Communication and Political Mobilization: Digital Media and the Organization of Anti-Iraq War Demonstrations in the U.S.

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The speed and scale of mobilization in many contemporary protest events may reflect a transformation of movement organizations toward looser ties with members, enabling broader mobilization through the mechanism of dense individual-level political networks. This analysis explores the dynamics of this communication process in the case of U.S. protests against the Iraq war in 2003. We hypothesize that individual activists closest to the various sponsoring protest organizations were (a) disproportionately likely to affiliate with diverse political networks and (b) disproportionately likely to rely on digital communication media (lists, Web sites) for various types of information and action purposes. We test this model using a sample of demonstrators drawn from the United States protest sites of New York, San Francisco, and Seattle and find support for our hypotheses.

Keywords internet and politics, digital media and protest, social movements, political networks

On February 15, 2003, millions of people in hundreds of cities around the world gathered to protest the impending U.S. invasion of Iraq. The numbers of demonstrators were estimated between 10 and 13 million people by the BBC (2003), and higher by various activist sources. In addition to being the largest coordinated demonstrations in recorded history, various cities such as London, Rome, and Madrid all witnessed their largest protests on record, with crowds estimated at a million or more. The rapid mobilization and unprecedented scale of these demonstrations provided a unique opportunity for researchers to examine their organization and learn more about the mechanisms through which they were coordinated. The demonstrations drew a broad range of activists of varying political

identifications, from the global social justice movement to national peace, religious, and labor groups and local churches, schools, and households. Many first time demonstrators also took to the streets to register their reservations about a war against a country that had, in the minds of many, been dubiously linked to terrorism and to weapons of mass destruction by government officials in the United States and Britain.

This article proposes a model that integrates the organizational coordination of protest with mechanisms of individual-level network bridging. The aim is to account for the rapid and widespread diffusion of protest beyond what might be expected through more conventionally brokered relationships between political and social organizations such as churches, unions, parties, or peace groups. The speed, scale, and transnational nature of these protests suggest the maturation of new organizational forms that have been much discussed in the recent literature on collective action. In particular, there is reason to think that changes in social identity processes lead many individuals in late modern societies to seek less binding and more flexible relationships with organizations that provide various kinds of support, from providing information to coordinating actions, on issues that matter personally (della Porta, 2005; Bennett, 1998, 2005). These personal association preferences require less from organizations in terms of formal membership management and bureaucratic resources, and offer individuals easier opt-in, opt-out mechanisms for affiliation and participation. Looser organizational ties enable affinity relationships that are often facilitated by social networking and digital communication technologies. Technology-assisted networking arrangements characterize familiar multi-issue movement organizations in the United States such as Global Exchange and Moveon, and illuminate a number of campaigns and protests in recent times, from the World Trade Organization demonstrations during the "Battle of Seattle" in 1999 to numerous campaigns against corporations to promote greater responsibility in labor, environment, economic and trade justice, and human rights practices (Danaher & Mark, 2003). Diani (2003) has noted related developments in social movement organization, suggesting that there may be multiplier effects in terms of personal network mobilization as individuals operate with greater independence from organizations. All of these factors lead to a reconsideration of collective action theories in terms of assumptions about requirements for leadership, organizational hierarchies, and bureaucratic resources (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005).

Detailed analyses of the 2003 global anti-war protests suggest that such flexible, post bureaucratic (Bimber, 2003) organizations played important roles in the rapid coordination of transnational demonstrations (Walgrave & Verhulst, 2003). However, there remains healthy debate about the continuing importance of traditional labor and peace movement organizations in national contexts as well (Walgrave & Rucht, 2008; Bennett & Givens, 2009). Our research examines the relationships between individuals and coordinating organizations, with an eye to the degree to which individual activists managed their often extensive personal political networks using digital technologies such as e-mail and Web sites (also referred to in this article as e-media). In particular, we predict that individual activists who were (a) more closely associated with the various sponsoring protest organizations were also (b) disproportionately likely to hold memberships in multiple personal political networks and (c) disproportionately likely to rely on e-media to connect those personal networks as part of the mobilization process. This set of relationships helps explain the diffusion of protests with the speed and scale that characterized the global demonstrations on the eve of the Iraq war. Assessing this complex set of relationships entails testing:

1. Whether participants most closely associated with organizations sponsoring the demonstrations also have more diverse personal political networks
2. Whether association with sponsoring organizations is related to high e-media use

3. When this cluster of variables is considered together, whether high reliance on e-media is explained more by simple association with organizations sponsoring the protests (suggesting a more dominant organizational role in protest mobilization) or by the diversity of individual-level political networks (suggesting an important individual-level protest diffusion mechanism)

If, as we predict, the latter individual-level effect prevails, we can offer a clue about how large scale protests can be organized so quickly. We envision a process that begins with the now-familiar formation of broad sponsoring coalitions whose impact may then be magnified by the activation of large numbers of diverse individual political networks through personal digital communication channels. After discussing the theoretical support for this model of protest activation, we test the model using a sample of 705 demonstrators drawn from the United States protest sites of New York, San Francisco, and Seattle.

Communication and the Organization of Collective Action

There are several interesting lines of research that suggest how large scale collective action of the sort witnessed in transnational protests in recent years may be increasingly organized through fine-grained individual-level networks that relax conventional organizational barriers of identification, ideology, and communication costs. One important enabling condition identified by scholars is the growing availability of personal digital communication media such as e-mail, Web sites, text messaging, lists, and blogs that may be accessed through various devices such as computers, mobile phones, and pagers. Such communication affordances lower the costs of action in ways that appear to be changing the conventional logic of collective action. For example, Lupia and Sin (2003) have challenged basic assumptions of collective action theories that link sustained and coordinated action to requirements such as formal organization and leadership.

In addition to lowering the costs of action, digital networking may enable sustained patterns of association that can be organized in terms of loose, voluntary, and nonhierarchical relationships (Graber et al., 2004). Bimber et al. (2005) have proposed a typology of a fluid collective action space in which conventional (hierarchical, centralized) organizations such as election campaigns may experiment with enabling more entrepreneurial, less centralized communication networks to form among members. Such organizational hybrids account for the rapid growth of the Howard Dean campaign in the 2004 Democratic primaries, for the success of online fundraising enjoyed by many candidates, and for the growth and flexible agenda setting of online activist organizations such as Moveon.org (Flanagin, Stohl, & Bimber, 2006).

