

Collective Action Frames, Advocacy Organizations, and Protests Over Same-Sex Marriage

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Although new theories of collective action in the contemporary media environment have provided an expanded view of the structure of action, important questions remain. These questions include how action frames flow between advocacy organizations and individuals on social media, especially in cases in which organizations do not initiate collective action. To address this question, we used Granger tests to analyze roughly 800,000 tweets about a competing boycott and buycott campaign that occurred in 2012. We found that the conversation about the campaigns began postbureaucratically (i.e., through citizen networks). Although organizations' involvement was associated with increased citizen attention to the campaigns, the organizations neither adopted nor influenced citizen frames on the issue. We view this as an illustration of the variable and sometimes unpredictable role of organizations in communication about collective action today.

Keywords: collective action, social media, same-sex marriage, boycott, political consumerism, Twitter

The structure of collective action in the contemporary media environment has been a topic of substantial interest to scholars. Since the early 2000s, researchers have observed many instances of collective action around the globe in which organizations involved in advocacy and mobilizing have not played the kind of central roles that classical theories in the social sciences would predict. Canonical examples include antiglobalization protests in many cities around the world, including the "Battle of Seattle" associated with the 1999 World Trade Organization meeting, demonstrations against the Iraq War, the Occupy Wall Street movement, and the Arab Spring.

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These examples, among others, have led researchers to develop new accounts of collective action in which decentralized networks can undertake some of the functions traditionally associated with advocacy organizations, such as framing, identity building, and coordination (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Bimber, 2003; Chadwick, 2007; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Howard & Hussain, 2013; Karpf, 2012; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). That is not to say that organizations are no longer relevant. The contemporary media environment supports the activities of both organizations and citizen networks, and both are present in some way in many campaigns (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2012; Chadwick, 2007; Han, 2014). As a result, recent research has focused on how to understand the various pathways by which collective action unfolds, with an emphasis on how networks and organizations interact (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

Here, we focus on one aspect of the coexistence of organizations and networks of citizens who are largely independent of them. Specifically, we examine the extent to which the frames citizens use to discuss an issue are independent from those organizations use. We are particularly interested in what happens in cases in which organizations join a campaign that they did not initiate. This is a common configuration for collective action today: Citizens use the immediacy of personal media to react to a problem, perhaps by initiating a rally, a protest, or a boycott. At some point, advocacy organizations may join the cause with their own tools or goals in mind, and in doing so may introduce new frames to the cause or discussion. These frames prime people to think about the cause in terms of one or another set of values or goals. In such cases, how do frames flow between organizations and the public?

For answers, we examined a case of competing boycotts and buycotts (i.e., reverse boycotts) in the summer of 2012.¹ These acts of political consumerism occurred against the larger backdrop of the debate over same-sex marriage (SSM) in the United States. The action began when supporters of SSM responded to a radio interview of the chief executive officer of fast-food chain Chick-fil-A. Their response took place on several fronts, including a social-media-based boycott and protest. A countereffort involving a pro-Chick-fil-A buycott quickly emerged. Although organizations did not plan either action, they contributed to them.

To understand whether organizations' frames affected citizen discussion, or the other way around, we examined how the conversation unfolded on Twitter by analyzing tweets and comparing the types of frames organizations and individuals on both sides used. We looked first at level of attention over time, and then at whether the participation of organizations affected how citizens discussed the campaigns. Our findings show that after a period of low-level attention from the public, the rise and then fall of organizational involvement corresponded with the changing volume of citizens' messages. This comes as no surprise: Organizational and public attention is interconnected. At the same time, our findings show a very different story about framing. Unlike research that shows that social movement organizations (SMOs) tend to adjust frames to match their audiences (e.g., Benford & Snow, 2000), we found that organizations' frames differed from those of citizens and exerted relatively little influence on

¹ While boycotting is the better-known protest tactic, "boycotting" is also common and involves preferentially purchasing goods from companies with compatible political views to reward them for desirable behavior (Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005).

public discussion. This is a case in which organizations with long-standing concerns about the issue of SSM neither initiated the boycott and buycott nor were successful in shaping how people talked about them.

The Challenge of Contemporary Collective Action to Traditional Theory

Researchers have studied how changes in the media environment have altered the structure of collective action. In classical theories, interest groups, civic associations, and SMOs—which we refer to here collectively as “advocacy organizations,” or just “organizations”—played the central role in collective action through resource accumulation and expenditure, coordination, agenda setting, message framing, identity creation, or other functions (e.g., Walker, 1991). Over the years, scholars have debated the extent to which these kinds of advocacy organizations matter (e.g., Melucci, 1980; Offe, 1985; Piven & Cloward, 1977; Tarrow, 2011), and have set aside the assumption of the rational calculation to free ride. Nevertheless, the idea that advocacy organizations are central to collective action continues to hold sway (Bennett, 2014). Because so many classical perspectives on collective action emphasize advocacy organizations, these perspectives can be conceptualized as “bureaucratic” in the Weberian sense: They focus on structures with well-defined boundaries, specialized roles, and hierarchical arrangements for managing information and coordinating human action.

In recent years, bureaucratic conceptions of collective action have come under criticism. There are many cases of mobilization in which organizations play a role but do not fit well with bureaucratic approaches to explaining collective action (Bimber, 2003; Bimber, Flanagan, & Stohl, 2005; Lupia & Sin, 2003). For instance, the literature on the Arab Spring shows that although organizations can be vital to the deeper social context for protest, they need not play a crucial role in planning or framing the initial action (Howard & Hussain, 2013; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). Chadwick (2007) emphasized the blurring of boundaries and functions among different types of organizations. A single organization can also serve different functions for different citizens, from traditional mobilizer to enabler of entrepreneurial action on the part of citizens (Bimber et al., 2012). Bennett and Segerberg (2013) synthesized this thinking and identified a continuum of collective action structures, from traditional organizational brokering to crowd-enabled action in which established organizations play minor roles.

The challenge today for theorists of collective action of all kinds (i.e., not just protest and social movements) is accounting for the fact that communication possibilities in the contemporary media environment facilitate a wide range of structural arrangements for collective action. Just as social media make it easy for social networks to become avenues for mobilization without organizations, organizations also use social media to mobilize people and develop activist talents among citizens (Han, 2014).

