COLLECTIVE ACTION AND DIGITAL INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES: THE SEARCH FOR EXPLANATORY MODELS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS' PROPENSITY TO USE DICTS IN DEVELOPED DEMOCRACIES

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A DISSERTATION

in

Communication

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2015

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DEDICATION

I am grateful to my adviser, Dr. Michael X. Delli Carpini, my co-adviser Monroe Price, and to Dr. Devra Moehler and Dr. Marwan Kraidy for their help, advice, and guidance.

In particular, however, I would like to thank the friends and family who saw me through this process, and of course, Tim.

ABSTRACT

COLLECTIVE ACTION AND DIGITAL INFORMATION COMMUNICATION

TECHNOLOGIES: THE SEARCH FOR EXPLANATORY MODELS OF SOCIAL

MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS' PROPENSITY TO USE DICTS IN DEVELOPED

DEMOCRACIES

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Digital information communication technologies (DICTs) play an ever-more prominent

role in politics, from the technologically sophisticated presidential campaign of Barack

Obama to the Twitter-inspired Occupy Wall Street movement. However, not all political

groups embrace technology to the same degree. Little scholarly attention has been paid

to understanding why some groups adopt DICTs and use them to achieve political goals,

while others do not. This dissertation attempts to remedy this by examining what drives

DICT adoption among 48 organizations involved in advocacy activities in support of and

in opposition to gay rights and marriage equality. It further contributes to the literature

on DICTs and politics by considering the role of national context in DICT adoption,

selecting organizations based in the United States, Ireland, and the United Kingdom, and

comparing patterns of DICT adoption cross-nationally. Several important findings

emerge from this research. First, there is significant variation in the extent to which the 48 organizations under study adopted DICTs. There appears to be no relationship between organizational ideology and an organization's tendency to adopt DICTs, nor do the characteristics of the organizations' staff or target publics appear to influence their adoption of DICTs, although this does seem to affect the extent to which they deploy offline tools. The paper finds that first-mover advantage plays a key role in DICT adoption, with laggards finding it hard to build online momentum. Further, the amount of resources an organization is able to deploy strongly affects their ability to adopt DICTs. A number of national factors also appear to play a role in DICT adoption, particularly the competitiveness of the issue that organizations are engaged with, and the political traditions of the nation in which organizations are domiciled. Overall, this paper finds that the adoption of DICTs is a complex process, born of an interaction between an organization and its characteristics, and the environment in which it operates. The dissertation concludes by offering a model of this process, suggesting that it could help organizations build better strategies for DICT adoption, particularly when circumstances are challenging.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2010 a wave of protests convulsed the Middle East and North Africa (MENA),

facilitated by the use of new digital information communication technologies (DICTs)

such as mobile phones (Baron, 2012; Comunello & Anzera, 2012; Harb, 2011; Khondker,

2011; Sabadello, 2011; Skinner, 2011; Stepanova, 2011). A year later "Occupy Wall

Street" protestors coordinated a seemingly leaderless global campaign against

contemporary capitalist arrangements using digital tools such as Twitter and Facebook to

spread messages, share logistical information, and mobilize thousands of people in

dozens of cities worldwide (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012; Gaby & Caren, 2012; Juris,

2012; Theocharis, Lowe, van Deth, & Albacete, n.d.).

As these two examples illustrate, DICTS are playing an increasingly prominent, if

still not fully understood role in collective action and social movement politics.[1]

However, not all social movements engage in the same practices, use the same tools, or

even rely on the internet and DICTs to the same extent. My own research among Tea

Party groups in the United States, for example, found that they did not deploy Web 2.0

tools to organize, instead focusing their recruitment and mobilization efforts on personal

networks, using the "mundane internet tool" (Nielsen, 2011) of e-mail newsletters and e-

mail lists to communicate, but also relying on the telephone and regular face-to-face

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[1] DICTS are also changing the landscape of more "routine" periods of contention within
institutionalized politics such as elections. For example, in 2012 the Obama campaign again
raised the bar for online electoral campaigning through the use of such things as a dedicated
social networking site, an iPhone application that allowed individuals to act as one-person phone
banks, an endless stream of online video, and a data mining operation that tapped dozens of
databases and online information traces and used sophisticated modeling to identify and reach
prospective voters, supporters, and volunteers (Ghani, 2013; Davidsen, 2013; Kreiss, 2012).
However, while distinguishing institutionalized politics such as elections from social movements
can be increasingly analytically and conceptually difficult (Chadwick, 2007; Masket, Heaney,
Miller, & Strolovich, 2009), my focus in this dissertation will be on the latter.

meetings. Karpf (2009, 2012) has documented a substantial and sustained gap between the use of the internet, data, and Web 2.0 tools by tech-savvy progressive organizers and activists and that of their lagging conservative counterparts in the United States. And, as I will detail in my literature review, many studies document variation in the use of the internet among social movements of different stripes in other countries. However, as I will demonstrate, to date there has been relatively little scholarly attention paid to systematically identifying factors that may explain variations in the use of DICTS among such movements, and there has been little attempt to identify variables that hold explanatory power across different national contexts.

My dissertation contributes to the literature by comparatively examining similarities and differences in the use of DICTS by social movement advocacy organizations in three developed democracies; specifically groups organized in support of or in opposition to gay rights and marriage equality in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ireland. I am interested in understanding the extent to which variation in the adoption of digital tools is associated with the characteristics of the actors, including their ideology, the demographics of the groups they target, their connections to other organizations, and the dynamics of the political process, including the actors' relationships to political power. I am also interested in determining whether patterns of usage and non-usage are similar across different national contexts, and in offering explanations for these differences.

To achieve this, I draw on data collected through the analysis of secondary sources, an organizational survey, an in-depth analysis of organizations' online activities, and elite interviews. My approach is a hybrid of inductive and deductive research. I start

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from a set of expectations culled from the existing literature, which I summarize in a simple heuristic model. However, my approach also allows for the possibility of gaining new, unexpected insights from my deep reading of my data, my elite interviews, and my analysis of survey answers (i.e., grounded research – see Glaser & Strauss, 1999). I incorporate both quantitative and qualitative data in my analysis, and use the insights I gain to build a new heuristic model that captures the dynamic processes I observe and the impact that national context and environment has on processes of DICT adoption.

In my first chapter, I will introduce and discuss the various bodies of literature that inform my proposed project. The second chapter will outline my arguments and the particular variables I wish to examine. Chapter three provides a detailed discussion of my proposed methodology and the data I collect. Chapters four, five, and six detail my findings, offering my analysis of my initial heuristic model, an assessment of the ways in which DICT adoption differ by country and some potential explanations therefore, and a description of the modified model that I propose offers insight into the process of DICT adoption by advocacy organizations.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

This project locates itself in research on the use of DICTS in the organization and mobilization of collective action (McAdam & Tarrow, 2010; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001). As such, it draws on several literatures that have often developed independently of one another. In order to cover this broad terrain, my review of relevant literature proceeds as follows. I begin with a general introduction to research on politics, the Internet, and related information and communication technologies. I then briefly discuss the development and state of research on social movements, followed by a review of the current state of knowledge about the use of DICTS by social movements. Finally, I focus more specifically on what the literature tells us about my central research question: which factors best account for variations in the use of the internet and other DICTs by political actors.

DICTS and Politics

Digital information and communication technologies, or DICTs, refers to the constellation of new technologies, tools, practices, and affordances that have emerged over the past 25 years. As such, this term captures a host of tools that involve the transfer of digital information from one user to another, from a website to the computer of a visitor, for example, or from one person's mobile device to another person's. Furthermore, following Salter (2003), I do not wish my use of the term DICTs to be understood purely as a reference to particular technological tools. DICTs also incorporate practices and paradigms – they privilege certain skills, for example, and encourage certain types of behaviors and uses and discourage others. Thus, DICTs is a rich term,

referring both to tools and to the practices attached to them – both to cookies and to the uses to which the data gathered by cookies are generally put.

As many scholars have noted (Anstead & Chadwick, 2008; Breindl, 2010a; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Fung, Gilman, & Shkabatur, 2013; Sibbernsen, 2012), the study of DICTs (starting most often with the Internet) and their role in politics has generally been dominated by two schools of thought: technological optimists, who argue that the unique affordances of online technologies have the potential to revolutionize the practice of politics, and pessimists, who insist that the constraints of pre-existing power relations and political structures will be replicated or exacerbated online, and that online tools will be used for surveillance and the maintenance of power and the status quo. Leading voices among the optimists include Benkler (1999a, 1999b, 2002, 2003, 2006), Castells (1996, 2009, 2010), Negroponte (1996), Shirky (2009, 2011), and Noveck (2010), while prominent pessimists include Hindman (2008), Morozov (2011), and Schlozman, Verba, and Brady, (2012). Over the years, much research and debate has been driven by the search for evidence that one or the other side is correct.

In the early days of DICTs scholarship, when empirical evidence was still sparse and much of the writing on the topic came from activists, information scientists, legal scholars and technologists (Farrell, 2012), those who imagined the new communication technologies birthing a democratizing revolution in politics dominated the discussion. In his magisterial trilogy of books on the information age, for example, Castells (1996, 2009, 2010) posited a number of ways in which the new technologies would fundamentally reshape society, introducing a new age of networked capitalist development (for a discussion of his themes, see Loader, 2008). These themes continued

to have resonance over time, and were echoed in influential works like Benkler's (2006) book on social production and networks, which explored the internet's potential for enabling new forms of collaborative production of media and material goods, as well as in Shirky's (2009) book examining the new forms of collective organization that the internet enables and speculating as to their democratizing potential. Scholars anticipated that DICTs would usher in a new era of political engagement worldwide and would deepen democracy and broaden political participation in technologically advanced democracies by lowering barriers and costs (Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, 2010; Farina, Newhart, Cardie, & Cosley, 2010; Noveck, 2010; Osimo, 2008). As I will discuss, these hopes and predictions inspired a great deal of the work on the relationship between DICTs and politics, with many scholars exploring the ways in which DICTs enable new forms of collaboration, organization, production, and low-cost communication for political purposes.

As scholarship developed and empirical evidence began to accumulate, however, more-pessimistic assessments of the role of DICTs in politics emerged. Scholars noted the existence of a digital divide; those with access to fewer material and educational resources were less able to acquire and utilize new technologies for political engagement and economic purposes, and so faced the possibility of further marginalization (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008; Hargittai & Litt, 2012, Norris, 2001). In addition, as these technologies developed, tendencies toward centralization, corporatization, and increased control and surveillance manifested, leading scholars to conclude that the internet would primarily replicate or deepen offline patterns of power and authority (Hindman, 2008; Margolis & Resnick, 2000; Morozov, 2011). Further, many worried that the ease with which DICTs

could be used to find ideologically congruent information would lead to political polarization and ideological segregation and diminish the quality of democratic discourse (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011; Hargittai & Kane, 2008; Sunstein, 2002, 2009; Yardi, & Boyd, 2010).

More recently, scholars have begun to raise concerns about the role of so-called "Big Data" in politics (Kreiss, 2012). Campaigns increasingly use a range of public and commercial databases and data gathered from online tools like cookies to segment and target voters with greater accuracy and a higher degree of personal tailoring (Ghani, 2013; Hersh, 2013; Issenberg, 2012); researchers worry that such tactics invade voters' privacy and reduce their political autonomy (Barocas, 2012; Evans, 2012; Tufekci, 2013). The use of data mining techniques is not limited to political campaigns; social movement and non-profit organizations also deploy such tools online, raising additional concerns about privacy and their effect on democratic processes (Delany, 2013; Karpf, 2009, 2010a; 2010b). Despite a number of empirical studies, then, there is as yet no scholarly consensus on whether DICTs have had a net positive or a net negative effect on the political realm, or on the context in which effects are likely to be positive or negative. A debate between these two camps, and research on both sides continues.

These twin themes of optimism and pessimism speak directly to the present project. Like the optimists, I am interested in examining the ways in which political actors have used DICTs to innovate in the practice of contentious politics, to form new collectives and new types of organizations, and to mobilize and engage citizens for collective action. At the same time, however, in attempting to evaluate what leads to the differential adoption of online affordances by political actors, I emphasize the limiting

factors that constrain patterns of adoption and usage. Like the pessimists, I am concerned

with gaps in online participation and usage and their relationship to material constraints,

as well as to the broader national and institutional contexts in which actors find

themselves. Thus, my project, like many contemporary accounts of DICTs and their

relationship to politics, will tread a middle ground between these poles, noting the ways

in which pre-existing and external structures of power, distributions of resources, and

legal and institutional arrangements limit the democratizing and empowering potential of

the internet, but also noting the ways in which online tools and new technologies have

enabled new forms of collective action, new political identities and coalitions, and new

means of political engagement that represent a change to the practice of politics. As we

move now to an exploration of research on social movements and on the role of DICTs in

collective action, these twin themes – the regressive tendencies and the revolutionary

power of DICTs – will form a backdrop to our overall understanding of the

internet/politics nexus.

Social Movements and Collective Action

The study of collective action has a long history. Early students of contentious

political activity by non-institutional actors, generally groups of citizens with grievances,

initially approached their subjects through the lens of extremism, deprivation, and

violence (Tarrow, 2011). Building on the work of eighteenth century sociologist Emile

Durkheim, disruptive collective action was seen as a symptom of anomie, of dislocation

from traditional roles and identities and the rootlessness that accompanied the Industrial

Revolution (Tilly, 1978, 2006). Scholars theorized that relative deprivation –

impoverishment or the denial to one group of resources that another group possessed –

led dislocated individuals in industrial society to embrace violent, disruptive, and deviant behavior in a bid to redress their grievances. Such perspectives often had a Marxist inflection; collective action was understood as the almost-inevitable consequence of inequality and the capitalist production system, which disempowered and exploited workers. The work of Chicago School sociologists Park and Burgess (1921) added the idea of irrationality to the study of collective behavior; these scholars proposed the irrationality of the mob as a model for how riots and protests occurred. The emphasis was thus on the social psychology of collective action, the ways in which individuals' deprivation and irrationality led them to embrace deviant, non-normative behavior.

Over time, however, this social psychological paradigm was challenged. Faced with the peace and civil rights movements of the 1960s, scholars reevaluated their models of collective action. Researchers, noting that while grievances are ubiquitous, movements seeking their redress are not, began to ask why certain marginalized groups, but not others, took action at particular times, but not at others. A new generation of scholars began to build a theory that defined the object of study, namely social movements, with greater care, and focused on questions of material, social and cultural resources and the political environment, emphasizing the roles of organizations, social networks, and movement and government tactics, a perspective that came to be known as the resource mobilization paradigm (Olson, 1971; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996; Tilly, 1993, 2004). The emphasis in the study of collective action moved from treating it as aberrant to seeing it as a part of the political process in a democracy. By reconceptualizing sustained collective action as a social movement, researchers were able to bring new models to bear on the study of why and how collective action occurred. In their seminal

piece on the resource mobilization paradigm, McCarthy and Zald (1977) explained: "This approach emphasizes both societal support and constraint of social movement phenomena. It examines the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements." (p. 121).

Scholars working in the resource mobilization paradigm have offered various definitions of social movements that emphasized their distinctiveness from political parties, interest groups, and revolutionaries. For example, Sydney Tarrow (2011) defined social movements as "collective challenges [to elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes] by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents and authorities." (p. 18). He emphasized that social movements involve sustained engagement – fleeting events like spontaneous riots are thus excluded. Social movements also involve people who share a purpose and sense of solidarity, who have a shared identity that inspires them to participate in the movement, and who seek to challenge elites, thus marking them as a phenomenon distinct from interest groups and political parties. Finally, social movements engage in sustained interactions with elites, opponents, and authorities; unlike revolutionaries, they seek to interact with and alter the system, rather than overthrow it through violent or other means. In a similar vein, Tilly (2004) defined social movements as a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns through which ordinary people make collective claims. For Tilly, social movements are among the primary vehicles through which citizens engage in politics; because they involve ordinary people engaged in contention and making collective

claims, social movements are distinct from institutionalized collectives like political parties or lobbying groups.

By clearly defining social movements as the object of study, the field thus moved away from the social psychology perspective that pathologized collective behavior, instead treating social movements as enduring, semi-institutional phenomena to be understood through a structural lens.

Initially, the resource mobilization paradigm emphasized material and political resources above all else (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). However, as the paradigm developed, the almost-exclusive emphasis on the mobilization of resources evolved into a more nuanced perspective that incorporated the role of external political opportunities and actors, including the media and their framing of movements, as well as emotion, communication, and the dynamics of political processes (Benford & Snow, 2000; Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; McAdam, 1999; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986; Tarrow, 2011; Tilly, 2001, 2006). This led to the development of broad frameworks for understanding the dynamics of collective action in social movements, such as that provided by McAdam et al (1996), who offer three interrelated factors to explain the emergence, development, and outcomes of social movements: mobilizing structures, opportunity structures, and framing processes.

Mobilizing structures are those mechanisms that enable people to organize and engage in collective action, including social structures (for example, the role played by Black churches in the civil rights movement in the 1960s) and tactical repertoires (such as the use of sit-ins, occupations, marches, and so on). Opportunity structures refer to conditions in the environment conducive to social movement activity, including, for

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example, the accessibility of the political system (how easily those with grievances can make their needs known to those in power and influence the progress of policy), the degree of elite alignment or disagreement (that is, the extent to which fractures in elite coalitions may offer openings for changes to extant political and economic structures), and the capacity and appetite of the state for repression. Finally, framing processes refer to strategic attempts by social movement organizations or political entrepreneurs to craft and disseminate materials that explain social problems in particular ways, to promote particular attributions of responsibility for those problems, and to suggest certain remedies. As we shall see, most of the work on the impact the internet has had on social movements has focused on its effects on mobilizing structures and on framing processes.

Linked to these concerns, a number of challenges that social movements had to overcome were identified within the resource mobilization paradigm. One of the primary challenges is the so-called free rider problem, which Olson (1971) identified as a key constraint to collective action. Essentially, even when people hold a common grievance, they have little incentive to organize into a group to seek redress. Organizing and participating in collective action is costly, while the benefit of such action is uncertain and potentially limited. Thus, each individual in a potential collective has a material incentive to free ride on the actions of others, reaping the reward of action without personally incurring the costs. Overcoming this tendency came to be seen as one of the primary tasks of social movements, and mobilizing structures, in particular formal organizations, were seen as the most important way to do this (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005). Specifically, formal organizations were seen as central to the communicative and organizational work involved in collective action including "locating

and contacting appropriate participants, motivating them to make private resources publicly available, persuading them to remain involved despite short-term setbacks and long-term risks, and coordinating their efforts appropriately." (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005: p. 368). This paradigm thus placed social movement organizations (SMOs) at the center of analysis, and focused on how such organizations emerged and developed, coordinated the mobilization of people and resources, and guided the process of claim-making.

The resource mobilization paradigm identified a second crucial challenge facing social movements once it incorporated the social constructionist perspectives of framing theory, namely the challenge of creating and disseminating compelling issue frames in the face of usually hostile mass media (Benford & Snow, 2000; Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). Media attention is a crucial resource for social movements, but media are prone to produce unfavorable representations of movements, with a tendency to emphasize violence and deviant behavior, and to simplify or distort movement messages (Della Porta, 2011; DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012; van Laer, 2007). Attracting media attention and influencing the frames of the movements presented by the media thus posed a second major challenge for social movements.

A great deal of scholarship on collective action has organized itself around these concepts: around the life cycle of the social movement in terms of emergence, development, and outcomes; around the structuralist framework of mobilizing structures, opportunity structures, and framing processes; and around identifying the tactics social movements use to overcome the challenges of free ridership and attracting sympathetic

media coverage. To some degree, the contemporary resource mobilization paradigm captured in MacAdam et al's (1996) framework remains a dominant model for the study of social movements. However, increasingly an alternative model of contentious collective action called new social movement (NSM) theory, which has a more social constructionist bent, also informs scholarship.

As Buechler (1995) explains, NSM theory emerged in response to the resource mobilization paradigm's emphasis on material and structural factors, including the material origins of grievances, which were often seen as rooted in Marxist economic identities. For NSM theorists, a range of identities beyond those catalogued in Marxist thought, including gender and sexual orientation, can serve as a source for collective claims-makings. NSM theorists generally agree that symbolic action in the cultural sphere can be seen as a legitimate form of political action, that post-materialist values emphasizing quality-of-life issues beyond material sufficiency are a major contemporary motivator of political and collective action, that collective grievances are socially constructed rather than having *a priori* structural origins, and, importantly, that submerged, latent, and temporary networks often undergird collective action rather that the centralized and formal social movement organizations prominent in the resource mobilization account (Buechler, 1995: p.442). This paradigm thus allows for a conceptualization of collective action that is subtly different from that of the resource mobilization paradigm, with an emphasis on a broader range of grievances, and multiple forms of networked organization and political action, and a lesser focus on the role of formal organizations and material resources – as we will see, these ideas have special

resonance with the ways in which social movements and collective action have changed with the spread of the internet.

If we incorporate NSM theory into the existing definitions offered by the resource mobilization paradigm, we may define social movements as *networks of individuals, characterized by varying structural forms and degrees of centralization, that are engaged in sustained collective action over grievances rooted in a shared identity, and who pursue their goals using various forms of collective action and communication*. This definition is broad, and we can foresee some of the objections raised by various scholars to conceptually separating social movements from interest groups, political parties, or even voters during elections. In all cases, there are networks of people, shared identity, and political goals pursued through various forms of collective action (Bennett, Breunig, & Givens, 2008; Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005, 2012; Bimber, Stohl, & Flanagin, 2009; Chadwick, 2005, 2007; Flanagin, Stohl, & Bimber, 2006; Masket, Heaney, Miller, & Strolovich, 2009; van Aelst & Walgrave, 2004). However, in the following discussion I will maintain the distinction between institutional and non-institutional collective contentious political action, and focus on the literature around social movements and DICTs.

DICTs and Social Movements

From the earliest research on DICTs and politics, scholars anticipated that DICTs would have a profound impact on social movements. Traditionally, as Chadwick (2007) explains, "Social movements [have eschewed] hierarchy, and [depended] upon mass mobilization to achieve their aims because they have usually been excluded from participation in mainstream channels or because they have deliberately sought to work

outside the system to avoid cooption. Typically, participants in social movements have encouraged methods of organization and decision-making that are self-consciously nonhierarchical, consensual, and participatory." (p. 285).

As habitual outsiders in the political system, social movements' ideological preference for nonhierarchical, consensual, and participatory forms of organization was seen as ideally suited to the internet age. The internet, conceptualized as a decentralized, open, and flexible platform, and as a mass medium able to connect individuals across time and space, seemed to offer enormous opportunities for social movements to organize more cheaply and effectively, and to build more diverse networks. However, as time has passed, social movement organizations have displayed a great deal of variation in the extent to which and in the manner in which they have adopted DICTs.

To shape my discussion of how social movements' adoption of DICTs has varied, I will consider the matter under three headings: organization, communication, and repertoires. Note that the separation into these three areas is largely arbitrary; the effect of DICTs on movement practices and structures is dynamic, and effects on various aspects of collective action are interrelated. The same mechanisms appear to mediate DICTs' effects across these three areas, and as you will see, similar themes and arguments have been made in each. However, this separation has the utility of providing a structure for this discussion, and for suggesting particular expectations and variables that will be useful for the present project. I will conclude the literature review by considering the various explanatory hypotheses offered by the literature to account for differences in the extent to which particular movements adopt online tools and new organizational forms.

Organization. As I have defined them, social movements consist of networks of individuals, whether in the form of a close-knit community or a loose-knit group of strangers, who are mobilized to pursue a common goal through collective action. The processes of finding potential movement participants, mobilizing them to participate in collective action, and coordinating their actions in the pursuit of movement goals are the primary organizing tasks facing social movements. Generally, the literature has found that most social movements have their origins in the labors of political entrepreneurs, highly motivated individuals or small groups who share a political identity and a grievance and seek to organize a larger network of people around that identity and grievance.

The main challenge facing these movement entrepreneurs, as alluded to earlier, is the free-rider problem. The free-rider problem can be expressed by the question: how do individuals overcome the lure of free ridership to form groups and take collective action? Traditionally, the answer has been two-fold: first, that people must be inspired to embrace a shared identity that makes movement participation seem necessary; and second, that a formal organization must be created to manage movement participants' activities and to maintain the movement network and the engagement of members. Both of these processes – identity cultivation and institution formation – are the work of organizing. Organization, both as process and as institution, is thus central to social movements, and DICTs have had a number of dramatic and profound effects on social movement organization in both senses (Bennett, Breunig, & Givens, 2008; Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005, 2012; Bimber, Stohl, & Flanagin, 2009; Chadwick, 2005, 2007; Flanagin, Stohl, & Bimber, 2006; van Aelst & Walgrave, 2004).

Shared identities. As described, social movements emerge when political

entrepreneurs begin to search for and recruit potential participants. In general, this

process involves tapping into existing social networks and spreading a sense of shared

identity and grievance among their members, and then coordinating those who identify

with the cause to take particular actions. DICTs have changed all of these aspects of this

process through their effect on costs, and their ability to activate networks and spread

identities. In order to mobilize people to take collective action, it is first necessary to

convince them of the need for such action, that is, to foster within them a political

identity and a sense of grievance, which generates feelings of solidarity and the desire to

engage in action. Shared identities, thus, are central to the formation and maintenance of

social movements. A number of scholars have argued that the internet can be used to

generate a sense of solidarity and to share common grievance frames across social

networks (Brainard & Siplon, 2000; Myers, 2000; Theocharis, Lowe, van Deth, &

Albacete, n.d.; van Aelst & Walgrave, 2004). Many observers of the Arab Spring have

hypothesized that the formation of a shared identity was one of the key contributions that

online tools made to the movements. Harb (2011), for example, argues that the key role

that social media played in the Arab Spring was the dissemination of information, action

frames, and images through social networks that helped to foster a sense of collective

identity among protestors and thus to encourage them to participate in anti-regime

activities, an argument echoed by Zhuo, Wellman, and Yu (2011), Wolfsfeld, Segev, and

Sheafer (2013), Axford (2011), Howard and Hussain (2011), and Stepanova (2011).

In the online environment, political entrepreneurs are able to cheaply and easily

produce communications materials and disseminate them through social networking sites,

e-mail chains, and websites. The internet is particularly good at facilitating the spread of messages and frames through pre-existing social networks, as motivated individuals are able to easily share them with friends and family on social networking sites and through personal e-mails. As Kavada (2012) shows in her study of the use of social networking sites for identity building by transnational progressive social movement organization Avaaz, social movements make use of a number of web features such as comments, share buttons, like buttons and so on, to promote shared identities and allow members to communicate with one another to foster a sense of solidarity. In a similar vein, in their study of the digitally organized protests against copyright reform in the European Union, Breindl and Briatte (2013) find that one of the key roles of DICTs was to enable highly interested parties (political entrepreneurs) to generate and share a collective action frame around the issue of copyright, thus building an online, and ultimately offline, transnational community with a shared identity, a sense of solidarity, and motivation to engage in political action. Likewise, Calderaro (2010) noted the role that e-mail listservs played in facilitating discussion, engagement, and the generation of shared identities among protestors and activists at the 2001 G8 summit in Genoa.

The role of DICTs in fostering shared identities is not, however, uncontroversial. Some scholars have argued that online tools and mediated communication cannot create the type of strong bond among individuals that forms the basis for the intensive and long-term commitment required to cause political change, arguing that such tools are too individualizing and remote to foster collective identity. Fenton and Barassi (2011), for example, conducted ethnographic research among trade unionists in Britain, and found that online tools such as social networking sites encourage a highly individualized style

of engagement that activists viewed as inimical to the formation of collective identity and the promotion of collective frames and action. In another example, in her study of the use of e-mail listservs and the role of face-to-face communication among activists connected to the Global Justice Movement, Kavada (2010) found that while e-mail enabled activists to express their individuality and the movement to manage diversity, divergence, and individual autonomy, face-to-face contact was critical for promoting unity, convergence, and a sense of collectivity. DICTs alone, she argued, were not able to generate the sense of solidarity and connection required to fully engage people in social movement.

In response to such criticism, however, one can point to work by Bennett (2012), who contends that in the contemporary political environment, citizens increasingly reject collectivist identities, instead seeking a more-personalized expression of their political interests. He argues that contemporary social movements can, in the digital environment, capitalize on this new feature of political engagement by offering potential movement participants highly individualized access points to the movement. In a study of two social movement organizations that arranged protest events during the 2009 G20 London summit, for example, Bennett and Segerberg (2011) note that one organization, Put People First (PPF) was able to mobilize citizens by offering them a broad frame for action (putting people first) and allowing them to personalize their engagement with the movement by attending protests with their own slogans, or providing their own messages to G20 organizers through the PPF portal. In contrast, another organization, G20 Meltdown, offered highly specific frames for collective action and a particular identity for participants, and was less able to motivate and mobilize citizens (see also Bennett, 2008; Bennett, Breunig, & Givens, 2008; Bennett & Segerberg, 2009).

Thus, we can conclude that one of the ways in which DICTs facilitate organization for social movements is through the dissemination of collective action frames that foster a shared political identity among potential movement participants, whether that identity is highly specific or more diffuse – consider, for example, the Occupy Wall Street frame "We are the 99%," a broad catch-all that participants were able to personalize to fit with their political orientations and personal identities while at the same time serving as a collective identity that bound participants together (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012; Gaby & Caren, 2012; Juris, 2012).

Accordingly, one of the crucial ways in which I expect DICT adoption to vary among organizations will be the extent to which they use online tools to foster collective identity, and the ways in which they do so

__The process of organizing and the form of organizations.__ Beyond spreading identities through networks, however, DICTs also have an effect on the practical and logistical side of social movements' organization. One of the key mechanisms here is cost. In Olson's (1971) work, free ridership was understood to be an issue because the cost of creating and of participation in a social movement was great; communication was expensive, and large, costly organizations were needed to recruit and coordinate members, and to solicit resources. The internet has the potential to dramatically lower all of these costs (Bennett & Segerberg, 2009, 2012; Garrett, 2006, van Laer 2007). Mass communication using DICTs displays an interesting cost pattern: the marginal cost of reaching the nth recipient is virtually zero, and the cost of reaching multiple recipients is virtually equal to the cost of reaching one – think of the cost of adding a single recipient to an e-mail versus the cost of adding a hundred recipients, and compare that to the cost

of mailing one letter versus the cost of mailing one hundred letters. In the internet age, mass dissemination of movement messages becomes dramatically cheaper. In addition, online tools like shared calendars, websites, online donation portals, and information tools like electronic databases have the potential to make organizing, aggregating resources, and coordinating efforts significantly cheaper and less complex. Thus, the costs and labor of organizing are reduced in the information age.

This radical restructuring of the cost of organizing opens up an intriguing possibility which Clay Shirky (2009) calls "organizing without organization." The idea of groups organizing in the absence of large, formal organizations has become a popular preoccupation among academic researchers as a result of the remarkable successes of projects like the development of the Linux operating system and the popular encyclopedia project hosted at Wikipedia.com, which are made possible by the development of cheap communication and workflow management tools that can be accessed by individuals located anywhere (Shirky, 2009; Karpf 2010b, 2011; Lev-On & Hardin, 2008). These projects have seen large groups of individuals seemingly spontaneously organizing to produce complex goods, and have raised the idea of open source politics, which is the notion of citizens spontaneously and without central leadership forming groups to achieve complex political goals – social movements without the social movement organizations (Karpf, 2010b, 2011; Kreiss, 2010; Lev-On & Hardin, 2008).

