bolded number is the total digital activist score difference.

Table 6c
Advocacy vs. Membership: Standardized Digital Activist Score Differences by Platform and Online Activity

	Development	Architecture	Participation	Total Platform
Web site	0.65	0.50	NA	0.62
Facebook	0.73	-0.13	0.50	0.48
Twitter	1.03*	0.64	0.87*	1.01*
Total Activity	1.01*	0.51	0.83*	**0.90***

-The score reported in each box is the standard deviation difference between advocacy and membership-based groups. Positive
numbers indicate that advocacy groups have a higher average score.
-The asterisk indicates statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.
-The bolded number is the total digital activist score difference.

Table 6d
Staff: Standardized Digital Activist Score Differences by Platform and Online Activity

	Development	Architecture	Participation	Total Platform
Web site	0.01	0.01*	NA	0.01*
Facebook	0.00	-0.01	0.01*	0.00
Twitter	0.00	0.01*	0.01*	0.01*
Total Activity	0.00	0.01	0.02*	**0.01***

-The sore reported in each box is the associated increase in the score for each one-person increase in staff.
-The asterisk indicates statistically significant at the p < 0.05 level.
-The bolded number is the total digital activist score difference.

Table 6e
National Ties: Standardized Digital Activist Score Differences by Platform and Online Activity

	Development	Architecture	Participation	Total Platform
Web site	0.25	0.65	NA	0.48
Facebook	0.10	0.30	0.52	0.40
Twitter	-0.08	0.21	0.20	0.13
Total Activity	0.11	0.59	0.44	**0.44**

-The score reported in each box is the standard deviation difference between groups that have national ties and those that do not. Positive numbers indicate that groups with national affiliations have a higher average score.
-The asterisk indicates statistically significant at the p < 0.05 level.
-The bolded number is the total digital activist score difference.

Table 6f
State/Size: Standardized Digital Activist Score Differences by Platform and Online Activity

	Development	Architecture	Participation	Total Platform
Web site	0.01	-0.32	NA	-0.17
Facebook	0.07	-1.01*	-0.56	-0.65
Twitter	0.37	0.44	0.73	0.61
Total Activity	0.19	-0.46	0.11	**-0.06**

-The score reported in each box is the standard deviation difference between groups that are statewide and larger and those that are local and smaller. Positive numbers indicate that statewide/larger groups have a higher average score.
-The asterisk indicates statistically significant at the p < 0.05 level.
-The bolded number is the total digital activist score difference.

Table 6g
Political Orientation: Standardized Digital Activist Score Differences by Platform and Online Activity

	Development	Architecture	Participation	Total Platform
Web site	0.66*	0.34	NA	0.54
Facebook	0.42	0.00	0.57	0.43
Twitter	0.68*	0.72*	0.18	0.63
Total Activity	0.73*	0.54	0.45	**0.66***

-The score reported in each box is the standard deviation difference between groups that are right wing and those that are left wing. All positive values indicate that right wing groups have a higher average score.
-The asterisk indicates statistically significant at the p < 0.05 level.
-The bolded number is the total digital activist score difference.

Table 6h
Political Strategy: Standardized Digital Activist Score Differences by Platform and Online Activity

	Development	Architecture	Participation	Total Platform
Web site	0.88*	0.85*	NA	0.93*
Facebook	0.23	-0.05	0.51	0.30
Twitter	0.13	0.59	0.34	0.42
Total Activity	0.52	0.71*	0.52	**0.67***

-The score reported in each box is the standard deviation difference between groups that are radical and those that are reformist. All positive values indicate that reformist groups have a higher average score than radical groups.
-The asterisk indicates statistically significant at the p < 0.05 level.
-The bolded number is the total digital activist score difference.

Table 6i
Class: Standardized Digital Activist Score Differences by Platform and Online Activity

	Development	Architecture	Participation	Total Platform
Web site	0.44	0.42	NA	0.46
	0.90	1.14*		1.10*
Facebook	1.34*	1.33*	0.59	1.43*
	1.25*	0.77	0.80	1.23*
Twitter	1.26*	0.80	0.75	1.11*
	1.09*	1.13*	1.16*	1.34*
Total Activity	1.26*	1.31*	0.82	**1.29***
	1.35*	1.55*	1.20*	**1.56***

-First score reported is the coefficient and difference in total standardized score between mixed class groups and working class groups. The second score is the difference between middle/upper class groups and working class groups.
-The asterisk indicates statistically significant at the p < 0.05 level.
-The bolded number is the total digital activist score difference

Table 7

Average Standardized Digital Activist Scores by Hierarchy Level and Organizational Type

	Membership	Advocacy
Less Hierarchical	**-0.70**	0.17
More Hierarchical	0.01	**0.85**

-The score reported in each box is the average score based on standard deviation for that group.