The point here is not that interpersonal networks are new; they have been well documented in social movement research (Snow, Zurcher, & Ekland-Olson, 1980; McAdam, 1986, 1988; della Porta & Diani, 1999; Tarrow, 2005). What is interesting is that communication technologies may now enable sustainable interpersonal network organization on a large scale that is (to varying degrees) independent of and, in some cases, may act upon conventional institutional organizations. For example, research by Shah and colleagues suggests that the use of digital media can transform the scope and scale of interpersonal political relationships both on and off line (Shah, Cho, Eveland, & Kwak, 2005; Nah, Veenstra, & Shah, 2006; Hwang, Schmierbach, Paek, Zuniga, & Shah, 2006).

While uses of digital communication technologies may provide part of the explanation for the emergence of fluid organizational forms and low-cost action opportunities for individuals, it is important to consider other individual-and organizational-level factors

that contribute to the creation of large-scale, rapidly mobilized, and often diverse protest networks. There is no inherent reason why digital communication technologies, alone, should make individuals more likely to bridge diverse networks, or make organizations more likely to relax the conditions for membership, cooperation, or coalition building. Additional explanatory factors include the possibilities that activists and organizations involved in fluid, large-scale political mobilizations are likely to espouse principles of pragmatism, inclusiveness, and diversity in their organizing and relationship-building routines, making it easier to bridge different political networks. For example, the rise of a global social justice (GSJ) movement in recent years offers an interesting window on the continuing evolution of principles of inclusiveness and diversity which Bennett (2005) has described as both organizational code and a meta-ideology (see, for example, *World Social Forum Bulletin*, 2004). The GSJ movement leaves traces of its loosely networked structure through automated event calendars, syndicated online activist news services, and protest coalition coordinating sites on the Web. Such communication infrastructure provides a preliminary organizational process for diverse protest activities including gatherings such as world and regional social forums; campaigns for fair trade, environmental protection, or labor standards; and demonstrations against world trade regimes or wars.

This loose but densely networked GSJ movement has produced an array of large-scale, transnational protest activities aimed at diverse targets and political goals, and its members played an important role in organizing the transnational demonstrations against the Iraq war. Indeed, the coordinated global anti-war protests of February 15, 2003, had their origins in global justice conferences, first in the European Social Forum in Florence in summer of 2002 and culminating in the World Social Forum meeting just prior to the demonstrations in the early winter of 2003 (Walgrave & Verhulst, 2003). Activists and coordinating organization representatives from these and other meetings dispersed to various national locations to spread the word and organize the details of the rapidly approaching protest event.

Just what kinds of organizations and activists spread the word so broadly and effectively? It is clear that organizations continue to play important roles in connecting and mobilizing activists. For example, an analysis of five globalization protests indicates that organizations helped mobilize long-distance turnouts and support local activists (Fisher et al., 2005). However, more remains to be understood about the nature of activists' affiliations with organizations and with each other. Perhaps there are different networking mechanisms in our case than those often encountered in the social movement literature on the challenges of coalition formation presented by organizational boundaries and collective identification requirements that require formal brokerage and leadership relationships to bridge (Tarrow & McAdam, 2005). Such organizational brokerage continues to play a role in many contemporary transnational protest networks, including large-scale Internet-era global networks such as the Zapatista solidarity movement (Olesen, 2003; Tarrow & McAdam, 2005). At the same time, there are signs that many organizations are increasingly open to "transposing" their missions to incorporate diverse transnational commitments without incurring much strain on their local organizational identities. Tarrow and McAdam (2005) note that Global Exchange is one example of a contemporary organization that is open to supporting multiple issues and relatively flexible identifications and action strategies among loosely affiliated activists. Other such flexible coordinating organizations include Moveon in the United States and ATTAC in various European countries. Organizations that that create flexible relations with members also enable individuals (often assisted by social technologies offered by organizations) to employ innovative personal networking strategies. This activation of diverse personal level networks adds a new mechanism to what Tarrow (2005) refers to as processes of "relational" diffusion.

In the case of the Iraq war protests, it is clear that the organizational coalitions were so loosely knit that they stretched the capacity to imagine them as a social movement at all. In comparing the two largest coalition organizations in the U.S. (United for Peace and Justice) and the U.K. (Stop the War Coalition), Pickerill and Webster (2006) conclude that "given this breadth and diversity it is hard to conceptualise such groups forming a social movement" (p. 415). They then identify a host of digital networking mechanisms that account for keeping the mobilization together.

Understanding the nature of individual association with such loose knit organizations also involves looking at the identification processes of different kinds of activists. If certain types of coordinating organizations are relatively open and flexible in relationships with their members, it stands to reason that individuals have created a demand for this type of organization by expressing flexible political identifications that bridge multiple issues and organizations. For example, flexibility in political affiliations and identifications clearly seems to be a hallmark of global social justice protests, which della Porta describes as grounded at the individual level in "heterogeneous, multiply faceted identities that reflect social complexity" with the result that an "identity shift from single-movement identity to multiple, tolerant identities has helped the movement in dealing with its heterogeneous bases" (della Porta, 2005, p. 186). We suspect that flexibility in political identifications is particularly true for activists operating near the organizing hubs of protest networks that unfold as quickly and on the scale of the February 15 anti-war demonstrations.

To return to the role of digital media in this mobilization process, it seems important to understand both the individual and the larger organizational contexts in which activists communicate with (and, in the process, help organize) their personal political networks. For example, the aforementioned study of globalization protests in the U.S. by Fisher and colleagues found high levels of Internet usage among demonstrators: "More than 80% of the protestors reported using the Internet to learn about the issue, organize accommodations or transportation, and/or coordinate with other people coming to the protest" (Fisher et al., 2005, p. 117). But what sort of political networks and issue communities were these activists accessing: single issue networks confined by well-defined organizational boundaries, or multiple networks that might even spill beyond the bounds of relatively fluid coordinating organizations? We suspect the latter pattern to be common in large-scale rapid mobilizations. In addition, we would like to know if some of these activists (and which ones) "live online," relying disproportionately on digital media over other information and communication channels to conduct their political activities.