Potential Independence of Citizen Discussion From Organizational Frames

The problem of how framing works in this context of postbureaucratic structures for collective action is of particular interest to us. Specifically, we want to know whether citizens engaged in campaigns adopt organizational frames when organizations become involved. We begin with Karpf’s (2012) work, which showed that organizations can function opportunistically by organizing around specific issues of interest to publics at particular moments. Based on that work, as well as other cases in which

organizational action follows peer-directed, network-based, or crowd-enabled action, we focus on the problem of how organizations respond to specific collective actions that citizens themselves have initiated and framed.

Framing is one of the most widely diffused concepts across the social sciences. Different disciplines have emphasized a multitude of formulations and aspects of the phenomena initially described by Goffman (1974) and Kahneman and Tversky (1979). Here, we are not concerned with mechanisms of persuasion or opinion change but instead with the problem of how issues are talked about by citizens, and why they come to be talked about in some ways rather than others when multiple frames exist that can potentially flow among actors.

Situations in which multiple frames are in play have been analyzed in several ways. In the study of organizations, the concept of "framing contests" describes the intentional use of frames to gain advantage in a competitive environment (Kaplan, 2008). In the study of media effects, research has focused on strategic counterframing by elites, showing that a counterframe can reduce the effect of an original frame, as well showing frame decay over time and the moderating effect that deliberation can have on framing effects (Chong & Druckman, 2013; Druckman, 2004; Druckman, Peterson, & Slothuus, 2013). In the study of social movements, framing processes are also widely understood to be contested, namely, between movement opponents, movement allies, and the media. In that theoretical tradition, organizations are understood to be crucial to a shared understanding of the problem. Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford (1986) argued that frame alignment between citizens and SMOs is a necessary condition for participation.

An important emphasis in this literature is that over the course of broad social movements, framing contests are common and multifaceted (Gamson, 2004). Research on social movement framing processes has emphasized what Benford and Snow (2000) called *audience effects*, or how the "target of the message can affect the form and content of the message" (p. 630). Unsurprisingly, many studies have found that SMOs adjust frames to fit specific target audiences. In this way, citizens are the objects, targets, or audiences of complex framing processes undertaken by elites.

The postbureaucratic literature on collective action places special emphasis on the public as agents (i.e., not targets), whose collective behavior has a complex relationship with organizations. This emphasis is not inconsistent with the tradition in social movements that emphasizes frame alignment, but extends beyond strategic alignment of frames by organizations. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) showed that organizations may avoid framing issues in favor of creating opportunities for citizens to construct personalized messages on their own. Social media enable people to construct and share frames with one another, and to offer their own personal take on news. In the mass media era, by contrast, citizens typically became aware of issues and campaigns through the lens of professional frames designed by organizations, news businesses, or other elites.

Organizations and the Framing of Same-Sex Marriage

To examine the degree of independence of citizen framing from organizational framing, we turn to a case of protest involving SSM. This issue provides a good opportunity for examining the interplay between organizations and citizens, because views among the public have undergone one of the most dramatic and noteworthy changes in public opinion of any area in recent decades. In the United States, public support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights increased from 27% in 1996 to 55% in May 2014 (McCarthy, 2014). A rapid sea change in public opinion is not common in American politics, and this one occurred in the context of highly focused and sustained efforts by organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and Freedom to Marry (Becker, 2014a). For most LGBT organizations, the primary goal has been obtaining the right to marry for LGBT couples (Becker, 2014a), which was granted in the U.S. Supreme Court's 2015 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. Prior to the ruling, LGBT advocacy groups organized many mobilization efforts to engage the public and encourage both electoral and nonelectoral participation (Becker, 2014b). At the same time, an array of ideologically conservative groups with interests in traditional understandings of family, such as the American Family Association, advocated against SSM.

As a result, SSM has elicited competing frames. Common frames in favor of SSM include civil rights, equality, and discrimination, whereas common frames against SSM include supporting the "traditional" definition of marriage, as well as Christian values (Hull, 2001; Liebler, Schwartz, & Harper, 2009; Rodriguez & Blumell, 2014). Organizations have been especially important in shaping these frames. Studies have found correspondence among news media frames and those organizations use (Liebler et al., 2009) and between organizations and the public (Hull, 2001). Overall, the literature suggests that organizational frames have influenced public discourse on SSM.

In the pursuit of LGBT rights, political consumerism is a commonly used tactic. Political consumerism usually takes the form of boycotts or buycotts and involves "the evaluation and choice of producers and products with the aim of changing . . . objectionable institutional or market practices" (Micheletti, Stolle, & Berlin, 2012, p. 145). Political consumerism is a common form of political behavior in the United States (Baek, 2010; Copeland, 2014a, 2014b; Newman & Bartels, 2011), and there have been a number of campaigns on social media about SSM (Becker & Copeland, 2016). HRC even provides a "buyers" guide at its website along with a mobile app to help consumers avoid companies opposed to SSM and LGBT rights in general.

We expected that the traditional dominance of organizational frames about SSM does not apply to how citizens talk about political consumerism. Political consumerism itself is associated with interpersonal discussion (Baek, 2010), political talk (Shah et al., 2007), and digital media use (Gil de Zúñiga, Copeland, & Bimber, 2014). Becker and Copeland (2016) showed that LGBT adults in the United States who use social media for connective reasons are more likely to engage in boycotts and buycotts to promote SSM. In addition, studies have found that political consumerism is overwhelmingly self-directed rather than organizationally driven (Earl, Copeland, & Bimber, 2014; Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006), despite this being an area in which organizations have been so active. Because of the nature of political consumerism and the characteristics of social media as an environment for political

communication, we see reasons to doubt whether organizational framing, frame alignment, and other traditional features of framing are as important as implied in the literatures on LGBT activism and collective action in general. This should especially be the case when organizations join a citizen-initiated campaign already in progress.

To explore this possibility, we chose a single case: a high-profile political consumerism campaign involving a competing boycott and buycott of the fast-food chain Chick-fil-A in Summer 2012, about three years before *Obergefell v. Hodges*. The campaigns emerged following a radio interview on June 16 with Chick-fil-A CEO Dan Cathy, who declared that the Chick-fil-A business supported the “biblical” or “traditional” definition of marriage. As our own data show, people began discussing a Chick-fil-A boycott in early July, although this conversation went largely unnoticed by journalists and organizations for about a week until July 16, when the *Baptist Press* released another interview with Cathy. In that interview, Cathy called himself “guilty as charged” for defending the “traditional family” (Blume, 2012).