Many have seen this form of organization in the Occupy protests of 2011 (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012; Gaby & Caren, 2012; Juris, 2012; Theocharis, Lowe, van Deth, & Albacete, n.d.). Researchers have noted that no particular centralized body

organized Occupy protests, although the idea for the protests was rooted in a call for the occupation of Wall Street from Canadian anti-consumerist group Adbusters, who themselves described the proposed occupation as America's Tahrir, a reference to the Tahrir Square protests in Egypt in 2010. Nevertheless, rather than relying on a central formal organization, Occupiers used a range of social media tools to coordinate protests and spread information (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012; Gaby & Caren, 2012; Juris, 2012; Theocharis, Lowe, van Deth, & Albacete, n.d.). Although Juris (2012) shows that more-formal social movement organizations are now emerging from Occupy networks, particularly at the local level, the main period of protest occurred without the central presence of formal organizations. This may thus be seen as an example of organizing without organizations.

However, as Karpf (2010b, 2011) notes, the example of Wikipedia suggests that such open source projects ultimately require management structures in the form of enforceable community norms, and that key individuals will emerge as more-central nodes in the informal network, a phenomenon that Theocharis (2012) has documented in Occupy-related Twitter networks. In other words, even without formal organizations, *organizers* are necessary (an observation that many observers have drawn attention to in the case of Linux production; the Linux open source production process works largely thanks to the fact that there is a small, central group of people organized around founder Linus Torvalds that contribute most of the work to the project and that organize and monitor others' contributions). Further, it appears as if the emergence of some kind of formal organization is almost inevitable in such "organized without organization" projects, such as the Wikipedia Foundation and the Linux Foundation (Karpf, 2010b,

2011). Thus, while the internet facilitates the spread of identities and to a certain extent enables "organizing without organizations," social movement organizations are by no means obsolete in the internet age. Social movements still require some type of formal organization in order to retain momentum and to act strategically over the long-term; what is changing is the form and mode of operation of social movement organizations, and this is an important topic for study (Bennett, Breunig, & Givens, 2008; Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005, 2012; Bimber, Stohl, & Flanagin, 2009; Chadwick, 2005, 2007; Flanagin, Stohl, & Bimber, 2006).

Social movement organizations have long been a feature of the social movement landscape, particularly since the 1970s, when enduring organizations emerged from the major movements of the era (Karpf, 2009, 2012). Typically, social movement organizations followed the usual bureaucratic organizational template, and tended towards hierarchical and centralized structures. Consider, for example, the National Organization for Women, an organization born in the 1980s from the women's movement (National Organization for Women, n.d.). This social movement organization has a formal, hierarchical structure and a large staff, as well as offices in Washington D.C.. It coordinates actions and campaigns among members, and priorities are decided largely at the center of the organization, although individual chapters have some freedom to pursue their own local agendas. The structure of NOW is typical of social movement organizations that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, although even older organizations have a similar structure – Karpf (2012), for example, described the structure of the pro-wilderness Sierra Club, founded in 1892, in terms of its centralization, reliance on hierarchy, and tendency to follow particular bureaucratic routines.

DICTs, however, allow social movement organizations to take new and powerful

forms by changing the costs and labors involved. Consider MoveOn.org, which was

founded in 1998 as an online petition which gathered half a million signatures to ask

Congress to censure then -president Bill Clinton and 'move on', instead of proceeding

with an impeachment over his sexual involvement with a White House intern.

MoveOn.org grew from there, defining itself as a progressive movement organization and

organizing protests, campaigns, and pledge drives for various progressive issues.

Although it may not appear to be a traditional social movement organization,

MoveOn.org does represent the organizational hub of a decentralized network of people

that share a political identity as progressives and pursue common goals through the use of

various protest tactics, and thus meets the requirements of the earlier definition of social

movements. Indeed, MoveOn.org is now widely regarded as the paradigm example of an

online, internet-age social movement organization, and is seen as having redefined the

concept of the social movement organization (Brasted, 2012; Carty, 2010, 2011; Kavada,

2012; Vromen & Coleman, 2013).

On the cost side, the effect of the internet on MoveOn.org's structure is profound.

MoveOn.org has a very modest budget. It has no physical offices; its small staff generally

works from home. A rotating staff is hired during busy campaigns, with a lot of authority

over how those campaigns are run, but they are only temporary employees, for the most

part, MoveOn.org operates with a small staff, few of whom are located in Washington

D.C., where most social movement organizations typically base themselves. Since its

inception, MoveOn.org has relied on low-cost internet tools such as an easily accessible

online fundraising application hosted by actblue.com, the low-cost medium of e-mail,

and, in its earlier days, the free internet service Meetup.com, which served as a portal for coordinating volunteers before MoveOn.org started to host its own portal. In his book on progressive online organizing, Karpf (2012) draws a contrast between the low budget and limited staff complement of a decentralized and flexible organization like MoveOn.org, which claims to have five million members, with the large budget and staff and complex, hierarchical structure of an established advocacy group like the Sierra Club that has just 1.4 million members. The internet, he argues, and the many organizing tools it offers for little to no cost, changes the underlying structure of social movement organizations (Karpf, 2012).

Admittedly, the literature has not been unequivocal on this point. At least one author has found that the process of moving organizing efforts online can in fact create new, burdensome costs for organizers of collective action, including a dramatic increase in the amount (and a concomitant reduction in the value) of communication which places a drain on time and cognitive capacity, as well as difficulties in coordinating across multiple platforms and ensuring that efforts are not replicated (Nielsen, 2009). In the course of an ethnographic study of a volunteer group involved in the 2008 Democratic U.S. presidential primaries, Nielsen (2009) found that volunteers described being overwhelmed with the volume and disorganization of information and communication generated by active participants online, to the point where they reportedly abandoned the use of online tools during the busiest organizing period of their campaign. Nevertheless, most of the literature agrees that cost reduction on the organizational end is a key feature of internet-enabled activism. Thus, I anticipate finding that social movements will tend to utilize DICTs to reduce their costs, although their use of low-cost online tools will differ.

Moreover, the effect of DICTs on social movement organizations goes beyond reducing their budgets; the day-to-day practices social movement organizations engage in and the ways in which they coordinate activities, set priorities, and engage with members have also changed with the advent of DICTs. MoveOn.org, for example, uses DICTs to give its members greater voice in the decision-making processes of the organization. MoveOn.org staff develop a list of possible priorities for the organization each year, and members vote on which they believe should be the top ones, and the organization frequently circulates polls to a subsample of its five-million member mailing list soliciting feedback on current campaigns, member priorities, and other topics. Thanks to DICTs, member polls and feedback can be quickly analyzed and incorporated into movement strategies. MoveOn.org also uses so-called a-b testing, which involves sending different versions of a message to two random samples of the mailing list and observing which message generates greater feedback or higher contributions and then using these observations to refine messages that are then circulated among the rest of the membership mailing list (Karpf, 2012). This use of rapid online testing means that MoveOn.org is able to quickly refine messages and respond to member preferences, thus making it better able to mobilize members. MoveOn.org also frequently invites members to create videos, host their own events, start MoveOn Councils in their areas through the MoveOn.org website, create their own online petitions, and engage in a number of other actions that offer members opportunities to engage, contribute to the movement's agenda, and, as discussed in the previous section, participate in the creation and maintenance of a shared identity.

These structures for engagement and participation are innovations in the social movement space and in the use of DICTs. By using the communications infrastructure

and interactive tools of the internet, MoveOn.org has found new ways to engage and organize members. DICTs have enabled social movement organizations to take on a new form – small, lightly staffed, decentralized and not located in any particular physical place, with an emphasis on using digital tools to solicit member feedback, either with their conscious knowledge, as in the case of inviting members to vote on priorities, or without it, for example, by monitoring which e-mail appeals are more likely to be opened and using those data to design future appeals. Carty (2011) describes MoveOn.org and similar organizations like GetUp! in Australia and Avaaz on a global level as *multi-issue internet-mediated organizations* in recognition of their tendency to switch across a number of issues in line with trending topics in the news, and of their absolute reliance on DICTs for their operation (Carty, 2011; Karpf, 2012).

However, the extent to which social movement organizations adopt new organizational forms and incorporate digital tools in their organizational management repertoires differs. Indeed, most social movement organizations do not deploy DICTs to the same degree or in the same manner as MoveOn.org. In a study examining American social movement organizations' web use, for example, Stein (2009) surveyed a number of organizational websites and measured the extent to which they incorporated various functionalities. She found that organizations primarily used their websites for information provision, with few websites offering functionalities or tools related to coordinating action, engaging in fundraising, making lateral linkages with other organizations, or, especially, allowing for interaction and dialog, and permitting creative expression from members. Thus, I anticipate that social movement organizations will adopt the new

organizational forms enabled by DICTs to different degrees; this will be another key

dimension along which actors' adoption of DICTs will vary.

Communication. In the preceding section, I noted the ways in which DICTs

affect the cost of communication, and the role that cheap communication tools like e-mail

can play in fostering collective identity and thus helping to overcome the free-rider

problem. However, these technologies affect communication in social movements in

other ways too. In particular, DICTs offer social movements a tool to overcome another

key challenge: spreading their message beyond movement participants and ensuring that

they are framed in a favorable way in the mass media. As I alluded to in the discussion of

the history of collective action research, work in the framing paradigm has informed the

study of social movements (Benford & Snow, 2000; Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Gamson,

Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986).

Essentially, this literature argues that one of the key tasks facing social movements is

creating resonant frames for social problems that can be adopted by non-participants and

that can then inform policymaking.

For Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford (1986) frames are schemata that

organize information and provide structures for interpretation, and are used to make sense

of the world and to influence people. By promoting particular frames – for example,

framing gun control as an encroachment on personal freedom – social movements unite

people and prompt them to take action. In describing the mechanics of framing, Entman

(1993: 53) writes "To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them

more salient … in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal

interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendations for the item described."

Entman identifies four aspects of frames: first, problem definition, which identifies the problem, conflict or controversy under consideration; second, causal interpretation, which suggests the causes underlying the problem; third, moral evaluation, which suggests to the reader how the event should be morally categorized; and finally, treatment recommendation, which concerns the course of action suggested, either implicitly or explicitly, to remedy the problem. The task of social movements is to create resonant frames for understanding the issues with which they engage and to promote that frame among non-participants. In doing this, movements face two challenges. First, they must develop frames that have cultural and political resonance and that appeal to a broad group of people. Second, they must find ways to promote their frames in the face of mass media that generally resist movement attempts to control framing and that tend to focus on the deviant or disruptive aspects of collective action rather than the political messages activists are attempting to share (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). DICTs offer tools for overcoming both of these challenges.

__Creating resonant frames.__ In the online environment, social movements are more easily able to generate resonant frames. First, through commons-based production, movements can incorporate suggestions and improvements from many members into movement messages (Tatarchevskiy, 2011). Members can contribute images, videos, poetry, essays and many other pieces of media that can frame the movement's message in various ways. Then, a second aspect of the internet, namely its ability to monitor feedback and use reputation systems such as "likes" to raise or lower the profile of an

item, can help winnow out less-appealing frames and draw attention to successful ones. For example, Gaby and Caren (2012) described how certain posts on Occupy Facebook pages attracted a large number of "Likes" and how those "Likes" corresponded to more members joining Occupy groups. In one example, a photograph of an elderly man with a particularly touching and well-crafted protest sign became the most popular picture on one Occupy group page – movement members can track what frames resonate with audiences through feedback mechanisms like this. Finally, virality on the internet, which is the phenomenon whereby certain items such as online videos become suddenly popular, attracting a very large number of views in a very short period of time, can act as another tool indicating to social movements when they have found a resonant message (Nahon, Hemsley, Walker, & Hussain, 2011).

Frame circulation. A second way in which DICTs have affected communication in social movements is by offering movements new options for circulating their frames. Traditionally, social movements were highly reliant on mass media for spreading their messages. Indeed, many movement tactics, such as sit-ins or large protest marches, were designed specifically to attract media attention in the hope of spreading movement messages to a broader public (Benford & Snow, 2000; Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; McAdam, 1999; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986; Tarrow, 2011; Tilly, 2001, 2006).

With the emergence and spread of DICTs, however, social movements have a range of new options for communicating their messages. For example, DeLuca, Lawson and Sun (2012) show how, in the early days of the Occupy Wall Street occupation of Zuccotti Park in downtown Manhattan, while the mass media largely ignored the

activists, occupiers were still able to circulate their messages through political blogs, social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook, and mass e-mails. While the few early news stories published on the Zuccotti Park occupation tended to treat it as a laughable exercise, multiple framings of the event were diffused through the internet, with millions of people reading blog posts, Tweets, e-mails and status updates that offered alternative frames (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012). The authors also offer evidence that such frames spread among non-participants by noting post-Occupation changes in poll data indicating the degree to which Americans perceived income inequality as an important problem. This suggests that, at least to some degree, movements today are able to influence frames by circumventing news media. This change in the media environment is quite profound; indeed, Cammaerts (2012) argues that the communicative environment in which social movements operate has altered to such a degree that he introduces a new concept, the mediation opportunity structure, to capture the new opportunities available to movements in their engagements with discourse, media, and networks of people. In the new environment, social movements have a greater number of tools available to them for circulating frames and producing media content, and this creates new opportunities for movements to promote their frames and achieve political goals (Cammaerts, 2012). By using low-cost digital tools to produce and circulate media, and by tapping into social networks among participants and beyond to source and spread messages, social movements can, in the internet age, create and circulate messages outside traditional channels, thus overcoming the challenge of disseminating their messages to a broad audience.

Repertoires. As discussed earlier, from the perspective of movement organizers, DICTs have changed the cost of organizing and thus helped to overcome the free-rider problem. But beyond this, DICTs have also changed the cost calculus for potential participants and thus had a far more direct impact on the centrality of the free-rider problem for social movements. Indeed, in their various collaborations looking at collective action and behavior in the digital age, Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl (2005, 2006, 2009, 2012) argue, inter alia, that DICTs lower the cost of participation to the point where it is no longer sensible to speak of individuals making a binary, cost-based decision on whether or not to participate in movements. As Bimber et al (2005) explain, many of the first steps to participation in social movements in the internet age are virtually costless – sharing information about an issue with friends through a social networking profile, for example, or signing an e-petition. Thus, individuals do not make a single, cost-based decision to participate or not, but instead incrementally involve themselves in collective action through small, iterative and low-cost steps. This, the authors argue, reduces the centrality of the free rider problem in contemporary collective action. Instead of inducing potential participants to make a single decision to participate, movements can now move people along an action tree, from easy, low-cost/costless action to donation to offline activity (Bimber et al., 2005). In other words, by adding to social movements' tactical repertoires and creating a new menu of potential actions for participants to take, DICTs have altered the process of member recruitment as well as the nature of the collective actions taken by movement participants.

Much empirical work has noted the widespread use of low-cost online action tactics by social movements (Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010; Harlow & Harp, 2012;

Mosca, 2010; Breindl, 2010b, 2013). Brunsting and Postmes (2002), for example, in an early study on the topic of online and offline activism, describe in some detail how the internet opens up new methods of protest, including online versions of offline tactics such as petitioning and letter-writing, and more extreme forms of action such as rioting and sabotage, which find online expression through things like dedicated denial of service (DDoS) attacks or malicious hacking and website vandalism. In another example, Badouard and Monnoyer-Smith (2013) examined how activists have used website linking strategies to influence policymaking in the European Union with a relatively high degree of success (see also Breindl, 2010b, 2013 for a discussion of how activists effectively used various online actions to influence EU policy on intellectual property). Van Laer and Van Aelst (2010) usefully offer a two-dimensional typology for understanding the on and offline tactical repertoires used by contemporary social movements (see Figure 1.1, taken from Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010: p. 4, below).

Along the first dimension, activism is understood as either internet-supported or internet-based. The internet can facilitate internet-supported actions, such as sit-ins and occupations, in that online tools can help organize such actions, but they are not native to the internet. In contrast, internet-based tactics expand the toolkit available to social movements by introducing innovative new tactics that are only possible online, such as hacktivism, which refers to aggressive online tactics such as the previously mentioned DDoS attacks. The second dimension ranges from low to high-threshold actions. Low-threshold actions require relatively little effort, commitment, or risk on the part of those taking action, while high-threshold actions are risky, and difficult, and require a high degree of commitment. It is actions in the bottom right quadrant of the matrix formed by

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these dimensions that are the kind of "virtually costless action" that Bimber et al. (2005) argue have reduced the centrality of the free rider problem for contemporary social movements. Sending an e-mail as part of an e-mail bomb campaign is a costless, low-risk action that is easily taken by a person who sympathizes with the goals of a particular social movement but is not yet ready to undertake a more intensive action; it is a plausible first step on the ladder to greater participation.

	Internet Supported	Internet Based
High Threshold	More violent action/ destruction of property Sit-in/occupation Transnational meeting/ demonstration	Hacktivism Culture jamming Protest website/ alternative media
Low Threshold	Legal demonstration Consumer behavior Donate money	Email bomb/ virtual sit in Online petition

Figure 1.1: A typology of a new digitalized action repertoire (Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010 p. 4)

Some observers have criticized such low-cost online action as "clicktivism" or "slacktivism", arguing that this kind of remote, costless activism lacks the impact of traditional collective action, often conceptualized in terms of use of physical bodies in

space, as in protest marches or occupations (Gladwell, 2010; Shulman, 2009). They have also expressed concerns that such clicktivism could result in displacement, that those who would ordinarily participate in costlier and more effective forms of collective action may substitute low-cost online actions, thus rendering social movements less potent as a force for change (Cornelissen, Karelaia, & Soyer, n.d.).

However, scholars have offered rebuttals to this argument. Karpf (2010a), for example, points out that low-cost online actions are typically only one aspect of a given social movement's repertoire, and that such actions often serve not only as a means of engagement for participants, but also as a way for organizers to collect data on matters such as which issues are particularly important to potential members. Furthermore, such low-cost online actions have been found in some studies to be correlated with offline actions – taking an online action can, it seems, lead potential participants in a social movement to greater levels of participation. In a survey of activists in the United States and Latin America, for example, Harlow and Harp (2012) find that online activism was seen as a precursor or complement to more costly offline activism, and Brunsting and Postmes (2002) found a high correlation between taking offline action and taking online action, suggesting that perhaps online action does not substitute for offline action among highly engaged participants; such individuals take part in both forms of action.

In summary, new forms of online action offer social movements new opportunities to engage participants. They offer non-participants a low-cost way to begin to engage in collective action, and can lead to higher levels of engagement. Further, such actions can serve as a useful source of data for social movement organizations.

Having outlined the various dimensions of social movements' adoption of DICTs, I will now discuss some of the explanations offered for the differing degree to which various movements and social movement organizations adopt online tools. In the preceding sections, my emphasis has been on the dimensions along which social movements' adoption of DICTs is expected to vary. In the sections that follow, I will present a comprehensive account of the explanatory variables that the literature offers to account for this variation.

CHAPTER 2: TOWARDS AN EXPLANATORY MODE OF VARIATION IN

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS ORGANIZATIONS' ADOPTION OF DICTS

In the literature there is relatively little theorizing on what determines the extent to which particular social movements will utilize DICTs. Implicitly, most work seems to assume that if the tools are available, political entrepreneurs will adopt them as needed. Further, there is no work of which I am aware that considers the influence of national context on the extent to which social movements adopt DICTs. Most scholarship on this subject implicitly assumes that movements will adopt DICTs, regardless of national context or individual characteristics, simply because such technologies have obvious utility for movements. This is, thus, a relatively under-theorized aspect of social movement studies. There is, however, some scholarship suggesting various movement-level factors that may influence the degree to which a given social movement or social movement organization will adopt DICTs and incorporate them in daily praxis. I will examine these briefly.

Diffusion

Some researchers suggest that diffusion processes are one way in which the use of online tools for collective action spreads; one might thus anticipate that groups that are connected to other groups that already use online tools are more likely to make use of them themselves (Earl, 2010). For example, as Vromen and Coleman (2013) note in their study of Australian social movement organization GetUp!, many of GetUp!'s tactics are drawn from the repertoire of America's MoveOn.org, with which GetUp! has many personal contacts and shared political goals. Similarly, in work on the Arab Spring, several scholars noted that the innovative online (and offline) tactics used in Tunisia were

adopted by Egyptian activists during their protests thanks to both media reports on Tunisian tactics and contacts between Tunisian organizers and their Egyptian counterparts, including the use of social networking sites for repertoire sharing (Comunello & Anzera, 2012; Khondker, 2011; Sabadello, 2011; Skinner, 2011; Stepanova, 2011).

Indeed, one of the main features of the internet is that it allows for activists in one country or location to easily communicate with activists in another country or location – it facilitates transnational and inter-organizational linkages (Mosca, 2010; Calderaro, 2010; Garrett, 2006; Van De Donk, Loader, Nixon, & Rucht, 2004). These linkages can serve as a pathway for the transmission of best online practices. Thus, one would anticipate that social movements and social movement organizations that cultivate linkages with peers in other countries or with successful organizations in their own country are more likely to be exposed to and to adopt innovative online practices. As Karpf (2009, 2012) points out, such linkages are most likely to be between movements or groups that share a similar ideological position, as for example the links between MoveOn.org and GetUp!, which are both progressive, are and thus certain practices may be more common among ideologically similar groups across countries than ideologically dissimilar groups within them. When examining my data, I will look for evidence that groups that cultivate linkages with peers at home and abroad are more likely to adopt innovative online tactics and tools, although this may vary between ideological networks depending on the extent to which ideologically similar peers have themselves adopted such tools.

Group Characteristics

A common assumption in the literature is that younger people are more likely to make use of online tools than their older counterparts, who may be less comfortable in the digital environment (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; Collin, 2010). Xenos and Foot (2008), in particular, make a strong argument that young people have a different relationship to DICTs than their older counterparts, and are significantly more comfortable using online spaces to take political action and interact with others. Indeed, Bennett (2008, 2012) argues that among the young, political participation looks very different than it does among older cohorts thanks in large part to the development of DICTs. Bennett (2008) notes that in many developed Western democracies, young people are increasingly disengaged from conventional politics – they do not vote at the same rate as older people, and do not join political parties and so on. Nevertheless, they engage in political action by other means; Bennett describes their approach as "social movement citizenship" (Bennett, 2008: p. 8), a form of engagement that involves online and offline collective action in the pursuit of goals like human rights promotion, environmental protection and so on. He attributes this in part to dysfunction in traditional political institutions, but also to the more personalized, interactive, and creative style of political engagement facilitated by DICTs. Overall, younger people are seen as more likely to use DICTs for political purposes and more comfortable with doing so. There is reason to think that this youth advantage in online politics may extend to the realm of collective action and social movements.

In my own unpublished research on the Tea Party, for example, I found that local Tea Party groups across the northeast of the United States were unlikely to use DICTs for

organizing beyond the use of e-mail newsletters. I hypothesized that one of the reasons why the movement failed to adopt online tools was that many of its local-level organizers were retired people who expressed discomfort with DICTs. These individuals, who also tended to be older, expressed a reluctance to take online actions and engage with the movement through DICTs; this hypothesis is in line with the finding of a survey by the Pew Research Center that Tea Party members tended to be older than the average for the United States (Frome, 2010). The demographics of Tea Party participants and organizers thus made online tools an unsuitable choice for organizing. We may therefore conclude that the characteristics of social movements' organizers and members – their demographics and personal comfort with online tools – may play a role in determining the degree to which a social movement will adopt DICTs.

Ideology

In his dissertation and in the updated book version thereof, Karpf (2009, 2012) notes a substantial innovation and adoption gap between how progressives, or the Left, in the United States use DICTs compared to their conservative counterparts on the Right. While the Left has innovative social movement organizations like MoveOn.org, highly active online political communities like the blog-based community of the Daily Kos, and institutions to support online activism such as the aforementioned ActBlue online fundraising toolkit and the New Organizing Institute, a training and networking organization for progressive activists, the Right has failed to develop a competing online architecture (Karpf, 2009, 2012). This gap in online facility has translated, he argues, into an electoral advantage for the Democrats in the United States, which is likely to be sustained unless Republicans and the Right are able to build their own online capacity.

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In seeking to explain this gap, Karpf posits three tentative hypotheses. The first is that there may be an inherently top-down quality to conservatism that diminishes the Right's interest in developing interactive, open, and democratizing online portals. As Karpf (2009) explains, this argument holds that the Right in the United States is less populist and less interested in mass mobilization or community organizing than the Left, and that its members are embedded in more traditional organizations such as churches, and thus do not need to look online for community (p. 238-242). Karpf himself dismisses this explanation, arguing that it does not stand up to historical scrutiny in that the Right has a long tradition of community organizing and collective action innovation, as well as a tradition of engagement with new media technologies such as talk radio. Nevertheless, given the many examples of progressive online organizing in democracies worldwide, such as the global justice movement (Kavada, 2010; Mosca, 2010) and the environmental movement, it is worth exploring what role, if any, ideology plays in the adoption of particular internet-based organizational structures and organizing practices. It may be that, when examining social movements and collective action writ large, rather than just in the American context, the role of ideology is central to explaining variation in the usage of DICTs for political purposes.

Out-party Innovation

The second hypothesis that Karpf (2009, 2012) advances to explain the digital gap between the Left and Right in the United States is that the Left was forced to innovate online because the Democrats were out of power when interactive web technologies initially developed, a period which he dates to the mid-2000s, and specifically to the second administration of former U.S. President George Bush. Karpf hypothesizes that the

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Left's out-party status encouraged it to experiment with new organizing tactics, and that because the emergence of interactive web technologies happened to coincide with the period in which the Left was out of power, progressive activists chose DICTs as the venue for their political experimentation.

The idea that being under political pressure encourages innovation has venerable antecedents. Mayhew (1974/2004), in his discussion of legislators' actions, argued that legislators facing a greater electoral challenge were more likely to innovate in their campaigns, and such dynamics have indeed been found to play out in campaigns over time. Karpf argues that a similar process may have driven progressive activists to innovate during the Bush years; because they had little formal voice in politics as a result of the electoral losses of the Democratic Party, progressive activists were driven to use innovative tactics to make themselves heard, to influence policy, and to engage networks of people who shared a progressive identity during a period in which that identity found little expression in institutional politics. As DICTs were, at the time, emerging and developing, they were a natural forum for Left wing innovation at a time when the Left found it difficult to make its political voice heard.

It is important to note that this hypothesis hinges on the existence of a close relationship between social movement organizations and political parties. After all, social movements are generally conceptualized as being outside of formal institutional politics, and so would have a perpetual incentive to innovate in that they would always be an "out-party." In Karpf's argument, however, social movements and social movement organizations are seen as being integrated, to a greater or lesser degree, with formal political parties. This view sees political parties through a particular lens, the parties-as-

networks lens that understand political parties in the United States as networks made up of "candidates and officeholders, formal party officers, loyal donors, campaign staffers, activists, allied interest groups, social movements, and friendly media outlets." (Masket et al, 2009: p. 4; see also Schlesinger, 1985; Koger, Masket, & Noel, 2009; Skinner, Masket, & Dulio, 2012).

In order for the out-party innovation hypothesis to be credible, close ties – either ideological or in the form of overlapping networks of members – must exist between a social movement and a party that is out of power. In the American context, it is clear that such ties exist. For example, Heaney and Rojas (2011) demonstrate how the peace movement in the United States has been strongly influenced by the electoral fate of the Democratic Party. When the Democrats were out of power in 2007/2008, anti-war protests saw a large increase in participants, many of whom, as Heaney and Rojas (2011) determined through the use of surveys, identified themselves as Democratic Party members and activists. However, when the Democrats returned to power in 2008/2009, participation in anti-war protests declined and, as the authors discovered, that decline was due to the absence of participants who identified themselves as Democrats. To the extent that similar ties exist between parties and movements in other countries, I expect that those social movements that are aligned with parties that are out of power will be more likely to innovate than those that are aligned with incumbent parties, and that this innovation will take place in part online, where there are opportunities for groups that are unable to make themselves heard in the mainstream to craft and disseminate messages, as discussed earlier. This is the explanation Karpf (2009, 2012) favors for explaining the relative innovativeness of the American Left. I intend to conduct research that will test

this explanation. As I will describe more fully in my methods section, I will be including

data from three culturally similar advanced democracies, in order to explore the extent to

which this explanation is generally applicable (rather than being unique to the American

progressive institutions that Karpf considers).

First-mover Advantage

The final explanation Karpf (2009, 2012) advances for explaining differential

levels of online innovation between the American Left and Right is a corollary of the out-

party innovation hypothesis. Essentially, he suggests that the Left, because it was forced

to innovate during the second Bush administration, enjoys a first-mover advantage

online, and that this limits the Right's ability to develop interactive online portals and

communities. Karpf gives many examples of how, when the Right attempts to open up

online forums to user input, they face 'trolling' by the multitudes of already-active

progressive internet users, while online progressive forums enjoy such scale that

conservative trolls are unable to overwhelm them in a similar fashion. For example,

when, in the wake of Barack Obama's victory in the 2008 presidential elections, a group

of young Republicans launched a website called ideas.rebuildtheparty.com to solicit input

from conservatives on how to improve the party's campaign strategies, progressive

pranksters flooded the site with joke recommendations such as "Hire more ninjas," which

became the most popular suggestion on the site (Karpf, 2009: p. 253-254).

Karpf argues that this vulnerability to trolling is a function of the development life

cycle of online hubs. Citing the example of Wikipedia, he describes how online sites

experience a five-stage growth process, which he describes as: "(1) beginning with a tiny

group of lead adopters who co-create the good, (2) expanding to a larger early adopter

class which is highly motivated but less technically skilled, (3) launching into the much larger early majority class, whose motivation and skill level is more varied and whose size pressures the system to adapt, (4) adopting protections against spammers and malicious attacks as the site attracts the late majority class and becomes recognized as "valuable online real estate," and (5) dealing with challenges to institutional power structures." (Karpf, 2010b: p. 14). In this process, it is only when a site has developed in scale and reach at the fourth stage that it becomes valuable online real estate, or, put another way, that it becomes effective and important. He argues that prior to reaching this scale, online hubs need to be free to develop under the radar starting with a small group of early innovators. However, because of the first-mover advantage enjoyed by online progressives, conservative online hubs do not have the luxury of developing organically; instead, "nascent [conservative] communities … face challenges and attacks before the necessary community-of-interest has formed to protect [them]." (Karpf, 2009: p. 252). It is plausible to imagine the first mover advantage accruing to any group in a particular issue space. For example, if anti-immigration activists in a particular country are able to develop a strong online presence and a large, engaged network of interested supporters, subsequent attempts to develop an online presence by those favoring immigration may face difficulties if the existing community of anti-immigration activists chooses to troll their sites or otherwise resist their development. I thus anticipate that social movements' tendency to adopt DICTs will be influenced by the extent to which they face oppositional first-movers in the online space, and will search for evidence of such a relationship in my data.

A Proposed Model for Understanding Social Movement Adoption of DICTs

While the extant literatures on DICTS and politics, social movements, and the use of DICTS by social movement organizations do not provide anything like a comprehensive model for DICT adoption by social movement organizations, they do provide the building blocks for constructing a contingent and partial one. Consistent with the "hybrid" and "iterative" approach to research I mentioned in my introduction (and will develop further below), the purpose of developing such a model is largely heuristic; that is, to help guide my research and initial expectations, while allowing for my findings to in turn refine my conceptual model. Drawing on prior research, my model includes five possible explanatory factors for explaining DICT adoption, with the latter conceptualized as having six interconnected components (see Figure 2.1). Further, I nest the overall model within national context, as I will explain below.

As can be seen, my explanatory variables include "diffusion," or the adoption and use of DICTS through a kind of learning from other organizations with which one regularly interacts; "group characteristics" such as the age or income levels of a movement's membership and/or organizational leadership; "ideology," or how a movement's philosophy does or does not fit with the arguably more interactive, less hierarchical qualities of DICTS; "out-party innovation," or the extent to which DICTS are most useful to organizations with less access to more mainstream forms of communication and information dissemination; and "first-mover advantage," or the extent to which the DICT environment becomes controlled by whomever "colonizes" this space first.