Our data on the Iraq war protests enable us to explore the hypothesis chain that those activists closest to the center of the organizing process (a) are more likely than other demonstrators to operate with multiple issue and organizational affiliations, and (b) are more likely to rely primarily on digital media for managing political information. Such large scale, individual-level network bridging explains how the speed and scale of protest may occur in contexts with relatively low levels of formal organizational brokerage and conventional leadership. The resulting horizontal, digitally distributed, emergent protest networks have been termed "dissentworks" by Coopman (2003).

From the standpoint of many activists, organizations may remain important elements in this process, but in decentered ways that reflect participants' multiple affiliations and greater communication and information capacities as individuals. This view of protest mobilization also suggests that digital media use is not important just for reducing the costs of communication, but it may also enable the organization of networks operating beyond the reach of formal organizations. Diffusion paths that link coordinating organizations

and more distant interpersonal networks may end up transforming both the form and the scale of protest organization through the process of communication.

These communication-related mobilization processes are particularly ripe for investigation in the Iraq anti-war protests, as the paths to mobilization passed from global social justice activists, as explained above, to large numbers of other organizations and actors clearly more identified with local or national politics, sometimes focused on single issues such as peace or human rights and, in many cases (30% of the U.S. sample), mobilizing individuals to protest for the first time. This diverse array of demonstrators offered a rich sample for exploring our questions about communication, organizational affiliation, multiple political identifications, and mobilization.

Hypotheses

Based on the above theoretical considerations, we propose several related hypotheses for which we generate measures and tests in the next several sections.

H1: Demonstrators with closer ties to organizations sponsoring the protests will also tend to have more diverse personal political networks than other demonstrators.
H2: Those with closer ties to sponsoring organizations are more likely to use e-media for their general political information needs.
H3: When association with sponsoring organizations and personal-level network diversity are considered together as predictors of e-media use, high reliance on e-media will be explained more by personal network diversity than by association with sponsoring organizations.

It should be noted that these hypotheses are not intended to apply to all demonstrations or all kinds of activists. However, we do think they yield promise for explaining an important category of demonstrations characterized by organizational coalitions embracing broad and inclusive protest frames that attract activists with flexible personal identifications. We can also imagine other kinds of demonstrations for which our hypotheses might be less appropriate: those that are more tightly framed around a highly specified message (e.g., pacifist claims that all war is immoral), or those organized more hierarchically by particular organizations (e.g., human rights or labor NGOs that seek greater control of messages and tactics), or those involving coalitions who put their partners to a political litmus test (e.g., abortion demonstrations organized by religious fundamentalist organizations). Such protests might not attract individuals with such diverse personal networks or offer much personal discretion to activate such networks if they were present.

Method

In the run-up to the February 15 events, a team of scholars from the United States and seven European countries (Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain, Germany, Belgium, and the United Kingdom) developed a survey instrument designed for distribution at the demonstrations. The surveys (with minor national variations) were translated and distributed in major cities holding demonstrations in the nations above.[1]

Participants and Procedures

Recipients were given the surveys with preaddressed, stamped reply envelopes so they could fill them in on their own following the event. Survey teams were instructed to

spread out along the path of the demonstration and distribute the surveys in a systematic way, depending on the nature of the march.[2] When police crowd control procedures made it difficult to distribute surveys systematically during the processions through the streets, we instructed teams of surveyors to move from the edges in toward the center of the crowd at the rallying points where speeches were delivered and the largest crowds gathered. Both along the marches and at the rallying points, surveys were distributed to every 10th person encountered by one of our team. Verbal input from the survey teams was limited to a courteous invitation to take part in an academic study, and pointing to the introductory paragraph on the survey for more information. The sampling of demonstrations is difficult to conduct as systematically as phone surveying, and may result in various kinds of biases that are hard to control. Since each protest varied by size, disruption by police, and other factors, we simply did our best to distribute surveys broadly throughout the crowds. Perhaps moving from the outside to the inside of the crowd introduced its own bias, while the line-of-march approach may have its own outside versus inside bias. And, of course, those respondents who returned the surveys may be different than those who did not. However, since demonstrations are somewhat chaotic events, and the conditions in each city varied, it was difficult to control for all such factors.

A total of 2,200 surveys were handed out in the three cities. Of these, 705 surveys were completed and sent back to the investigators, for a combined response rate of 32%, with responses distributed as follows: New York (278), Seattle (196), and San Francisco (231). The anonymity of respondents was assured in the design of the instrument, with only a city code appearing on the questionnaire to enable assessment of differences among the demonstration sites.

Measures

Reflecting the interests of the international investigators involved in the design of the study, the final survey instrument contained some 35 questions ranging over various concerns, from demographics to protest history and media use. We present a demographic picture of our sample in Table 1 in the findings section below, along with descriptive statistics on a number of the variables informing our analysis. The key items involved in testing our hypotheses were measures of association between the respondent and organizations sponsoring the demonstration, an inventory of media use items, and several indices of political network diversity.

Association with Sponsoring Organizations. Measuring association with organizations coordinating or sponsoring the demonstrations was fairly straightforward, involving a pair of items asking if the respondent was a member or knew a member of "an organization that is (co-)organizing this demonstration." Since being a member of an organization is clearly a closer organizational tie than knowing a member, we coded being a member as 2, knowing a member as 1, and those who responded with a "no" to both questions as 0. The data show that 78 respondents (roughly 11%) claimed membership in a group organizing the demonstration, and another 167 said they knew an organizer, for a total of 245 demonstrators with some association to sponsoring organizations. One can argue that those who merely know a member are not closely associated with sponsoring organizations. On the other hand, this is a network communication analysis, and our knowledge of this protest culture suggests that knowing someone represents a tie that may be of theoretical significance in understanding the flow of information and the activation of personal networks. In a more perfect design, we might have asked what sort of organization (in terms of strong

or weak membership requirements) the person was affiliated with, and then separately about whether knowing someone from a particular type of organization affected the way in which the respondent contacted others. However, since the survey design was based on a large collaboration, this level of precision was difficult to achieve. The 3-point scale that we have adopted is both robust analytically and suggests degrees of closeness or separation from sponsoring organizations that are consistent with our theoretical formulation. In the end, if there is not a scalable relationship here running from being a member to knowing one, to neither, then this measure will work against our hypothesis.