-The difference of 1.45 standard deviations between less hierarchical membership groups and more hierarchical advocacy groups is statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Table 8
Regression Analyses on Standardized Digital Activist Score

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k
More Hierarchical (vs Less Hier.)	0.70*	0.54		0.74*			0.62				
Advocacy (vs Membership)	0.86*				1.02*			0.63			
More Bureaucratic & Staff (vs Less Bur.)		0.01							0.00		
Right (vs Left)			0.51	0.66*						0.24	
Reformist (vs Radical)			0.51		0.79*						0.27
Middle/Upper Class (vs Working)						1.57*	1.40*	1.37*	1.35*	1.40*	1.39*
Mixed Class (vs Working)						1.29*	1.33*	1.15*	1.27*	1.18*	1.22*
R2	0.25	0.27	0.16			0.29	0.36	0.35	0.33	0.30	0.30
N	34	34	34			34	34	34	34	34	34

-I only included the factors that were significant in the t-tests.
-Note that the r-squared represents and reflects the small sample size
-* $p < 0.05$

Table 9

Total Digital Activist Score by Class, Ideology and Organizational Characteristics

Standardized Total Score	Social Class	Political Orientation	Strategy	Organization Type	Hierarchy
2.35	middle/upper	right	reformist	advocacy	more
1.91	middle/upper	right	reformist	advocacy	more
1.29	middle/upper	right	reformist	membership	more
1.1	middle/upper	right	reformist	advocacy	more
0.97	mixed	right	reformist	membership	more
0.84	mixed	left	radical	membership	more
0.82	middle/upper	left	radical	advocacy	more
0.82	mixed	right	reformist	membership	more
0.69	middle/upper	right	reformist	membership	less
0.56	mixed	left	reformist	membership	more
0.55	middle/upper	right	reformist	membership	more
0.46	middle/upper	right	reformist	membership	more
0.46	mixed	right	radical	advocacy	less
0.33	middle/upper	left	reformist	membership	more
0.25	mixed	left	reformist	membership	more
0.23	mixed	left	radical	advocacy	more
0.00	middle/upper	right	reformist	membership	more
-0.01	middle/upper	left	reformist	membership	more
-0.11	mixed	right	radical	advocacy	less
-0.12	middle/upper	right	reformist	membership	more
-0.13	mixed	left	reformist	membership	more
-0.44	middle/upper	left	radical	membership	less
-0.55	mixed	right	radical	membership	less
-0.66	working	left	radical	membership	more
-0.69	working	left	radical	membership	less
-0.72	mixed	left	radical	membership	less
-0.76	middle/upper	left	reformist	membership	more
-0.91	mixed	right	radical	membership	less
-0.92	mixed	left	reformist	membership	less
-1.17	working	left	reformist	membership	more
-1.27	middle/upper	right	reformist	advocacy	more
-1.53	middle/upper	right	reformist	membership	more
-1.57	working	left	radical	membership	more
-2.06	working	left	radical	membership	less

All values are standardized scores based on Table 2. The values indicate standard deviation distance from the mean.

Table 10
Average Standardized Digital Activist Score by Class and Ideology

|	Left	Right
Working Class	-1.23	NA
Mixed Class	0.02	0.11
Middle to Upper Class	0.08	0.45

-The score reported in each box is the average score based on standard deviation for that group.
-The difference working class left groups and middle to upper class right groups is statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Table 11
Analysis of Facebook Content by Organizational Characteristics—Percentage of Posts and Links

	More Hier.	Less Hier.	Right	Left	Reform.	Rad'l	Patriot	Not Patriot	Working Class	Mixed Class	Middle & Upper Class
POSTS											
Debate Organizational Issue	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01
Debate Political Issue	.26*	0.20	0.23	0.20	0.20*	0.25	0.26*	0.19	0.29*	0.22	0.20
Encourage Online/Offline Participation	0.21	0.20	0.19*	0.24	0.22	0.21	0.20	0.22	0.27*	0.22	0.20
LINKS											
Debate Organizational Issue	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.01
Debate Political Issue	0.36*	0.51	0.45*	0.34	0.36*	0.50	0.53*	0.34	0.42	0.40	0.40
Encourage Online/Offline Participation	0.17	0.16	0.14*	0.20	0.16	0.19	0.14	0.18	0.20	0.18	0.16