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In addition, and again drawing on the literature discussed above, my heuristic model also lays out the specific uses to which DICTS can be put by social movement organizations, and that collectively make up what I mean by "DICT Adoption." These include: fostering shared identities among members; facilitating new forms of organizational structure and logistics; developing and producing frames for understanding the issue(s) central to the movement and disseminating these frames (directly and through other media outlets) to members, other relevant organizations, and the larger public; motivating and facilitating action among members/participants through the provision of low-cost forms of participation; gathering and utilizing online data to assist in the activities described above; and, embracing internet-based activism as a legitimate and valuable form of social action.
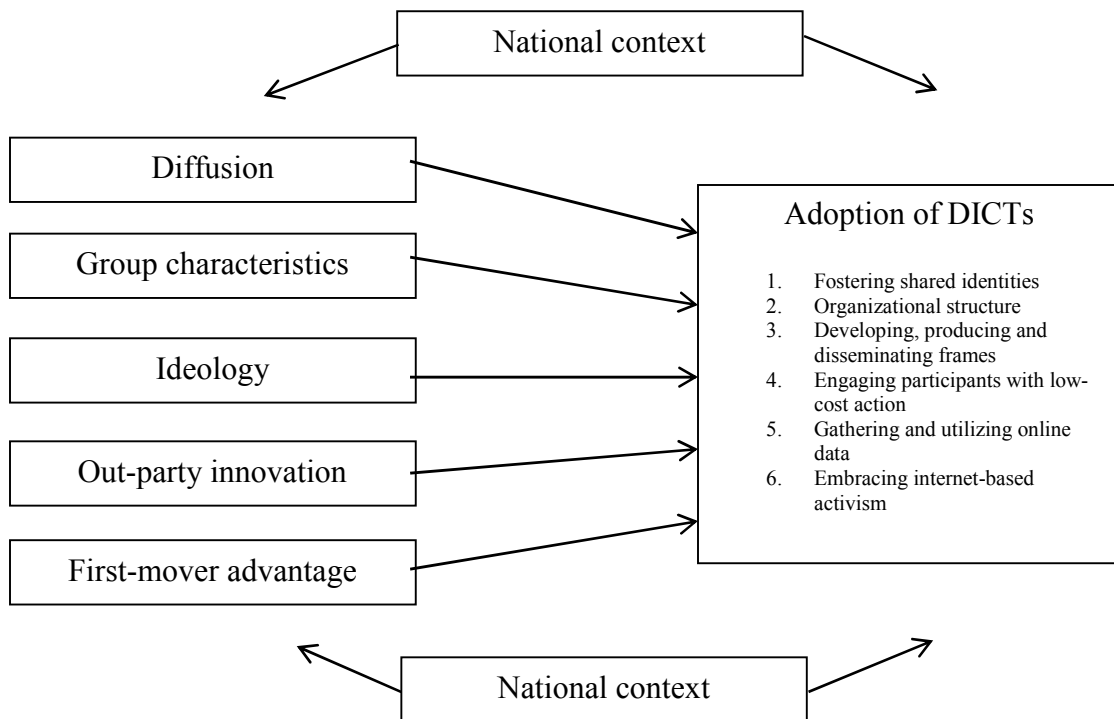
Figure 2.1: Model of social movement organizations' adoption of DICTs

While my approach to exploring the relationships among these five explanatory variables and six outcome variables will be inductive and grounded, the literature discussed earlier does provide suggestions for starting points. Specifically, the literature leads me to the following expectations.

First, I expect that the more connected a social movement organization is to other organizations, the greater will be its adoption of DICTs. Second, I anticipate that the demographic characteristics of social movement organizations' members and organizers will affect the degree to which organizations adopt DICTs. In particular, I expect that organizations with younger, wealthier, and more educated members and organizers will adopt DICTs to a greater extent than organizations with older, less wealthy, and less educated members and organizers. Third, in the literature there is a suggestion that movement ideology plays a role in DICTs adoption, specifically, that organizations that are more politically progressive are more likely to adopt the democratizing, engaging, and open tools available in the internet age. I thus anticipate that the more progressive an organization, the more likely it is to be an intensive adopter of DICTs. Fourth, as discussed in the literature review, social movement organizations that are at political odds with the incumbent party may have a greater incentive to innovate with DICTs, and thus I expect that the less aligned with a social movement organization's objectives the political party in power is, the higher that social movement organization's adoption score will be. Finally, I have noted that some scholars have theorized that social movement organizations attempting to use DICTs may face an uphill struggle if ideological opponents are already highly active online, and thus I expect that the less active social

activists who are ideologically opposed to a given movement are online, the higher that social movements' adoption score

The above expectations will serve as a guide to the both the types of data I will gather and to the analysis to which I will subject that data. I hope to assess my data in the light of these expectations, noting areas of convergence and divergence with my expectations, and using these as a springboard to develop an account of why social movement organizations use DICTs in different ways.

A core part of my argument throughout will be that the use of DICTS by social movement organizations is likely to be context dependent. This context includes the kinds of factors shown in my model, which capture the context particular to individual social movement organizations, but also variations that are tied to different national political, social and cultural conditions and histories. Without considering these nation-level differences it is difficult to know how "transportable" empirical findings (and the theories on which they are based) are. This is a particular concern in the present study as most of the research identifying factors that influence the use of DICTS by social movement organizations that informs my approach has been conducted in the United States. In order to better understand the relationship among democratic political systems, social movement organizations, and the role of DICTs, then, it is helpful to examine movements in a cross-national perspective. Such an approach will enable me to begin to draw out what aspects of national culture and politics may be affecting the ways in which social movement organizations deploy DICTs in the pursuit of their political goals. As I will describe in chapter three, I will therefore select various countries for inclusion in my study, and explore how DICT adoption varies across national contexts. Although my

conclusions will therefore be subject to certain limitations imposed by my research design, I nevertheless offer insight into the role that national level factors play in DICT adoption by comparing organizations to peers in other nations, an issue that has heretofore been neglected by the literature.

Conceptually, then, I will be examining the extent to which the model described above, supplemented by any additional factors that emerge during my inductive research process, explains variation in social movement organizations' adoption of DICTs across the countries I select, and comparing the levels and patterns of adoption within the three countries to see whether or not I can identify any salient differences across different national contexts. I will then attempt to link such differences to country-specific factors that offer possible explanations for national variation.

Having offered a simple model of the specific elements I will be exploring in an attempt to better understand how and why organizations adopt DICTs to different degrees, I will now turn to a discussion of the specific methodologies I will be using to examine these, and the types of data I will bring to bear on these elements.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA, AND METHODS

This project aims to examine the extent to which the organizational factors that I have drawn from the literature and outlined in Figure 2.1 are associated with differences in the adoption of DICTs by social movement organizations, to assess whether part of the variation in social movement organizations' adoption of DICTs is explained by their national context (as opposed to their individual characteristics), and finally, to offer additional, inductively developed explanations for variations in adoption with reference to both organizational and country characteristics. To achieve this, I propose a multi-pronged, small-*n* methodological approach, drawing on data gathered through the analysis of secondary sources, an organizational survey, semi-structured elite interviews, and a systematic examination of the content and structure of organizations' websites. Using these data, I will attempt to parse out the degree to which the various explanations advanced by the literature hold true for the organizations I examine, to note any cross-national differences in patterns of DICT adoption, and to develop additional explanations for variation in the use of DICTs.

While my approach cannot offer conclusive evidence of causal relationships between the proposed explanatory and outcome variables[2], I argue that it offers a great deal of value to the literature on the topic of the use of DICTs for political purposes. As the only systematic, cross-national examination of these questions of which I am aware,

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[2] There is an extensive philosophical literature on the subject of causality, and much debate on the nature of the phenomenon and the appropriate methods for demonstrating its existence (for overviews, see Brady & Collier, 2010; King, Keohane & Verba, 1994; see also Falleti & Lynch, 2009; Gerring, 2010; Grzymala-Busse, 2011). Broadly speaking, however, scholars agree that for a causal relationship to exist between two variables, the following criteria must be met. First, the causal factor must precede the outcome factor in time. Second, there must be a demonstrable association between the causal factor and the outcome factor such that variation in the first is associated with change in the second. Finally, all other potential causal factors must be accounted for. Measured against these criteria, the qualitative, cross-sectional study I am proposing is inadequate to the task of demonstrating causality.

the present study will contribute to the field by offering an empirical test of proposed explanations, by documenting cross-national variation, and by providing evidence as to whether or not suggested explanatory factors are similarly important across national contexts. This will have the ancillary benefit of contributing to ongoing debates about the homogenizing power of the internet versus the determining power of national context.

The Selection of Countries for Analysis

The first step in conducting this project is to select countries for inclusion in the study. Generally speaking, there are two possible approaches one might take to conducting a transnational comparison. The first is to choose countries that maximize differences across key explanatory variables; for example comparing nations with radically different political systems, economic development, or technological sophistication that have similar values on an outcome variable. Such an approach enables a researcher to explore how different levels and sets of explanatory variables lead to broadly similar outcomes, and enables him or her to hypothesize about the relationships between various explanations and the outcome. The second approach is to compare similar nations that vary in terms of the outcome in order to control for certain broad explanatory variables and to enable the researcher to determine what more-subtle differences may account for differences in the outcome.

My approach comes closer to the latter. I made this choice for several reasons. First, I am interested in the factors that explain DICT use by social movements beyond the obvious, such as those related to the availability of these technologies. This means the nations I choose should be similar in their levels of DICT development. Second, I am interested in understanding variations in the use of DICTS by social movements in

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developed democracies. Scholars have argued that political activists in the Middle East turned to DICTs in order to circumvent state-owned media and to preserve their anonymity in the face of political repression (Axford, 2011; Harb, 2011; Howard and Hussain, 2011; Stepanova, 2011; Wolfsfeld, Segev, & Sheafer, 2013; Zhuo, Wellman, & Yu, 2011). One would not reasonably expect such dynamics to influence the behavior of social movement organizations in a democratic country like the U.S., where the media system is more accessible and where state repression is more limited. Similarly, the use of DICTs by activists in poor and technologically underdeveloped nations is also likely to be driven by different factors than their use by peers in advanced economies, as the levels of access, penetration, and available resources are different. Thus, comparing countries with very different forms of government would not enable me to distinguish unique factors that operate specifically in developed democracies. Third, as I will discuss below, I am interested in holding constant the nature of the specific issue(s) focused on by the social movement organizations I study; this requires me to choose cases where similar issues are politically relevant. Fourth, practical considerations of language, access, availability of relevant data, etc., necessarily influenced my choice of nations.

I therefore chose to conduct a most-similar-systems study, comparing countries that are similar on several key independent variables such as their political systems and levels of economic development, in order to identify what other, more-subtle national differences might lead to differences in the adoption of DICTS by social movement organizations. Specifically, the countries I have selected – Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the United States – share many common characteristics. First, they share a number of political features including civil rights that permit citizens to organize and act

collectively, and regular, competitive elections, which suggests that contentious

collective action in these countries will follow broadly similar patterns; this is in contrast

to autocratic countries, for example, in which contentious politics and the role of the

internet therein are quite different (Axford, 2011; Baron, 2012). They also have similar

levels of economic development – according to the World Bank they are all high-income

countries; in 2011 per capita income in US dollars in the United Kingdom was $37,780, it

was $48,620 in the United States, and $39,150 in Ireland (World Bank, 2013a). These

similarities will enable me to control, to a certain extent, for the effect of democracy, free

speech, and socio-economic development on the use of the internet in collective action.

In addition, these countries have similar levels of internet penetration: according to

World Bank data, in 2011 U.S. had 78.2 internet users per 100 people, the United

Kingdom had 81.7, and Ireland had 76.8 (World Bank, 2013b). Thus, any differences in

patterns of DICTs adoption by social movement organizations cannot be plausibly

attributed to differences in access to technology. Furthermore, there are ideological

similarities among these nations. All three are characterized by a left-right political

spectrum, all three have tended to embrace, to a greater or lesser degree, neoliberal

economic policies, and all face similar societal divisions over social issues such gay

rights, abortion and reproductive rights (Bartlett, 2010; Bew, 2007; Childs, 2012; Jenkins,

2012; Jones, & Norton, 2013; Kuklick, 2009; Weaver, & Rockman, 1993). Thus, the

persuasive task facing social movement organizations in all three countries are similar,

and the contexts in which they operate are also broadly similar. By comparing similar

systems, I will be able to control, to a certain degree, for these obvious independent

variables, and thus more easily to identify less-obvious factors that may account for different patterns of adoption in the three countries under consideration.

There are, of course, also many differences among the countries; differences that I hope will help me better understand the dynamics of DICT adoption in developed democracies. For example, the laws governing the online realm differ across countries, as do their political cultures, histories, and partisan dynamics, and any of these differences that could be plausibly expected to affect patterns of DICT adoption by social movement organizations within these three countries. As I showed, the question of country-level factors that may affect social movement organizations' adoption of DICTs has not yet been addressed by the literature, and I therefore have no systematic expectations for how the pattern of DICT adoption will vary across countries. Nevertheless, by comparing three similar systems and drawing on various sources of data, including my elite interviews, I hope to be able to make some tentative suggestions as to how national context may affect the ways in which social movement organizations engage with DICTs beyond those organization-level explanations covered in the model presented above.

The Selection of an Issue for Analysis

In considering how best to select organizations within my chosen country, I explored the ways in which other studies selected their subjects. Most of the studies I considered confined themselves to a single country and often, to a single organization selected for convenience, and no study that I am aware of that offered a convincing method for randomly sampling from a clearly defined population of social movement organizations. However, a study by Stein (2009) that used a random sampling technique to gather a sample of social movement organizations in order to analyze their websites

provided some inspiration. Stein (2009) drew a random sample from organizations listed in the *Encyclopedia of Associations: National*, which provides information on non-profit membership associations in the U.S. that have national scope and reach. Stein (2009) used the index to find organizations that are associated with keywords linked to particular social issues such as the environment and media reform, and then selected a stratified random sample based on those issues. A key benefit of her approach was that, by selecting organizations on the basis of the issues with which they engage, she was able to obtain a sample of organizations that deal with politically important social issues that have attained national prominence; in other words, she was able to ensure that her sample included organizations that are actively involved with topical social issues. I thus elected to begin the process of identifying suitable organizations for inclusion in my study by identifying an issue that has attained prominence in the three countries under study.

I made this choice for a number of reasons. First, I chose to focus on a single issue out of a desire to avoid introducing too many potential explanatory variables into my analysis. I am already considering three countries. If I were to then consider multiple issues across these countries, my analysis would be made unnecessarily complex. My goal was to identify a single issue that was attracting the attention of social movement organizations, political players, and the general public in all three of the countries under study. Further, I looked for an issue that involves a degree of contention between liberal and progressive elements, as one of the key factors in my heuristic model relates to the role of ideology in DICT adoption. I also wanted an issue that had attracted the support of similar groups across the three countries under question. For example, I rejected immigration as an option, as the differences among the countries under study were too

great. In the United States immigration has supporters and detractors across the political spectrum, and the issue is made more complex by the American tradition of welcoming immigrants and the unique economic relations that exist between the United States and its neighbors. In Ireland, immigration debates are intertwined with debates about Ireland's relationship to the European Union, from which most of its immigrants originate, and Ireland's long history as a source of emigrants, while in the United Kingdom, most migrants hail from former British colonies, and immigration debates tend to split more clearly along partisan lines. I thus preferred to find an issue that had a greater degree of similarity across the three countries under study.

Ultimately, I identified gay rights as the issue I would focus on. Gay rights, and in particular, the issue of marriage equality for same-sex couples, has attracted attention from both conservative and progressive elements in the countries under consideration. As noted, one of my goals is to compare conservative and progressive organizations, and the selection of organizations that have played some role in debates around gay rights makes such a comparison possible. Over the last few years, the issue of same-sex marriage has attained a high degree of prominence in the three countries under consideration, with proponents and opponents engaging in protests, marches, and other forms of collective action. In the U.K., same-sex marriage was recently legalized after a significant battle for public opinion ("Same-sex marriage becomes law," 2013); in the U.S., a Supreme Court battle over the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act in late 2013, and the legalization or prohibition of same-sex marriage by a number of states has raised the prominence of the issue ("Supreme Court bolsters gay marriage," 2013); and in Ireland, a referendum will be held in 2015 on the issue of same-sex marriage in the wake of

extensive campaigning on the issue ("Referendum on gay marriage," 2013). The issue was thus prominent and actively contested in all three countries under study during the period in which I gathered my data.

In addition, the contours of the debate around marriage equality were similar in all of the countries under consideration. In all three countries, as I will show, liberal and progressive political parties, organizations, and individuals advanced the cause of same-sex marriage citing the principles of equality before the law, fairness, and personal freedom as reasons for the legalization of same sex marriage. In all three countries, conservative groups, individuals, and political parties opposed same-sex marriage, citing religious prohibitions and traditional family values as key reasons for their rejection of marriage equality. Economic issues played only a marginal role in the debate, typically when issues of access to tax benefits for married couples were discussed, and by and large, the tenor of the debates in both countries was broadly similar, an assessment I made based on reading 338 news articles on the topic of gay rights and marriage equality, as I will discuss below.

The Selection of Organizations for Analysis

Having thus identified both the countries and an issue to focus on, my next task was to identify the particular organizations that would be included in my study. In deciding how best to select subjects, I considered a number of alternative methods. First, I considered using a list of registered organizations such as that used by Stein (2009). Registered non-profits or charities, lists of which are available in all three countries under consideration, are, however, not identical with social movement organizations; they include organizations providing services in an apolitical fashion, and thus do not fulfill

the terms of the definition of social movements provided in the literature review. The

U.S. offers lists of registered lobbyists, which capture a certain type of politically

engaged organization, but the definition of a lobbyist is also not identical with that of a

social movement organization, and neither the U.K. nor Ireland currently maintains a

registry of lobbyists. There is no standardized list of registered social movement

organizations in any of the countries under study, and thus no readymade sampling frame

that I could access. I then considered using a web search to identify suitable

organizations. However, as my interest is in the use of DICTs by social movement

organizations, relying on an online search to identify suitable organizations would put me

at risk of selecting on the dependent variable, which can lead to biased estimation of

relationships among independent and dependent variables in any regression-type analysis

where a researcher is attempting to link explanations to outcomes (Collier & Mahoney,

1996; Geddes, 1990; Lustick, 1996). Ultimately, I chose to select organizations based on

neither their legal status nor their web presence, but rather on the basis of their media

prominence. Specifically, I identified organizations for inclusion in my study by

conducting a search of newspaper archives for references to organizations that were

involved in collective action around the issue of gay rights.

In order to identify suitable pro- and anti-gay rights organizations, I conducted a

search of the archives of two national newspapers in each of the countries under study,

namely the *New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* in the U.S., *The Guardian* and

The Times in the U.K., and *The Irish Times* and *The Irish Independent* in Ireland. I

searched two years of archived material, from September 2011 to September 2013 for

reference to gay rights, same-sex marriage, and marriage equality. After eliminating

duplicates and irrelevant pieces, I was left with 338 articles. I examined each of the 338 articles I found, and listed any organizations that were identified in the articles as having been involved in some form of collective action with respect to gay rights, noting those organizations that were mentioned most frequently. Using this approach I identified 53 organizations in the three countries under study that were mentioned in the news coverage. These organizations are listed in Table 3.1 below. Thirty of the organizations were described advocating on behalf of gay rights and marriage equality, while twenty-three were reported as opposing the extension of certain civil rights such as the right to marry to homosexuals. The organizations listed in Table 3.1 meet my definition of social movement organizations as they have been engaged in collective political action over shared grievances related to a prominent social issue. In addition, they represent a group of organizations that has succeeded at the tasks of fostering shared identity, mobilizing individuals, and taking action. There is a possibility that there is a relationship between the degree to which the organizations use DICTs and their success in attracting media attention. However, this is not necessarily the case. Organizations that attract media attention will typically be those that have coordinated a significant collective action event, such as a large protest, which is certainly possible in the absence of DICTs, as the long history of collective action indicates. Indeed, using this method is perhaps the only way to identify organizations that have succeeded in organizing *without* using DICTs, as well as those that have succeeded with using them. Thus, by using this method I have a reasonable chance of finding successful social movement organizations that have organized without using DICTs, as well as those that rely on DICTs for their effectiveness.

Table 3.1: Organizations involved in collective action around the issue of gay rights

United Kingdom		United States		Ireland	
Pro-gay rights	**Anti-gay rights**	**Pro-gay rights**	**Anti-gay rights**	**Pro-gay rights**	**Anti-gay rights**
Campaign for Homosexual Equality	Society for the Protection of Unborn Children	Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders	American Family Association	Gay & Lesbian Equality Network	Iona Institute
LGBT+ Liberal Democrats	Gay marriage no thanks	Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation	MassResistance	LGBT Noise	Irish Episcopal Conference
Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association	Catholic Truth	Marriage Equality USA	Concerned Women for America	Marriage Equality Ireland	Youth Defence
Homosexual Law Reform Society	Anglican Mainstream	DignityUSA (Catholic Church)	Focus on the Family	Changing Attitude Ireland	Family & Life
The Lesbian & Gay Foundation (LGF)	La Manif Pour Tous	Out & Equal	National Organization for Marriage	Gay & Lesbian Unions Eire	Evangelical Alliance Ireland
LGBT Network	Evangelical Alliance	Human Rights Campaign	Defend the Family	L.inC	Ireland Stand Up
OutRage!		Freedom to Marry	Campaign for Children and Families	Outhouse	Council for the Status of the Family
Queer Youth Network (Q.Y.N.)		Family Equality Council	Institute for Marriage and Public Policy	OutWest	
Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement		Gender Public Advocacy Campaign	Americans for Truth About Homosexuality	Rainbow Support Services	
Stonewall		Lamda Legal	Heterosexuals Organized for a Moral Environment	BeLoGTo	

By selecting only the most active organizations, I am also biasing my sample towards organizations that have succeeded. However, this is not necessarily a conceptual problem for this study. My goal is not to determine whether DICTs affect organizations' success, but rather to identify what factors are associated with the use or non-use of DICTs by organizations. Thus, selecting successful organizations should not bias my analysis, but will rather aid me by making it easier to obtain the information I need.

I do not claim that this selection process has resulted in my obtaining a random sample representative of a population. My sample is non-random, and includes only successful organizations that have attracted media attention and that engage with a particular subset of social issues. However, my sample has been selected to ensure that I obtain a selection of organizations that are free to differ in terms of their adoption of DICTs, that meet the criteria for the type of organization that interests me, and that are sufficiently large and successful to be able to provide the type of information I require for my analysis. As I analyze the patterns of relationships among the factors I plan to explore in this portion of the study, I will keep in mind the limitations of the set of organizations that I have selected.

Having outlined how I selected my cases for this study, I will now move to a discussion of the specific methods I used to gather the data I needed in order to evaluate and explore my heuristic model, as well as providing some detail on the types of data I have collected.

Gathering Data on Political and Legislative Environments

In order to contextualize the environments in which the organizations I have selected operate, I gathered data on each country's key political institutions, system of

government, and communications environment. These data were drawn from secondary sources, and included data related to laws governing the behavior of social movement organizations, with particular attention to any laws addressing the use of DICTs. The goal of my analysis of national context is to explore any cross-national differences I find in how organizations in these three countries adopt DICTs. Thus, my goal in gathering data on the political and legislative contexts within each country is to find information that will be useful for understanding the ways in which the countries under study are similar or different, with the intention of ultimately linking these differences to any cross-national variation.

As noted, I was unable to identify any country-level variables in the literature that scholars have advanced as explanations for transnational variation in the adoption of DICTs by social movement organizations in developed democracies. Thus, my task is to determine whether the patterns of adoption differ across the three countries under consideration by gathering data on these organizations, and then to offer plausible explanations of the particular national factors that may affect their adoption of DICTs. The background research I have conducted serves as a starting point for such theorization; it will be supplemented with qualitative data drawn from interviews, as I will explain below. Although I do not know a priori which particular factors will prove to be important, I anticipate that three core areas of difference are likely candidates: differences in the laws involving internet governance, differences in political culture, and differences in the intensity of competition over social issues.

As an example of how such issues may be relevant, consider laws around the use of data on the internet. The laws related to the use of cookies differ in the U.S. and the

European Union; in the E.U. websites are required to provide visitors with a notice saying that they use cookies and requesting user permission to do so. This may potentially discourage organizations in Ireland and the U.K. from using cookies as intensively as organizations in the United States. However, the warning only notes that cookies are used, and offers no information on the number or full purpose thereof, and so this may not be a disincentive to use a large number of cookies, but may only affect the decision of whether or not to use cookies at all. I will, therefore pay close attention to such laws and, during my collection of organizational data, to any national variation in the pattern of cookie use. Should the sites in the E.U. show less inclination to use cookies, this may suggest that disclosure laws affect organizations' propensity to gather data online, an important issue for scholars who argue that regulation is needed to protect online privacy. This is one example of how national context may inform my theorizing about what factors affect organizations' adoption of DICTs. In chapter five, I discuss cross-national differences in patterns of adoption, and attempt to theoretically link those to the data I have gathered on national political and legislative contexts.

Gathering Data on Organizations

Having outlined the manner in which I selected social movement organizations for inclusion in my study and how I collected background data on the environments in which they operate, I will now turn to a closer consideration of the types of data I collected about the organizations themselves. My data-gathering efforts fell into four primary categories. First, I conducted an in-depth analysis of each organization's web presence. I did both a close reading and a systematic cataloging of web materials, including organizational websites, social media, forums, cookies, privacy policies,

disclosure statements, and terms of use agreements, in order to gather data on a range of factors. Second, I fielded an online survey to each organization, asking a range of questions about DICT usage, online strategies, organizational structure, and online experiences. Third, I conducted twelve in-depth elite interviews with people at ten of the organizations under study, building insight into their relationship to DICTs and the role such technologies play in their organizations. Finally, I used a number of secondary sources such as newspaper articles, political party policy documents, public opinion data, and offline materials published by the organizations under study to further supplement the data I gather using other methods.

Analysis of web materials. To gather data on DICT adoption, I relied primarily on in-depth analysis of each organization's web presence. I visited each organization's website several times between October 2013 and June 2014, using a codebook (included in appendix one) to empirically measure various aspects of the site, as well as spending time exploring each site to get a sense of the way in which it was updated, how people interacted through and with the site, and what types of content were most regularly created and shared. I took extensive notes while examining the websites, building up my understanding of what each organization appeared to be doing with its online portals, and how intensively such portals were updated and visited. In addition, I examined the organizations' Facebook pages where available, followed their Twitter accounts where available, and visited any other social or external media sites they mentioned, including YouTube and external blogs. I also took notes on patterns of interactivity, such as the frequency of retweeting of organizations' tweets, the number of comments on their blogs and Facebook posts, and other forms of online interaction. In order to assess

organizations' data-gathering processes, I included data-gathering questions in my survey (see appendix two), but also used data collected in my analysis of organizations' websites. Specifically, I took note of what cookies each site used, and whether or not third-party cookies were used. To do this, I used two approaches. First, I visited each site with a newly installed and cookie-free Chrome browser, using the cookie monitoring browser utility Collusion (https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/collusion-for-chrome/ganlifbpkcplnldliibcbegplfmcfigp?hl=en) to note the number of cookies used on each site's homepage and the presence or absence of third-party tracking cookies. I then repeated the process of visiting each site, this time using a newly installed and cookie free copy of Firefox and the browser utility Lightbeam, again noting the number of cookies that the homepage inserted into my browser and whether or not third party cookies were included. Wherever possible, I also read through the sites' privacy policies, user agreements, and site disclosures, although only six sites had such documentation.

To supplement my web material data pool, and for purposes of comparison, wherever possible I tracked organizations' offline activities, relying on news alerts to monitor offline meetings and events, and asking interview subjects about their offline tactics. My goal in gathering these data was to develop a sense of each organization's DICT adoption, usage practices, and relative sophistication, as well as to assess how successful each organization has been at using various online tools, and whether or not each organization displayed a clear preference for online or offline activities. With specific reference to my heuristic model, the data I gathered from my analysis of web materials was used to measure and evaluate a number of elements. These data were brought to bear on my analysis of a number of dimensions of DICT adoption, including

the promotion of shared identities, organizational structure, framing, low-cost online actions, data-gathering and data-mining, and internet-based activism. Furthermore, these data informed my assessment of organizational connectedness, member and organizer characteristics, organizational ideological orientation, and first-mover advantage (see Table 3.2).

I conducted a range of simple statistical analyses of the data I gathered using the codebook in appendix one, the results of which I will present in my analytical chapters below. I also qualitatively analyzed the notes I took describing and assessing each of the sites under study, noting patterns and interesting aspects of the sites and incorporating these observations into my evaluation of my heuristic model and into my theory-building process, as I will recount more fully in my analytical chapter.

Organizational survey. My second data-gathering tool was an organizational survey, which I fielded between January and March of 2014. The survey was built using Qualtrics software, and was hosted on the Qualtrics server; I have included a full copy of the survey questionnaire and the accompanying consent form in appendix two. I initially contacted 48 of the 53 organizations under study with an e-mail invitation to participate in the online survey on January 6th, 2014. Four of the organizations under study, namely Gay & Lesbian Unions Eire, Gender Public Advocacy Campaign, Homosexual Law Reform Society, and Rainbow Support Services, did not have active websites providing e-mail addresses, only cached sites. One organization, Council for the Status of the Family, had no web presence at all. I attempted to contact these five organizations through other means, including the postal service, but was unable to connect with them; I believe the organizations in question to be defunct, and excluded them from my analysis.

Table 3.2: Summary of variables and methodologies

Factor	Method
Adoption	
Promotion of shared identities	Analysis of web content, assessment of offline activity
Organizational structure	Analysis of web content, organizational survey
Framing	Analysis of web content, assessment of offline activity
Low-cost online action	Analysis of web content, assessment of offline activity
Data-gathering and data-mining	Cookie monitoring software, analysis of privacy policies, disclosures, and terms of use, organizational survey
Internet-based activism	Analysis of web content, assessment of offline activity
Organizational connectedness	Analysis of web content, link analysis, news coverage analysis, organizational survey
Member characteristics	Public opinion poll data, organizational survey, analysis of web content
Organizer characteristics	Analysis of web content, news coverage analysis, organizational survey
Ideological orientation	Analysis of web content, news coverage analysis
Out-party status	Analysis of incumbent party policy
First-mover advantage	Analysis of web content, organizational survey

I made follow-up contacts by e-mail with the organizations that had not yet completed the survey on January 27th, 2014, and again by e-mail and phone between February 24th and February 26th, 2014. Twenty-six organizations initiated the survey (49% of the total), but only sixteen fully completed it, giving me a 30.2% response rate.

Of the sixteen complete surveys, liberal organizations completed ten and conservative organizations completed six. Note that my measure of the ideological orientation of an organization is straightforward; I considered an organization to be progressive if it favors marriage equality, protection from hate crimes, anti-discrimination legislation, and adoption rights for gay couples, and conservative if it opposes marriage equality, rejects anti-discrimination laws, or opposes allowing gay couples to adopt children. Importantly, many of the organizations under study are not primarily concerned with LGBTQ issues. Because I included organizations that were mentioned in news coverage of gay rights issues, some of the organizations included in the study are not ones that lobby exclusively around such issues, but rather organizations that take a generally liberal or conservative position on social issues and were solicited by reporters for comment on gay rights, or participated in some type of protest action on the issue. Thus, these organizations should not be thought of as exclusively gay rights organizations, but rather as organizations that have been involved in some capacity in gay rights issues. My assessment of the organizations' ideological orientations was made based on data drawn from newspaper coverage and my analysis of online and to a lesser extent printed materials produced by each organization; Table 3.1, presented earlier, reflects my assessment of the ideological positions of the organizations under study based on my analysis.