In order to account for possible city differences in the patterns of demonstration organizing that might affect individual-level communication patterns, we also asked respondents who indicated they were members of a coordinating organization to cite the organization(s) they belonged to. A variety of organizations were involved with mobilizing demonstrators, and levels of identification with each organization varied considerably by city. These organizations included Moveon.org, Unitedforpeace.org, Answer.org, Not in Our Name, and others (e.g., city-specific coalition organizations such as SNOW.org in Seattle). As expected, city differences in organizational structure were considerable, accounting for some city-level differences in the relationships between individual-level political network diversity and digital media use patterns, as reported below.

Personal Political Network Diversity. The question of how individual demonstrators define and organize their personal political networks is challenging to assess. There is no obvious standard measure for personal network affiliations, particularly in such a large mobilization that contained a huge variety of actors, from conventional labor and religious organizations to more loosely defined issue, neighborhood, and affinity groups. We developed several different measures intended to capture possible ways in which political networks might operate at the individual level.

The first indicator of political network diversity was a simple yes-no question asking whether the respondent sympathized with the movement against neo-liberal globalization.[3] Since the globalization or global social justice movement emphasizes inclusiveness and diversity as central to its organizing ethos, we hypothesize that these principles should correlate with greater diversity of political affiliations among activists who sympathize with the movement.[4] Indeed, this is consistent with della Porta's (2005) findings discussed earlier. We emphasize that this is only one constructed indicator, among others, of individual-level political network diversity. It is less direct than our other two measures described below, and it may strike readers less familiar with the evolved culture of the GSJ movement as a bit abstract. However, if we are wrong in our conceptual thinking (i.e., that those sympathetic to the GSJ movement are likely to have more diverse personal networks, and thus rely disproportionately on digital communication), this measure will only work against us empirically.

Since GSJ sympathy was not expected to be universally relevant to a broad cross section of national anti-war sentiment, nor was it the most direct indicator of personal political networks, we created two other measures of political network diversity. The first of these assessed the number of different issues for or against which the respondent had previously demonstrated. Respondents were asked: "If this is not the first time you have engaged in a demonstration or public protest, please indicate which one(s) you have engaged in before." The respondent was then instructed to mark as many as applied from a list that included: peace demonstrations, anti-racism, human rights, third world, social issues (including labor), environmental, anti-globalization, women's rights, regionalist,

and other. Our reasoning here is that having demonstrated around different issues may place one in different networks involving communication and activity on those issues. As there were several outliers who might have unduly affected the analysis (most likely biasing it in favor of our hypotheses), we constructed a scale of protest issue diversity with the following four groups: 0, 1, 2–5, and 6+. This scaling provided a less skewed distribution of scores against which to run our analyses.[5]

A third measure of the diversity of political affiliations involves the number of different kinds of organizations in which individuals claim active membership. We asked protestors whether they were active, inactive, or former members of 16 kinds of organizations ranging from political parties to charities. The organizational diversity measure is based on the sum of active memberships in these various categories of organizations. We could have engaged in speculation about how to weight inactive and former memberships, but our preference was to keep things simple for this preliminary test of the model.[6] If people belonging to multiple organizations are more likely to use e-media in their political communication, then this general network indicator will be clearly established, and more nuanced measures can be developed in the future. Using these raw data, we created a scale where all missing values are coded as no active membership and number of active memberships in different types of organizations (which we call organizational network diversity) is divided in three categories (0, 1–3, and 4+), based on similar considerations about outliers to those used in scaling the raw data from the issue diversity measure.

Since we did not have a theoretical basis for predicting how these three different indicators of personal networks should connect or relate, we chose to keep them independent in our preliminary hypothesis testing. Indeed, as we report below, they are moderately associated, but they clearly measure different kinds of political association patterns. Based on what we learned about them separately, we felt more comfortable combining them into a grand scale for later analyses.

Political Information and Media Use Measures. The information and media use variables were constructed from a battery of questions tapping various sources that people might use for obtaining and sharing political information (television, newspapers, magazines, radio, other people, Web sites, e-mail lists). A checklist of these information sources was organized in a grid asking respondents how often they used each type (never, monthly, weekly, or daily), enabling us to array each information source on a scale of 1–4, with the descriptive statistics shown in Table 1. In order to make broad comparisons between digital media use and other media sources, we constructed two main media clusters: mass media sources (TV, radio, newspapers, magazines) and e-media (lists, Web sites). From these media cluster variables, we constructed a more discriminating pair of media categories to directly address our hypotheses: identifying those who relied predominantly on e-media with relatively little reliance on mass media, and those who emphasized mass media information sources far more heavily than e-media channels. Thus, the variable *mass media dominance* was defined as using some conventional media source (radio, TV, magazines, newspapers) on a daily or weekly basis and e-media (lists, Web sites) only monthly or not at all. Similarly, *e-media dominance* was scaled as using Web sites or lists daily or weekly and mass media only monthly or not at all. The results showed that 43% of the protestors were dominant mass media users, and about a third predominantly utilized e-media for obtaining political information, representing a nice distribution of scores on our key dependent variable. Descriptive statistics for these variables can be found in Table 1. We now turn to the testing and tuning of our hypotheses.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for variables and demographics by city