-Numbers are based on a sample of posts for each group from the entire time they were on Facebook until June 30, 2013, and they are the average percentages of each post and link coded twice by a team of trained undergraduate coders.
-Links were articles, video clips, or other content that the team coded. Posts indicate the content of the words posted.
-Statistically significant differences at the $p < 0.05$ level between group types with asterisk.
-For "Debate Organizational Issue," these are posts or links that are about a debate within the organization in terms of direction that the organization is/should be taking. It is about an issue that the organization is organizing around that is debateable.
-For "Debate Political Issue," these are posts or links that are an editorial opinion that is part of a larger political debate either nationally or locally but not necessarily about the organization's own work.
-For "Encourage online/offline participation," these are posts or links that are an announcement about a public event, conference, rally, meeting, fundraiser or another way for someone to get involved in the organization (or someone else's organizational activities). It is a call to action in any form.

Figure 1
Organization Formation Date by Total Standardized Digital Activist Scores
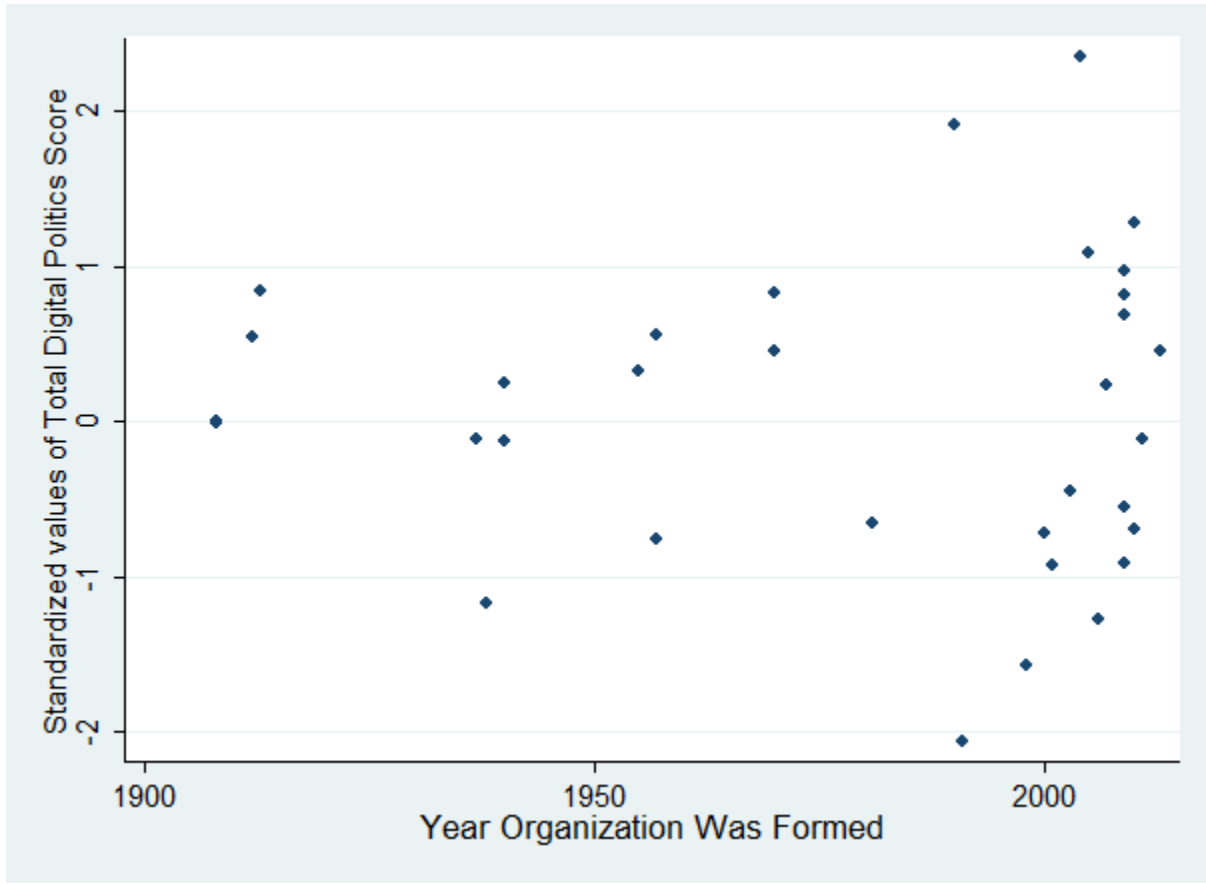
Diamonds are total digital activist scores scaled by platform for each group, calculated based on Table 2 measures. This excludes the outlier of the NC Board of Governors, founded in 1789.