The organizational survey addressed a number of issues, including the structure of the organization, its target audiences and preferred means of engagement therewith, as well as issues of data-gathering and of the experiences the organization has had online (a full copy of the survey is included in appendix two). The survey data served to enrich my analysis and assessment of a number of the elements of my heuristic model, including

organizational structure, data-gathering and data-mining, organizational connectedness, member and organizer characteristics, and first-mover advantage (see Table 3.2). I will discuss the survey results and my analysis thereof, in the analytical chapters below.

Elite interviews. As my goal is not only to evaluate the heuristic model I provided earlier, but also to inductively develop additional and supplemental explanations for why certain organizations use DICTs in particular ways, I conducted a series of in-depth interviews with subjects who work at several of the organizations under study (a copy of the consent form provided to all interview subjects is included in appendix three). By gathering this type of qualitative data, I was able to refine my interpretation of the data I gathered by other means, and to develop some fresh insights into organizations' DICT-related choices and practices. I began the interview process by interviewing eight subjects at eight different organizations, five of them liberal and three conservative. As I gathered and began to evaluate survey and website data, I conducted further interviews. I re-interviewed two individuals employed at two of the conservative organizations I had previously interviewed, and conducted interviews with two more individuals, one at a liberal organization and one at a conservative organization. In total, I conducted twelve interviews with ten subjects, representing six liberal organizations and four conservative organizations. The initial wave of interviews I conducted in January and February 2014 primarily addressed questions related to my heuristic model, supplemented with fresh questions arising out of the conversations I had. My second wave of interviews, conducted in March 2014 and May 2014, served to reassess some of my conclusions and concepts, and to further develop some of my emerging ideas. The data gathered with these elite interviews informed my analysis of all aspects of my

heuristic model, and supplied me with data that enabled me to develop fresh ideas on what drives organizations to adopt DICTs; I will fully discuss these interviews and the data I gathered through them in my analytical chapters.

Secondary sources. The final tool I used to gather relevant data was an examination of various secondary sources. First, I used the newspaper articles I collected when identifying subjects for my research to help identify organizations' offline activities related to the promotion of shared identities, framing efforts, and propensity to organize low-cost online activities and to embrace internet activism. My analysis of these materials also informed my assessment of these organizations' relations with other organizations, organizer and member characteristics, and ideological orientation (see Table 3.2).

Second, I evaluated the policy statements of the incumbent political parties of the countries under study in January 2014 in order to identify their policies with respect to gay rights and same-sex marriage, with the goal of determining whether the organizations under study should be considered in or out parties (see Table 3.2). I defined the incumbent party as the party that controlled the most senior branch of the legislature. In the United States, the Senate was controlled by the Democratic Party in January 2014, as was the presidency, so I considered that the incumbent party. In the United Kingdom, the House of Commons and the Cabinet was dominated by a coalition between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats, with the Conservative Party holding a greater number of seats and ministerial appointments. I thus considered the Conservative Party to be the incumbents, but analyzed both Conservative and Liberal Democrat policy documents to determine the state of current British governmental policy on LGBTQ

issues. In Ireland, the incumbent 31st Dáil was a coalition between Fine Gael and the

Labour Party, with Fine Gael holding more seats and having won a greater proportion of

the vote. I considered Fine Gael to be the incumbent party, but analyzed both Fine Gael's

and the Labour Party's policy documents to determine current Irish policy towards gay

rights.

Finally, I assessed previously collected public opinion data in order to draw some

conclusions about the likely characteristics of the audiences for the various organizations

under study (see Table 3.2). I assumed that organizations promoting gay rights would

tend to target individuals whom they believe will be inclined to support them and vice-

versa for conservative organizations. Therefore, I assumed that by examining public

opinion data indicating the demographic and other characteristics of individuals who

supported or opposed various aspects of gay rights, such as marriage equality, I could

draw some inferences about the type of individuals that conservative and liberal

organizations were trying to communicate with. Happily, such data were freely available.

In the United Kingdom, quarterly surveys have been conducted by public opinion polling

organization YouGov that have measured support for gay marriage, broken down by age,

gender, political partisanship, and socioeconomic status since 2011 (YouGov, 2013). In

addition, in 2014, polling organization ComRes conducted a poll of British adults on the

topic of gay marriage (ComRes, 2014), and a 2012 poll by Angus Reid Global examined

attitudes to marriage equality (Angus Reid Public Opinion, 2012). In the United States,

polls measuring support for gay marriage and other gay rights broken down by a range of

demographic characteristics include polls by public opinion research firm Gallup (2013),

the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (2011), the Public Religion

Research Institute (2014) and Quinnipiac University (2013). In Ireland, polls addressing

support for gay marriage among the Irish broken down by various demographic

characteristics include a 2011 survey by the Department of Public Expenditure and

Reform (2012) and a 2012 public opinion survey by polling organization MillwardBrown

(2012). As I will discuss below, I examined all of these polls, and selected a single poll

from each country that provided both detailed demographic data for those who support

and oppose gay rights and information on methodology, and that was conducted in the

months before my data collection period began, thus ensuring that the data were relevant

to the period I examined. I will discuss the details of these various data in the analytical

chapters below, when I address the issue of the relationship between member or

supported characteristics and the propensity to adopt DICTs.

CHAPTER 4: EXPLORING THE HEURISTIC MODEL: DICT ADOPTION AND

FACTORS THAT PREDICT IT

The first analytical task I face is exploring how well the heuristic model I developed earlier explains what I found when I examined my data. In the model I proposed five drivers of DICT adoption by social movement organizations: diffusion, group characteristics, ideology, out-party innovation, and first-mover advantage. I further proposed that there would be differences between organizations grouped by country, arguing that national context was likely to play some role in the degree to which organizations hosted in a particular nation adopted DICTs. Per this model, DICT adoption is my key dependent variable, which is to say, it is the outcome that I am primarily interested in explaining. Therefore, I will begin this section with a discussion of how I developed an assessment of the degree to which different organizations adopted DICTs. I will then move on to a discussion of the other elements of my model, namely the factors that I anticipate will influence the degree to which organizations adopt DICTs.

DICT Adoption

My analysis of the organizations' DICT adoption was informed primarily by my assessment of their websites, supplemented with other forms of data as I will discuss below. The first step was determining whether or not each organization listed above did or did not have a website. As noted earlier, 48 out of the 53 organizations under study did indeed have websites. Four of the organizations under study, namely Gay & Lesbian Unions Eire, Gender Public Advocacy Campaign, Homosexual Law Reform Society, and Rainbow Support Services, did not have active websites, only partial, cached sites. One organization, Council for the Status of the Family, had no web presence at all that I was

able to find. As all my offline efforts to locate these organizations failed, I considered them to be defunct, and excluded them from my analysis, as I was unable to gather any meaningful data about them. However, the study of organizations that eschew the use of online tools would doubtless add a great deal of insight into the processes of DICT adoption, and future research should be directed at such organizations.

Using the codebook reproduced in appendix one, I evaluated the remaining 48 organizations' online activities. I noted the degree to which different organizations used various forms of social media, including their proclivity to post and the number of likes, followers, or views they collected. I considered the features of their websites. As discussed in the literature review, one of the ways in which DICT adoption can serve organizations is by providing them with a range of low to no-cost actions that individuals can take that will move them towards full participation in the organizations' work. Thus, I measured elements such as the inclusion of an online donation option, the invitation to subscribe to an e-newsletter, and the provision of information about concrete actions site visitors could take to support the organization (other than donation). I was also interested in interactive elements, as much of the literature is concerned with the ways in which online affordances can make social movement organizations more interactive and open to member input. Thus, I measured elements such as the incorporation of user-generated content, the provision of a forum in which site visitors could interact with one another, and the presence or absence of contact details that would make it relatively simple for a site visitor to contact the organization directly. I measured organizations' use of cookies, as detailed earlier, as one of the elements in my analysis of their data gathering sophistication. In the pages that follow, I will begin by discussing my specific findings

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with respect to the various elements of organizational DICT adoption that I gathered in the course of my analysis of online materials. I will then describe how these relate to my heuristic model, and explain how I developed my overall evaluation of organizations' degree of DICT adoption.

Use of basic web affordances. The first dimension along which I explored DICT adoption was what I called the use of basic web affordances. In order to examine this dimension, I combined my dichotomous measures of whether or not a site had a media section – I interpreted this as a marker of sophistication as it indicated that the site was built to serve multiple audiences – along with my dichotomous measures of whether or not the site included an online donation option, whether or not the site included video (as an indicator of multimedia sophistication), whether or not the site included an organizational blog, whether or not the site included a section with options for taking action, and whether or not the site offered the option to sign up for an e-mail newsletter.

Table 4.1: Use of basic web affordances

	Yes	No
Online donation option	77%	23%
Blog	77%	23%
Take action section	69%	31%
E-mail newsletter signup	65%	35%
Video	58%	42%
Media section	50%	50%

Table 4.1 provides a summary of my results for each measure. As you can see, the majority of sites offered each of the elements considered. However, few sites included all of them.

As Figure 4.1 shows, over half of the organizations under study used five or six of the basic web affordances described above. However, 38% of organizations used just one, two, or three of these affordances, suggesting meaningful variation on this dimension – some websites were much more sophisticated and complex than others. As part of my evaluation of organizations adoption of DICTs, I used my dichotomous measures of whether or not each organization used each of the web affordances listed in Table 4.1 to create a single measure of web affordance usage use scaled from 0 to 6. The mean score on this dimension for all organizations was 4.11.

Figure 4.1: Frequency distribution of web affordances
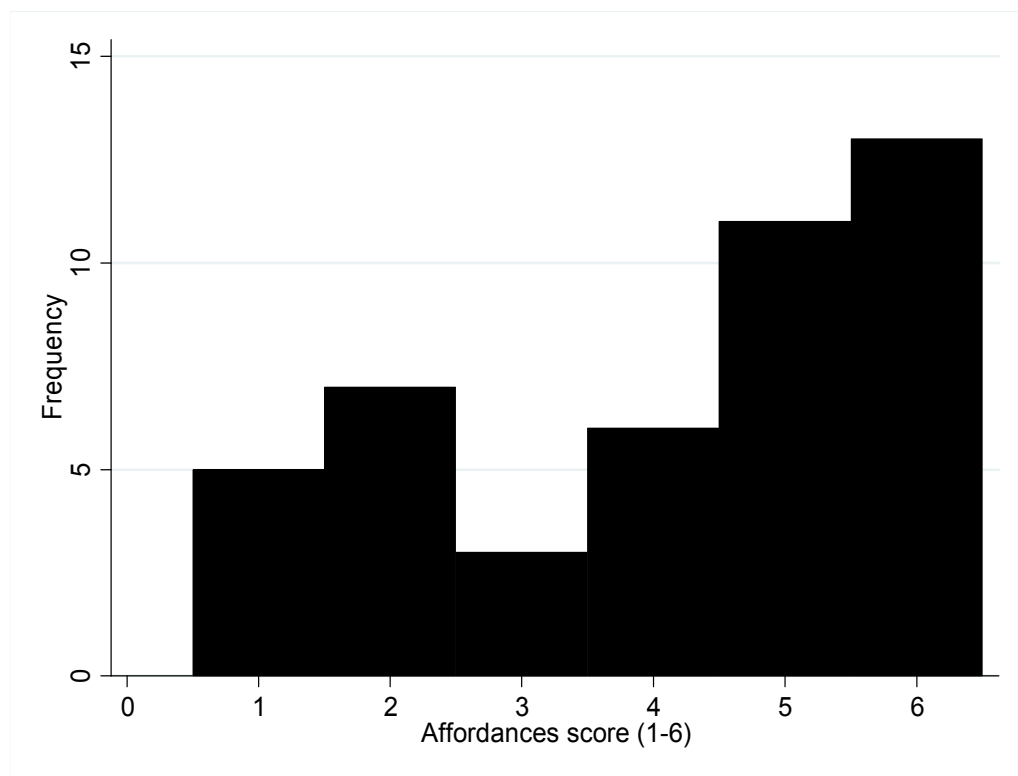
In terms of my qualitative evaluation of these sites' contents, one of the things that struck me was the extent to which organizations that included blogs used those blogs to discuss and interpret news articles and materials from elsewhere on the web. The vast majority of the posts published in organizations' blogs referred to a news event or news articles, and discussed the implications and interpretation of that event. Indeed, as one of my interview subjects, Keith[3], a man who founded and runs a conservative organization in the United States, said, the primary reason that his organization produces and maintains a website is to provide site visitors with an alternative interpretation of news, and to increase their awareness of news stories that did not receive significant attention in the mainstream media. Similarly, Sara, a young woman responsible for communications at an Irish organization that is lobbying for marriage equality ahead of the Irish referendum, said that one of the most important things her website does is to collect news stories related to LGBTQ issues from around the world and to share them with members and site visitors along with commentary highlighting the moral rightness of marriage equality and equal rights. Said Sara, "We want people to understand that this is a worldwide issue, and that Ireland needs to be on the right side of it. We want to show people that this is a human rights issue, and something that other people and really, other places and countries, that they're wrestling with this too. We want to show that this is a moral issue, human rights, you know, an equality issue. People need to think about same sex marriage as being an issue about equality and equal rights. And so we write about these news and events and share these articles to help educate people on this." In other

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[2] Not his real name. My interview subjects all requested anonymity, and I have therefore used pseudonyms in the text in order to facilitate readers' comprehension while maintaining the anonymity of my respondents.

words, the organizations that included blogs on their sites almost all used those blogs to frame issues for site visitors to a greater or lesser degree – blogging was the most prominent way in which organizations attempted to frame events and issues for their members.

As discussed in the literature review above, one of the core tasks of an advocacy organization is building frames, or promoting a particular interpretation of a social problem, and a particular solution thereto. The organizations under study used their blogs to develop and promote frames, and to reframe news and events in such a way as to promote their perspective on the issue of marriage equality. Whether or not this is an effective strategy is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of the present study; I gathered no evidence on whether site visitors adopted organizational framing of the issue, or whether the frames developed in organizations' blogs had an impact on the framing of gay rights issues in the mainstream media (for some evidence on this topic, see DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun, 2012, whom I cited earlier). While the ultimate question of whether or not attempts at alternative framing online are successful at altering social conversations around issues remains unanswered in the present study, it is nevertheless interesting to note that attempts at framing are a key feature of organizations' online efforts.

Social media. The second key dimension I evaluated using the data I collected on organizations' websites was their use of social media. Table 4.2 indicates the proportions of organizations' using Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. I selected these three social media platforms, and no others, for two reasons. First, these are the most popular platforms among internet users in the three countries under study. According to a proprietary report by global digital media and marketing research firm eMarketer, in the

United Kindgom, Facebook and Twitter were the most popular social networking sites by unique visitors in 2012, and in the United States, Facebook and Twitter were the most popular social media sites by share of visits (eMarketer, 2013). The report provided no data on Ireland, however, the Irish government reports that Facebook and Twitter are the country's most popular social networking sites (Passport to trade 2.0, 2013). Furthermore, a report by Sandvine, a Canadian broadband provider, showed that YouTube accounted for 15.43% of US internet traffic in 2012, second only to Netflix with 28.9%, and for 21.3% of internet traffic in Europe, making it the single largest online destination in the region (Sandvine, 2013). In other words, these three site are among the most popular web destinations in the countries under study. Second, these three sites were by far the most common social networking sites I encountered in my analysis of these organizations' online web presence. Only very rarely were other sites linked to or updated, and when they were, it was typically a site like Digg, which aggregates news and allows for its sharing, but which does not allow for much interaction or community building beyond the sharing of web articles. Typically, certain organizations would include a Digg button on their blogs, to enable readers to share the content, but otherwise not engaging with the site at all. I therefore focused my efforts on the platforms that organizations use, namely Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Table 4.2: Social media

	Yes	**No**
Facebook	75%	25%
Twitter	75%	25%
YouTube	52%	48%

As can be seen in Table 4.2, most organizations use Facebook and Twitter, and a majority have a YouTube channel. When looking at the distribution of organizations by social media usage, I found that 21% of organizations used no social media at all, 2% used one form of social media, 31% used two forms of social media, and 46% used all three of the social media tools I measured, indicating some variance in social media usage. As part of my evaluation of organizations adoption of DICTs, I used my dichotomous measures of whether or not each organization used each of the tools listed to create a single measure of social media use scaled from 0 to 3. The mean score on this variable was 2.02; the frequency distribution is graphed below in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Frequency distribution of social media usage
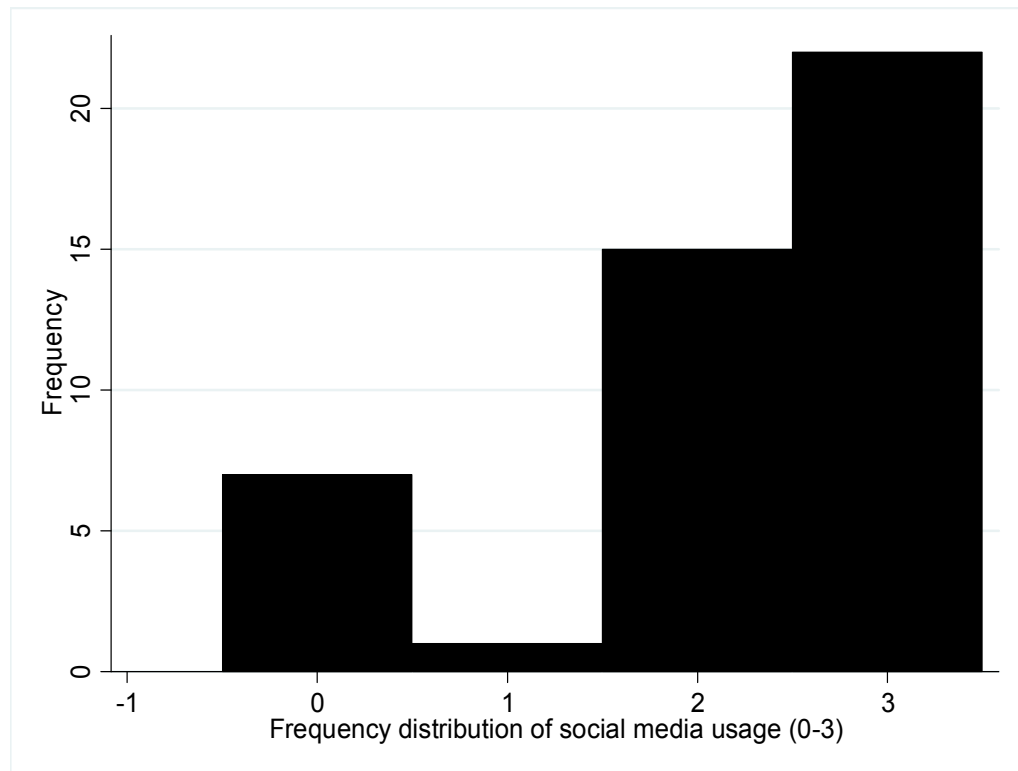
In addition, there was some variation in how frequently organizations updated their social media, and how many followers they manage to attract. Among those

organizations that have a Facebook page, 86% update their pages weekly, and 75%

update them daily; some organizations that have Facebook pages – some 14% – are thus

relatively infrequent updaters. On Twitter, 92% of organizations with a Twitter feed

Tweeted weekly, and 69% daily, while on YouTube, 52% of organizations loaded new

video regularly. Thus, there was variation in how intensively organizations updated their

social media outlets, with YouTube being the least frequently updated, which makes

sense given the complexity of creating a video compared with the relative simplicity of

writing a short Tweet or Facebook update. Furthermore, there was a great deal of

variation in the attention organizations managed to garner on social media. Among

organizations that maintained Facebook pages, the number of likes their pages attracted

ranged from 74 for Ireland Stand up to 1,603,798 for the Human Rights Campaign;

among organizations that maintained a Twitter feed, the number of followers they

attracted ranged from 233 for OutWest to 372,000 for the Human Rights Campaign; and

among organizations that maintained a YouTube channel, the number of subscribers they

attracted ranged from 56 for the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children to 21,228

for the Human Rights Campaign. Thus, organizations displayed varying degrees of social

media success, despite the widespread use of social media, with the Human Rights

Campaign clearly dominating the social media space among these organizations.

Interestingly, the Human Rights Campaign, which had almost 500,000 more

Facebook likes than the next most-popular organization, Focus on the Family, with

1,116,649, is an organization that attracted a lot of attention with its viral Facebook

campaign in March, 2013. The organization devised a simple red and pink logo (see

Figure 4.1), that it encouraged followers to use as their profile pictures on Facebook in

the weeks immediately preceding two US Supreme Court cases addressing the issue of marriage equality, namely *United States v. Windsor* and *Hollingworth v. Perry* (Human Rights Campaign, n.d.). Although I do not have historical data, the Human Rights Campaign itself notes that its social media following grew significantly following the success of the profile picture campaign and the media attention that the campaign garnered, a powerful illustration of the power that virality can have on the internet.

Figure 4.3: Human Rights Campaign Facebook logo
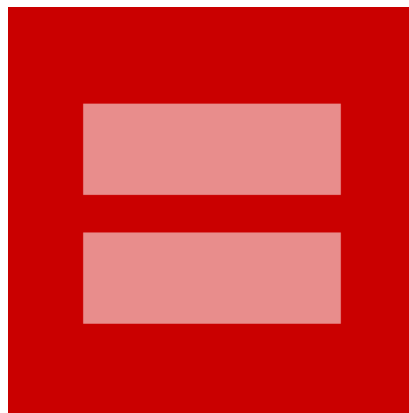
Interactivity. The third dimension that my analysis of organizations' web presence explored is interactivity. My data included a number of measures of interactivity, including dichotomous variables measuring the provision of forums that enabled unmediated or minimally edited debate and discussion between site visitors, the inclusion of user-generated content on the website in blog posts or other areas, comments functionality on blog or other posts that allow site visitors to leave comments about website content, and the inclusion of contact details and media contact details to enable different audiences to engage directly with organizational staff. Table 4.3 summarizes the proportions of organizational websites incorporating these elements. As you can see, interactive elements were much less common than the other elements I have thus far

described. Although most sites included contact details, few sites allowed comments or incorporated forums or user-generated content, and the majority of sites did not provide media contacts. It is interesting that so few organizations appear to be taking advantage of the opportunity for interaction permitted by contemporary DICTs. I was concerned that perhaps there was a substitution effect occurring, and that organizations were interacting primarily through social media rather than through their web portals. However, I examined all the organizational Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, and YouTube channels, and found very little evidence of interactivity. While the organizations with the biggest following on each social medium did attract some comments, I found only a handful of examples of organizations responding to Facebook or YouTube comments, and very little interaction on Twitter beyond organizations retweeting, saying "thank you" for retweets, or acknowledging mentions.

Table 4.3: Interactive elements

	Yes	**No**
Contact details	94%	6%
Media contact details	46%	54%
Comments	25%	75%
User-generated content	13%	88%
Forum	10%	90%

My overall impression was that only a few organizations truly embraced online interactivity and invited site visitors or followers to interact with them and co-create online content or messages. Despite the interactive power of the web, organizations primarily seem to use the internet as a one-way medium. As I will discuss below, I do not

believe that this is the result of organizations being unaware of the potential for interactivity online, or resistant to engaging with external audiences, but rather it is a consequence of the fact that organizations have limited time and resources, and cannot afford to devote staff time to responding to comments and monitoring online feedback. In order to further summarize organizational adoption of interactive elements, I combined my dichotomous variables for the inclusion of forums, UGC, and comments in a single variable ranging from 0 to 3 that I describe as web 2.0 interactivity. This variable is intended to capture how much the organization engages with the unique interactive affordances that the internet provides; I excluded contact details and media contact details from this variable as these serve to facilitate offline or e-mail interaction, which I do not consider to be unique web affordances.

Organizational structures and DICTs. The fourth aspect of DICT adoption that I considered was the extent to which organizations displayed internal structures influenced by digital tools like those Karpf (2012) describes as characterizing Moveon.org. According to Karpf (2012), DICTs allow organizations to operate with much lighter staff complements than previously, and to take on decentralized and diffused structures with limited staff co-presence. I do not have systematically organized data on staff numbers, as this information was not always available. Thus, the data I collected on this aspect of DICT adoption includes staff details taken from the websites where available, data from the survey I conducted, and supplementary data taken from my interviews and in some cases from newspaper accounts. Overall, I found that there was a lot of variation in the number of staff members at each organization, ranging from a single full-time staff member at MassResistance to around 650 full-time staff members

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at Focus on the Family. There was also a loose correlation between staff numbers and other aspects of DICT adoption. In other words, the more staff members an organization employed, the more sophisticated its adoption of DICTs tended to be as measured by the other dimensions I have discussed. This is contrary to what one might expect based on the existing literature, which suggests that organizations that intensively use and adopt DICTs can operate with a lighter staff complement than traditional organizations. As I will explain in my discussion section, there are a number of reasons why, in my assessment, these organizations display this pattern, primary among them being that often, the sophistication with which an organization adopts DICTs is in fact a function of the resources the organization is able to devote to DICTs.

Online data-gathering and analysis. Finally, I gathered data on organizations' use of cookies, and of third-party cookies, which are cookies that do not belong to the host website, but to a third party, typically an advertising firm (Turow, 2010, 2013). While first-party cookies typically are used to track users within the website visited and to remember their preferences and login data, third-party cookies allow the third party to track users across websites, building a profile of their web browsing habits and enabling third parties such as Google to serve targeted advertising to web users. The average number of cookies that the organizations' websites inserted into my browser was 4.5, with a minimum of 0 from LGBT Noise and LGBT+ Liberal Democrats and a maximum of 13 from Americans for Truth about Homosexuality, Concerned Women for America, and Freedom to Marry. Furthermore, 92% of organizations' cookies included third-party cookies. However, these results should not be interpreted as indicating a high degree of sophisticated data gathering and analysis by the organizations under study. The majority

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of sites inserted third-party cookies from Google, Google Analytics, Facebook, and Twitter. Many of these organizations rely on blogging software to design their sites, and such software often includes Google Analytics and social media cookies as a matter of routine. In addition, many of these organizations use free Google services in building, hosting, and maintaining their websites, and Google routinely includes its cookies when such tools are used (Google, n.d.). Having spoken with people from these organizations, who uniformly said that their organization did not use online tracking tools, and having examined my survey data, which indicate that most of the data that organizations gather and use about their members is related to donors, and includes personally identifiable data such as names, addresses, phone numbers and so on – data which are not collected by cookies – I conclude that online data gathering tactics are relatively underdeveloped among these organizations. Indeed, among my survey respondents, only 30% reported using online tracking tools (with 54% saying they did not use such tools and 15% saying they weren't certain if their organization did or did not use them), and among the organizations that reported using online tools, all of them cited Google Analytics as the data tool they used. Unless users subscribe to premium services, Google Analytics offers websites information about how many visitors their site has, what devices they are using to access the site, and where in the world they are accessing the site from; the basic data are neither complex nor comprehensive, and do not constitute the kind of in-depth, behavioral tracking with which experts are concerned. Furthermore, all organizations denied using data gathered by other organizations to target users online, which is the primary use of third-party cookies. Thus, with respect to online data gathering, I found that these organizations generally do little to no structured online data gathering and

display relatively low levels of sophistication around online data gathering tools and technologies. It is possible that there is a degree of deception involved on the part of my respondents and interview subjects; however, I noticed that I did not see any Google advertisements for the sites I had visited after visiting them with my usual browser, which allows and monitors cookies, nor did I receive any communication from those groups on any social media that I did not directly request. Thus, the data from my web analysis, interviews, survey, and my qualitative experience of engaging with these organizations online and through social media all suggest that they do not engage in sophisticated online data gathering, nor do they use third-party data to track and monitor online activities and develop targeted messages. Although I will again touch on issues of online data-gathering when I address cross-national differences, for the purposes of assessing organizations' overall adoption of DICTs, I did not find the data I gathered on online data-gathering to be a useful addition to my analysis, and I thus did not include it in my overall assessment of organizations' DICTs adoption.

Overall assessments of organizations' DICT adoption. Taken together, the findings described above informed my overall analysis of the organizations' DICT adoption. My heuristic model served to inform the types of data I gathered. As discussed in my literature review, one of the ways in which organizations can use DICTs is to foster shared identities. In order to incorporate this in my assessment of DICT adoption, I included the measures of interactivity that I described above, which captures the degree to which organizations create online communities and allow their audiences to interact with them and with others to foster a sense of shared identity. I also included the use of web affordances like blogs, which as I explained earlier, organizations tended to use to

promote interpretations of events and thus to foster a shared interpretation of the world among members. A second aspect of organizational DICTs adoption, as indicated in my model, is the use of DICTs to develop and disseminate frames. In order to capture the extent to which organizations use DICTs to build frames, I measured their use of blogs, which were typically used to provide interpretations of events and promote solutions to social problems, which is the essence of framing. I also considered organizations' tendencies to use social media, which are a way for organizations to expand their reach beyond people who visit their website and to reach broader audiences with their frames, helping to disseminate them. As my model illustrates, the internet offers organizations a unique opportunity to engage potential members and interested audiences through the provision of accessible and often low-cost actions that individuals can take, and the inclusion of options for online activism. For example, by offering options for people to donate online, to subscribe to e-mail newsletters, and to take other forms of action, usually organized under a "Take Action" button on organizations' web pages that link to online e-petitions, upcoming events and so on, organizations can engage interested parties, and deepen their involvement with organizational goals related to social movement priorities. I thus measured the extent to which the various organizations under study provided these tools and opportunities. Finally, as described above, I gathered data on organizations' internal and staff structures to determine the extent to which DICTs adoption had influenced how they arrange their work, and I gathered data on the use of cookies to assess their online data-gathering practices. As you can see, several of the individual items I measured related to multiple aspects of my heuristic model, and thus I

sought to build an overall assessment of organizations' adoption of DICTs based on my data.

Specifically, to facilitate the rest of my analysis of my heuristic model, I summarized much of the data I collected in a single score, which considered the degree to which each organization under study used the basic web affordances, social, and interactive elements that captured the key dimensions of DICTs adoption as summarized in my heuristic model. In particular, the score incorporated my dichotomous measures for the following: the inclusion of a separate media section, the inclusion of an online donation option, the inclusion of video, the inclusion of blogs, the inclusion of a 'take action' section, the provision of an e-mail newsletter, the use of an organizational Facebook page, the use of an organizational Twitter stream, the use of an organizational YouTube channel, the provision of contact details, the provision of media contact details, the inclusion of comments, the inclusion of user-generated content, the inclusion of a forum, and finally, five dichotomous variables measuring the frequency with which organizations updated their social media pages (see appendix one for details). These nineteen dichotomous variables were summed to form a new variable, which was then rescaled to run from 0 to 10. Table 4.4 provides the scores for all of the organizations under study. Note that these scores do not include any measures of data gathering or of DICT-influenced organizational structures. As discussed, I do not believe that any of these organizations engage in sophisticated data-gathering and analysis, nor do I find the quantitative data I gathered on the subject to be a useful indicator of DICT adoption. In addition, due to the varying degrees of information I was able to gather about each organization's internal structures, it was not possible to include those data in this score.