Variable	NYC					SEA					SF				
	Obs	M	SD	Min	Max	Obs	M	SD	Min	Max	Obs	M	SD	Min	Max
TV	268	2.76	1.18	1	4	196	2.77	1.21	1	4	224	2.67	1.24	1	4
Newspaper	268	3.41	0.84	1	4	196	3.19	1.00	1	4	226	3.49	0.84	1	4
Magazine	254	2.46	0.92	1	4	196	2.20	0.94	1	4	213	2.28	0.91	1	4
Radio	263	3.38	1.03	1	4	196	3.32	1.12	1	4	223	3.45	0.96	1	4
Social network	259	3.27	0.88	1	4	196	3.17	0.98	1	4	210	3.27	0.88	1	4
Web sites	256	3.09	1.02	1	4	196	2.82	1.19	1	4	213	2.76	1.20	1	4
E-mail lists	248	2.75	1.26	1	4	196	2.46	1.28	1	4	206	2.52	1.25	1	4
Mass media dominant	278	0.38	0.49	0	1	196	0.49	0.50	0	1	231	0.43	0.50	0	1
E-media dominant	278	0.32	0.47	0	1	196	0.35	0.48	0	1	231	0.27	0.44	0	1
Protest issue diversity	278	1.39	0.95	0	3	196	1.57	0.94	0	3	231	1.35	0.90	0	3
Organizational membership diversity	278	1.17	0.71	0	2	196	1.24	0.73	0	2	231	1.13	0.72	0	2
GSJ sympathy	231	0.75	0.43	0	1	195	0.55	0.50	0	1	191	0.56	0.50	0	1
Association with sponsoring organization	260	0.56	0.72	0	2	195	0.67	0.78	0	2	223	0.33	0.61	0	2
Male (m = 0)	275	0.39	0.49	0	1	193	0.38	0.49	0	1	226	0.35	0.48	0	1
Age	273	42.79	16.64	14	84	194	46.54	15.26	12	82	221	46.64	13.66	16	79
Income	259	4.62	1.88	1	7	185	4.54	1.70	1	7	216	5.11	1.66	1	7
Education	268	6.17	1.17	1	7	192	6.03	1.23	1	7	228	6.18	1.08	2	7

Findings and Analysis

Descriptive Statistics: Sample Demographics and Key Variables

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for the key variables. As a broad overview, the typical demonstrator in the U.S. sample was sympathetic to the GSJ movement (63%), actively participated in one to three organizations, and had participated in between two and five different types of demonstrations.[7] And the typical member of the sample had moderate to high scores on most of the raw media use variables. The question of course, is whether activists positioned more closely to sponsoring organizations are disproportionately likely to use e-media.

Associations Among the Three Indicators of Personal Network Diversity. Recall from the above discussion that one key hypothesis about disproportionate use of e-media involved three different measures of personal political network diversity. Our goal was to create measures that tapped different ways in which activists might configure their political network ties. We expected, and found, some overlap and some divergence among these measures. For example, globalization movement sympathy is, as we expected, strongly related to protest issue diversity (at the .001 significance level).[8] This is in keeping with our understanding, discussed above, that being sympathetic to the GSJ movement would be associated with a more diverse repertoire of protest issues than found among those not sympathetic. By contrast, there was not a significant correlation between GSJ sympathy and organizational membership diversity. This also makes sense, because many GSJ activists favor loose political networks over strong organizational memberships. Moreover, many local and national (e.g., peace) activists engage with organizations that have little or nothing to do with GSJ activities. Finally, as one would expect (given the reliance on organizations to represent individuals vis-à-vis issue positions), organizational membership diversity is significantly related (at the .001 level) to protest issue diversity, although at a coefficient of .26, the two measures are clearly not tapping identical aspects of political network affiliation. Thus, we have some comfortable overlap and some nice differences in the measures of personal network diversity. The relationships between network diversity and the dependent media use variables will be probed in the regression analysis below.

Media and Information Source Variables. As one would expect, these demonstrators are generally highly media reliant and media diverse. About 73% of the protestors indicated some use of the Internet for political activities, roughly conforming to the findings from the protests studied by Fisher et al. (2005). First timers were the most limited in media use, relying overwhelmingly on conventional or mass media sources, and favoring television more than more experienced demonstrators. The typical demonstrator obtained political information through newspapers and the radio on close to a daily basis (both media sources had means of 3.4 on a 4-point scale). More or less weekly use was made of social networks (mean ≈ 3.2), Web sites (mean ≈ 2.9), TV (mean ≈ 2.7), and e-mail lists (mean ≈ 2.6). Put differently, 45% received political information through social networks on a daily basis and most employed some form of conventional or mass media on a daily basis. Roughly 48% relied on some digital or e-media source (Web sites or lists) for political information on a daily basis.[9]

The questions now before us are (a) whether those who relied disproportionately on digital media were more likely to be affiliated with more diverse political networks,

(b) whether those with more diverse political affiliations are positioned closer to the organizing circles of the demonstrations, and (c) whether individual level networks trump organizational association when run in the same regression to explain dominant e-media use.

Hypothesis Tests

In order to test the first hypothesis that members of the organizing circles of the anti-war demonstrations are also more likely to have diverse personal political networks, we employ simple cross tabulations appropriate to the measures used in both variables. Table 2 displays the coefficients of association (Somer's *d*) for all respondents who submitted complete information on the four key variables: association with sponsoring organizations, GSJ sympathy, protest diversity, and membership diversity. There are strong and statistically significant associations between sponsoring organization association and all three of the personal network diversity measures. Compared to the typical protestor, demonstrators with links to sponsoring organizations display higher levels of GSJ movement sympathy, have attended more diverse types of protests, and are active members in more diverse types of organizations. The coefficients of the associations among these three measures of diverse political affiliation and organizing circle membership are all statistically significant ($p < .001$)

Testing Hypotheses 2 and 3. The next, and most challenging, questions are whether activists with more diverse networks rely disproportionately on digital media, and if so, whether that reliance is better explained by personal network diversity or by association with the organizations sponsoring the demonstrations (which, as the reader may recall, is also associated with all three measures of network diversity). We explore this interesting question using more sensitive regression analyses that enable us to sort out the personal network and sponsoring organization effects, and to look at the question of city-level differences in the political organization and communication practices of demonstrators.

Table 3 presents a set of logistic regression models examining the impact of association with sponsoring organizations and the three indices of diverse political networks (GSJ sympathy, protest issue diversity, organizational membership diversity) on dominant e-media use for general political information for the sample as a whole, as well as for the individual cities. The model also includes various sociodemographic variables (age, sex, education, and income), of which we expected only younger activists to be significantly more reliant on e-media.[10]

The first regression model in Table 3 assesses the role of the three indicators of diverse political networks, along with the organizational association variable and various

Table 2

Relationships between indices of political network diversity and association
with protest-sponsoring organizations

Complex ID variable	Association with sponsoring organization[a]
GSJ sympathy	.138***
Organizational membership diversity	.311***
Protest issue diversity	.211***

[a]Coefficient specifying the direction of the association as indicated by Somer's *d* ($N = 602$).
***p < .001.