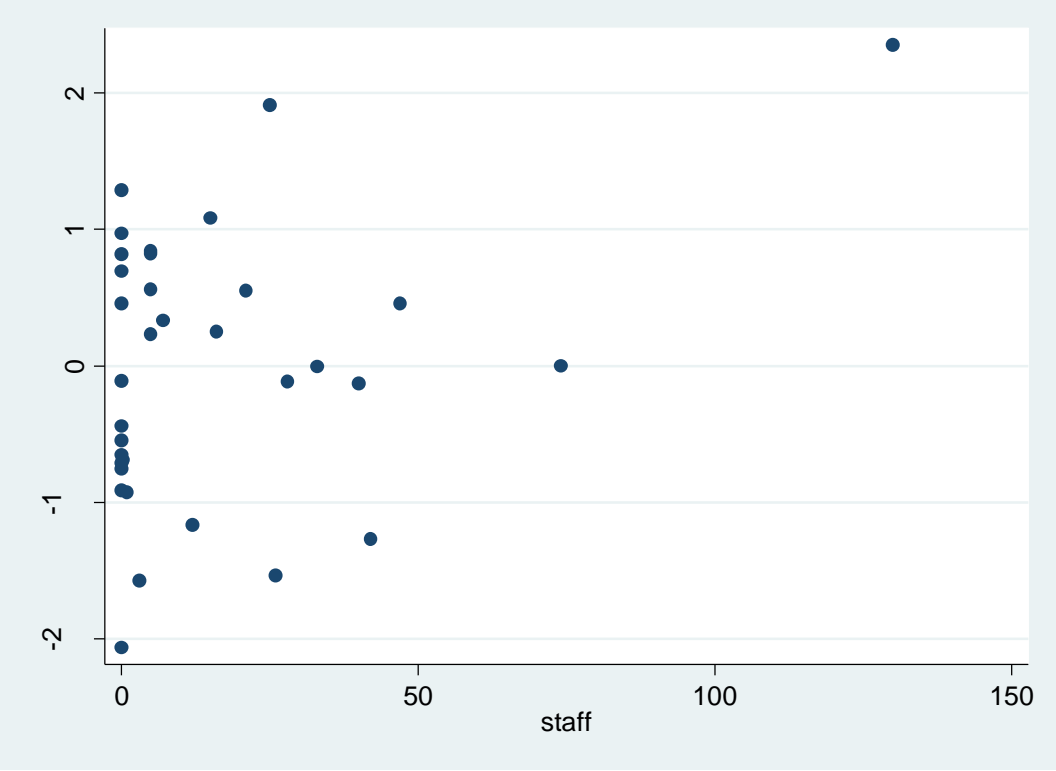**Figure 2 –Staff (as a Measure of Bureaucracy) by Total Standardized Digital Activist Scores**

Figure 3
Standardized Average Total Digital Activist Scores by Social Class of the Organization