Following the second interview, actions against Chick-fil-A began on a number of fronts. The National Organization for Marriage, an organization against SSM, publicly labeled Cathy a corporate hero (Sverson, 2012). On July 19, a New York activist created a Facebook page proclaiming August 3 “National Same Sex Kiss Day at Chick Fil A,” calling for people to visit a Chick-fil-A restaurant and kiss others of the same sex as a form of protest (Sverson, 2012). By the day of that event, nearly 15,000 people reported their intention to participate at the Facebook page (National Same Sex Kiss Day, 2012). Other activists organized and coordinated local actions.

A counterprotest emerged on the right. On July 26, former governor of Arkansas, presidential candidate, and talk show host Mike Huckabee declared August 1 “Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day” on his Facebook page. This call to action encouraged people to buycott—eat at—Chick-fil-A restaurants to “affirm a business that operates on Christian principles and whose executives are willing to take a stand for the Godly values we espouse.”² Former presidential candidate Rick Santorum also rallied his 200,000 followers by tweeting, “With two of my boys, Enjoying chick-in-strips and an awesome peach shake at Chick-fil-A. See you here next Wednesday!” (Sverson, 2012).

During the second half of July, public officials and organizations joined the conversation about Chick-fil-A and SSM. Leaders in Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and elsewhere issued statements against the company. On July 20, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino released a letter to Cathy invoking equal rights and antidiscrimination (Bhasin, 2012). Chicago Alderman Joe Moreno also framed his opposition to a new restaurant in his city in terms of discrimination (Dardick, 2012). San Francisco Mayor Edwin Lee used an equality frame, tweeting on July 26, “Very disappointed #ChikFilA doesn’t share San Francisco’s values & strong commitment to equality for everyone” (Lopez & Hsu, 2012). On July 20, the Jim Henson Company, owners of the Muppets franchise, also announced that it would cease its business relationship with Chick-fil-A, emphasizing in its Facebook post its concern for “diversity and inclusiveness” (Jim Henson Company, 2012).

² According to the event’s Facebook page, more than 3 million people were invited, about 660,000 people “attended,” and 63,000 people said they were interested (Huckabee, 2012).

Advocacy organizations also joined the public conversation in mid-July. The American Civil Liberties Union, which has a position in favor of SSM, defended Cathy's right to free speech, arguing that cities should not evaluate business licenses on the basis of political views. On July 27, the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts published a blog in which she admonished public officials for infringing on Cathy's rights to free speech under the First Amendment (Rose, 2012). The American Civil Liberties Union's involvement consistently advanced a free-speech frame, emphasizing the issue as one of the right to express opinions rather than a question of the desirability of SSM. The fact that multiple frames were in play was clear to at least one protestor at a restaurant near Atlanta, who told a reporter, "It's a human rights issue, it's not a First Amendment issue" (Palmer, 2012,).

HRC, the leading LGBT rights organization, has traditionally emphasized equality and human rights as frames. The organization became involved on July 19, three days after the *Baptist Press* interview, when it posted a call for comment on Facebook: "Chick-fil-A Responds . . . And Muddies the Waters More. What are your thoughts? Sound off in our comments below" (HRC, 2012a). The next day, HRC featured Chick-fil-A on its website, providing a pledge form for people to sign condemning Cathy's position and promising to boycott Chick-fil-A if Cathy did not "stop using money from customers as part of the larger process to oppress LGBT Americans" (HRC, 2012b). By the end of July, HRC expanded its framing to include "hate," distributed the hashtag #ChikfilHATE, provided people a branded image to use in their own social media pages, and finally called directly for participation in the boycott (HRC, 2012c). On July 25, the same day as the Washington, D.C., protest, another major LGBT advocacy organization, GLAAD, posted an interview with McGehee, the kiss-in initiator, and created a Chick-fil-A action page (Murray, 2012).

After Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day and the national kiss-in in early August, no additional boycotts or buycotts were organized, although Chick-fil-A remained a source of controversy. City governments, universities, and student groups have continued to debate the opening of new Chick-fil-A restaurants. The cycle of mobilization around Chick-fil-A in Summer 2012 lasted approximately a month. We sought to understand how frames flowed between the organizations and public during that time.

Data and Method

Because the campaigns to boycott and buycott Chick-fil-A relied heavily on social media, and because social media data provide fine-grained information about what organizations and individuals say, and when, we used Twitter data. To collect our data set, we used the ForSight tool by Crimson Hexagon. We searched for tweets using a Boolean search string of terms related to Chick-fil-A and the boycott or buycott (for a complete list, see the Appendix). We examined tweets between July 10, 2012, and August 31, 2012, which resulted in roughly 800,000 tweets. This period reflects the range of discussion about the campaigns on Twitter as activists, citizens, and organizations on both sides sought to mobilize others.

Our coding scheme for analyzing tweets included two sets of codes. For each set, we started by hand-coding a sample of tweets and using the results to train the ForSight machine-learning tool, which then coded the full collection of tweets. Our first set included five codes addressed to the position of the tweet toward the campaigns: (a) proboycott statements (29% of tweets); (b) probuycott statements

(32%); (c) related statements in favor of nonparticipation (11%); and (d) general news about the controversy (17%). About 12% of tweets in our sample were not related to the campaigns, and we coded these as (e) irrelevant or off topic. A random sample of 100 tweets produced good reliability between two coders (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .81$). Table 1 shows examples of these position categories.

Table 1. Position Frames on Twitter in the Chick-fil-A Boycott and Buycott Campaigns.

Position frame	Example
Support of boycott	Chick-fil-A is openly against gay marriage. Please boycott and say bye to chick-fil-A!
Support of buycott	Eat Chick Fil A TOMORROW: Support Free Speech and Traditional Marriage. Fight off the INTOLERANT LIBERALS!
Nonparticipation	Done with this chick-fil-a shit. Its good food so I will eat there that doesn't mean I don't support gays it just mean I like chick-fil-a.
General news	Chicago Gay Rights Activists Set To Protest Against Chick-Fil-A #GanjaBo http://bit.ly/QFJEsp
Irrelevant, not related to political consumerism	I hate that chick-fil-a isn't open on Sundays!):

Note. These tweets are verbatim, showing uncorrected spelling and grammatical errors from the originals.