Table 3

Regression models explaining dominant e-media use for general political information (dependent variable: dominant e-media use)

Independent variable	Pooled and city dummies		NYC		SEA		SF	
	Exp(B)	SE	Exp(B)	SE	Exp(B)	SE	Exp(B)	SE
GSJ sympathy	1.70**	0.36	2.62*	1.11	1.78*	0.62	1.12	0.44
Protest issue diversity	1.27*	0.14	1.61**	0.29	0.92	0.19	1.27	0.26
Organizational membership diversity	1.42**	0.20	1.13	0.28	1.12	0.27	2.69***	0.78
Association with organization sponsoring demonstration	1.15	0.16	1.11	0.25	1.24	0.29	1.16	0.34
Male	1.50*	0.29	1.67	.53	1.46	0.49	1.48	0.55
Age	0.98***	0.01	0.98*	0.01	0.98*	0.01	0.97*	0.02
Income	0.97	0.05	1.01	0.08	0.90	0.09	1.01	0.12
Education	1.05	0.09	0.98	0.14	1.08	0.16	1.10	0.24
City dummies	YES							
N	554		203		181		170	
Log-likelihood	−332.35		−119.74		−111.39		−93.29	
Model χ^2 (df)	45.09***		25.72***		12.39*		21.12**	

Note. Dominant e-media use was defined as daily or weekly reliance on any combination of Web sites or lists, and only monthly or no use of conventional mass media sources for political information. Reported values are odds ratios. The estimates for the constants and city dummies are not displayed.

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$ (one-tailed).

demographics for the entire sample. In order to control for city-specific differences, we included city dummy variables. The regression results strongly confirm the main hypothesis: Even when association with an organization sponsoring the demonstration is included in the equation, political network diversity (by all three measures) increases the likelihood of being a dominant e-media user. This means that the effect of association with a sponsoring organization (which, as noted earlier, is significantly related to all three measures of network diversity) is not significant in explaining dominant e-media use when included in an equation with the network diversity measures. By contrast, all three of the personal network diversity measures are statistically significant and positive predictors of dominant e-media use. In particular, being sympathetic to the GSJ movement leads to about a 1.7 increase in the odds of being a dominant e-media user, ceteris paribus. Similarly, the odds of being predominantly an e-media user increase by a factor of about 1.4 for a one-unit increase in organizational diversity and by a factor of roughly 1.3 for a one-unit increase in protest issue diversity. Among the sociodemographic variables, age is strongly significant and gender is moderately significant, both in directions commonly found in studies of Internet use (younger males are more likely to be dominant e-media users).

In order to obtain a more fine-grained assessment of each demonstration site, we also conducted regression analyses for each of the three cities. In the case of New York and Seattle, globalization movement sympathy has a significant (at the .05 level) and positive effect on dominant e-media use. Looking across the models, the regression coefficients indicate that sympathy to the globalization movement increases the odds of being a dominant e-media user by a factor of 2.6 in New York (which had the strongest ties to the origins of the protests in the GSJ movement, as discussed below) and 1.8 in Seattle. In the case of New York, protest issue diversity also displays a significant and positive independent effect. For example, when holding other factors constant, the odds of dominant e-media use increase by a factor of about 1.6 for each one-unit increase in protest issue diversity. Organizational diversity is by far the strongest variable in the case of San Francisco, where a one-unit increase in organizational diversity leads to an increase in the odds of being a dominant e-media user by a factor of 2.7, ceteris paribus. Of the control variables, only age (again) had a negative and significant impact on dominant e-media use across the three cases. (Recall that this is a logit regression, so a coefficient less than 1 indicates a negative relationship.)

Explaining the City Differences. The differences among the city regressions may in part reflect smaller sample sizes that weakened the strength of some of the relationships (which are all in the predicted directions for all cities, and all prove significant in the pooled larger sample size equation). However, we also note, as mentioned earlier, that the structure of protest organization was substantially different in each city, which may account for different communication dynamics within political networks variously organized by our three measures of diversity. While exploring these possibilities will require further research, we can offer some directions based on our data.

Note, for example, that at the national level (the entire sample), 34 respondents (14%) who declared association with a sponsoring organization identified United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) as a key organization for them, yet the distribution of these affiliations was vastly different at the city level, with 30 New York respondents citing UFPJ as their primary organization, as contrasted with 3 and 1 citations, respectively, in San Francisco and Seattle. The extreme overrepresentation of UFPJ in New York makes sense, in that it was one of the prominent national sponsors of the United States demonstrations and concentrated its coordinating efforts strongly on New York, which was chosen as the primary

national demonstration site. Since UFPJ was one of the main sponsoring organizations of the national demonstration, and since it had close ties to the origins of the global anti-war protests in various World Social Forum meetings, it makes sense that the strongest predictors of dominant e-media use among New York demonstrators are the two network measures most closely associated with the globalization movement: GSJ sympathy and protest issue diversity.

Another important city difference involves the multi-issue protest organization Moveon.org. The pooled (3-city) sample cited Moveon in a tie with UFPJ for most (34) mentions, yet there was also substantial city-level variation ranging from 19 mentions in New York to 11 in San Francisco, and just 4 in Seattle. Among the most dramatic city differences was SNOW, a Seattle coalition of some 100 local and neighborhood organizations that drew top mention (14) in Seattle organization citations, enough to put it in fifth place in the entire sample, even though for obvious reasons it did not register at all in the other two cities.

Such local organizational differences suggest a ripe topic for further research. However, we also note that, despite local organizational differences, the findings all trend in the same direction and are consistent with our predictions that (a) demonstrators closest to the coordinating organizations are likely to have the most diverse political network affiliations, and (b) those politically diverse activists rely predominantly on digital media. Through this process of digitally managed personal networks, large-scale, coordinated national (and indeed, transnational) demonstrations were possible with substantially different formal organizing processes operating at different sites. The overarching conclusion from the analysis so far is that, despite some differences in the strengths of the relationships in different local organizational environments, activists with more diverse political networks rely disproportionately on digital media to manage their communication.