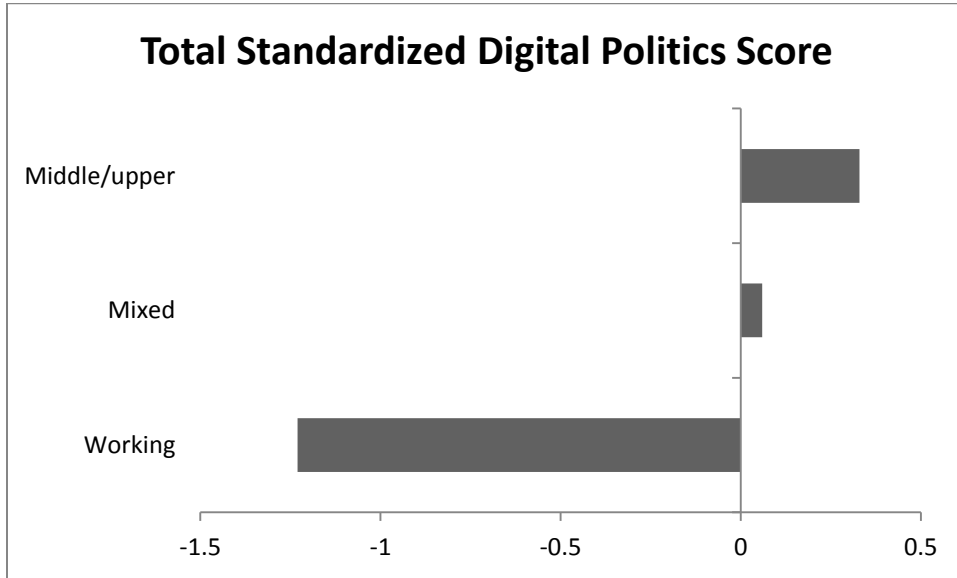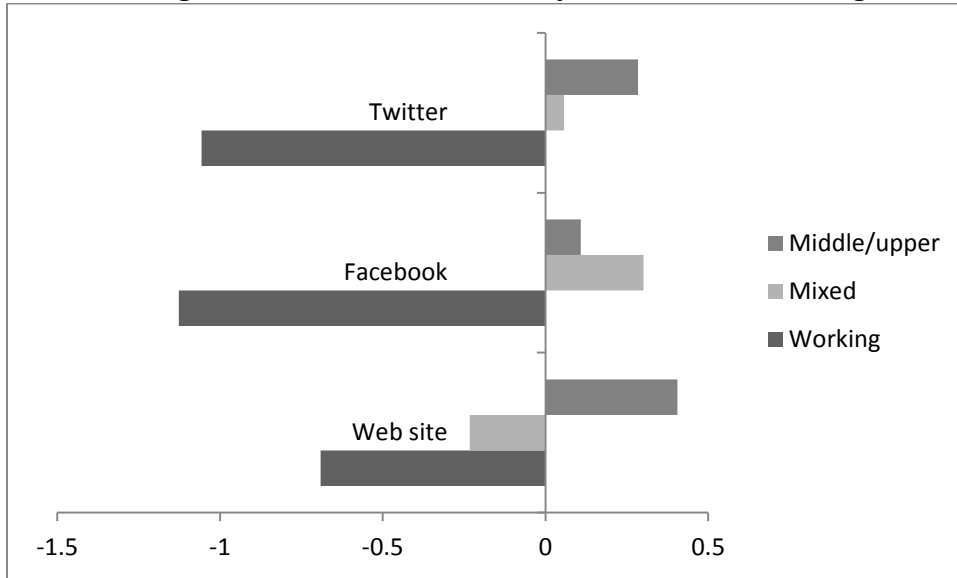**Total Standardized Digital Politics Score**

Figure 4
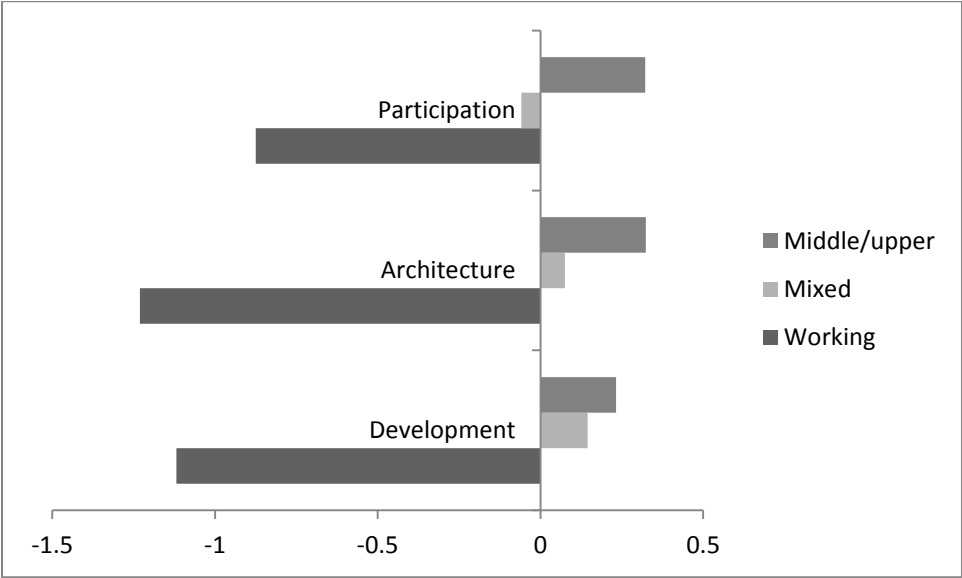**Scaled Average Scores of Each Platform by Social Class of the Organization**

The y-axis is the standardized average scores from each platform based on Table 2

Figure 5
Scaled Average Scores of Each Activity by Social Class of the Organization

The y-axis is the standardized average scores from each activity based on Table 2