Our second set of codes dealt with three main issue frames, as follows: (1) Christian values, (2) freedom of speech, and (3) equality/discrimination. These were frames that we anticipated finding in the messages based on the history of the issue of SSM in the United States. The Christian values category included any tweets that primed people to think about the Chick-fil-A controversy in terms of Christian or Biblical values, regardless of which side the tweet favored. We used the same approach for freedom of speech and equality/discrimination. As we were training the machine-learning tool, we noticed a significant number of tweets discussing the effectiveness of the campaigns in the absence of value frames.³ Therefore, we developed a code to capture this kind of message. This category included discussions or observations about whether the boycotts or buycotts were working, as well as the effectiveness of political consumerism itself, without discussing values or politics. Finally, we coded for personal statements with no frame, general news about the campaigns with no frame, and tweets that were irrelevant to the controversy. Table 2 lists these frames, along with examples. Another random sample of 100 tweets produced good reliability between two coders for this coding scheme (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .75$).

³ These types of tweets are consistent with movement-counter movement dynamics in social movements, and likely reflect efforts by opposing camps to undermine the opposition's campaign (Zald, 1996).

Table 2. Value Frames on Twitter in the Chick-fil-A Boycott and Buycott Campaigns.

Value frame	Example
Christian values	Chick-fil-a is a CHRISTAIN based resturant. They're just going by what the BIBLE says.
Equality/discrimination	I loves me some Chick-fil-A, but I won't give them any more business. I won't support bigotry and discrimination in \$5 increments.
Freedom of speech	I support Chick-Fil-A and it's founders. The right to speak freely is one of the most precious freedoms we have.
Effectiveness of boycott/buycott	Chick-fil-A - http://www.chick-fil-a.com/ looks like support chic-filet was a rousing success! Take that libs. We are the majority!
Personal statements—no frame	I wish we had Chick-Fil-A in Canada just so I could boycott it.
General news—no frame	Muppets end its partnership with Chick-fil-A over anti-gay sentiments – LGBTQ Nation
Irrelevant, not related to political consumerism	Just bought another dresser from iKea. now at Chick-fil-A , then walmart. i think. lol i hate runnin errands.

Note. These tweets are verbatim, showing uncorrected spelling and grammatical errors from the originals.

We also coded whether the tweet came from an organization involved with the SSM controversy, from a major news business, or from an individual other than an advocacy organization or news business. For this task, we developed a master list of organizations with a stake in SSM by examining tweets for names of organizations, and then searching each organization's followers to look for other involved organizations. Next, we conducted searches in LexisNexis to find news articles that identified organizations on both sides of SSM using the same Boolean search string. These two tasks resulted in 213 organizations that posted 436 tweets in this six-week period. Although this number is small, the potential for organizational tweets to influence public discourse can be great because of the large number of followers. Presently, more than 600,000 people follow HRC on Twitter, more than 300,000 follow GLAAD, and about 260,000 follow the American Civil Liberties Union.

Similarly, we developed a list of major national news outlets, which included 82 Twitter handles. This list comprised popular news organizations with a national presence. The list did not include all those that may have tweeted about the campaigns, but it captured a range of popular legacy and new media outlets. Some of these outlets have more than one Twitter handle, and in these instances, we included the main general news handle. There were 554 tweets from the news media.

To define the set of the public's tweets, we removed tweets originating from the 82 major news outlets and the 213 organizations. The remaining set contained individual citizens, as well as some public officials, celebrities, and other kinds of authors, which we did not attempt to classify. We refer to this set of 804,246 tweets from neither organizations nor news outlets as the public group. In addition to Twitter, we content-analyzed print media articles related to the boycott and buycott campaigns during the same

six-week period. The articles came from a LexisNexis search of all U.S. print news using the same Boolean search string; this resulted in 474 relevant, individual news stories. We coded for volume of individual print stories per day, as with news media on Twitter, and coded the headlines for issue frame. Two-coder reliability in a random sample of 10% of the headlines was good (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .81$). We used the news coverage to provide context for our analysis of the Twitter conversation.

To examine the influence of organizations' tweets on public tweets, we used Granger causality modeling, which communication scholars have used in recent years to understand social media time series data (e.g., Bastos, Mercea, & Charpentier, 2015; Groshek, 2011; Guggenheim, Jang, Bae, & Neuman, 2015; Habel, 2012; Neuman, Guggenheim, Jang, & Bae, 2014). Although the name implies otherwise, Granger causality is not a true test of a causal relationships. Instead, it tests whether previous values of x and y together predict later values of y better than previous values of y alone. For us, this meant we could test whether data about organizations' tweets added to the prediction of future public tweets over previous public tweets alone, and vice versa. This provided a concise way to observe the rise and fall of organizational, public, and news media tweets, and to make reasonable inferences based on temporal order about whether the activity of one group influenced the activity of another.

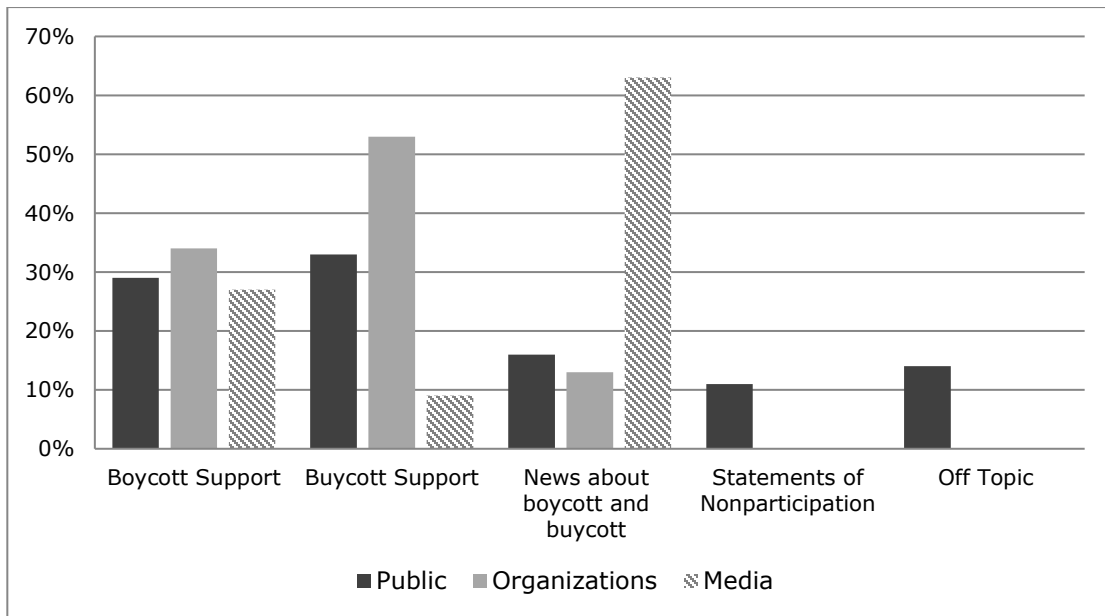


Figure 1. Proportion of activity by the public, organizations, and news media on Twitter.