Combining the Measures of Personal Networks. A final analysis illustrates the combined impact of the three key personal political network variables. Figure 1 presents the predicted probabilities for two "composite" types of protestors across the whole sample: those displaying high and low diversity of personal political networks based on combining scores on the three different network diversity measures (GSJ identification, protest issue diversity, organizational membership diversity). Generating predicted probabilities of dominant e-media use allows us to control certain variables while varying the independent variable we are most interested in theoretically. The illustration is for a hypothetical protestor who is male and has the sample median income and education level. Figure 1 shows how unlikely it is that a demonstrator with a low score on the combined political network measures—that is, a first-time protestor with no past issue protests, no globalization movement sympathy, and no active organizational memberships—will obtain political information predominantly through e-media. The range is from only around 30% likelihood for the youngest demonstrators to the low 20s for older members of the sample. However, if we look at the highest combined scores on protest diversity (six or more different past issue protests), organizational diversity (more than four types of organization), and globalization movement sympathy, then it is highly likely that our hypothetical demonstrators will be dominant e-media users, with probabilities approaching 80% in the younger age brackets and greater than 50% through the oldest end of the age range. In general, Figure 1 clearly shows that network diversity in general terms is a strong predictor of the degree to which the demonstrators rely predominantly on e-media.
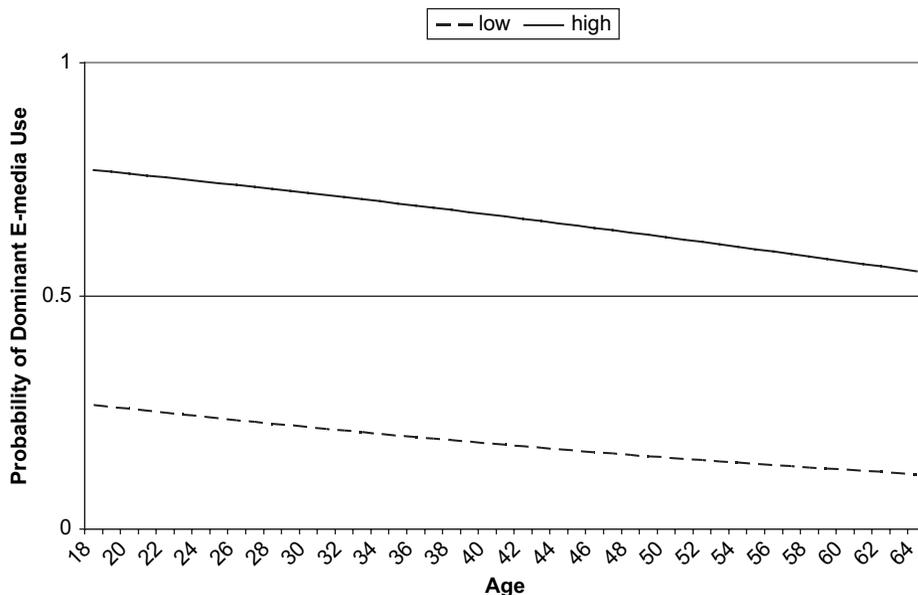
Figure 1. Combined measure of political network diversity as predictor of dominant e-media use for hypothetical male demonstrator with median income and education (combined GSJ sympathy, issue protest diversity, organizational membership diversity, and organizational association scores scaled for high and low).

Discussion

Our investigation of February 15, 2003, anti-war demonstrators in the United States who acted in concert with millions of others around the world begins to illuminate the growing capacity for direct, person-to-person communication on a large scale. Personal network diversity provides a far stronger explanation for predominant reliance on digital media than does simple association with organizations sponsoring the demonstrations. At the same time, the kinds of organizations sponsoring these demonstrations clearly draw activists with the highest levels of personal network ties, indicating that organizations do matter in this networking process. However, the kind of organizational affiliation involved here leaves considerable discretion for individuals to activate personal networks that may extend well outside a particular organization's reach. These personal and organizational linkages may vary from location to location as our city differences also seem to suggest. In sum, our findings indicate that digital media technologies allow activists to manage the information attendant to multiple issues, memberships, and identifications and to link rapidly to larger, personal-level action networks.

Our findings resonate with the thesis that the convenience of managing complex affiliations via digital communication lowers the communication and brokerage costs often associated with coalition building in collective action, as articulated by Lupia and Sin (2003), among others. Perhaps more importantly, we have shed new light on the relationships between protest coordinating organizations and affiliated activists who use digital media to activate their own political networks. These fluid pathways of mobilization suggest that organizational leadership, collective identification, and organizational level brokerage may not be the only or even the predominant avenues to mobilization, as is often depicted in social movement research. At the core of more loosely knit activist networks,

digital communication practices and technologies may enable new organizational forms in what Bimber (2003) refers to as a post-bureaucratic politics. Indeed, our findings resonate with shifts in the collective action theory paradigm that recognize more fluid organizational forms characterized by looser membership relationships that enable loose-tie networks to flatten conventional hierarchical organization (Bimber et al., 2005; Flanagin et al., 2006). We note here that all of the most cited organizations among these demonstrators in our study were loose-tie networking organizations such as UFPJ, Moveon, and SNOW.

Indeed, our findings resonate with the growing conclusion that the creation of large, personal level digital communication networks may help account for the scale and speed of mobilization of recent transnational protests. At the core of this process are activists with more flexible political identifications who link to diverse networks with less ideological tension limiting their protest activities (Bennett, 2003, 2005). Network structures that are accessible to activists with complex or "flexible identities" (della Porta, 2005) may explain a good deal about the scale and sustainability of recent transnational protest politics.

Taking a broader view of all this, we suspect that these trends toward the individual level coordination of collective political organization may not be confined to transnational activism, but may reflect more fluid political identification patterns among particular demographic groups in so-called late modern societies—demographics that continue to shift away from ideologically based identifications anchored in mass social organizations (party, class, church) toward more self-directed political affiliations driven by lifestyle values (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 2000; Inglehart, 1997; Bennett, 1998). One result, as Putnam finds in the United States, is that relatively thin political ties (e.g., voluntary associations) seem to be growing while stronger civil society relations (e.g., group memberships) continue to decline. This trend is pronounced among younger citizens who are least engaged by conventional group membership and participation patterns (Putnam, 2000). Recall that in our study, the youngest demonstrators are most likely to rely predominantly on digital media in managing their political networks.