Table 4.4: Overall DICT adoption score (out of 10)

Organization	Score
Concerned Women for America	8.9
Freedom to Marry	8.9
Human Rights Campaign	8.9
Lamda Legal	8.9
Marriage Equality Ireland	8.9
DignityUSA (Catholic Church)	8.4
Focus on the Family	8.4
Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD)	8.4
Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)	8.4
Society for the Protection of Unborn Children	8.4
La Manif Pour Tous (French organization active in the UK)	7.9
National Organization for Marriage	7.9
Stonewall	7.9
The Lesbian & Gay Foundation (LGF)	7.9
Campaign for Children and Families	7.4
Evangelical Alliance	7.4
Family Equality Council	7.4
Irish Episcopal Conference	7.4
Out & Equal	7.4
Youth Defence	7.4
Americans for Truth About Homosexuality	6.8
Marriage Equality USA	6.3
American Family Association	5.8

BeLoGTo	5.8
LGBT Noise	5.8
MassResistance	5.8
L.inC	5.3
Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement	5.3
LGBT+ Liberal Democrats	5.3
LGBT Network	4.7
Outhouse	4.7
Family & Life	4.2
Gay & Lesbian Equality Network	4.2
Iona Institute	4.2
Queer Youth Network (Q.Y.N.)	4.2
Evangelical Alliance Ireland	3.7
Anglican Mainstream	3.2
Gay and Lesbian Humanist Association (GALHA)	3.2
Ireland Stand Up	3.2
OutWest	2.6
Catholic Truth	2.1
Institute for Marriage and Public Policy	2.1
Campaign for Homosexual Equality	1.6
Gay marriage no thanks	1.6
Changing Attitude Ireland	1.1
Defend the Family	1.1
Heterosexuals Organized for a Moral Environment	1.1
OutRage!	1.1

To compensate for these limitations, in addition to calculating these scores, I revisited each organization's website, considered my notes on each, and compared my subjective impressions, including my data on their internal structures, to the score I had calculated for each organization. Overall, I found that there was a strong relationship between my impression of how intensively an organization had adopted DICTs, and the score that organization received. Although these scores constitute a quantitative measure of organizations' DICTs adoption, their primary utility was as a shorthand that I used when exploring various aspects of my heuristic model. I did not do any sophisticated statistical modeling of these scores, but instead used them to guide my analysis of the relationships between my explanatory factors and DICT adoption, and for some basic t-tests. In the discussion that follows, I will provide some numbers, drawn from these scores, to bolster my arguments. However, I will also discuss the extent to which my qualitative data support or contradict my expectations, and I do not consider this quantitative measure to be an absolute indicator of DICT sophistication, but rather one suggestive piece of evidence among several. Having developed a sense of the degree of DICT adoption displayed by each of the organizations under study, summarized by the score given in Table 4.4 and supplemented by my notes and my qualitative evaluations, I can now move to exploring at the next key element of my heuristic model, namely those factors that the literature suggests should influence the degree to which a given organization adopts available DICTs.

Diffusion

The first factor that I anticipated would play a role in DICT adoption is diffusion, or the degree to which an organization interacts with other organizations and thus has an

opportunity to learn from other organizations' experiences with digital technologies. Measuring this proved to be challenging. One of the tools I used was my organizational survey, which included a question asking whether or not the respondent's organization interacted with other organizations. Of the sixteen organizations that completed the survey, 75% said that they did interact with other organizations, with 6% saying they did not know whether or not their organization interacted with other organizations, and the remaining 19% saying that they did not interact with other organizations. There is some evidence of a positive relationship between whether or not organizations reported interacting with other organizations in the survey and their overall DICT adoption score. The adoption scores of the organizations that reported interacting with other organizations ranged from 1.1 to 8.9 and averaged 5.5, while the scores for the few organizations that reported not interacting with other organizations ranged from 2.1 to 6.3 and averaged 3.9.

Clearly, the organizations that reported interacting with other organizations tended to have slightly higher adoption scores. However, the number of observations here is naturally too small to allow for any reliable inferences to be drawn. Furthermore, my survey questions simply asked whether or not interaction took place, and did not address the complexity, frequency, or depth of that interaction, all of which are key to understanding the structure of the networks in which the organizations operate. Thus, my survey provided very limited evidence of the role of diffusion in DICT adoption.

I then turned to my analysis of news accounts and online materials. For all of the websites I examined, I noted whether or not the site linked to the websites of other organizations. With no exceptions, the sites I examined included links to external sites,

including the sites of other organizations lobbying on similar issues. Given the widespread inclusion of such links, I concluded that they were an unreliable indicator of the degree to which organizations interacted meaningfully with other organizations. I then examined organizational press releases where available, looking for mentions of partnerships with other organizations and participation in joint events, as well as any mention of conferences or workshops. This was a somewhat more fruitful approach. I found a number of references to participation in shared events. For example, BeLonGTo, an national Irish organization that supports LGBTQ youth, organizes an annual Stand Up Against Homo/Transphobic Bullying week in Ireland, which a number of other organizations participate in, particularly school and government groups, indicating that BeLonGTo has strong relationships with other organizations. Similarly, Concerned Women for America, a conservative Christian women's activist group that lobbies on a number of issues including marriage equality, hosts a number of events in which multiple organizations participate, including other conservative organizations and churches. Not all organizations provided press releases or such data, but for the organizations that do provide that type of information, I made note of their activities, and then examined the degree to which such activities were associated with increased DICT adoption. This process revealed a reasonably clear degree of association between interaction with other organizations and DICT adoption. In particular, I found that there were a number of organizations that were highly involved in planning and participating in multi-organization events, and that those organizations, which appeared to act almost as a node connecting multiple other organizations, typically displayed a sophisticated degree of DICT adoption. For example, Freedom to Marry is an organized coalition of US

organizations that promote marriage equality. Freedom to Marry has arranged a number

of multi-organization events, frequently holds conferences for gay rights organizers, and

engages deeply with multiple organizations; it is also an organization with one of the

highest DICT adoption scores in my study. Similarly, the Human Rights Campaign,

which I have previously mentioned, displays both a high propensity to engage with other

organizations and a high degree of DICT sophistication. However, as I will discuss more

comprehensively in the discussion section below, this does not necessarily indicate a

causal relationship. Instead, it may be that large, well-funded organizations with

significant staff complements are able to devote resources to cultivating relationships

with other organizations *and* developing DICT capacity. Furthermore, the data I collected

are insufficient to fully explore the role of diffusion in DICT adoption by organizations.

In order to properly assess the effect of diffusion, it would be necessary to gather detailed

information on the nature, frequency, and depth of inter-organizational interactions. Such

data would enable me to build a network map for the organizations under study, and to

then trace the ways in which practices and ideas migrate through the network. I was able

only to gather limited information on whether or not interactions occurred. Overall, the

data I was able to gather suggest that my expectations with respect to the relationship

between inter-organizational interaction and DICT adoption have been met, and that

organizations that interact more with other organizations are also more likely to

intensively adopt and deploy DICTs. However, further study is needed to properly assess

the role of diffusion in DICT adoption.

Group Characteristics and Ideology

As noted, the literature I reviewed led me to anticipate that the characteristics of the types of people that organizations employ and try to reach will influence the degree to which those organizations adopt DICTs.

The role of audience characteristics. I will begin by discussing the data I gathered about the external audiences that these organizations targeted. My first step was to examine data drawn from public opinion surveys in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Ireland. I will describe the findings of each in turn. In the course of the discussion, all the differences among groups to which I refer are statistically significant, unless other specified.

First, for the United Kingdom, I examined a number of polls, including those mentioned earlier by YouGov, Angus Reid Public Opinion, and ComRes. The data across most of the polls was broadly consistent, but I elected to rely primarily on a YouGov poll conducted in May 2013, as this was the poll that most immediately preceded the start of my data collection process, and thus captured the distribution of public opinion about marriage equality in the United Kingdom at the time of my data collection (the findings closely mirror those of the later ComRes poll). Table 4.5 provides a summary of support for gay marriage by various demographic characteristics for the three countries under study. Note that "social grade" refers to a set of measures developed by the National Readership Survey and used widely in public opinion polling in the United Kingdom; it measures respondents' social status based on their occupation, and is used as a proxy for income and education (National Readership Survey, 2013).

Category A includes those in higher managerial, administrative or professional occupations, B refers to those in intermediate managerial, administrative and professional occupations, category C1 refers to those in supervisory, clerical and junior management, administrative and professional occupations, category C2 refers to skilled manual laborers, category D refers to semi-skilled and unskilled manual laborers, and category E refers to those receiving a state pension, casual workers, and the unemployed receiving state benefits (National Readership Survey, 2013). As can be seen, in terms of significant differences, conservative Britons are more likely to oppose marriage equality than their more-liberal counterparts, women are more likely to support marriage equality than men, and younger people (under 40) are more likely to support marriage equality than those over 40. There is no significant difference in support for marriage equality between those with a higher socioeconomic status and than their lower-status peers, and they are equally likely to oppose it.

Turning to the United States, I had a wealth of public opinion data to choose from, and I elected to focus on a 2013 poll by the Public Religion Research Institute. This organization provided in-depth detail about its methodology, as well as a detailed breakdown of its results, and the poll was conducted in mid-2013, meaning that it immediately preceded my data collection period and thus captured the characteristics of the people who would be targeted by my organizations during the period under study (Public Religion Research Institute, 2014).

As can be seen in Table 4.5, there are many similarities between American marriage equality supporters and opponents and their British peers. As was the case in the United Kingdom, liberals are more likely to support marriage equality than conservatives,

women are more likely to support marriage equality than men, and the young are more supportive of marriage equality than those over 49. The U.K. did not provide data on the racial characteristics of those who favor or oppose marriage equality, but in the U.S., blacks are significantly less likely to support marriage equality than whites or Hispanics. Finally, in the U.S., those with a college education tend to be markedly more supportive of marriage equality than those with only high school; this is in contrast to the U.K., where socio-economic status, as measured by social grade, was not associated with a major difference in opposition to or support for marriage equality. The two measures are not directly comparable, but both capture some aspect of the socio-economic characteristics of gay marriage supporters and opponents, and it is thus interesting to note this difference.

Finally, I examined public opinion data from Ireland. In contrast to the U.K. and U.S., there were far fewer opinion polls from which to select in the case of Ireland. I elected to use data from a November 2013 poll by Red C Research (Red C Research, 2013). As can be seen in Table 4.5, Irish support for marriage equality is much higher overall than support in the U.K. and U.S.; however, there are some similar patterns. Liberals tend to be more favorably disposed to marriage equality than conservatives, women are more likely to support marriage equality than men, and those under 65 are significantly more likely to support marriage equality than those 65 and over. As was the case in the U.K., there is no significant difference among people of different socio-economic status.

Overall, and perhaps unsurprisingly, it is clear that there are some general differences between those who are more likely to support marriage equality, and those

who are more likely to oppose it in all three of the countries under study. Overall, conservatives, males, and older people are more likely to oppose marriage equality, while liberals, females, and younger people are more likely to support it. There is also some evidence that more educated people are more likely to support marriage equality in the United States, while there were no significant differences in support for marriage equality among different socio-economic status groups in the U.K. and Ireland This assessment of the typical characteristics of supporters of and opponents to marriage equality is echoed by much of the literature on the subject, and applies more broadly to issues of gay rights (see, for example, Herek, 2002; Lewis & Gossett, 2008; Romero, 2013). Furthermore, the data from my survey broadly support this assessment – liberal organizations were more likely to say that they targeted younger people and more educated people, and vice-versa.

Table 4.5: Public opinion poll data on support for or opposition to marriage equality

United Kingdom			United States			Ireland		
Characteristic	Total support	Total oppose	Characteristic	Total support	Total oppose	Characteristic	Total support	Total oppose
Voting intention			*Party affiliation*			*Party affiliation*		
Conservative	48%	41%	Democrat	64%	36%	Fine Gael	73%	27%
Labour	60%	29%	Independent	57%	43%	Labour	96%	4%
Liberal Democrats	69%	24%	Republican	34%	66%	Fianna Fail	71%	29%
Gender			Tea Party	32%	68%	Sinn Fein	84%	16%
Male	47%	40%	*Gender*			*Gender*		
Female	58%	30%	Male	48%	52%	Male	76%	24%
Age			Female	57%	43%	Female	85%	15%
18-24	68%	17%	*Age*			*Age*		
25-39	70%	18%	18-33	69%	31%	18-24	89%	11%
40-59	53%	35%	34-48	55%	45%	25-34	86%	14%
60+	28%	61%	49-67	45%	55%	35-44	89%	11%
			68+	37%	63%	45-54	79%	21%

Social grade			Race			54-65	78%	22%
ABC1	55%	36%	White, non-Hispanic	55%	45%	65+	60%	40%
C2DE	50%	36%	Hispanic	53%	47%	*Social class*		
			Black, non-Hispanic	39%	61%	Higher social grades	84%	16%
			Educational attainment			Lower social grades	82%	18%
			Post-graduate	66%	34%			
			College graduate	60%	40%			
			Some college	57%	43%			
			High school or less	46%	54%			

Source: YouGov, 2013; Public Religion Research Institute, 2014; Red C Research, 2013

Second, in order to link these data to my findings on DICT adoption, I assumed that the organizations that are involved with lobbying to preserve marriage as a heterosexual institution are likely to seek to reach and engage those individuals who are more likely to support their position and take action on the issue, which is to say, older, conservative, male, and perhaps less educated individuals, while organizations that lobby to expand the right to marry to same sex couples will target those likely to support and aid them, namely younger, liberal, female, and perhaps more educated individuals. At this point, it became clear that it is almost impossible for my analysis to clearly separate the effect of ideology from the effect of group characteristics. Earlier, I suggested that, *ceteris paribus,* conservative organizations might be innately less likely to adopt DICTs than their liberal peers. However, it is impossible, given the limitations of my data, for me to tell whether liberals are innately more likely to adopt DICTs or whether the rate at which the liberal organizations in my study adopt DICTs is a function of the fact that they are likely to target people who have a higher propensity to support gay marriage. In particular, it is difficult to separate the effects of age and ideology. In the U.S., younger people are more likely to describe themselves as moderate, while older people are more likely to describe themselves as conservative (Gallup, 2012); in the U.K., support for the Conservative Party is significantly higher among those 55 and over, while support for the Liberal Democrats is significantly higher among those under 44 compared to those over 55, indicating that younger Britons tend to be more liberal than older Britons (Ipsos MORI, 2010); finally, in Ireland, I was unable to obtain data indicating the relationship between age and ideology or party affiliation, but it is likely to follow a similar pattern. Thus, conservative organizations are likely to target conservatives, who are likely to be

older, and liberals are likely to target liberals, who are likely to be younger. I therefore folded my analysis of the effect of ideology into my analysis of the effect of group characteristics.

Proceeding with my analysis, then, I sought to determine whether there were patterns of internet and DICT usage associated with any of the characteristics I found to be related to propensity to support marriage equality. For example, if data indicate that women are significantly less likely to use DICTs than men are, organizations that target women may favor offline methods of communication over DICTs in order to reach their target audiences. According to data from the Pew Research Internet Project, in the United States, there is no significant difference between men and women when it comes to their usage of the internet, e-mail, or mobile internet (Pew Research Internet Project, 2014). There are, however, significant differences in internet usage among people 64 and younger and people over 65 – younger people are much more likely to use the internet than their older peers. In addition, those under 30 are more likely than those over 50 to use the internet. Furthermore, those with an income above $50,000 a year and those with at least some college are significantly more likely to use the internet than those who earn less than $50,000 a year and those with only a high school education. In the U.K., data from the Office for National Statistics found only minor differences between men's and women's propensity to engage in various activities online (Office for National Statistics 2013). However, age was found to be significantly associated with the propensity to engage in different internet activities, with those under 55 much more likely to use the internet than those 55 and over. Finally, there was a small but significant difference between the propensities of those with a high income to use the internet compared to

those with a very low income, with the higher-income group more likely to use the internet in more ways. In Ireland, statistics from the Central Statistics Office indicated that, as was the case in the U.K. and U.S., there was no major difference in internet usage between men and women (Central Statistics Office, 2013). However, those under 45 were significantly more likely to use the internet than those 45 and older, and those aged between 45 and 59 were much more likely to use the internet than those aged 60 and over. In terms of the relationship between socio-economic status and internet usage, the Central Statistics Office reported that university students and the employed were more likely to use the internet than the unemployed, homemakers, and the retired. In short, then, in all of the countries under study, younger, wealthier, and more educated people were more likely to use the internet and to use it for multiple purposes than older, lower income, and less-educated people. Combining these observations then, I would anticipate that organizations that oppose marriage equality would favor offline over online communication methods, while those in favor of marriage equality would be more intensive users of online communication tools. In order to explore this, I used several pieces of data. First, I considered the overall adoption scores of the pro- and anti-marriage equality organizations under study. Second, I referred to my survey data, in particular, to the questions related to preferred methods of communication. Finally, I discussed the issue with my interview subjects.

Looking at their overall levels of DICT adoption, I did not, in the course of my qualitative examination of the organizations' online materials, note any clear and systematic differences in online sophistication between conservative and liberal organizations. Looking at their quantitative adoption scores too, there was only a modest

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difference in the mean adoption scores of conservative (5.26) and liberal (5.87) organizations, though this small difference is in the expected direction[4]. However, in my qualitative exploration, I did note that some differences, specifically that the conservative organizations tended to have more sophisticated websites, and that the liberal organizations tended to offer more interactive online options and, to a degree, to use social media more intensively. I looked at the individual components of my quantitative adoption score to support this impression. In terms of website sophistication, by which I mean the use of basic web affordances, conservative organization did score slightly higher on average than liberal organizations, with an average of 4.1 to liberal organizations' 3.9[5]. When looking at organizations use of social media, I created two metrics. First, I had a simple 0 to 3 scaled measure of whether or not organizations used the three social media platforms I measures. Second, I created a measure that included the variables measuring the use of the social media platforms and the five measure of the frequency with which they are updated. On the first measure, conservative organizations scored 1.8 and liberal organizations scored 2.2, suggesting there was a small difference between organizations' propensity to use social media by ideology[6]. On the second measure, however, there was a clearer difference – conservative organizations scored an average of 4.1, while liberal organizations scored an average of 5.2[7]. Finally, when considering my measure of interactivity, on average, liberal organizations scored slightly

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[4] My sample was too small for meaningful statistical testing. However, I did run a t-test of the difference between the two means, and found that there no statistically significant difference between the means, which adds weight to my impression that there was little clear overall difference.
[5] This difference is not statistically significant, but it is suggestive.
[6] Again, the difference was not statistically significant, but was in the expected direction.
[7] This difference, too, was not statistically significant, but is in the expected direction.

higher with 2 than conservative organizations did with 1.7[8]. Overall, then, conservative websites showed a slight tendency to have better developed websites, while liberal organizations showed a slight tendency to use and update social media more and to be slightly more interactive. The number of organizations under study is too small for formal statistical analysis – the small differences I found might reach statistical significance in a larger sample – but it is interesting that the differences are generally in the expected direction, even though they are not meaningful in size.

However, overall, the online activities of conservative organizations were, on average, no less sophisticated than those of liberal organizations. This first piece of evidence, then, suggests that ideology and the characteristics of organizations' target audiences are unrelated to the sophistication with which organizations adopt DICTs. However, without a comparison to offline activities, this analysis is partial at best. I thus turned to an analysis of secondary sources and to my survey and interview data to attempt to determine the extent to which organizations used offline communication methods.

An analysis of my survey materials showed some interesting patterns. There was no difference between conservative and liberal organizations' tendency to use online tools like e-mail, their websites, and social media. However, when it came to offline technologies like postal mail and the telephone, conservative organizations reported a greater tendency to utilize these tools[9]. My interview respondents echoed this finding.

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[8] Again, the difference is not statistically significant, but is in the expected direction.
[9] The sample size for my organizational survey is far too small for statistical analysis, what I report here are differences for which I did not test significance. For example, among the organizations I surveyed, no liberal organizations reported frequently using the postal service to communicate with members or the public, but four conservative organizations did; and while two liberal organizations reported never using the postal service to communicate with members or the public, no conservative organization did. Chi-square tests were impossible due to the small cell numbers.

Ted[10], who is responsible for updating and maintaining the website of an English

organization that lobbies religious bodies to maintain traditional family values, noted that

his organization frequently used postal mail to communicate with supporters and solicit

donations, saying, "We put a lot of effort into maintaining and updating our site, of

course, but a lot of our members are older folks who prefer not to bother with the

internet. So, for them, we produce snail-mail stuff, and send it out to them in the post. We

get good response from those mailing too, people will ring us up at the offices to chat

over something we mentioned in the mailings."

Sara[11], the young woman responsible for communications at a pro-marriage

equality Irish organization, said, "We don't really bother that much with the post. I mean,

we find our members are mostly happier if we get in touch with them on e-mail – they're

responsive to that form. When we've tried a blanket mailing, we just haven't found it to

be worthwhile. No one responds, and it's hard to know if it worked at all. So we like to

stick with our e-mail, and our site."

I did not find a great deal of relevant secondary evidence; news reports tended to

focus on mass events and on lobbying campaigns such as petition drives, and there did

not seem to be any clear differences between liberal and conservative organizations'

propensity to engage in these behaviors. Nevertheless, based on my analysis of online

materials and my survey data and of my interviews, I suggest that ideology and target

audience do not significantly influence organizations' propensity to use online tools, but

rather their propensity to use *offline* tools. While liberal organizations targeting younger

people were just as likely to use various DICTs as conservative organizations targeting

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[10] Not his real name, see footnote 2
[11] Not her real name, see footnote 2

older people, they were less likely to use offline technologies. Based on my interviews, I conclude that this is driven by two factors. First, conservative organizations are acutely aware of the imperative to have an online presence and to be engaged with new technologies. Although at present there is a sizeable gap between the use of the internet by the young and by older people, this gap is likely to shrink over the years as people age and as the internet becomes ever-more embedded in daily life. Thus, for organizations and advocacy workers that anticipate a long-term involvement in social issues, it is important to begin building online skills and capacities. Furthermore, as several of my interview subjects pointed out, large donors expect to see online efforts at the organizations that they fund. An organization that is not seen to be active online may find it more difficult to raise money from large donors and organizations. Therefore, conservative organizations have a number of incentives to make an effort to develop their online capacity.

Second, however, they are also aware that many of their members are less comfortable online, and therefore of the need to communicate using offline tools. While conservative organizations have incentives to pursue online efforts, they are also aware that their members and supporters are often more comfortable with offline communication. Older people may, for example, be more comfortable donating with a check in the mail than through an online portal, and thus conservative organizations see value in maintaining their offline communications efforts. In contrast, the younger people who are more likely to donate to and participate in liberal organizations that promote same-sex marriage are likely to be more comfortable online. Liberal organizations,

therefore, have no incentive to engage in extensive offline communications efforts; instead, they have many reasons to focus on online communication.

Angela[12], a young woman responsible for communications activities at a conservative organization based in London, explained these pressures: "Well, we have to be online. Everyone is online these days, and if you don't have a good website, or Twitter, then some members ask why not. They want to see you moving into the twenty-first century, and talking to young people. But then, of course, a lot of our older members want their newsletters in the post and their donation forms. So we do both. We have to do both, and be seen doing both, if you understand me."

These findings have some interesting implications for conservative organizations, not least of which is that it could tend to impose higher costs on them. While liberal organizations may be able to minimize their use of offline technologies like the postal service, which tend to be more expensive than online equivalents like e-mail, conservative organizations must find room in their budgets both to develop their online presence and to deploy offline tools. Thus, social activism could potentially be costlier for conservative organizations than their liberal peers, at least at present. It is also interesting that I found little meaningful overall difference between conservative and liberal organizations' online adoption practices, given that much of the literature suggests that there would be a notable gap. In chapters five and six I delve more deeply into this finding in my discussion section, as it made such a marked contrast to the existing evidence, and I propose some explanations as to why I found this.

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[12] Not her real name, see footnote 2

The role of staff characteristics. As discussed in earlier chapters, it was not only member characteristics that I anticipated may play a role in organizations' propensity to adopt DICTs, it was also the characteristics of their staff. Specifically, I argued that it might be that younger, more-educated staff would be associated with a greater propensity to adopt DICTs. In order to explore this relationship, I gathered various types of data about organizational staff. First, when analyzing organizations' web presence, I took notes about staff wherever possible. Not all websites offered this information, and in some cases, the only data on offer was a photograph of a staff event shared on Twitter, or a similarly unstructured piece of evidence. I made notes of all the online evidence I was able to find. Second, I considered the data from my survey, which inquired about staff characteristics. Third, I examined news coverage to try and identify staff members and their characteristics. Finally, I discussed organizational staff and their influence on communications processes with my interview subjects. Not all of the organizations under study were included in my survey and interviews, nor did they all provide information on their staff. I was therefore unable to gather comparable information on all of the organizations under study. However, by considering data drawn from my survey and interviews, and the data I was able to glean from organizational websites and press coverage of organizations, I was able to draw some tentative conclusions about the relationship between staff and DICT adoption.

First, as I noted earlier, somewhat unexpectedly, organizations with a larger staff tended to score higher on DICT adoption than organizations with a smaller staff. While the literature hypothesized that organizations that engaged intensively with DICTs would tend to have smaller staff complements due to the cost savings and efficiencies generated

by DICTs, I found the opposite to be true; overall, the bigger an organizations' staff, the better it tended to score in terms of DICT adoption. It seems that while DICT tools like Facebook or Twitter may, themselves, be free to use, the management and maintenance thereof demands a reasonably large organization that is able to devote time and resources to DICT-related tasks. I will discuss this insight further in chapter six. Second, in the course of my exploration of the relationship between staff characteristics and DICT adoption, I also found that organizations that employed more young people as a proportion of their staff showed a slight tendency to score higher on DICT adoption. This pattern was less clear, but this was primarily because it was challenging to get good data on staff age and so I could consider only the small number of organizations for such data were available. Nevertheless, I did find some relationship between having a more youthful staff and DICT adoption; in particular, organizations with a greater proportion of younger staff members tended to update their social media slightly more frequently. This impression was supported by a comment from Angela[13], a young employee at a conservative organization, who said, "In a way it's helpful to have younger staff. Like, for example, it's easier to get our younger staff to just dash off some Twitter updates. They just do it without a fuss, whereas the older staff forget to do it or just don't think about it. So, maybe, the habits that the younger staff people have are a little bit helpful."

Similarly, Keith noted, "Well, for me, it would be great to have someone younger and more interested in the social media onboard. I think that the lack of a young person or two in the team makes it – I don't want to say harder – just makes it more instinctive to use those things."

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[13] Not her real name, see footnote 2

There were no other clear patterns of relationships between staff characteristics

and DICT adoption; for example, I was unable to find a relationship between staff

education or social status and DICT adoption. However, it may be that I simply wasn't

able to detect the differences that exist due to the limitations of my data. Overall, the only

patterns I was able to identify with respect the relationship between DICT adoption and

staff characteristics was that a higher proportion of young staff members tended to be

associated with more intensive use of DICTs, and a larger staff was associated with more

intensive DICT adoption.

Upon considering the data I had gathered and my qualitative notes, I further noted

some suggestive patterns in the relationship between staff and DICT adoption and

organizational ideology. Overall, conservative organizations tended to employ slightly

more staff members than liberal organizations. This was not uniformly true; there were

many liberal organizations with a large number of employees such as the Human Rights

Campaign with its staff of around 160, and many conservative organizations with a very

small staff. However, among the organizations for which I was able to determine staff

numbers with some degree of certainty, including the organizations that responded to my

survey, the conservative organizations tended to employ slightly more people than the

liberal ones[14]. Further, the organizations with the biggest staffs were both conservative[15].

As noted, the more staff an organization has, the more sophisticated its DICT adoption

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[14] The difference in the average number of staff members between liberal and conservative organizations
was 2 people, with the liberal organizations averaging 21 employees and the conservative organizations
averaging 23. However, in calculating this I excluded the two biggest conservative organizations, Focus on
the Family and Concerned Women for America, which both had several hundred staff members, and the
Human Rights Campaign which had 160, as including these have a distorted picture of staff numbers. Most
organizations had around 22 staff members.
[15] As noted in the previous footnote, Focus on the Family had around 650 staff members, and Concerned
Women for America had around 540. These organizations, however, focus on a range of issues beyond gay
rights, and are not therefore directly comparable to the other organizations I studied, many of which were
focused exclusively on marriage equality.

tends to be. Yet, liberal organizations, which tend to employ slightly fewer staff members than conservative ones, perform as well as their conservative peers when it comes to DICT adoption. This conundrum is explained, in part, by the fact that liberal organizations show some tendency to employ *younger* people than conservative ones, which is unsurprising given my earlier argument that younger people are more likely to support the goals of gay rights organizations. Conservative organizations do employ young people, but young people tend to make up a smaller proportion of their staff than is the case at liberal organizations[16]. In other words, a typical conservative organization's staff will be slightly larger than a typical liberal organization's staff, and will have a slightly lower proportion of young people. As I will discuss in more detail in chapter six, this finding, together with data from my interviews with conservative organizations, lead me to tentatively hypothesize that conservative organizations have actively expanded their staff and sought out younger employees in part to improve their online profile. In other words, conservative organizations have compensated for any online disadvantages that their slightly older staff may have imposed by increasing the number of staff they employ. Again, this would tend to add to the costs that conservative organizations must incur in order to engage in activism, and explains in part why liberal and conservative organizations tend to score equally well on DICT adoption measures; liberal organizations have the advantage of younger staff members, while conservative organizations have the advantage of slightly larger staff complements. This is an

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[16] The data I was able to gather about staff age was limited. However, using the information I gathered in my organizational survey, and the elite interviews I conducted, I was able to determine some detail about the staff ages at twenty four organizations. Typically, liberal organizations were more likely to report having staff members aged 18 to 24 – some conservative organizations reported having no staff members aged 18 to 24, and fewer conservative organizations had staff members aged 25 to 34 than liberal organizations. They were, however, equally likely to report having staff members in all other age categories (see appendix two for details on age categories).

interesting difference that was not apparent when I considered only the relationship

between staff size and DICT adoption, because on average, the relationship between the

two is, as described, a positive one.

Out-party Innovation

The fourth key factor that I anticipated would affect the degree to which the

organizations under study adopted DICTs was their position in the political landscape. As

discussed in the literature review, Karpf (2012) has argued that, according to Mayhew

(1974/2004), one of the factors that may drive political entities to innovate online is the

position that they hold in the field of discourse. Specifically, if an individual is promoting

a policy or political position that is marginal in the politics of his or her country, he or she

is more likely to look for innovative ways to spread his or her messages, including

innovating online. Similarly, an individual promoting a policy or political position that

enjoys widespread support in his or her country is less likely to innovate. The underlying

idea here is that when a political entity like a campaign or an advocacy organization finds

itself promoting an idea that runs contrary to the tide of popular opinion, it must look for

innovative ways to reach and persuade people. Conservatives in the United States, for

example, once found themselves struggling to get their messages into mainstream media

outlets. In response, they engaged in innovative practices with direct mailing and talk

radio (Jamieson & Capella, 2008; Viguerie & Frank, 2004). Similarly, Karpf (2009,

2012) argues that when liberals found themselves marginalized by the political

mainstream during the Bush years, they engaged in innovation online to try to build and

reach constituencies. I therefore argued in the preceding chapters that organizations that

found themselves marginalized by the tide of public opinion, legislative policy and media

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coverage would have an incentive to find innovative ways to share their messages and reach supporters. I further argued that it was likely that some of this innovation would occur online, as DICTs offer organizations a way to reach mass audiences without the intermediation of mainstream traditional media outlets, and a way to activate and capitalize on the social networks of supporters. I thus anticipated that organizations that held out-party views would be more likely to adopt DICTs in innovative and intensive ways.

The first step in analyzing the extent to which this was true, I had to determine which organizations would be considered out-parties. In order to assess whether or not the organizations under study would be considered in- or out-parties, I analyzed the positions of the governments of the countries in which these organizations operate with respect to gay rights, and considered the tone of public opinion, which I discussed earlier in my evaluation of public opinion polling data from the three countries under study.