Results

We begin with descriptive findings, which provide a basic picture of attention to the campaigns by the public and organizations. The data show that organizations' tweets were more likely to support the boycott or buycott than public tweets, especially the buycott. The largest percentages of the public's tweets involved statements about the boycott and buycott, but they also shared news about the campaigns, as well as statements of nonparticipation (see Figure 1).

The timing of tweets is shown in Figure 2, which plots the volume of tweets per day from the public, organizations, and news media over the six-week period. Tweet volume varied widely between these sources, from low values of fewer than 10 per day to high values of up to approximately 100,000 per day; therefore, we log-transformed the raw counts for easier visualization of the patterns, although we used nontransformed data in the analysis.

Visual inspection of Figure 2 shows that public tweets emerged first. It took about a week before advocacy organizations joined in. Public tweet volume continued to build for about two weeks. After the third week of July, organizations' tweets were relatively constant, with the exception of a quiet Sunday toward the end of the month. The news media had a shorter window of attention, with most of the tweets occurring in a two-week period at the end of July and beginning of August.

There are several interesting periods in these data. Organizations began tweeting on July 16, and their activity followed a sharp rise in public tweeting that began a few days earlier. It also appears that the rise in organizational tweets in the third week of July—and again at the very end of the month—may have preceded resurgence in public tweeting around those times. News tweets in support of the boycott or buycott appear to follow both the public's and organizations' tweets. The volume of both organizational and public tweets declined after the first week of August with one exception: Whereas organizations stopped tweeting by mid-August, public conversation continued at a steady, although lower, volume through the end of the month. This is a case in which public attention was more persistent than organizational and news attention.

To understand these relationships better, we turn to the Granger analysis. Before we ran the models, we difference-transformed all vectors to achieve stationarity (Thurman & Fisher, 1988). With the difference transformation, each relevant vector passed both the Kwiatkowski-Phillips-Schmidt-Shin and augmented Dickey-Fuller stationarity tests. Next, we determined the appropriate lag using best-fit lag tests: Akaike Information Criterion, Hannan-Quinn information criterion, Schwartz Bayesian information criterion, and Final Prediction Error. The results of these tests varied slightly; we used a lag of seven days in the analysis, which is a period others have found to be the best fit for Twitter data in communication studies (Guggenheim et al., 2015; Neuman et al., 2014).

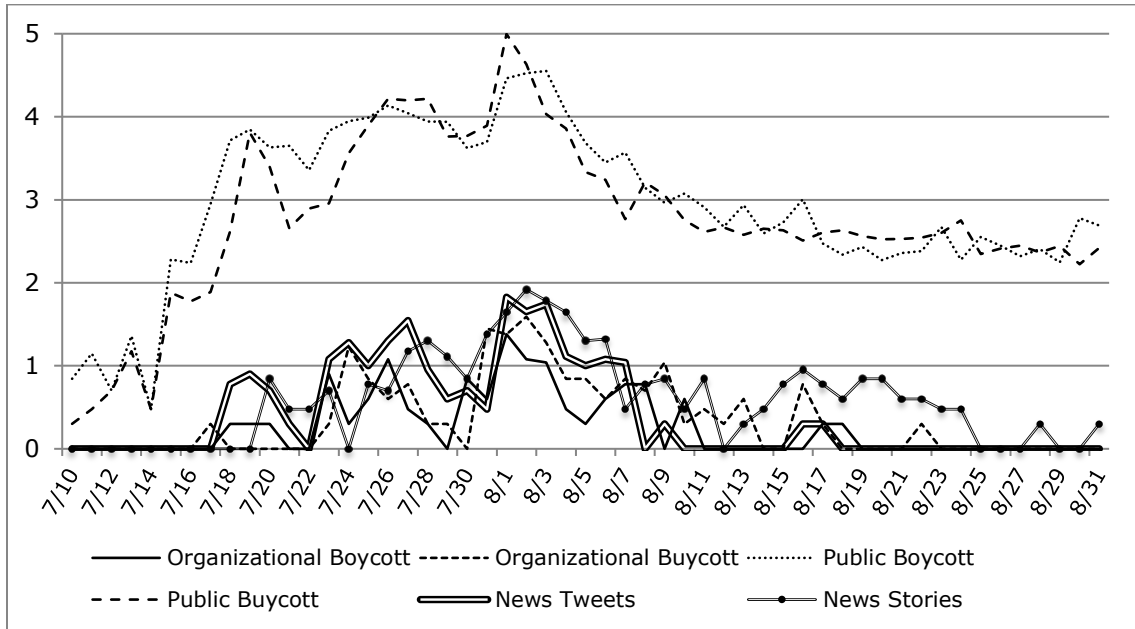


Figure 2. Log-transformed volume of tweets over time, with news stories for comparison.

The results regarding the potential influence of organizations’ action frames on public action frames show that organizational tweet volume Granger-causes public volume both for the boycott ($F = 5.23, p < .01$) and boycott ($F = 6.01, p < .01$). We found no support for reciprocal causation in tweets related to the boycott. When we ran the models in the direction from public tweets to organizational tweets, we found that public boycott tweets added no predictive value to organizational tweets ($F = 0.87, p = .53$). However, we did find support for reciprocal causation in the boycott-related tweets ($F = 11.53, p < .01$).

Next, we turn to the frames the actors employed. About 27% of organizations’ tweets framed the campaigns as a matter of equality or discrimination (see Figure 3). Organizations also used Christian values (10%) and free speech (3%) frames, although organizations used these frames less frequently than individuals did. About 29% of tweets from organizations discussed the effectiveness of the campaigns. On Twitter, the news media also discussed the effectiveness of these campaigns—and shared news—but did not use any of the issue frames in sufficient volume to conduct quantitative analysis.