Such trends toward more fluid, individually defined political action were presaged by the pioneering cross-national studies by Barnes, Kaase, and colleagues (1979) at the dawn of this era of social and psychological change that continues to reshape citizen action in Western democracies. Their findings pointed toward many of the patterns that have come to characterize late modern politics: (a) the blurring of distinctions between conventional and unconventional political action repertoires, with the result that activities such as boycotts and buycotts and other forms of political consumerism are now part of the everyday action repertoires of large numbers of citizens (Micheletti, 2003); (b) the diffusion of similar individual action repertoires across national political cultures that remain different in constitutions, institutions, and rules; (c) the waning of grand coalition social movements for systemic national change; and (d) the rise of more flexible issue-driven *direct action* politics. Kaase and Marsh, for example, proposed a generalization about "the newly emerging participatory culture of advanced industrial societies" as "a culture characterized by the waning of broad socio-political movements for system change and an increase in limited, issue-based, and frequently regional ad hoc group actions that may well dissolve after the issue has receded" (Kaase & Marsh, 1979, p. 49). It goes without saying that there are countervailing developments as well, as witnessed in the reactions of groups and movements bent on fighting these trends through rededication to tradition via culture wars and religious and nationalist movements.

Many questions can be raised about these emerging styles of activism and mobilization. Perhaps the most important issue is whether such flexible political identifications operating through such personalized political communication channels can produce the kinds of focused collective action that often seem necessary to define common goals, develop power relationships with targets of protest, and ultimately achieve political and social change. In his historical analysis of social movements, Charles Tilly (2004) questions the potential effectiveness of transnational activist networks in just these terms. Tarrow (2001, 2005) also raises similar concerns. It may well be the case that transnational activist networks are as unimpressive in their ultimate effects as they have been impressive in the scale, scope, and speed of their mobilizations. However, it may also be the case that the nature of political problems and protest targets in variously labeled late-modern or globalizing societies are changing in ways that invite the formation of the loose, multi-issue activist coalitions that have appeared in so many areas, from environment and trade policies to corporate responsibility and debt relief, and that helped initiate the anti-war protests studied here.

There are clearly many interesting questions that remain to be answered. The linkages that we infer among organizations and personal networks via digital media are just that: inferences. More refined research designs are needed to document and understand these network patterns at a finer-grained level. In future surveys, this might involve asking more refined questions about the nature of the demonstration-coordinating organizations with which activists affiliate, the relative importance of digital versus face-to-face connections to those organizations, and the kinds of communication that individuals use to activate personal networks. However, we believe that this study makes a small contribution to understanding the coordination and mobilization of protest events that occurred on an unprecedented scale, and with remarkable speed and geographical dispersion, as contrasted, for example, to the years of often-fractious mobilization in the era of Vietnam war protests. The hallmark of protest in the digital age appears to be rapid and dense networking behavior that can (though surely does not always) cross issue and organizational boundaries with a minimum of formal coalition brokerage and collective identity framing. These patterns suggest the important role of activists who display diverse issue and organizational repertoires, and have the communication capacities to network their flexible identities with large numbers of others, while still maintaining loose associations with formal coordinating organizations.

Notes

1. More information on the multinational study, including the questionnaires in different languages, can be found at http://webhost.ua.ac.be/m2p/index.php?menu = 2&page = 101.

2. Each of the demonstrations was large, and could not be sampled randomly. Depending on the source, estimates ranged from 100,000–500,000 in New York, which was designated by organizers as the main national demonstration; 150,000–250,000 in San Francisco; and 20,000–50,000 in Seattle.

3. The wording of the question in terms of "sympathy" to this movement reflects the discussion among the investigators in 8 countries about standardizing a measure that would work in different cultures. Some felt that seemingly clearer terms such as membership were out of step with the spirit of the GSJ movement as a vast network of networks, driven by affinity relationships. A contingent question asked about strength of identification with the globalization movement but combining the two measures into a single scale struck the reviewers of this article as awkward, and so was not included in the analysis. In any event, the simple sympathy scale performed about the same as the more complicated strength of identification scale, rendering this scaling issue moot.

4. Thus, we regard sympathy with the GSJ as one possible proxy measure of diversity or complexity of political affiliation. As noted above, the demonstrations were initially coordinated by activists affiliated with the global social justice movement at meetings of the European Social Forum in 2002 and the World Social Forum in the early winter of 2003. Both the scale of the protests and our own data suggest that not all participants related to this movement, but a considerable proportion (75% of our sample) were sympathetic to it.

5. As the reader can see in Table 1, the typical respondent in each city had participated in demonstrations for just slightly more than two types of issue. Using raw data here would have made our analyses unusually sensitive to the skewed distribution with several outliers. There is no reason to think that a few individuals who have extreme protest profiles should either be weighted so heavily, or that such high levels of participation among a few individuals is a theoretically significant issue.

6. Our reasoning for not adopting a more complex scaling of active and inactive memberships was simply that active membership networks are more likely to be considered in activating personal networks (and we had little theoretical basis for guessing how inactive memberships would operate in this context). It may be that former memberships have some effect on network activation as well, but it is not theoretically clear how to scale and weight active and former memberships, whereas active membership seems a clear measure of links to organizations.

7. Recall that the scores in Table 1 for issue and organizational diversity represent the scaled values for these variables.

8. For this initial assessment, we relied on simple cross tabulations and Spearman's ρ as our test statistic because all variables of interest are scaled categorically.

9. These information and communication categories are often overlapping, and call for the more sophisticated analyses performed below. For example, we invited members of coordinating organizations to check multiple ways in which they stay in touch with each other and with their organizations, including face-to-face contacts, Web sites, e-mail, meetings, and written publications such as newsletters. The top methods were face-to-face (152) and e-mail (151), with 60% of those citing face-to-face also citing e-mail.

10. The analysis reported in Table 3 also shows a gender effect echoing the general finding that men are somewhat more e-media oriented than women.

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