In the US, as discussed earlier, the Democratic Party can be considered the incumbent party for the period under study. The Democratic Party explicitly supports marriage equality; the 2012 Democratic Party Platform states: "We support the right of all families to have equal respect, responsibilities, and protections under the law. We support marriage equality and support the movement to secure equal treatment under law for same-sex couples …We oppose discriminatory federal and state constitutional amendments and other attempts to deny equal protection of the laws to committed same-sex couples who seek the same respect and responsibilities as other married couples. We support the full repeal of the so-called Defense of Marriage Act and the passage of the Respect for Marriage Act." In addition, as the survey data cited earlier indicates, a slim

majority of Americans support marriage equality. Thus, I consider organizations in the United States that support marriage equality and gay rights to be in-parties, and those that oppose marriage equality to be out-parties.

In the United Kingdom, a coalition government with the Conservative Party as the senior partner and the Liberal Democrats as the junior partner ruled during the period under study. The Liberal Democrats are long-time supporters of marriage equality and gay rights (Liberal Democrats, n.d.). The Conservative Party has a more mixed record of support for gay marriage, and while Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron endorsed gay marriage and supported Britain's move to legalizing same-sex marriage, many Conservatives opposed the move (Taylor, 2014). Nevertheless, given the majority support for marriage equality in Britain, the position of the incumbent Liberal Democrats, and the position of the leadership of the Conservative Party, I consider organizations in the United Kingdom that support marriage equality and gay rights to be in-parties, and those that oppose marriage equality to be out-parties.

In Ireland, a coalition government of Fine Gael and the Labour Party ruled during the period under study. At its 2012 annual meeting, Fine Gael, the stronger partner, endorsed a motion calling on government to prioritize consideration of same-sex marriage, an at its 2014 meeting, voted to support marriage equality in Irelands upcoming referendum (GLEN, 2012, 2014). For its part, the Labour Party has long supported marriage equality and gay rights (Gilmore, 2009). The support of the incumbent parties, together with widespread support for gay marriage in Ireland leads me to consider organizations in Ireland that support marriage equality and gay rights to be in-parties, and those that oppose marriage equality to be out-parties.

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I therefore determined that, during the period under study, in all of the countries under study organizations that support gay rights were in-parties while their conservative counterparts were out-parties, in the sense that in all cases, the incumbent political parties supported marriage equality, as did majority public opinion. Per Karpf (2012) and Mayhew (1974/2004) , this would likely give organizations that oppose marriage equality an incentive to find new and innovative ways to communicate their messages.

I then examined the relationship between out-party status and organizations' tendency to adopt DICTs. Once again, it is difficult to separate ideology from out-party status, as the two are closely intertwined in the countries under study. Nevertheless it is worth noting that, while the literature leads me to anticipate that the out-party organizations will tend to adopt DICTs more intensively, in actuality, out-party conservative organizations displayed a comparable level of DICT adoption to their liberal peers; if anything, conservative organizations were slightly, but not meaningfully, *less* likely to adopt DICTs to favor potentially innovative tools like online interactivity and social media. In other words, it seems that conservative organizations did not react as expected to their out-party status. In terms of the literature, one would expect that as conservative organizations found themselves advocating for a position that was losing favor among the public and in the halls of power, namely the preservation of marriage as a heterosexual institution, they would turn to innovative online strategies to try and gain new supporters and turn the tide; this is the process that Karpf (2012) argues goes some way to explaining Moveon.org's success; progressives who found their goals and ideas out of favor turned to online innovation to reverse their fortunes. We might thus reasonably expect that conservative organizations, finding themselves the out-party in an

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important debate, would have a strong incentive to innovate online in order to fight the tide of opinion. Instead, conservative organizations, while committed to a strong online presence, seem somewhat less eager to embrace potentially innovative tools like social media and online interactivity than their liberal peers.

There are several potential explanations for this. First, it is possible that, in the period under study, conservative opponents of marriage equality were not, in fact, the out-party. Same-sex marriage was, at the time, still illegal in almost all cases in the countries under study, and thus in a sense, those who oppose it were, by default, victorious. However, I do not think this is an adequate explanation. While it is true that same-sex marriage was still illegal, in all of the countries under study, marriage equality advocates had won major victories. As I will discuss in detail in chapters five and six, public opinion had undergone major changes, swinging from disapproval to approval in a relatively short time, and in all the countries under study, major political parties had reversed their stance on the issue or made clear policy statements in support of marriage equality. A number of ballots, amendments, and new laws were either pending or being implemented permitting same-sex marriage, and there were moves in all three countries to permit marriage equality at the national level. Thus, I would argue that at the time, conservative organizations in fact felt their out-party status keenly, an observation that was substantiated by comments from my interview subjects to the effect that they felt themselves to be on the outside of the debate and losing ground. If, as Karpf (2012) explains, being the out-party means feeling that your organization's stance on an issue is unable to gain traction in political debate and has little support, and that your organization is struggling to make itself heard in the public arena, I argue that in the

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period under study, conservative organizations were certainly out-parties. I am furthered strengthened in this conviction by the fact that, in my interviews with gay rights organizations, they expressed a sense that they had the ears of the powerful, the support of the public, and momentum for their ideological victory, which qualities define in-party status.

A second possible explanation is that it might be that conservative organizations believe that the fight around marriage equality is unwinnable and that it is therefore improvident to dedicate resources to it. However, this seems unlikely, given the deep conviction of many of these organizations. As Angela[17] said, "We don't pick our issues based on if we can win, they come from our convictions and from spiritual imperatives. It's not that we think one thing is a good issue for us and another is hopeless, so we pick the first. We work on issues that matter to people of faith, no matter if they seem hopeless or what public opinion is." This kind of dedication to social issues is fairly common at conservative organizations, as I found in my study of their web materials and in conversations with them. Thus, I do not believe that apathy is a plausible explanation of the failure of conservative organizations to innovate when they find themselves in an out-party position.

A third possible explanation is that conservative organizations may be responding to their position in the political landscape with innovation, but that this innovation is not occurring online. I found some evidence for this. For example, Ted explained that much of the work his organization does involves lobbying within the structures of the church and among political leaders. "The website matter to us, of course it does. We invest in it.

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[17] Not her real name, see footnote 2

But a lot of the real action of what we do is happening offline. We are in the churches, talking to church leadership and encouraging them to take a stand with parishioners. We are talking to local leaders who rely on support from parishioners, and telling them that this matters to us. We are face-to-face, a lot of the time, we're talking face-to-face with people and building institutional levels of support." Comments like this one, coupled with my finding that conservative organizations are more active with offline communication than their liberal peers, suggests that conservative organizations may be attempting to develop innovative strategies to counteract their position as an out-party outside of the online world. Given their imperative to target the older people who are more likely to support them, this would make sense; it may be that for conservative organizations, it is more important to innovate offline and attempt to reach older people who are more likely to support them than it is to innovate online and attempt to sway resistant young people. This is an area for future research, but I suggest that this tentative finding may indicate that online innovation is just one among many avenues open to organizations, even those in developed democracies, and that organizations invest resources and make strategic decisions based on what is likely to best serve their ends, even if that means neglecting online opportunities. In other words, despite the assumption in much of the literature that organizations will necessarily turn to DICTs more and more as time goes on because such tools have some obvious advantages for such organizations, it may be that the process is more complex, and that organizations will adopt DICTs only if they believe that such tools will in fact help them achieve their goals. Further study of organizations that choose to eschew online tools would be helpful in exploring this issue.

A fourth possible explanation is that conservative organizations would like to innovate online, but are unable to do so due to a lack of skills or opportunity. It seems unlikely that skills are a limiting factor for conservative organizations. As noted, they tend to have slightly larger staffs than liberal organizations, which suggests that they would have the resources to hire people with relevant online skills should they be needed. It is possible, of course, that their relative lack of younger staff members when compared to liberal organizations means that they tend to have a smaller pool of informal online skills among their staff, but the differences in staff ages did not seem stark enough for this explanation to suffice. In terms of opportunity, it is possible that, as a maturing phenomenon, the internet offers less potential for innovation than it did in the early 2000s, the period during which much of the literature cited was produced. Being the first organization to deploy e-mail as a tool for political mobilization, as Moveon.org was, was only possible when e-mail was a relatively new technology; the same holds true for the use of Facebook and so on. However, innovations in mobile internet, the development of apps for mobile devices, and so on seem to offer the potential for innovation by advocacy organizations, and this seems an inadequate explanation for the failure of conservative organizations to innovate online in response to their out-party statues. As I will discuss in the next section, though, it is possible that conservative organizations' ability to innovate online has been stifled by their opponents' first-mover advantage.

First-mover Advantage

The present study is cross-sectional. I did not study the evolution of my selected organizations' online activities over a period of several years, and thus it was difficult for me to gather good data the extent to which different organizations benefited from first-

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mover advantage. Nevertheless, by combining several sources of data, I was able to draw some conclusions about the role that first-mover advantage plays in the adoption of DICTs by the organizations under study.

As outlined in the literature review, one of the explanations proposed for why some organizations fail to adopt DICTs was that, because they were slower to move online as the technology emerged, when they belatedly arrived in the online space, they found that it had already been colonized by their ideological opponents and that they were therefore unable to build their own ideological communities online due to trolling by the already-established communities of their opponents. In order to evaluate the extent to which this was a factor driving DICT adoption among my organizations, I gathered several types of data. First, I explored organizations' online forums and the comments on their blogs, websites, and social media pages in order to note whether or not their posts attracted critics. Here, I made several interesting observations. Among the organizations I surveyed, a higher proportion of liberal organizations offered online forums (11.5%) and allowed comments (30.7%) than conservative organizations (9% and 18.2%, respectively). Overall, a very small proportion of the organizations under study included web 2.0 interactive elements (31.3%), but they were more common among liberal organizations[18]. In addition, in my qualitative evaluation of online materials, while I seldom found critical comments from conservatives on liberal forums or blogs, I found quite a number of critical comments from liberals on conservative blogs and forums. In other words, liberals were more likely to criticize conservatives on conservative pages

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[18] I ran statistical tests on each of the interactive elements, and for the combined interactive variable, and none of the differences were statistically significant. Nevertheless, the sample size is small, and a larger sample may have the power to detect significant differences; it is still suggestive that all of the differences were in the same direction, namely that liberal organizations were more likely to include each of the interactive elements I measured.

than vice-versa (it was, however, extremely common for conservatives to criticize liberals on their own forums and vice-versa). Karpf (2012) describes online trolling as a key mechanism through which first-mover advantage acts to limit the activity of ideological opponents, and the evidence I found that conservatives appeared to be avoiding interactive options and that, where available, such interactive venues attracted liberal critics, suggests that liberals enjoy a first-mover advantage online when it comes to issues of gay rights and marriage equality in the three countries under study. This conclusion is supported by the other data I considered.

My second data source here was my organizational survey, which is included in appendix two. In the survey, I asked respondents to rank their online communities' strength and the strength of the online communities of their ideological opponents. Table 4.6 summarizes my results. As can be seen, the liberal organizations I surveyed reported that their supporters' online communities were relatively strong, and that the communities of their opponents were weaker than theirs. In contrast, the conservative organizations surveyed were confident of the strength of their supporters' online communities, but evaluated the online communities of their ideological opponents as stronger than their own. The sample size here is, of course, small, but coupled with the earlier evidence I described, these findings strengthen the argument that supporters of marriage equality and progressive issues have a more robust online presence than their conservative peers.

Table 4.6: Organizations' perception of the strength of their supporters' and opponents' online communities

| | Strength of your supporters' online community | | Strength of your opponents' online community | |
	Liberal	Conservative	Liberal	Conservative
Very weak	0	0	1	0
Somewhat weak	0	0	3	0
About average	5	1	2	0
Somewhat strong	5	3	3	4
Very strong	0	2	1	2

Finally, my elite interviews confirmed this finding. For example, when asked why his organization's website did not include comments from users, Geoff[19], the communications manager for a conservative American group responded, "Well, what we deal with is controversial, obviously, and I find, that is, we find that if we allow comments then we get a lot of negative talk. We experimented a bit with this, and comments just don't work for us. There are some organizations that have comments and it works great, but for us, it doesn't. We get a lot of critical voices, not helpful critical people, you understand, just people who disagree with us. And that's discouraging, you know, for the people who agree with us and who want to comment, they feel like they can't comment if there are these negative things there. So we just find it doesn't work for us."

Overall, then, the balance of my evidence suggests that the conservative organizations I studied have faced resistance as they try to build communities online from

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[19] Not his real name, see footnote 2

liberals, who appear to enjoy a first-mover advantage. Their forums and blogs have attracted liberal trolls, and they have thus been discouraged from offering forums or allowing comments. Although my lack of time series data makes it difficult for me to trace the sequences of events that lead to liberals' stronger online communities, I have been able to identify what appear to be the consequences of first-mover advantage – liberals appear to have a robust online community of supporters who are able to act to limit the ability of conservatives to build similar interactive communities online. Thus, it appears that one of the reasons why conservative organizations have failed to innovate online, as might be expected given their out-party status, is the strength of the already-established online community of liberals. In a sense, then, I find that first-mover advantage does indeed play a role in the adoption of DICTs; specifically, that when one group has a first-mover advantage online, it is difficult for another group to build interactive communities even when incentives exist to doing so, such as out-party status.

Having thoroughly discussed the five factors that I anticipated would play a role in organizations' propensity to adopt DICTs, I can now turn to the final element of my heuristic model, the role of national context.

CHAPTER 5: EXPLORING THE HEURSTIC MODEL: THE ROLE OF NATIONAL CONTEXT IN DICT ADOPTION BY SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

As discussed, the literature contains little suggestion of how organizations' adoption of DICTs may vary across nations. In much of the scholarship on DICTs and politics, there seems to be an implicit assumption that, given availability, these technologies will be universally embraced, and universally used in a way that promotes democracy, regardless of the broader national context (Pool, 1984). Although this view is more nuanced in recent scholarship, there has still been little systematic attention paid to the ways in which national context may influence DICT adoption by advocacy organizations within democratic countries. In an attempt to address this, I will discuss how DICT adoption varied across the countries under study, explore how the relationship between the factors I expected to influence DICT adoption and adoption itself varied across the countries under study, and suggests some additional reasons for the variation.

Cross-National Differences in DICT Adoption.

There were some clear differences in adoption across the three countries under study. As table 5.1 illustrates, organizations based in United States scored higher on their overall adoption scores and on their social media scores than the combined averages for their Irish and British counterparts; the differences in terms of interactivity were, however, negligible[20].

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[20] My sample was too small for meaningful statistical tests. Nevertheless, in order to strengthen my assumption that the differences between organizations in the U.S. and their European counterparts were meaningful, I ran a t-test on the difference between the average for organizations in the United States and the combined average for organizations in Ireland and the United Kingdom. The differences between the U.K. and Ireland were very small and insignificant; while, the US scored significantly higher than both groups. I therefore elected to compare the U.S. to the combined scores for Ireland and the U.K., which

Table 5.1: Average adoption scores by country

Country	Average overall adoption score	Average social media score	Average interactivity score
United States	6.8	5.8	2
United Kingdom	4.8	3.7	1.8
Ireland	4.9	4.3	1.7

Qualitatively, I noted several differences between the US websites and their Irish and British peers (there were far fewer differences between the Irish and British sites). In particular, my exploration of web materials suggested that a greater proportion of U.S. sites were highly sophisticated than was the case in Ireland or Britain. An examination of the frequency distributions for the overall adoption scores of organizations based in the different countries offers some support for this impression. Figure 5.1 shows the frequency distribution of the adoption scores of U.S. organizations. As you can see, there are two distinct groups of organizations: a small cluster of unsophisticated sites, and a larger cluster of more sophisticated sites. In addition, there is a large group of sites right at the top of the range.

Contrast this with figure 5.2, which shows the distribution for British organizations. As can be seen, the distribution of adoption scores is closer to a normal

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enabled me to combine all my cases in the t-test, giving it more power. I found that the difference in overall adoption score and social media score were statistically significant, while the interactivity difference was not. My sample included only 48 organizations, 19 of which were American and 29 of which were Irish and British. Thus, although this test should not be relied upon, it does strengthen my argument that American organizations outperformed their European counterparts.

distribution, with organizations spread more evenly along the spectrum of sophistication, and with relatively fewer organizations at the high-end of the range.

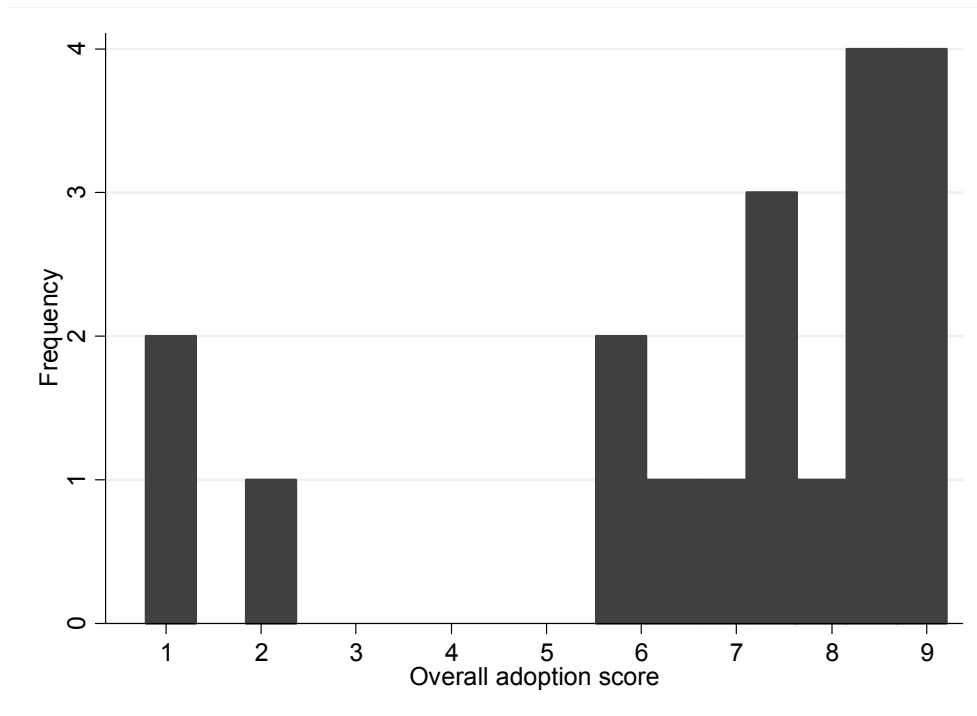**Figure 5.1: Frequency distribution of overall adoption score for American organizations**

Figure 5.2: Frequency distribution of overall adoption score for British organizations
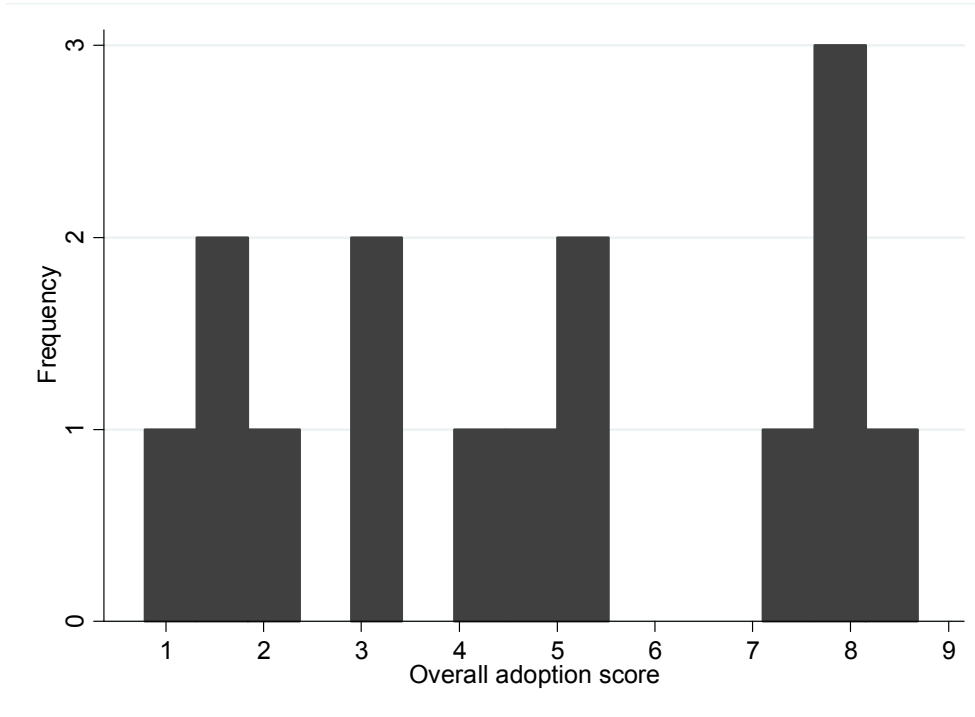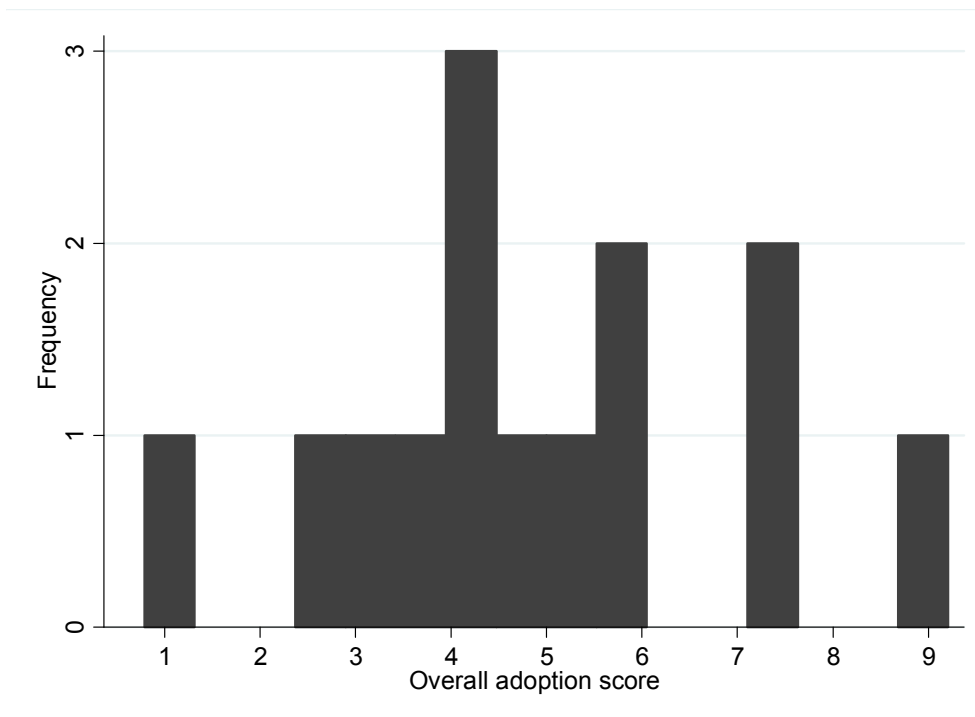
Figure 5.3: Frequency distribution of overall adoption score for Irish organizations

Finally, consider figure 5.3, which shows the distribution for Irish organizations. Once again, there is a more even spread across the range of scores, with fewer organizations at the high and low ends.

These are suggestive patterns. In my assessment, the pattern in Figure 5.1 indicates that the typical American organization is likely to be a relatively intensive adopter of DICTs, and that the reason I did not find even more-striking differences in the scores when grouped cross-nationally is that my sample included three organizations that were clearly outliers. The three organizations that scored on the low end of the U.S. range were Defend the Family, Heterosexuals Organized for a Moral Environment, and the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy. These organizations are unusual compared to the rest of the organizations in the sample, including the British and Irish organizations. Both Heterosexuals Organized for a Moral Environment and the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy are organizations established and, as far as I was able to determine, staffed by a single person; Defend the Family is a religious group associated with Abiding Truth Ministries, an organization best known for promoting legislation in Uganda that imposes the death penalty for homosexual activity (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.).. A close reading of the content of these three sites and that of the sites of other conservative groups in all three countries revealed that these three sites tend to promote arguments that are more extreme than those of their conservative peers; they argue, for example, that homosexuals intentionally indoctrinate heterosexual young people into gay lifestyles, and that there is a secret homosexual agenda dedicated to abolishing the family unit and heterosexual relationships. None of the conservative American sites that had higher adoption scores included such extreme rhetoric, and none of the Irish or British sites did

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either; typically their arguments emphasized scriptural reasons for the prohibition of same-sex marriage and issues related to building and maintaining stable family units in the face of changing definitions of marriage. In the next chapter, which addresses supplemental organization-level factors that may drive DICT adoption, I will discuss how the DICT adoption of this organizations may be related to the relatively extreme rhetoric these three sites promote, and the position this places them in with relation to the broader political discourse. More generally, and pertinently to the issue of cross-national difference, the data indicate that American organizations are more sophisticated than their European peers; I will address some potential explanations for this in the sections below.

Another set of cross-national differences that I noted related to social media usage. First, I noted that the U.S.-based organizations tended to attract more likes, followers, and subscribers on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube than their British and Irish peers. However, it is likely that this is in large part a function of the fact that the population of America is much larger than the population of the U.K. and Ireland. Social movement organizations based in these different countries would primarily be of interest to citizens of those countries, and thus Irish organizations would have a smaller potential audience of citizens than American organizations. According to the World Bank, in 2013 the population of Ireland was 4.6 million, the population of the U.K. was 64 million, and the population of the U.S. was 316 million (World Bank, 2013c). This pattern is echoed by the pattern of social media popularity in my data. For example, the U.S. attracted the greatest number of followers on Twitter, with an average of 51,483, followed by the U.K. with an average of 15,244, and then Ireland with an average of 2,119; the number of

followers follows the pattern one might expect if it was driven, at least in part, by total population[21].

Table 5.2: Organizational social media use by country

Country	% using Facebook	% using Twitter	% using YouTube	% updating Facebook daily	% updating Twitter daily	% updating YouTube fortnightly
United States	79%	84%	74%	68%	68%	42%
United Kingdom	67%	67%	27%	33%	47%	27%
Ireland	79%	71%	50%	64%	36%	7%

Second, as I mentioned earlier, U.S. organizations scored higher on an index of social media adoption than their British and Irish peers. Table 5.2 breaks down some of the key elements of the index[22]; there are some clear differences that are in line with the overall finding that U.S. organizations are more intensive adopters of DICTs than their European peers. Interestingly, in terms of social media use, organizations in the U.K. tend to lag organizations in both the U.S. and Ireland, but, while fewer British organizations use social media than Irish organizations, they also tend to update them more regularly (with the exception of Facebook). However, U.S. organizations are more likely to use and update social media than organizations in either European country.

In terms of issues of interactivity, I did not note any major cross-national differences. Interactive options were relatively rare across all organizations, and there was no clear pattern linked to national context.

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[21] The patterns were broadly the same for Facebook and YouTube, although the magnitudes of the differences varied.
[22] For brevity, I excluded my measures of whether or not the organization had updated Facebook and Twitter in the previous week.

Overall, then, my data shows clear cross-national differences. In particular, American organizations are significantly more sophisticated in terms of the DICT adoption than their peers in Ireland and England, and more engaged with social media. In the following section, I will note some key cross-national differences in the factors driving DICT adoption that were included in my heuristic model and how they relate to the cross-national differences in DICT adoption that I have identified; I will then move to a discussion of possible explanations for these differences.

Cross-National Differences in the Factors Driving DICT Adoption

There were a number of suggestive cross-national differences among organizations related to the factors in my heuristic model. For the purposes of this discussion, I will discuss only those differences that were meaningful, and that offer some insight into the different patterns of DICT adoption that I found in the three countries under study.

Ideology. One difference that stood out upon analyzing my data was how the relationship between ideology and DICT adoption differed dramatically across the countries under study. Table 5.3 shows mean overall adoption scores for organizations grouped by country and by ideology. As you can see, there were no major differences between liberal and conservative organizations in Britain and Ireland, but overall, conservative organizations tended to score slightly higher than liberal organizations[23]. In the United States, in contrast, there was a stark difference between liberal and conservative organizations, with liberals scoring much higher than their conservative

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[23] I conducted t-tests of the group differences, and found that only the difference between conservative and liberal groups in the United States was statistically significant. However, once again, the small and non-random nature of my sample means that this is not irrefutable evidence of a difference. It is, however, clear that differences were bigger in the United States, a finding that was echoed in my qualitative notes about the web materials I examined.

peers. In fact, liberal U.S. organizations were the highest scorers overall. This is an interesting finding. First, it suggests that the negligible ideology-related differences I found when examining all of the organizations pooled together was a function of the fact that in the U.S., conservative organizations score poorly compared to liberal organizations while in Ireland and the U.K., conservative organizations have a slight but not meaningful edge over their liberal counterparts. This underscores the fact that a pattern that applies in the U.S. context may not apply elsewhere, and that cross-national comparison has a role to play in identifying ways in which the use of DICTs varies across nations and in explaining why that may be so.

Table 5.3: Mean adoption scores by country and ideology

Country	Mean adoption score: Liberal	Mean adoption score: Conservative
United States	8.1	5.5
United Kingdom	4.5	5.1
Ireland	4.8	5

However, these aggregates do not convey the whole story. As discussed earlier, three conservative organizations in the United States appeared to be outliers with respect to their DICT adoption, and these organizations skewed the overall results[24]. More importantly, I do not believe that the differences I have identified here are a consequence of ideology itself. If it were the case that liberals had an inherent, ideological advantage online then one would expect that advantage to manifest across all three of the countries

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[24] Excluding the three outlier organizations, the mean adoption score for conservative organizations rises to 7.3, and there is no longer a statistically significant difference between conservative and liberal American organizations. This is in keeping with my impression of the sophistication of mainstream conservative organizations' DICT adoption.

under study. Given that liberals enjoy a clear advantage in the U.S. and lag conservatives in the U.K. and Ireland, it seems clear that there is no inherent advantage accruing to organizations based solely on their ideological orientation. This is, I believe, positive finding as it suggests that there is no innate reason why groups espousing conservative rhetoric should find themselves at a disadvantage when attempting to use new communication technologies. From the perspective of encouraging broad political debate and allowing multiple viewpoints to impress themselves on public discussion, this is a positive finding.

As I will discuss in the following sections, I suggest that, rather than springing from ideology, the differences in DICT adoption I have observed are a consequence of several factors, including liberal first-mover advantage, and several unique characteristics of the U.S., British, and Irish political environments, and of the outlier U.S. conservative organizations. One interesting point to note here is that these findings provide evidence that it is not the characteristics of groups or organizational staff that lead to particular patterns of DICT adoption. In all three of the countries, individuals who opposed marriage equality shared the same relevant demographic characteristics, in particular, that they tended to be older; they were also more likely to be male and to an extent, less educated. Given the relationship between age and DICT usage, then, we might expect that, if it is the characteristics of the people that organizations target that drives their DICT adoption, conservative organizations would show a lower propensity to adopt DICTs than their liberal peers. However, this cross-national comparison shows clearly that this is not so, because although conservative individuals' characteristics are very similar across all three countries, the patterns of difference between the adoption of

DICTs by liberal and conservative organizations vary. In other words, this study provides good evidence that it is not the individual characteristics of groups or their ideology that drives DICT adoption, but rather other factors related to the political environment and the historical development of online activism; this is an important finding that would not have been possible in the absence of a cross-national comparison. In the sections that follow, I will discuss some of these factors.