Contrary to organizations’ messages, most of the public’s tweets were not framed in political terms. About 3% of public tweets were framed in terms of equality or discrimination, 7% were framed in terms of freedom of speech, and 18% of tweets invoked Christian values. Almost one quarter of all the public tweets discussed the effectiveness of the campaigns rather than the underlying issue. In fact, many of these tweets mocked participants for their efforts. One individual, for instance, tweeted, “Boycott FAIL! The Chick-Fil-A line wraps all the way around the food court!”

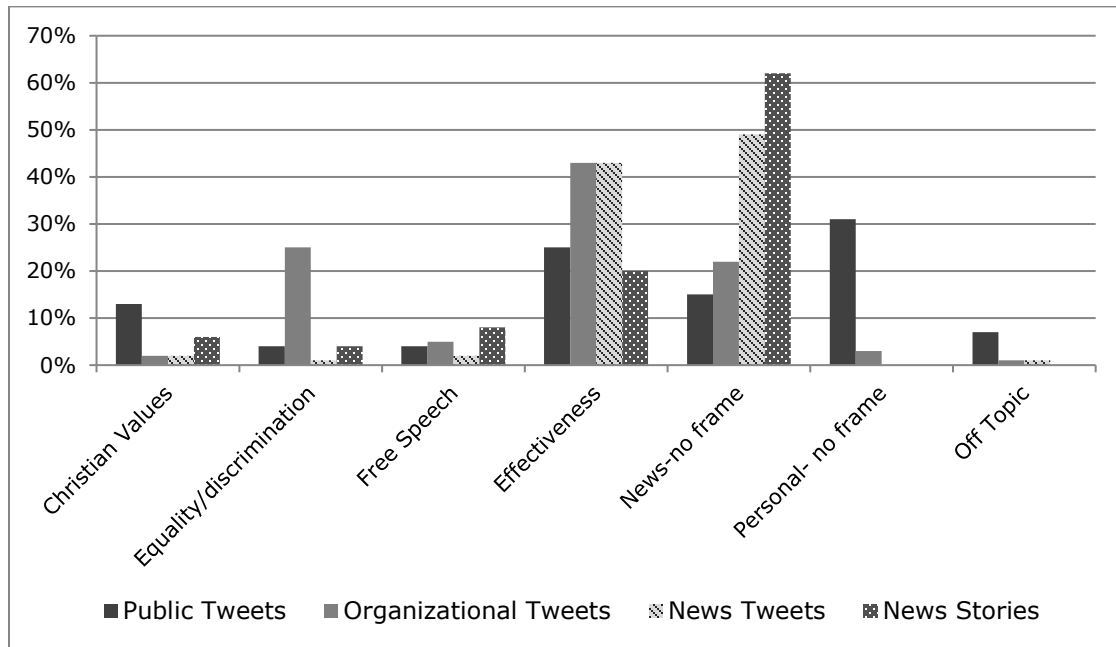


Figure 3. Proportion of frames used by the public, organizations, and news businesses on Twitter, and in print news stories.

To visualize how these frames appeared in tweets over time, we again log-transformed the raw number of tweets. Figures 4a-d plot the log-transformed volume of the three issue frames, as well as the effectiveness category.

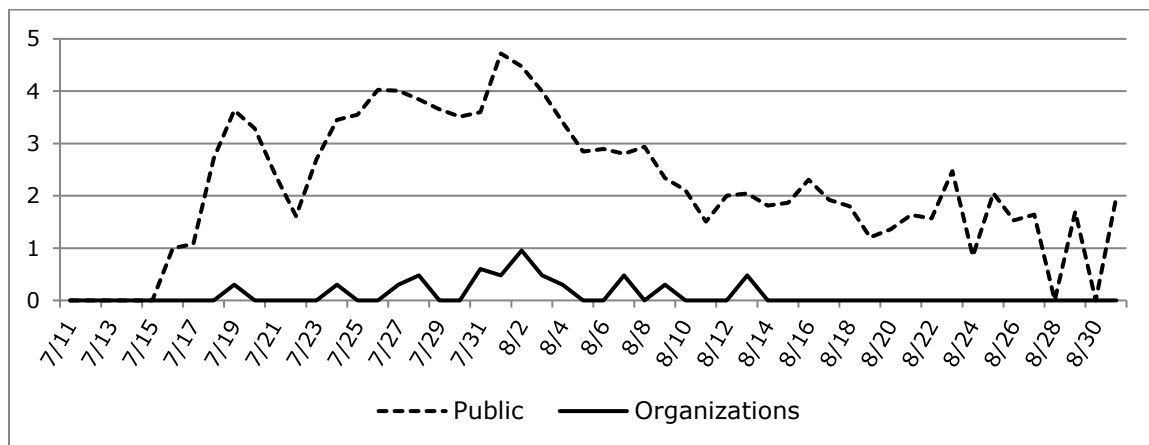


Figure 4a. Log-transformed volume of tweets with Christian value frames.

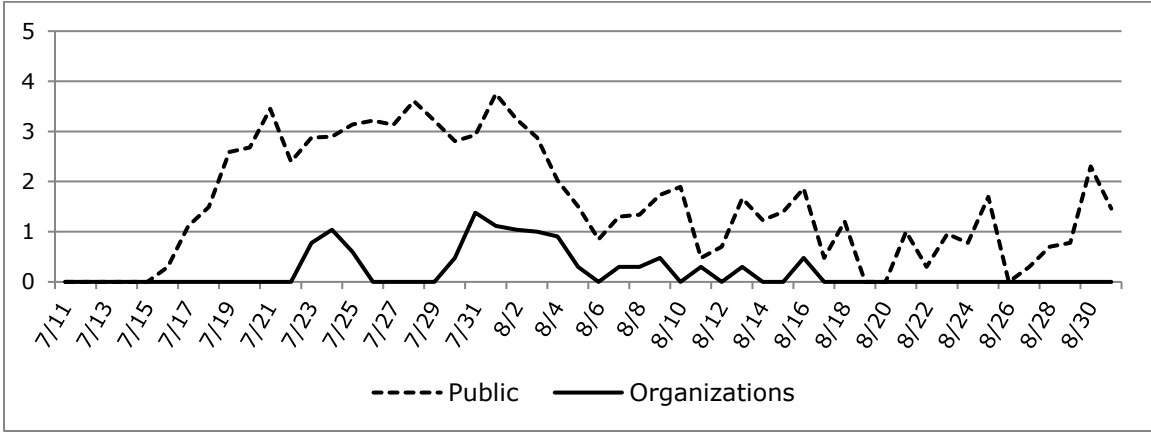


Figure 4b. Log-transformed volume of tweets with equality/discrimination frames.

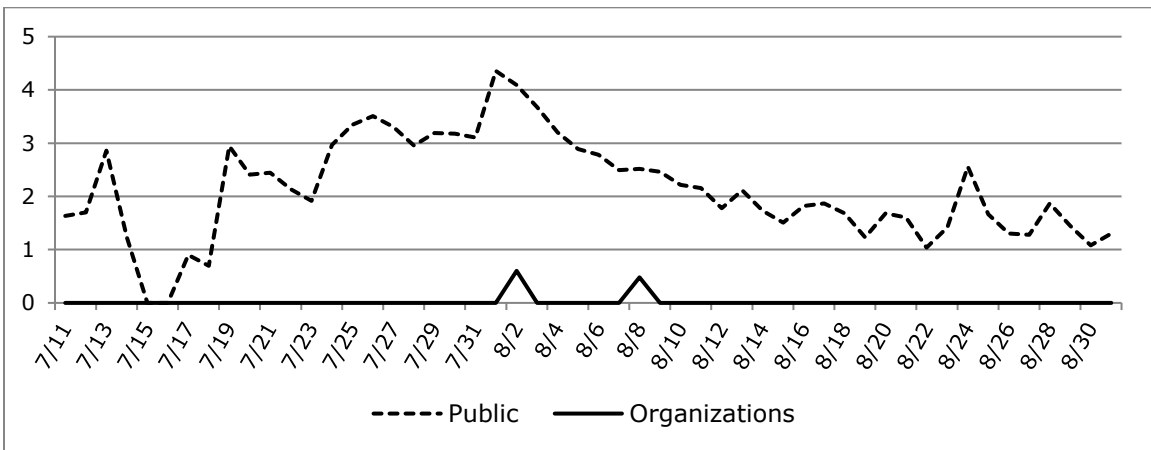


Figure 4c. Log-transformed volume of tweets with free speech frames.

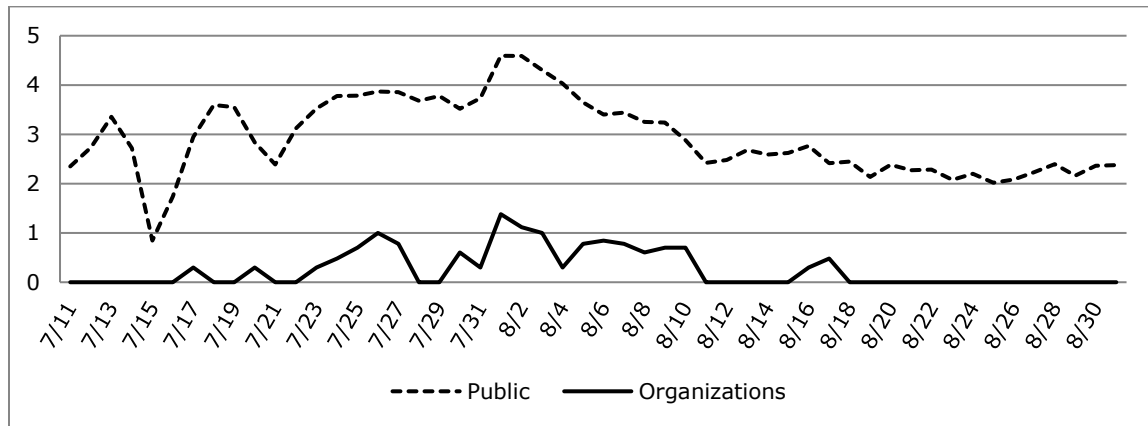


Figure 4d. Log-transformed volume of tweets with effectiveness frames.

The results do not show a consistent relationship between organizational use of issue frames in tweets and public use of issue frames in tweets. For example, in the case of the Christian values frame (see Figure 4a), the public seems to precede organizations, whereas with effectiveness frames (see Figure 4d), organizations' use looks very much like public use.

As with the total volume of tweets, we employed Granger analysis to examine patterns in framing. The results indicate that organizations' use of Christian value frames did not Granger-cause public use of those frames ($F = 2.24, p = .06$). However, the public's use of Christian value frames Granger-caused organizations' use of the frames ($F = 10.65, p < .01$). The public's use of the Christian values frame may have shaped organizations' messages.

The use of the free speech frame in tweets followed a similar pattern. The public's use of free speech frames Granger-caused the organizational use of the frames ($F = 13.95, p < .01$), but there was no significant effect of organizations' use of this frame on the public ($F = 0.98, p = .46$).

For equality and discrimination frames, the results suggest a reciprocal relationship. The public's use of equality and discrimination frames Granger-caused organizations' use of the frame ($F = 9.56, p < .01$), and organizations' use of these frames Granger-caused the public's use of them ($F = 4.51, p < .01$).

Finally, the use of the effectiveness frames was significant among the public, organizations, and news media in Twitter. Organizations' use of effectiveness frames in tweets predicted the public's use of this frame ($F = 4.64, p < .01$), and the public's use of the frame predicted organizations' use ($F = 2.63, p < .05$). Between the public and the news media, we again found a reciprocal effect; News media tweets about effectiveness Granger-caused public tweets ($F = 6.88, p < .01$) and vice versa ($F = 7.55, p < .01$). With organizations, we found the same pattern. Organizations' use of the effectiveness frame Granger-caused the news media's use of the frame ($F = 4.46, p < .01$), and vice versa ($F = 3.03, p < .05$). Taken together, these results suggest that the flow of frames between organizations and the public can work in either direction, or in neither direction.

Discussion

We began this article with the observation that organizations no longer have a monopoly on the initiation and organization of collective action. We posed the problem of the role of organizations in framing collective action in this context, especially when collective action starts without them, so to speak. We examined the Chick-fil-A boycott and buycott of 2012 over SSM because these acts involved a classic and still important protest tactic (boycotting), and an issue in which organizations have been historically influential. At the same time, the tactic we examined—political consumerism—is one for which evidence suggests that people often act in self-directed ways rather than in response to prompts from organizations.