Out-party status and first mover advantage. When I previously discussed out-party status, I concluded that, overall, in all three of the countries under study conservative organizations were out-parties in the politics of marriage equality and gay rights. However, while this is true, the degree to which conservative organizations find themselves on the margin of the debates of the day differs by country. In Ireland, for example, public opinion is strongly in favor of marriage equality, with 76% of Irish voters expressing support for the upcoming referendum on the issue (Red C Research, 2013). In the U.K., however, support is much lower, with 55% of voters saying they support marriage equality (YouGov, 2013). Finally, in the U.S., support for marriage equality is around 52%, although it should be noted that there has been a rapid and significant shift in American attitudes towards same-sex marriage; support for marriage equality increased by 21 percentage points between 2003 and 2013 (Public Religion Research Institute, 2014). In terms of political support, in the U.K, two of the three major parties have long advocated in favor of marriage equality, as has Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron; among the traditional opponents of marriage equality in the Conservative party, there is a split, and the party has no unified position on the issue. In Ireland, all of the major political parties have endorsed same sex marriage. Meanwhile, in

the U.S., the Republican Party has a firm and almost-unified stance on the issue; only eight of the 279 Republicans in Congress supported marriage equality in July 2014, and that number was lower during the period under study (Bradshaw, 2014). Thus, while Irish marriage equality advocates enjoy both widespread public and broad political party support for their cause, American advocates face a more-deeply divided electorate and unified opposition from one of the country's two parties; British advocates face a mixed bag of moderate public opinion support and broad political party support. Irish conservative groups, therefore, are more of an out-party, in a sense, than their British and American peers. This has some possible consequences, as I will discuss in the next section of this chapter.

For the purposes of this discussion, however, the logic of the arguments outlined in the literature related to the role of out-party status in the adoption of DICTs would still suggest that, in all of the countries under study, conservative organizations that oppose same-sex marriage would have a strong incentive to innovate online in pursuit of their political goals, as in all cases, they are either clearly a hopeless out-party, or are struggling to turn a rising tide of support for marriage equality. Thus, if out-party status were the primary driver of DICT adoption, one would expect that the gap between DICT adoption among organizations grouped by ideology to be largest in Ireland, where conservative organizations have an incentive to be innovating intensively online. One would expect a smaller gap in Britain, with conservative innovation leading to higher DICT adoption scores for conservative organizations. Finally, one might expect the U.S. to have a relatively small gap between the mean scores for DICT adoption of conservative and liberal organizations, with conservatives enjoying a modest lead.

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Instead, the smallest difference is found in Ireland, and the largest in the U.S., and the gap is meaningful only in the U.S., where liberal organizations display a much more sophisticated approach to DICTs than their conservative peers. This is a noteworthy departure from what we might expect given the literature on out-party status and innovation.

I believe that the explanation for this gap lies, in part, in the role that first-mover advantage plays in driving DICT adoption over time. According to Evan[25], an organizer at a medium-sized U.S. organization that promotes marriage equality, the reason that liberal organizations have an online advantage in the U.S. is their long experience with web technologies. "I don't think it's a mystery, really, I think we were just there first. We, the community, the gay rights community, I guess, we were online right from the beginning. We had nowhere else to go, a lot of the time. Or nowhere to talk politics, in a way. So we were online. And then, you know, over the years, we just built on that and built on it. We had a big fight on our hands, and we had to use everything we could and that included the web, you know. So, it's that, we were online early, and we kept trying things online, like forums or what have you, or meetups, and we just built it up. So today, we have a lot of experience, and just a lot of … spaces, maybe? Well, we have a lot of experience and capacity online. And that's really why we're doing good work. It's just a long time of trial and error. Plus, you know, we could get funding. At first, of course it was informal online, but then, we could show early results, and that helped us get resources. So we built up the experience and we built up the resources."

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[25] Not his real name, see footnote 2

What Evan's comments suggest is that, years ago when web technologies were first emerging, progressives advocating for gay rights in the U.S., who were at the time a political out-party, moved into online spaces to meet, strategize, and organize. Over time, they developed expertise and skills, and importantly, strong online communities, which have been hard for conservative activists to replicate. In recent times, when conservatives have found themselves at a disadvantage in the politics of gay rights, any attempts on their part to innovative online have been stymied by the pre-existing liberal advantage, as discussed earlier and underscored by Geoff's previously quoted comment. Thus, the initial role that out-party status played in stimulating DICT adoption has now been overshadowed by the role that first-mover advantage plays in inhibiting opportunities for innovation for later adopters. This interpretation is supported by comments from organizers based in Britain and Ireland. As Ted explains, "To some extent, I think we're all fairly new to this. I think that, yes, the pro-marriage equality community moved faster into the web, certainly. But I also think we're just quite new at it as a national community. It's not that Britons aren't online, and they haven't been active online, it's more that we just perhaps got a later start than the Americans, or some of the Europeans even. Not all around, I'm talking about the NGO community more. We just were a bit slower getting into things."

In other words, one of the reasons why the gaps in DICT adoption look different in Ireland and the United Kingdom than they do in the U.S. might be that in Britain and Ireland, neither group accrued a particularly strong first-mover advantage online. This is, of course, made complex by the fact that, particularly on interactive forums, people from around the world comment and engage online. Thus, it is possible that the early adopters

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in the U.S. formed a ready-made community when British and Irish groups began to move online that helped to protect those groups from trolling and inhibit conservative groups. Unfortunately, the study of such dynamics is beyond the scope of this paper, but would make an interesting topic for future research. Nevertheless, these findings highlight the crucial role that first-mover advantage plays in DICT adoption. This has important implications for organizations seeking to increase their online efforts in contexts in which opponents already hold an online advantage. In particular, it suggests that organizations may need to work on strategies to negate the inhibiting impact of first-mover advantage, such as the chilling effect that trolling may have on nascent communities of interest. Possible strategies might include using registration options to control commenting, and hiring staff that have obtained experience with DICTs in other contexts, such as in consumer products marketing, who will not be inhibited by their ideological convictions from sharing skills and experiences with the disadvantaged organization.

Having considered some of the key ways in which the factors that my heuristic model indicated may affect DICT adoption operate in different national contexts, I will now offer some additional hypotheses on how national context may influence DICT adoption. One of my goals in conducting a cross-national study was to theorize on the role of national context, and in the section that follows, I will draw on my qualitative data to offer some possible explanations thereof.

Potential Alternative Explanations for Cross-National Differences in DICT

Adoption

As I have shown, organizations based in the U.S. tend to be more sophisticated adopters of DICTs than their European counterparts and the U.K. and Ireland tend to display similar patterns of DICT adoption. There are a number of potential explanations for these findings, including the explanation offered above related to the role of first-mover advantage, and some are more convincing than others.

At the most simplistic level, this difference could be attributed to internet penetration; if Americans used the internet more than Europeans, it would make sense that U.S. organizations display more online sophistication. However, this is unlikely to be the case. As noted, according to World Bank data, in 2011 U.S. had 78.2 internet users per 100 people, the United Kingdom had 81.7, and Ireland had 76.8 (World Bank, 2013b). Furthermore, the data I gathered on individual usage of the internet by group characteristics indicated that patterns of internet usage were very similar across all three countries, even in terms of usage by age, sex, and socio-economic status. Any differences in internet penetration and access were thus marginal and inadequate to account for the differences in adoption.

Differences in wealth and resources are perhaps a better candidate for explanation. According to the World Bank, in 2011 per capita income in US dollars in the United Kingdom was $37,780, it was $48,620 in the United States, and $39,150 in Ireland (World Bank, 2013a). As discussed earlier, at the individual level, wealth plays a limited or no role in internet usage. However, wealth could play a role in organizations' adoption of DICTs. Specifically, greater wealth may allow Americans to devote more

resources to their advocacy organizations by giving more money and volunteering more time to help such organizations, which might help those organizations to devote more resources to DICTs, while similar levels of wealth in the U.K. and Ireland may lead to their similar patterns of DICT adoption. I found mixed evidence to support this argument. First, I compared the data I was able to collect on organizations' staff across countries. US organizations typically had somewhat larger staffs than their Irish and British counterparts, and all of the biggest organizations, in terms of staff, were American. This suggests that American organizations were better able to mobilize resources in pursuit of their political goals than their peers in Europe. Second, I considered data on international giving. CAF America, a global grant making organization, produces an annual *World Giving Index*, which compares charitable giving and volunteering around the world (CAF America, 2013). According to the 2013 *World Giving Index*, the United States was the most charitable nation in the world in 2013, with Ireland and the United Kingdom ranking fifth and sixth respectively. A greater proportion of Irish people (70%) and British people (76%) donate to charity than Americans (62%); however, data from the Center for Civil Society Studies at the Johns Hopkins Institute for Health and Social Policy indicate that Americans give more (Center for Civil Society Studies, 2013). According to the Center for Civil Society Studies, Americans' donations between 1995 and 2003 were equal to 1.85% of GDP, while Irish donations equaled 0.85% of GDP, and British donations equaled 0.84% of GDP. Furthermore, according to the *World Giving Index*, a greater proportion of American individuals engaged in volunteering (45%) than the proportion of Irish individuals (37%) and British individuals (29%). However, I do not find this a totally convincing argument. The U.S., Britain, and Ireland are all wealthy

countries, and no doubt organizations that met a need in their respective political environments would be able to secure funding. Instead, based on my interviews and overall assessment of my data, I argue that the reason why U.S. organizations fare better online and may, perhaps, enjoy an edge in fundraising (as illustrated by their relatively larger staffs) is the nature of the competition over the issue of marriage equality in the U.S. compared to the U.K. and Ireland. Earlier, in my literature review, I suggested that differences in the political environment and in the intensity of competition over social issues may play a role in cross-national differences in DICT adoption, and in the course of my study, I found evidence that this is true.

 The competitive environment. As I mentioned above, the competitive environment in which the advocacy organizations under study differ in the three countries under study. Marriage equality enjoys broad public and political party support in Ireland, broad political party support and moderate public support in the U.K., and divided political party support and public support in the U.S.; the issue is therefore most competitive in America, where public support of marriage equality is closest to 50%, and where one of the country's two political parties staunchly opposes it. In both Ireland and the U.K., the issue is much less competitive, and given the near-unanimous political party support for marriage equality, the battle for the right to marry is almost won in those countries. Events that occurred after the period under study bore out this assessment. Same-sex marriage was legalized in the U.K. in mid-2013 ("Same-sex marriage becomes law", 2013), the pro-marriage equality outcome of the Irish referendum on the topic is widely expected to be a foregone conclusion ("67% support the introduction of same-sex marriage", 2014), and in the U.S., despite a number of legislative victories, the battle

remains relatively intense, particularly after a surprise appeal court decision upholding three state bans on same-sex marriage ("Appeals court upholds bans on same-sex marriage", 2014). This state of affairs means that, during the period under study, American conservative organizations had the best opportunity to fight moves to legalize same sex marriage – the issue was competitive enough that it was not a foregone conclusion that marriage equality would become a reality. This also meant that American liberal organizations faced a more challenging task than their European peers in maintaining and expanding support for marriage equality. Therefore, in this study U.S. organizations on both sides of the issue should be, overall, better able to mobilize resources than their peers; not because of greater American wealth, but because the competitiveness of the battle over the issue motivates supporters of both sides to contribute resources. As Geoff expresses it, "The battle is being decided now, so we're willing to put in whatever we can to make it a good fight, to win on this. And of course, our members support that, they want it, they are available to help out, and to give, and to participate." According to Schervish and Havens (1997), charitable giving, which is the primary source of funding for the organizations under study, supplemented with grant money in some cases, is driven by what they call the identification model. Essentially, people are driven to contribute to organizations by virtue of the identification they feel with its goals and ambitions. In the Schervish and Haven (1997) model, through their formal and informal networks of relationships and motivated by their particular ways of thinking including political convictions, people build connection with particular organizations and are motivated to give to those organizations when they feel that by doing so they will further a goal they support. Thus, when there are roughly equal groups

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of people with strong convictions over an issue that is being debated in the public sphere, as there is in the U.S., both sides will be able to motivate their supporters to devote resources to the cause; hence the larger staffs at the American organizations and American organizations' higher adoption scores. In contrast, in a place like Ireland and the U.K., where marriage equality enjoys wide support, particularly at the legislative level, those who support and oppose the policy have less incentive to contribute resources, and organizations have lower adoption scores.

If this is correct, however, and in the U.S. both sides are able to mobilize resources, how then do I explain the finding that liberal American organizations adopt DICTs more intensively than their conservative peers? My proposed explanation has two parts. First, I emphasize that the gap in DICT adoption among liberal and conservative organizations in the U.S. is primarily the result of a small group of outliers; conservative organizations that display a very low level of DICT sophistication. This suggests that there are organizational level factors at play. In particular, I argue that the relatively extreme rhetoric that these organizations embrace places them outside the competitive mainstream of the debate. The small group of people to whom these arguments appeal is not large enough to provide the resource to support concerted advocacy action, and these organizations thus remain at the margin, a point I will expand on in the next chapter. As I noted earlier, when these organizations are excluded, the difference in DICT adoption between liberal and conservative organizations in the U.S. is much smaller. At this point, the second element of my argument becomes relevant; I argue that first-mover advantage plays a key role here, as discussed above. Liberal organizations advocating marriage equality in the U.S. are in the happy position of being able to mobilize resources

effectively thanks to the competitiveness of the issue, and of enjoying a first-mover advantage online that helps them to maintain their online edge in the face of motivated conservative organizations, which have the resources to innovate online and which are motivated by their out-party status to do so, but thwarted by pre-existing liberal advantages. In other words, as I anticipated, at the national level, the more competitive the political environment is around a particular issue, the higher the adoption scores of organizations advocating positions related to the issue are likely to be, in part because those organizations will be better able to mobilize resources. However, issues such as the history of lobbying around the issue and the legacy of advantage that history has given particular organizations will still play a role in determining individual organizations' adoption of DICTs.

The political environment. In terms of the political environment more broadly, there does appear to be a link between the political environment and a country's political traditions and the extent to which organizations adopt DICTs. Consider, for example, the similarities in the adoption patterns in the U.K. and Ireland, and how they differ from the U.S.. I argue that these patterns are, in part, the result of certain aspects of the political environment in these two European countries. These aspects differ somewhat across the two countries, but have similar effects on the propensity of organizations within these countries to adopt DICTs.

First, let us consider the case of Ireland. According to Sara, "You have to understand that this model of organizing around social issues is quite new in Ireland. We have a history of organizing of course, fighting the English and so on. But for so long, Irish society just relied on the Church as far as social issues goes, whether abortion, or

gay rights or anything really. So it's only since the Church has lost its grip that we've really organized around these things in an organized way. I'm not saying there's no Irish history of social mobilization, but it is true that the last few years have been transformative, the last few decades, in terms of how we are trying to shape Irish society. It used to be the parties and the Church only, you were a member of a political party and they dealt with politics and then you went to Church and lived that way, the Catholic way. Now, it's different."

Sara's point, which was echoed by much of the literature that I read on Ireland, is that for much of its history, Ireland saw relatively little organization around social issues that did not occur through the formal channels of the Catholic Church (Bartlett, 2010; Bew, 2007). This is not to say that Ireland has no history of social movements focusing on issues like women's rights, but rather that the country has seen less spontaneous organization by citizens around such issues than has been the case elsewhere. Specifically, for many years debate on social and moral issues was dominated by the Catholic Church, which was long the most influential organization in Irish society, and activity around these issues was channeled through that institution. Over recent years, however, Church attendance and religious observance in Ireland have declined dramatically, and increasingly the Irish are looking beyond the Church for guidance on moral and social issues. This has meant that there has been an increase in efforts by secular, informal social movement organizations and political entrepreneurs to organize around social issues like marriage equality. Such efforts have borne fruit, as the success of attempts to encourage support for marriage equality demonstrate. However, Irish social movement organizations, and particularly those that focus on social issues, have

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less historical experience with organizing around these issues than their peers elsewhere. Thus, one of the reasons that Irish advocacy organizations display lower levels of DICT sophistication than their American peers is that these organizations are still developing their capacity to organize and lobby. As Sara puts it, "We're figuring this all out, still. We're learning how to do this work of building up the public to support something like same sex marriage, which was not something we were even thinking about thirty years ago, when the Church was really the only, or really the main game in town."

In the case of the U.K., as in Ireland, advocacy organizations tend to adopt DICTs less intensively than their U.S. peers, and again, this difference is, I argue, rooted in differences in the political environment. While DICT adoption in Ireland is influenced by the relative newness of non-Church organizing around social and moral issues in the political environment, in the U.K., DICT adoption by advocacy organizations is influenced by the British tradition of strong political parties and well-developed institutional channels for organization (Childs, 2012; Jones, & Norton, 2013). While the specific drivers of DICT adoption differ somewhat, the effect on average levels of adoption appears to be similar.

According to Ted, "The British way of organizing is different, I think from the Americans. We, I would say we do a lot more through channels, through the political parties, through the Church of England, through maybe you could say formal channels. I believe that most of the really big marches in British history were political, it was Labour organizing the masses. In America, it seems to be different, they have more big marches by groups, if you see what I mean." In other words, Ted's comments suggest that one reason why American organizations achieve higher DICT adoption scores may be that the

political traditions of Britain have favored collective action around social issues expressed through traditional channels like churches and political parties.

Indeed, both Ireland and the United Kingdom have long been dominated by a single church, the Catholic Church in the case of Ireland and the Church of England in the case of the U.K.; in contrast, the U.S. has long been a place of significant religious diversity among Christians (Bartlett, 2010; Jenkins, 2012; Jones, & Norton, 2013; Weaver, & Rockman, 1993). Furthermore, the U.S. has a relatively weak party system compared to the U.K. and Ireland (Bartlett, 2010; Bew, 2007; Childs, 2012; Kuklick, 2009; Weaver, & Rockman, 1993). This has led to a greater role for social movements and extra-party political organizing in the U.S. than in Ireland and Britain. Furthermore, in Ireland, there has been relatively little tradition of citizens organizing around issues considered to be moral matters by the Church like same-sex marriage, while in the U.K., much organization around social issues has traditionally occurred through well-developed, formal political party channels. Thus, in both countries, social movement organizations have less depth of historical experience of extra-institutional organization than their American peers.

One might anticipate that this would give British and Irish organizations a further incentive to adopt DICTs, in order to develop new modes of extra-institutional organization in the absence of a long tradition thereof. However, I argue that instead, a tradition of fierce extra-institutional competition in the U.S. drives organizations to more actively seek out new tools for organizing. Thus, one national level factor that may drive DICT adoption in a country is the degree to which the country has a tradition of strong

parties or strong institutions like the Catholic Church in Ireland, or a tradition of extra-institutional political organization.

A second aspect of the political environment that may influence organizations' propensity to adopt DICTs is the structure of the media system and the partisan history of various forms of media. For example, as noted earlier, in the U.S., conservatives have a strong tradition of using direct mail and talk radio as platforms for expression, while liberals have tended to have less tendency to use such tools (Jamieson & Capella, 2008; Karpf, 2012; Viguerie & Frank, 2004). Mainstream media in the U.S. generally tend to adhere to principles of balance and objectivity, and thus to offer a platform that is not particularly friendly to either ideological orientation. Thus, in the U.S., it is possible that conservatives feel less pressure to innovate online because they have access to channels like talk radio, and this may help to explain their relatively unsophisticated adoption of DICTs. In contrast, in the U.K. and in Ireland, broadcast media are dominated by state-owned, public service broadcasters – the BBC in the U.K. and RTE in Ireland – while newspapers tend to embrace partisan identities and offer political parties and ideologues platforms for their views (Doyle, 2002; Horgan, 2001). Thus, in those countries, neither side of the political spectrum has a particular advantage in any medium, and therefore neither has a strong incentive to claim online spaces. Although I have gathered no data that would specifically address the extent to which this explanation works to explain variation in DICT adoption across the three countries under study, this may offer a fruitful avenue for future research.

Similarly, there are important differences in the legislative practices and structures of the three countries under study (Bartlett, 2010; Bew, 2007; Childs, 2012;

Jenkins, 2012; Jones, & Norton, 2013; Kuklick, 2009; Weaver, & Rockman, 1993).

While the U.S. has a federal, presidential system based on a constitution, the U.K. is a unitary, parliamentary, constitutional monarchy, while Ireland is a unitary, parliamentary, constitutional republic. The particulars of how laws are made and implemented in these different systems may also play a role in patterns of DICT adoption by advocacy organizations domiciled therein. This issue is beyond the scope of the present project, and should be explored in future research.

It is also worth noting that I found no evidence that different internet regulation regimes played a role in the extent to which DICTs were adopted by organizations in the three countries under study. Although European law requires websites domiciled in European Union countries that are signatories to certain E.U. statutes, which includes the U.K., to alert visitors to their use of cookies and obtain permission from visitors to place cookies in their browsers, many of the European sites I visited did not provide such warnings despite their use of cookies. Further, although as I noted I did not include my measures of cookie usage and other online data-gathering practices in my overall analysis, I did note that there were no meaningful differences among organizations domiciled the three countries under study with respect to the number of cookies used or their propensity to use third-party cookies. Given the European countries' disregard of the regulations around cookies, and the absence of any cross-national differences in data-gathering practices, it seems unlikely that such regulations are having a chilling effect on organizations' use of DICTs. Furthermore, none of my interview subjects made any mention of issues with internet rule regimes or even awareness of particular rules and regulations. Thus, I do not think that such rules make any meaningful difference to DICT

adoption in developed democracies with free speech regimes. It is possible that such rules

play an important role in DICT use in countries in which speech is curtailed, but that is

beyond the scope of this study.

In conclusion, then, I have identified two major national-level factors that I argue

may account for the cross-national differences in DICT adoption that I have identified.

Specifically, I argue that the intensity of competition around a given social issue will play

a role in determining how intensively advocacy organizations working on that issue will

adopt DICTs, such that the more intense the competition, the more intensely

organizations will adopt DITCs. Further, I argue that the political traditions of a country,

in particular the extent to which it has a tradition of extra-institutional political

organizing, will play a role in organizations' adoption of DICTs such that countries with

a strong tradition of extra-institutional organization will produce organizations that adopt

DICTs with greater intensity.

My final goal in this project was to assess my overall heuristic model, and to

identify additional factors that may drive DICT adoption at the organizational level and

could therefore be included with group characteristics, ideology, out-party innovation and

first-mover advantage. It is to this final task that I now turn.

CHAPTER 6: THE UTILITY OF THE HEURISTIC MODEL

As discussed earlier, the goal of this project was threefold. First, I planned to explore the heuristic model I built based on the literature, gathering data and determining how well the patterns I observed fit those I theorized would exist. Second, I planned to evaluate the extent to which national context shapes the adoption of DICTs by social movement organizations by grouping them by country and comparing those groups. Finally, I planned to evaluate the usefulness of my heuristic model and suggest refinements thereto; this is the task of this final chapter.

Refinements of the Heuristic Model

Overall, I found the heuristic model to be somewhat useful, but in need of modification. First, given the strong relationship between group characteristics and ideology, such that people with particular demographic qualities are likely to also have particular ideological qualities, and that the demographic attributes associated with particular ideologies are also associated with web use, it was impossible for me to treat those aspects of the model as distinct drivers of DICT adoption, and this is likely to be the case in most developed democracies at this time. In decades to come, this may change, but currently, there is an unavoidable overlap between age, internet proficiency, and ideology in developed democracies. Nevertheless, based on my data and particularly on my cross-national comparison, it appears to me that these factors play a relatively minor role in organizations' tendency to adopt DICTs. All of the organizations under study and all of the people I engaged with recognized the need to maintain a web presence, and strove to do so. The differences I noted in organizations' tendencies to adopt DICTs appeared to be largely unrelated to their ideological orientation or to their

particular target audiences, although target audience appeared to play a role in organizations' tendencies to use *offline* communications tools, as discussed earlier. Ideology was, however, a useful way to position organizations in the political landscape surrounding the issue of interest. The degree of political competition around an issue is one factor that I argue influences organizations' tendencies to adopt DICTs, and understanding where organizations are positioned vis-à-vis the issue through understanding their ideology helps one understand how the political environment has influenced that organization's propensity to adopt DICTs. Thus, I would not remove ideology from the model, but I would argue that it is important primarily because it gives the position of the organization relative to the issue and the political debate around it. Given an adequate understanding of the political environment and nature of an issue, organizational ideology can serve as a useful proxy for the organization's relative political position, in- or out-party status, and for the group characteristics of its audience. Group characteristics, meanwhile, I would consider to be of interest primarily in terms of how they relate to the total communications strategy of an organization, beyond its online activities. As I noted earlier, conservative organizations appear to do more offline communication work than liberal ones, and I argue that this is related to the characteristics of the groups that they are targeting. Thus, organizational ideology is not, in itself, a useful variable, but it serves as a useful proxy for other important variables, and helps locate organizations in the political landscape.

Second, it appears that the existence of first-mover advantage accruing to one ideological party may be enough to stifle innovation in the other, even when the other finds itself to be a political out-party with a strong incentive to innovate; this finding was

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consistent when comparing all of the organizations and when comparing them grouped by country. Thus, I would argue that historical processes are important to understanding how and why organizations use DICTs. Among the organizations in my study, for example, it appears that the liberal organizations were at one time an out-party, and that in that period, they moved online aggressively. According to Lisa, a community manager at a U.S. organization that manages a forum for LGBTQ people, "We started about twelve years ago, I would say. Back then, it was very different for people, if they wanted someone to talk to or a place to go, there weren't that many places. So we went online because we had to, it was a place we could go that was safe and we could talk and just interact. So the reason we have the great community we do, I think, is because we've been around for ages, and so people know about us, and they know they can come and be welcome. And so even though things are so different now, and the politics have changed a lot, we still have this community and this role to play."

As this quote illustrates, people with an interest in gay rights were initially drawn to the internet and its affordances because they were an out-party, just as Karpf (2012) suggested. Their communities were therefore able to grow as outlined in his discussion of Wikipedia (Karpf, 2010b); from a small dedicated core, the community expanded slowly, attracting supporters while remaining unnoticed by opponents, who as yet had no incentive to move online to organize, because their position vis-à-vis gay rights was, at the time, the dominant one, particularly related to marriage. Over time, the online gay rights community gained scale, and was then able to resist malicious trolling and other attacks by opponents, and to stifle the development of oppositional communities by intervening in them when they are still small and growing. This pattern was particularly

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notable in the U.S.; in Ireland and the U.K., organizations did not display any meaningful differences in DICT adoption when grouped by ideology, and it appeared that their online organizing efforts were less robust than their American peers'. However, I tentatively hypothesize that it is possible that the existence of a robust online community in the U.S. had a spillover impact on the nascent communities in the U.K. and Ireland. As I mentioned earlier, I seldom found hostile comments from conservatives on liberal forums or blogs, but did find hostile comments from liberals on conservative forums and blogs, and this pattern was relatively consistent across the countries under study. Given the fact that there was little difference between conservative and liberal organizations' adoption of DICTs in the U.K. and Ireland, I would tentatively suggest that perhaps the strong online community of liberal Americans played some role in this online trolling. It is hard to find evidence of this, as people do not typically declare their nationality when commenting anonymously (or with a name) on forums or blogs. However, I did notice several instances in which U.S. spelling appeared on Irish and British forums (colour vs. color, for example), which suggested that at least some Americans were visiting these online communities. More research would be needed, but I suggest that, particularly when language is not a barrier, there may be some spillover online in communities built around issues of cross-national interest, such that a robust community supporting an issue in one jurisdiction may spill into the online environment in another jurisdiction, offering support to online peers and opposition to online opponents in the new jurisdiction. This would further complexify the processes driving DICTs adoption by social movement organizations.

Taken together, these findings suggest that it is possible that, for latecomers, online innovation and expansion will be difficult, even when they are motivated to innovate by their position as political outsiders, due to the historical first-mover advantage their opponents enjoy. This would explain a contradictory finding of mine. As I noted in my discussion of the data I gathered on DICT adoption, overall, conservative organizations scored slightly higher than liberal ones on the non-interactive, non-social media aspects of their web presence, but slightly lower on the interactive and social media fronts. It is possible that conservatives, in response to their position in the political landscape, have attempted to strengthen their online presence, but the first-mover advantage that liberals enjoy has reduced conservative organizations' ability to expand into interactive options and social media. In other words, DICT adoption may be the result of complex processes over time, and certain factors that propel organizations to innovate may be countered by other factors that retard their innovative ability. Thus, due consideration of the historical evolution of the political landscape is important in understanding why organizations do and do not adopt DICTs.

A third, and crucial revision that I would make to my heuristic model would be to include material resources as a key driver of DICT adoption. It is curious, but the literature makes no mention of the role that resources might play in the use of DICTs, except to note that their lower cost makes them more accessible to people and organizations with limited access to resources. To the extent that the relationship between material resources and DICTs is considered, the literature typically assumes that the fact that these tools are frequently free or low-cost means that they are almost costless to use and that they will lower the overall resources required to engage in organization.

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However, I did not find this to be so. Instead, I found that the more resources an organization had access to, the more sophisticated its DICT adoption tended to be. The reason for this seems to be that fully utilizing the tools that the web offers requires knowledge, skills, and, especially, a significant investment of time. It seems that only organizations that can afford to hire staff members who have relevant skills and knowledge to work full-time on DICTs can fully utilize these tools. Amanda[26] is a communications manager at a medium-sized, liberal American organization. "If you want to run a tight ship online you have to have the people. I mean, just consider what it takes to have a good Twitter feed. You have to have someone whose job it is to run the feed, because if you do it right, it's almost a full-time thing. OK, the same person could also do Facebook, but you have to have someone who is responsible for it all the time. On the weekend too. Because you have to be writing tweets all the time, because Twitter is so ephemeral, you have to be in conversation basically all the time. And you have to monitor it, to see what's trending, look for stuff to tweet about, like things to share, and respond to people too, if they tweet you... So it's quite non-stop. And so we have to have someone whose job it is to just deal with Twitter. Or else why bother, if you're only going to use it every now and then, there's no point. No one will follow you, and then there's no point. OK, you have to have the people to do the work."

As this quote illustrates, using DICTs can be a labor-intensive enterprise. While e-mail costs less to send than postal mail, switching to e-mail can often compound an organization's costs because messages must be compiled more frequently, a-b testing must be conducted, vast databases of names and addresses must be managed, and

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[26] Not her real name, see footnote 2

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responses must be monitored and managed. Online, blogs must be written and updated, content must be discovered and shared, and new tools and technologies have to be considered and incorporated all the time. For example, according to Angela, "We send people to events all the time, to conferences and such, to keep up-to-date. We have to be there to find out what's happening, just so that we can keep up online, and be part of the next big thing. It takes a lot of work." In order for an organization to incorporate and effectively utilize DICTs, it must dedicate staff to the task, which costs money. Thus, organizations that have few staff members, and are run by passionate individuals on a volunteer basis, tend to be much less consistent users of DICTs. In my sample, for example, among the smaller organizations, many had social media pages, but updated them infrequently, or would publish a lot of website content one day, and then very little for the next two weeks. The lack of resources made it difficult for small organizations to use DICTs consistently, which weakened their overall online profile; typically there is a correlation between how frequently social media are updated and how many followers they attract (Schonfeld, 2009).

It is, perhaps, surprising that resources play such a key role in DICT adoption given the literature's assumption that they are low-cost communications tools and the relative neglect of the role of resources in new social movement theory, but my data clearly point to this. Although I did not initially anticipate this finding, I nevertheless attempted to test it after noting the pattern. I attempted to gather revenue data for the organizations in my sample. Many of them made such data easily available, and public records were available for many others, but the data were not available for all of the organizations in my sample. By combining these data with the data I was able to gather

on staff (assuming that organizations with many staff members had access to more resources) and I was able to divide 30 of my organizations into three categories: low resources, average resources, and high resources. I found that the average DICT adoption score for the low resources category was 2.4, for the average resources category, 4.6, and for the high resources category 8.1. Although the sample is small, this is further evidence of a relationship between resources and DICT adoption. In addition, as I mentioned earlier in the section of the relationship between diffusion and DICT adoption, I noted that there were a handful of very large organizations that were highly networked, had access to significant resources, and were very sophisticated adopters of DICTs, such as the Human Rights Campaign and Focus on the Family. It seems that these organizations have succeeded in attracting and deploying resources in a way that has enabled them to take a place at the center of organizing efforts by organizations in the issue space. Many smaller organizations partner with these large ones, and rely on their resources to learn about DICT best practice and so on. Again, the role of resources is crucial, and is an element that is missing from my original model. I would therefore argue that, while the insights of new social movement theory have greatly enhanced our understanding of how social movements form and act, it is unwise to discard the contribution of the resource mobilization paradigm. Resources play a crucial role in how effectively organizations are able to undertake the labor of organizing, even in the supposedly costless realm of DICT tools. Any consideration of the strategies that organizations use to achieve their goals must incorporate a clear sense of the role that resources play therein. As Lisa points out, "We definitely spend money and time on our online forum. It's not free. And I don't mean, like, the cost of hosting or anything. I mean that we have to have people whose job

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it is to manage the forum. We have to pay these community managers. We have

volunteers, sure, but you can't just run on volunteers. Not for long, anyway. I mean, we

used to just use volunteers but we, to keep it going and to build it, we have to spend

money, spend time. It's not free."

In addition to including resources in a revised model, I would also like to note that

there is an interrelationship between an organizations position in the political landscape

and the resources it is able to attract. Earlier, I pointed out that conservative

organizations' relatively weak DICT performance in the U.S. was primarily driven by the

inclusion of three outlier conservative organizations that had particularly low DICT

adoption scores. These organizations, Defend the Family, Heterosexuals Organized for a

Moral Environment, and the Institute for Marriage and Public Policy, were all outliers

both in terms of their DICT adoption scores, their access to resources, and their rhetoric. I

suggest that one of the reasons why these organizations underperform the way that they

do is that their extremist rhetoric attracts only marginal support in the U.S. political

context. "OK, so, yes, there are some crazy folks out there who make these crazy

arguments about why people should reject marriage equality – I'm talking about the kind

of folks who say that gays target kids, or have some weird agenda. But those people

actually aren't our enemy, OK, because they are so off-the-wall that they just don't have

the support. OK, who is going to give money to them? Very few people. Who's going to

read their stuff? Very few people. They just aren't in the real debate. The real debate, the

real enemies, or, OK, opponents that we have are the people who make the pro-family

argument, about strong families. They get the supporters, and they are the ones we have

to talk back to," explained Dennis, an organizer at a liberal U.S. organization. By arguing

for a particularly extreme position, these three organizations have reduced their potential support base, and thus struggle to attract resources. This, in turn, limits their ability to be effective users of DICTs. This is again in contrast to what one might expect from the broader literature, which suggests that DICTs offer particular advantages for those with extreme or marginal views. It is, of course, plausible that without their digital platforms, these extreme organizations would not be able to attract the news coverage that they have attracted. However, they are still limited online because of their scant resources. They may have been able to build a bigger community using online tools than they would have without access to such tools, but there relative inability to attract resources has meant that they have remained relatively unsophisticated users of DICTs compared to other, larger, and better-resourced organizations. In other words, I argue that the political environment shapes the extent to which organizations are able to secure resources , which in turn affects the extent to which they are able to effectively use DICTs. This is, perhaps, why organizations that make the most politically palatable arguments are the largest and have the most resources. For example, the Human Rights Campaign deploys human rights arguments in favor of marriage equality, asserting that the prohibition against gay marriage is a form of discrimination, and prevents gay citizens from enjoying full equality before the law. Meanwhile, Focus on the Family deploys arguments related to the social importance of strong families, and scriptural guidelines for the patterns families should follow to advocate against marriage equality. Both of these positions are widely palatable to Americans, and these organizations have succeeded in attracting significant resources and in achieving high DICT adoption scores. There is, I argue, a crucial

interaction between the political environment and the organization that determines how effective the organization will be at securing resources and effectively using DICTs.

Finally, there is another key factor that should be added to any model that seeks to understand how and why social movement organizations adopt DICTs. Among the many differences that I noticed when speaking to representatives of conservative and liberal organizations in the three countries under study, one of the most striking was the difference in how they understood their networks. Many of the conservative organizations in my sample are very closely linked to religious communities. Indeed, given the nature of the selected issue, gay rights, religious groups make up the most important group of that oppose their extension. One of the factors most closely associated with support for or opposition to marriage equality is religious conviction. In the U.S., for example, while 52% of Americans support same-sex marriage overall, only 27% of white evangelical Protestants do so (Public Religion Research Institute, 2014). In the U.K., University of Leicester professor Ben Clements reports that while 52% of Britons who claim no religious affiliation supported marriage equality in 2007, that number fell to 32.3% among Anglicans, 40.9% among Catholics, and 38% among other Christians (Clements, 2012). I was unable to find data for Ireland, but as the Catholic Church opposes marriage equality, it is likely that devout Irish Catholics are more likely to oppose it than their less devout peers. Indeed, it is possible that the relationship between age and support for marriage equality is, in large part, a function of the relationship between religion and marriage equality, as older people tend to be more devout in all of the countries under study. The reason that this is important for the purposes of my study is that this close relationship between the issue position (opposing gay marriage) and

organized religion means that many of the organizations that oppose same-sex marriage have their roots in religious communities. Many of them therefore view their target audiences primarily in terms of faith; for example, one Catholic group in Ireland responded to survey questions about how they defined their target audiences saying "We target all Catholics, of all ages, everywhere!" Clearly, then, these organizations are able to tap into the networks that exist within organized religions, including churches, devotional groups, action committees and so on. Although many of the organizations were independent of formal church control, many were very closely affiliated with various churches, and active within formal church networks. In contrast, the liberal organizations tended to think of their target audiences in broader terms as people interested in equality, for example. There are no pre-existing, formal, institutionalized networks of such people, and even the networks of gay advocacy groups and communities that do exist today had to be built from almost nothing over the last few decades. Therefore, while conservative groups could, to an extent, rely on pre-existing networks to structure their organizing attempts, liberal organizations had to build networks from scratch. This is, potentially, another reason why liberal organizations moved online more aggressively than their conservative counterparts over the years, in the U.S. particularly. Just as I noted that political traditions such as a history of strong institutions may influence organizations' tendencies to use DICTs, it is possible that, at the mezzo-level, organizations' ability to tap into institutional structures may play a role in their use of online tools. Conservative organizations may, for example, choose not to include many online interactive options because they prefer to interact face-to-face at

church gatherings; access to formal networks may influence the strategies that organizations use to reach their target audiences.

I therefore propose a number of changes to my heuristic model. I would de-emphasize the importance of ideology and group characteristics as isolated drivers of adoption, instead positioning them as interacting with environmental factors to shape organizations' relative positions in the landscape. I would highlight the importance of the historical evolution of the issue, in terms of the history of public opinion thereof, and of organizations' historical activities related thereto. I would place resources as a central factor in determining organizations' ability to mobilize DICTs. Finally, I would emphasize that institutional and external networks may play a role in the communication strategies organizations choose to pursue, particularly for organizations that are already closely embedded in formal institutional networks such as churches.

A Revised Heuristic Model of DICT Adoption by Social Movement Organizations

Taking into account the refinements I have outlined above, I propose a revised heuristic model that may help researchers understand the processes that influence organizations' tendency to adopt DICTs in developed democracies. Again, the model is intended as a contingent device to help guide understanding and analysis, rather than as a firm statement of how organizations operate. I hope that, by highlighting the importance of context and certain organizational characteristics, this model will enable researchers to approach questions related to organizations' use of DICTs in fresher and more sensitive ways.
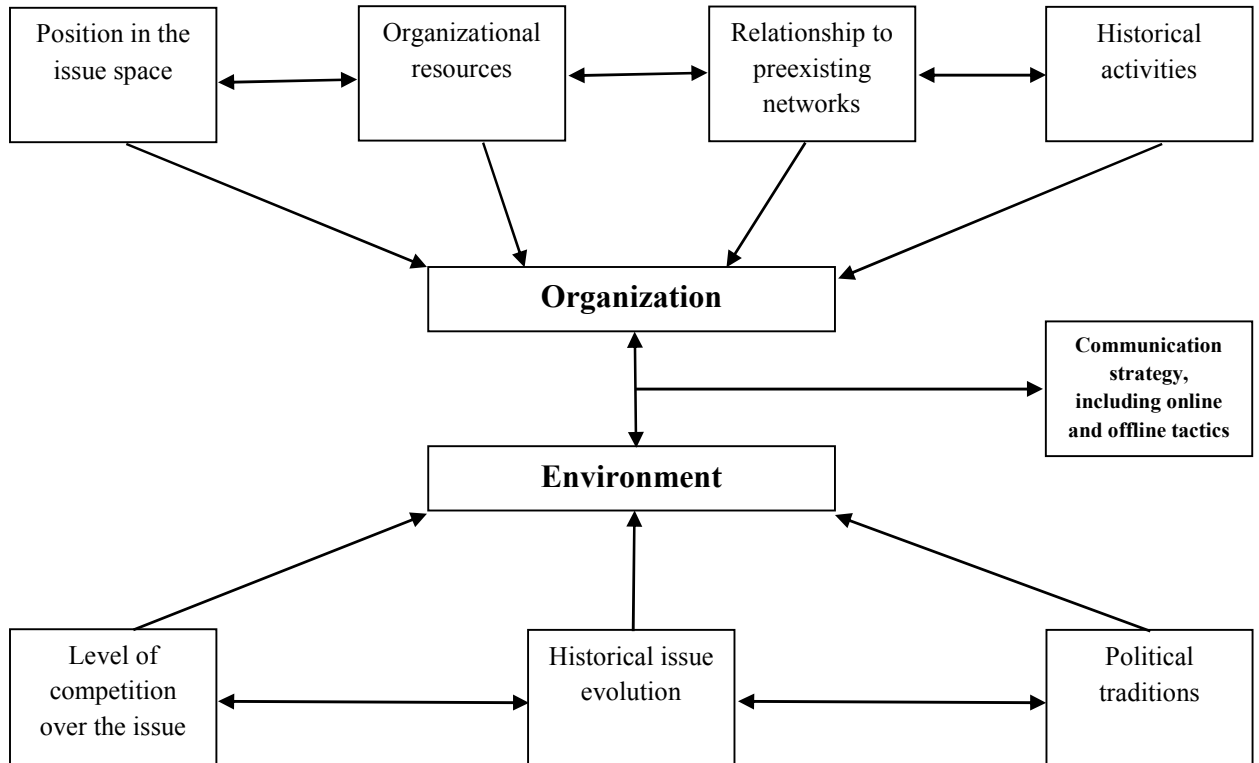
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┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
│ Position in the│◄───►│Organizational│◄───►│Relationship to│◄───►│  Historical  │
│  issue space  │      │  resources   │      │  preexisting │      │  activities  │
│               │      │              │      │   networks   │      │              │
└──────────────┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘
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Organization

**Communication
strategy,
including online
and offline tactics**

Environment

```
┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
│   Level of   │◄───►│Historical issue│◄───►│   Political  │
│  competition │      │  evolution   │      │  traditions  │
│ over the issue│      │              │      │              │
└──────────────┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘
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Figure 6.1: Revised model of social movement organizations' DICT adoption

As can be seen, the revised model shown in figure 6.1 is more complex and less

linear than my original heuristic model, and allows for interactions between all of the

factors. I will now briefly explain the elements of the revised model, and how they work

together to drive organizations' communications strategies. At the center of the model, I

have placed the organization and its environment, by which I mean the context in which

it finds itself. It is the interaction between environment and organization that influences

the particular communication strategies that the organization will pursue. Various aspects

of the organization are crucial in understanding how it will interact with its environment.

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First, it is important to understand the organizations' position in the issue space. For example, in the case of my study, I had to understand how each organization was positioned relative to public opinion on the issue of gay rights, how its rhetoric compared to broader public discourse, and how it was positioned relative to political parties' policies on the issue. Thus, this factor incorporates the ideas I discussed around ideology, group characteristics, and out-party innovation. This factor also interacts strongly with the second key factor in my model, organizational resources. As I explained, resources are a key determinant of how intensively organizations are able to deploy DICTs that was omitted from my earlier model. Further, to a large extent, organizations' ability to mobilize resources is linked to their relative position in the issue space, as discussed above. Thus, these two factors are closely linked. The third organizational factor in the model is the organization's relationship to preexisting networks. When organizations have strong roots in or strong connections to existing networks, particularly formal, institutional networks such as churches or labor unions, this connection can influence DICT adoption in several ways. First, it can help organizations access resources, both financial and in the form of volunteers. Second, it can shape how the organization choses to communicate with its target public by, for example, encouraging face-to-face models of interactivity rather than online ones. Finally, the organization's historical activities influence its choices with respect to communication strategies. For example, an organization that has historically built a strong online presence during a period of relative political insignificance may be more likely to pursue sophisticated DICT policies today, while an organization that has historically eschewed DICTs may find it challenging to move into online spaces, particularly if opponents have already colonized the internet.

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This factor thus incorporates the idea of first-mover advantage, but emphasizes its historical dimensions.

Turning to the bottom half of the model, there are three important environmental factors that must be understood if one hopes to understand why some organizations adopt DICTs and others don't. First, there is the level of competition over the issue. As discussed, when there is more intense competition over an issue, it is easier for organizations – at least those with relatively broad, mainstream appeal on either side of the issue – to mobilize resources and, thus, to engage in complex and sophisticated DICT usage. Competitive issues will also tend to lead to more engagement from the public, and thus help to drive the spread of online messages. The second key factor is the historical evolution of the issue. Understanding how opinions have changed, how organizations have influenced the debate, and how the issue has played out online over time will help the researcher to position the organizations under study in the issue environment, and to understand their historical activities. Once again, the inclusion of this factor underscores the importance of understanding the history of the issues and organizations under study, and how that history has affected the communication strategies organizations deploy. Finally, the last important environmental factor is the political traditions of the nation in which organizations are domiciled. As discussed earlier, countries with a strong tradition of extra-institutional organization may find that their social movement organizations are more aggressive in utilizing new affordances for the furthering of political agendas. Furthermore, differences in media systems and legislative norms and structures may also influence organizational practices.

By understanding the environment in which the organization operates, how that organization relates to the environment, how it has influenced the environment, and how it is internally structured, one can begin to understand why that organization adopts the particular communication strategies it does, and especially why the organization does or does not move aggressively to use DICTs. This model summarizes my findings on how these processes work, how organizations negotiate their positions, resources, strategies, connections, and environment in the pursuit of their broader goals, and why organizations choose, or choose not, to use DICTs.

CONCLUSION

This project is rooted in the study of the ways in which the development of DICTs has influenced the practice of politics. At their advent, digital technologies were celebrated for their political promise; they offered hopes of empowerment for ordinary citizens, the ability to organize without organization, the ability to mobilize people for global change, and the potential for the freer and more open flow of information. However, as these technologies have matured, much of this early promise has been caveated or qualified. As DICTs become a routine part of people's daily lives, and as a small handful of companies and sites capture an ever-larger proportion of web traffic, the revolutionary potential of these technologies seems diminished, high hopes for the potential of social media notwithstanding.

In the course of this study, I have learned that, rather than remaking public and political life, DICTs have instead been incorporated into extant routines of public protest and political movements. While some organizations, like Moveon.org, appear to have developed fresh models based exclusively on DICTs, my study of more-traditional

advocacy organizations that are not superstars in their fields, but that have been effective at mobilizing people around topical issues, underscored how these technologies are, for organizers, another set of tools among many, offering advantages and disadvantages, requiring resources, and demanding active decisions from organizations. Their use has not completely revolutionized the process of social movement organization. Rather, organizations use these tools, to a greater or lesser extent, as a result of a host of internal and external factors as outlined in my revised model. My model highlights the importance of the interaction between organizations and their environments, and of the multiple, interdependent factors that influence how organizations integrate these tools into their routines.

Understanding this process is important, both for scholars interested in DICT adoption, and for social movement organizers who wish to understand how and why organizations lag behind in DICT adoption. As DICTs become ever-more important in daily life, it will become ever-more important for organizations to use these tools to engage with the public in order to achieve meaningful social change. In cases where organizations underperform their peers or opponents in the use of DICTs, understanding the roots of this underperformance could suggest strategies for overcoming it. As I suggested earlier, understanding that the first-mover advantage accruing to an ideological opponent who was online early can inhibit an organization's ability to adopt DICTs may encourage that organization to develop strategies specifically targeted at solving this problem. For new entrants, too, understanding the forces driving DICT adoption can help them to adapt their own organization to better utilize these tools.

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Although this paper presents a model for helping researchers and activists understand the process of DICT adoption, it is by no means the final word on the topic. Instead, this project represents an important first step in building scholarly understanding of how average, contemporary advocacy organizations adopt and deploy DICTs, and how this process is influenced by contextual factors. Possible avenues for future research would include extending this model to a fresh set of organizations to explore its usefulness, as well as consideration of the potential effect that cross-national spillover has on DICT adoption, as discussed earlier. Future researchers should consider the ways in which the structure of the media system may influence organizations' adoption of DICTs, and how the particular legislative arrangements that obtain in different national contexts influence the decisions advocacy organizations make with respect to DICTs. Further, a study that includes organizations that do not engage in online activities would deepen and enrich our understanding of what drives organizations to use, or not to use, such tools.

APPENDIX ONE

Below is a tabular copy of the codebook used in the web analysis.

Variable name	Description	Values
Organization	Name of the organization	Text
ID Number	Assigned id number	Number
Nationality	Which nation the organization is primarily active in	1 = United States
		2 = United Kingdom
		3 = Ireland
Conservative	Measure of ideological orientation based on analysis of the website and associated materials	0 = not conservative
		1 = conservative
Website	URL of the relevant website	Text
Facebook	Measure of whether or not the organization has a Facebook page	0 = no
		1 = yes
Fb page	URL of the organization's Facebook page	Text
Likes	Number of likes the organization's Facebook page had garnered as of March 31, 2014	Number
Post in last week	Measure of whether or not the organization had posted within a week of January 31, 2013, February 28, 2014 and March 31, 2014	0 = no
		1 = yes

Post today	Measure of whether or not the organization had posted on the day immediately before or of January 31, 2013, February 28, 2014 and March 31, 2014	0 = no
		1 = yes
Twitter	Measure of whether or not the organization has a Twitter feed	0 = no
		1 = yes
Twitter feed	URL of the organization's Twitter feed	Text
Followers	Number of followers the organization's Twitter feed had garnered as of March 31, 2014	Number
Tweets	Number of tweets the organization had tweeted as of March 31, 2014	
Tweet in last week	Measure of whether or not the organization had tweeted within a week of January 31, 2013, February 28, 2014 and March 31, 2014	0 = no
		1 = yes
Tweet today	Measure of whether or not the organization had tweeted on the day immediately before or of January 31, 2013, February 28, 2014 and March 31, 2014	0 = no
		1 = yes
YouTube	Measure of whether or not the organization has a YouTube channel	0 = no
		1 = yes
YouTube channel	URL of the organization's YouTube channel	Text

Subscribers	Number of subscribers the organization's YouTube channel had garnered as of March 31, 2014	Number
Views	Total number of views the organizations YouTube videos had garnered as of March 31, 2014	Number
Video in last two weeks	Measure of whether or not the organization had posted a video within two weeks week of January 31, 2013, February 28, 2014 and March 31, 2014	0 = no
		1 = yes
E-mail newsletter	Measure of whether or not the organization publishes a regular e-mail newsletter to which a site visitor can subscribe	0 = no
		1 = yes
Take action	Measure of whether or not the organization's site includes a section or button to help site visitors identify relevant actions that they can take, such as e-mail campaigns to participate in	0 = no
		1 = yes
Contact details	Measure of whether or not the site provides visitors with a way to contact the organization, either through e-mail or via the mail or a phone number	0 = no
		1 = yes
Blogs	Measure of whether or not the organization's website includes blogs produced by organization staff offering news or opinion	0 = no
		1 = yes

Comments	Measure of whether or not the site offers any comment facilities, either on organizational or user-generated blogs	0 = no
		1 = yes
UGC	Measure of whether or not the organization publishes user-generated content on its site, in the form of blogs, vidoes, or petitions, and excluding comment facilities	0 = no
		1 = yes
Forum	Measure of whether or not the site offers a forum in which users can engage directly with one another and share any content or comments of interest	0 = no
		1 = yes
Video	Measure of whether or not the site includes embedded video content, whether original or produced by other organizations	0 = no
		1 = yes
Donate	Measure of whether or not the site offers a way for site visitors to donate money online	0 = no
		1 = yes
Media section	Measure of whether or not the site includes a dedicated section for the press, with press releases or other relevant content	0 = no
		1 = yes
Media contacts	Measure of whether or not the site includes contact details for a media liaison or communications department	0 = no

		1 = yes
Website sophistication	A subjective measure of the website's relative sophistication (compared to the sites of the other organizations under study)	1 -10 scale, with a higher number indicating greater sophistication
Website interactivity	A subjective measure of the website's relative interactivity (compared to the sites of the other organizations under study)	1 -10 scale, with a higher number indicating greater sophistication
Cookies	Number of cookies inserted into my browser by the site homepage	Number
Third-party cookies	Measure of whether or not the site uses third-party cookies	0 = no
		1 = yes
Notes	Personal notes on the website	Text

Below is a copy of the organizational survey I fielded between January 2014 and March 2014. It included a consent form, as shown.

Consent Form

University of Pennsylvania
Informed Consent Form
Project: Collective action and digital information communication technologies: The search for explanatory models of social movements' use of DICTs to mobilize, organize, and achieve political goals through collective action

Principal Investigator:

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Investigator:

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You are being asked to take part in a study about the role that digital information communication technologies play in your organization. We are interested in learning how you use such tools, and what factors lead you to use certain tools and not others.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question and to stop the survey at any time or for any reason. No personal information will be collected, and every effort will be made to keep your responses anonymous. All the data collected will be stored in a secure workspace until this project is completed in August 2014. All data will then be deleted.

The risks of participating in this study are minimal. You will not be asked for any confidential or sensitive information. You may contact the Office of Regulatory Affairs with any question, concerns or complaints at the University of Pennsylvania by calling +1 215 898 2614. You can also contact the principal investigator with any questions.

I hereby acknowledge that I have read the above consent form.

Organizational Data

What is the name of your organization?

Do have permanent offices?

○ Yes

○ No

○ We did previously, but do not any longer

Do you employ any full-time staff members?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Sometimes, but not currently

We'd like to ask you some questions about your staff. You may not be certain about the answers to some of these questions. However, the intention of these questions is simply to get a general sense of the kinds of people your organization employs. If you do not the exact answer, simply offer your best estimate.

How many full-time staff members do you typically employ?

○ 1-5

○ 6-10

○ 11-20

○ More than 21

What age category/categories do you think best describe/s your organization's typical staff member? (Maximum 3)

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-34

☐ 35-44

☐ 45-54

☐ 55-64

☐ Over 65

What education category/categories do you think best describe/s your organization's typical staff member? (Maximum 3)

☐ Less than High School

☐ High School / GED

☐ Some College

☐ 2-year College Degree

☐ 4-year College Degree

☐ Masters Degree

☐ Doctoral Degree

☐ Professional Degree (JD, MD)

In your estimation, what is the typical salary paid to your organization's typical staff member? (Maximum 3)

☐ Less than $30,000

☐ $30,000 – $39,999

☐ $40,000 – $49,999

☐ $50,000 – $59,999

☐ $60,000 – $69,999

☐ $70,000 – $79,999

☐ $80,000 – $89,999

☐ $90,000 – $99,999

☐ $100,000 or more

What are some words you would use to describe your organization's typical staff member? For example, you might describe them as traditional, or innovative, or cosmopolitan, or hard-working.

Membership data

You will now be asked some questions about your typical members. Again, it is not necessary to be certain that your answer is correct. Instead, the goal of these questions is to get a sense of how your organization visualizes its members.

Some organizations consider individuals to be members if they pay dues, and some

organizations consider individuals to be members if they subscribe to organizational communications, while others have yet another definition of membership. Does your organization have members, however you define them?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I'm not certain

How do you define "members" in your organization?

How many members do you estimate you have?

What age category/categories do you think best describe/s your organization's typical member? (Maximum 3)

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-34

☐ 35-44

☐ 45-54

☐ 55-64

☐ Over 65

What education category/categories do you think best describe/s your organization's typical member? (Maximum 3)

☐ Less than High School

☐ High School / GED

☐ Some College

☐ 2-year College Degree

☐ 4-year College Degree

☐ Masters Degree

☐ Doctoral Degree

☐ Professional Degree (JD, MD)

What household income categories/categories do you think best describe/s your organization's typical member? (Maximum 3)

☐ Less than $30,000

☐ $30,000 – $39,999

☐ $40,000 – $49,999

☐ $50,000 – $59,999

☐ $60,000 – $69,999

☐ $70,000 – $79,999

☐ $80,000 – $89,999

☐ $90,000 – $99,999

☐ $100,000 or more

Which of the following communication methods do you use to stay in touch with your members?

	Use frequently	Use infrequently	Never use
E-mail/E-newsletter			
Organizational website			
YouTube			
Twitter			
Facebook			
Other social media			
Automated phone calls			
Postal mail			
Other			

What are some words you would use to describe your typical member? For example, you might describe them as urban, or suburban, or traditional, or modern.

Many organizations collect some basic information about their members, such as their e-mail addresses, age, and other information. Do you gather any data on your members?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I'm not sure

What types of data do you typically gather?

Target public

In addition to members, many advocacy organizations have a target public, a broader group of people that they seek to influence or inspire. The next few questions are about your organization's target public. Once again, you should answer to the best of your knowledge, even if you are not entirely certain that your answer is correct.

What age category/categories do you think best describe/s your organization's target public? (Maximum 3)

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-34

☐ 35-44

☐ 45-54

☐ 55-64

☐ Over 65

What education category/categories do you think best describe/s your organization's target public? (Maximum 3)

☐ Less than High School

☐ High School / GED

☐ Some College

☐ 2-year College Degree

☐ 4-year College Degree

☐ Masters Degree

☐ Doctoral Degree

☐ Professional Degree (JD, MD)

In your estimation, what is the average household income/s of your organization's target public? (Maximum 3)

☐ Less than $30,000

☐ $30,000 – $39,999

☐ $40,000 – $49,999

☐ $50,000 – $59,999

☐ $60,000 – $69,999

☐ $70,000 – $79,999

☐ $80,000 – $89,999

☐ $90,000 – $99,999

☐ $100,000 or more

Which of the following communication methods do you use to communicate with your target public?

	Use frequently	Use infrequently	Never use
E-mail/E-newsletter			
Organizational website			
YouTube			
Twitter			
Facebook			
Other social media			
Automated phone calls			
Postal mail			
Other			

What are some words you would use to describe your organization's target public? For example, you might describe them as traditional, or innovative, or cosmopolitan, or hard-working.

Many organizations use technological means to help them understand their target public better. For example, many organizations use cookies or other browser-based technologies to collect information about visitors to their sites. Does your organization use technologies like cookies to collect information about visitors to your site?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I'm not certain

What technologies does your organization use to collect information about visitors to its site?

Some organizations have started to use information that they (or another company) have

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gathered from people's online activities to try and reach people with relevant messages about their goals. To your knowledge, does your organization do this?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I'm not certain

To the best of your knowledge, how does your organization use information about people's online activities to reach those people?

External relations

The next set of questions deals with your organization's relations with other organizations and institutions that can help them achieve their goals.

Do you frequently interact with other organizations that are also active on issues related to LGBTQ issues?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I'm not certain

Please list some of the other organizations you interact with.

Does your organization send representatives to any networking conferences or events that help to foster and develop relations with other organizations?

○ Yes

○ No

Which of the following communication methods do you use to communicate with other organizations?

	Use frequently	Use infrequently	Never use
E-mail/E-newsletter			
Organizational website			
YouTube			
Twitter			
Facebook			
Other social media			

Automated phone calls			
Postal mail			
Other			

Do you ever communicate with journalists?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I'm not certain

Which of the following communication methods do you use to communicate with journalists?

	Use frequently	Use infrequently	Never use
E-mail/E-newsletter			
Organizational website			
YouTube			
Twitter			
Facebook			
Other social media			
Postal mail			
Phone calls			
Face-to-face meetings			
Other			

Online communities

These final questions address the issue of online communities. Many organizations engaged in advocacy have online supporters who use the Internet to share information, discuss important issues, and build relationships. The following questions will ask about your organization's online presence and the online activities of people who support you. They will also ask you about organizations that oppose your goals and the people that support them, and their online activities.

How strong do you think your organization's online presence is?

○ Very strong

○ Somewhat strong

○ About average

○ Somewhat weak

○ Very weak

How would you say that your organization's web presence has changed in the last two years?

○ Improved a lot

○ Improved a little

○ Stayed about the same

○ Become a little worse

○ Become a lot worse

How strong do you think the online community of people who support you is? A strong community might, for example, have an active online presence, perhaps in the form of active forum discussion groups, or popular Facebook pages that are used for discussion and networking.

○ Very strong

○ Somewhat strong

○ About average

○ Somewhat weak

○ Very weak

How would you say that your organization's supporters' online community has changed in the last two years?

○ Grown a lot

○ Grown a little

○ Stayed about the same

○ Shrunk a little

○ Shrunk a lot

How strong do you think the online presence of organizations that oppose you and advocate against your goals, is?

○ Very strong

○ Somewhat strong

○ About average

○ Somewhat weak

○ Very weak

How would you say that web presence of organizations that oppose you has changed in the last two years?

○ Improved a lot

○ Improved a little

○ Stayed about the same

○ Become a little worse

○ Become a lot worse

How strong do you think the online community of people who oppose you is? A strong online community might, for example, have an active online presence, perhaps in the form of active forum discussion groups, or popular Facebook pages that are used for discussion and networking.

○ Very strong

○ Somewhat strong

○ About average

○ Somewhat weak

○ Very weak

How would you say that the online community of people who oppose has changed in the last two years?

○ Grown a lot

○ Grown a little

○ Stayed about the same

○ Shrunk a little worse

○ Shrunk a lot worse

Have you or your supporters ever faced online harassment or trolling from people who disagree with your positions?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I'm not certain

This concludes the survey. Thank you very much for your participation. If there are any additional points you would like to make, or any other information you would like to share, please do so in the space below.

University of Pennsylvania
Informed Consent Form

Project: Collective action and digital information communication technologies: The search for explanatory models of social movements' use of DICTs to mobilize, organize, and achieve political goals through collective action

Principal Investigator:

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> Philadelphia, PA, 19104
> fduncan@asc.upenn.edu

You are being asked to take part in a study about the role that digital information communication technologies play in your organization. I am interested in learning how you use such tools, and what factors lead you to use certain tools and not others.

This interview is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question and to stop the interview at any time or for any reason. Unless you grant me permission to use your name or title in any publications that may result from this research, the information you tell me will remain anonymous.

I would like to record this interview on a digital voice recorder for my personal reference. I will not record the interview without your permission. If you do grant permission for this conversation to be recorded, you have the right to revoke recording permission and/or end the interview at any time. This project will be completed by October 2014. All interview recordings and transcriptions of those recordings will be stored in a secure workspace until October 2014. The recordings and transcripts will then be deleted.

The risks of participating in this study are minimal. You will not be asked for any confidential or sensitive information. You may contact the Office of Regulatory Affairs with any question, concerns or complaints at the University of Pennsylvania by calling +1 215 898 2614.

You can also contact the principal investigator with any questions.

Participant
Name:_____

Participant
Signature_____

Date:_____
___

REFERENCE LIST

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