Our findings show that where overall volume of attention is concerned, influence is in the direction from organizations to the public, but not the other way around. When organizations tweeted more, public tweeting increased. We also found that the public's attention had much more persistence than attention from organizations and news media. After a little more than four weeks, news media attention in Twitter returned to its preprotest levels, and traditional news coverage itself settled down after about five weeks. However, the conversation on Twitter was still elevated, although below its peak, at about the seven-week mark when we stopped collecting data. We suspect this to be an interesting feature of attention generally in the social media context. A mutually reinforcing, multidirectional agenda-setting dynamic occurred among the public itself, news organizations, and advocacy groups at the outset of the protest. After some time, news media and organizations turned their attention elsewhere, as did some members of the public. But other people stuck with the issue and continued talking about it well after it had fallen from the national news agenda. It may be that those continuing the conversation were issue publics with an established interest in SSM, who could be expected to remain engaged after those with a more fleeting interest in the issue had left the conversation, or it may be that they remained interested in the Chick-fil-A events for other reasons. This is consistent with the findings of Stocking (2015). We suspect that the persistence of conversation in social media after news media have stopped covering an issue occurs with other issues. Social media allow people to continue a national conversation after the news media have moved on; at the same time, social media allow researchers to observe the persistence of these conversations in ways that would have been impossible in the mass media era.

We found that the public's use of issue frames looked quite different from organizations' use. Organizations tended to frame SSM as a matter equality or discrimination, but their use of these frames did not shape how the public discussed the controversy. Moreover, the equality or discrimination frame was not limited to organizations that support SSM; many of the organizations opposed to SSM policies also used this frame. For example, one organization tweeted, "Chick-fil-A Controversy Exposes Media's Anti-Christian Bias and Discrimination Double Standard." Organizations also used effectiveness frames by touting the success of supporters' efforts and participation; for example, one organization tweeted, "Strong #ChickfilA appreciation turnout debunks #gaymarriage polling."

Meanwhile, many public tweets showed a lack of political framing, and those that were political most commonly employed Christian values frames, which occurred on both sides of the issue. The public also used frames emphasizing the ineffectiveness of the two campaigns. The flow of frames between

organizations and the public was not consistent across frames, and we suspect that this is likely true for other issue areas and events beyond this case. This raises the question of whether there are characteristics of issues or campaigns that drive the degree of independence of framing between organizations and the public.

We limited this study to Twitter and so cannot generalize to other social media, to the public at large, or to the conversations people had face-to-face. Nonetheless, Twitter is an intrinsically important venue for political communication, especially because of the attention paid to it by professional news media, and so understanding the interaction of the public and organizations within Twitter strikes us as illuminating. We also expect that among the large number of public tweets, a small number of Twitter users have a large number of followers. Our analysis did not account for the potentially out-sized influence of a few people in the public. Furthermore, our data did not include information about networks and connections, which would have been useful in understanding which groups or individuals were influencing which publics. Future research on public influence and impact would benefit from incorporating this type of information.

Our analyses relied on Granger models. These models measure correlation over time, and only allowed us to ascertain whether knowing the previous values of a second variable improved our ability to predict the future values of a first variable over knowing only its own previous values. Consequently, the model did not allow us to make strong causal inferences, nor did it allow us to control for other variables. In many cases, the reciprocal findings may suggest that other actors influenced how organizations and the public discussed the Chick-fil-A controversy. In our case, the most obvious potential confound is that of professional news media beyond Twitter. We indicated what news organizations were sharing and when in terms of the news headlines in print and those shared in social media. The content of news articles certainly provided more information than the headlines or tweets, but 61% of individuals do not regularly click through news media links on Twitter (American Press Institute, 2015), and so the influence of news media tweets on public discussion may be small. As other research has shown, tweets can include concrete frames (Bennett et al., 2014; Lim, 2012; Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013), and those shared by news media frequently employ frames. We doubt that our findings were artifacts of news attention as we did examine the amount of print news media coverage the campaigns received over the six-week period.

Previous analysis has shown that in the postbureaucratic era of political organizing, collective action does not require planning or initiation by organizations (Bimber, 2003). At the same time, previous analysis has shown that organizations remain key players in collective actions of all kinds, sometimes acting in traditional roles and sometimes acting as facilitators of networked, socially driven action, and personalized styles of participation. Organizations can shape networked action by facilitating multiple participatory styles for their members and regular followers (Bimber et al., 2012) and by enabling larger networks of "connective action" beyond members and regular followers. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) showed that organizations enable connective actions through several means, including the provision of social technology, loose coordination, creation of opportunities for personalized expression of grievances, and use of inclusive collective action frames. In the current study, organizations engaged in some of these practices, especially in the case of HRC, which provided the pledge form, the branded image for use in social media, and the #ChikfilHATE hashtag. They neither planned nor brokered the campaign, however,

largely participating alongside what was chiefly an ad hoc action. They drew attention to a socially driven campaign without shaping its framing. In Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) schema, the campaigns of Summer 2012 largely constituted crowd-enabled connective action, with minor features of organizationally enabled connective action that were not important to the outcome. Our study was not designed to understand organizations' strategies, and so we could not assess whether their minor influence was the result of the campaigns being a low priority for them. It is an interesting challenge for future research to assess the communication strategies of organizations in situations in which networked campaigns are initiated without them. It is also worthwhile understanding better how organizations and networks interact across different kinds of campaigns beyond political consumerism.

One of the challenges of studying collective action in the contemporary media environment is structural variety and heterogeneity, as well as the presence of the path-dependent features of network dynamics. This means that generalizing from single cases is more difficult than ever, and the need for theories that account for variety is greater than ever. We expect that what organizations contribute to collective action is highly variable now, and that this variable contribution is an enduring and sometimes unpredictable puzzle for researchers.

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Appendix

Boolean Search Strings

(chick-fil-a OR chickfila OR chik-fil-a OR ChickFilia OR chikfila OR CFA)

AND

(boycott OR boycotting OR boycotted OR buycott OR buycotted OR buycotting
OR support OR supported OR supporting OR "appreciation day" OR "appreciation"
OR protest OR protested OR protesting OR kiss OR kiss-in OR kiss-ins
OR gay OR LGBT OR "gay rights" OR "LGBT rights" OR "sexual orientation" OR "sexual orientations" OR
marriage OR "same-sex marriage" OR "gay marriage" OR "commitment to equality" OR equality OR equal
OR "equal rights" OR discrimination OR discriminate OR "anti-gay comments" OR "free speech" OR "hate
speech" OR hate OR h8 OR bigots OR fag OR homo OR homosexual OR christian OR Christ OR God OR
bible OR biblical OR values OR fundamentalist OR "biblical definition of marriage")