

MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

“Let’s keep it about Kony, not Kony 2012”

Exploring the shifts in language around a user generated hashtag during the Kony 2012 movement

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Abstract

Social media has become more than a platform for social engagement and connectivity. Users have tapped into the power of social media's reach to connect with like-minded individuals around the world. Protests, revolutions and global movements are taking shape as a result of what the Internet affords us as users – immediate connectivity. This paper aims to explore Twitter as a platform for activist movements. Specifically, I look at the language used within the Kony 2012 movement and aim to understand how the language within tweets changed overtime by following a user-generated hashtag (#Kony2012). For this study, I analyzed 325 tweets from the Kony 2012 campaign. These tweets were collected from March 5th 2012 to March 17th 2012. My findings indicate that Twitter's hashtag function was always used in the three following ways: (1) Sharing Information, (2) Passive Calls to Action, (3) Strong Calls to Action. Overall, the tweets I studied surrounding #Kony2012 hashtag suggest that this movement was weak in mobilizing change but strong in raising awareness.

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Introduction

This paper explores Twitter as a platform for activist movements. Specifically, I look at the language used within the Kony 2012 movement and aim to understand how language within tweets can change from one day to the next by following a user-generated hashtag. According to Bruns and Burgess (2011), Twitter has an important role in the dissemination of information during major events. To coordinate communications, people use the hashtag function, which they describe as a “largely user-generated mechanism for tagging and collating those messages – tweets- which are related to a specific topic” (p.2). Today’s cyber citizens are using platforms like Twitter for story telling and fact checking – creating an uncomfortable destabilization between traditional and modern practices of information creation and information consumption. Unique Twitter features, like the hashtag, the 140-character limit and the speed of transmission, provide users with the accessibility to act as activists and democratic news disseminators. Furthermore, the Internet has afforded activism the vehicle by which it can evolve so that geography no longer stifles efforts to collaborate with like-minded individuals around the world.

This research is important because activism has long been associated with grass-roots movements, which are typically characterized as locally based protests with a lack of resources and funding (Thorson et al., 2013). Today, activism is performed much differently because “digital media can reduce the cost of connecting and coordinating people and may dissolve some of the obstacles once thought to only be surmountable through bureaucratic social movement organizations” (Thorson et al., 2013, p.423).

Kony 2012 – The Documentary

The Kony 2012 campaign was born out of a movement that started over nine years ago. In 2004, an organization called Invisible Children Inc. launched with a mission to bring awareness to the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in central Africa and its leader, Joseph Kony (Invisible Children, 2013). Initially, Invisible Children claimed that the Kony 2012 campaign started as an experiment to test the online community to see if an emotionally charged video could have the power to inspire people to create change and make an obscure war criminal become known by everyone (Invisible Children, 2013). Invisible Children claimed that making Kony famous would create global awareness of LRA atrocities, leading to the arrest of Joseph Kony, the end of the LRA, and the release of hundreds of Kony's child soldiers (Invisible Children, 2013).

The 30-minute video, released on Tuesday March 5th, 2012 reached 100 million views within 6 days - making it the fastest growing viral video in history (Visible Measures, 2013). In the Kony 2012 documentary, Jason Russell, CEO of Invisible Children, highlights the fact that we've come to an age where social media has become a revolutionary tool. Raving about the power that digitally literate citizens have to become actively engaged in changing the world, Jason Russell asks, "Who are you to end a war? I'm here to tell you, who are you not to?" He does an excellent job at creating sympathy for the viewer when he tells the story of Joseph Kony to his 3-year-old son Gavin. By explaining the hard truth behind the LRA, the audience benefits from hearing the details in an extremely simplified manner. The rest of the documentary talks about rallying people, especially celebrities and major decision makers to first, make Kony famous, and second, to have him arrested. The call to action at the end of the documentary asks people to make Kony famous by doing two things. First, Jason Russell asks that people buy the

‘Action Kit’, which is a box that includes bracelets, posters and flyers for people to use and distribute with the goal of making Kony visible everywhere. The second and major call to action was called ‘Cover the Night’. Cover the Night was supposed to be a daylong protest on April 20th, 2012 for people to rally together and cover every wall in every city with posters of Joseph Kony’s face.

This is the day where we will meet at sundown and blanket every street in every city till the sun comes up. We will be smart and we will be thorough. The rest of the world will go to bed Friday night and wake up to hundred of thousands of posters demanding justice on every corner. (Jason Russell, Kony 2012 documentary)

The main call to action demanded that people physically participate in the movement. This was a request that obligated Kony 2012 participants to leave their computer screens and demonstrate their involvement by showing up in person. Cover the night was widely known for being an unsuccessful call to action, as momentum on social media had completely died by the time this movement was meant to take place.

Kony 2012 Statistics

The statistics born as a result of this film are important as they highlight the wide reach a documentary of this caliber can have. For example:

- 3.7 million people from 185 countries pledged their support for the campaign¹.
- Invisible Children garnered 3.1 million likes and became the most liked non-profit organization on Facebook¹.

- There were 1,380,900 tweets per day about Kony 2012 in the three days after the story first hit Twitter².
- 58% of young adults aged 18-29 said they had heard about the video in a national phone survey in the days following the launch¹.
- 66% of Twitter conversations between March 5th 2012 and March 12th 2012 supported the anti Kony campaign¹.
- On average 3.6 million dollars were pledged to the Invisible Children website to support the Kony 2012 campaign².
- There was a 13,536% increase in views of the Kony 2012 video after Oprah Winfrey tweeted about it³.

Days after the launch of the video, articles criticizing the motives behind the Kony 2012 campaign started to circulate. With the mounting pressure of this unexpected backlash, Jason Russell, the CEO of Invisible Children, was filmed running in the streets of San Francisco naked and performing acts of profanity. This mental breakdown was caught on film, which also spread virally within hours of it being on YouTube. These events are important to consider as they had a profound influence on how the language on Twitter surrounding Kony 2012 changed and evolved between March 5th 2012 and March 17th 2012. The language within the tweets surrounding the hashtag Kony 2012 evolved as follows (see Figure 1):

¹ Visible Measures (2013)

² Invisible Children (2013)

³ Pew Research Center (2013)

Figure 1: How the language evolved between March 5th – March 17th



Dividing the campaign into phases allows for a better understanding of how the language shifted from one day to the next. Essentially, these phases are a representation of the three main areas of focus on Twitter throughout the campaign.

Theoretical Orientation

New Social Movement Theory

Traditionally, social-psychological theories of social movements focused on discovering what it was that attracted people to participate in social movements (Zurcher & Snow, 1981). Three main concepts were established to determine the motivation for participants to take action: personality traits, marginality/alienation and grievances/ideology (LeBon, 1903, as cited in Klandermans, p.583, 1984) Additionally, traditional social-psychological theories of social movements characterized individual participants as being erratic, irrational and unconventional (Schartz, 1976 as cited in Klandermans, 1984). These characteristics of a social movement

prompted theorists like Buechler (1995) and Klandermans (1984) to explore alternative perspectives on social movement motives. Resource mobilization theory, for example, was created to respond to the traditional misconceptions outlined above (Buechler, 1995). Specifically, this theory calls into question the three main motivators (personality traits, marginality/alienation and grievances/ideology) of participation and argues that social movements occur through the mobilization of resources rather than as a result of the three aforementioned motivators (Klandermans, 1984). Oberschall (2000) argues, for example, that marginality and alienation were not prominent characteristics in major movements like the civil rights movement, the union movement, or the unemployment movement. Essentially, the resource mobilization theory claims that movements occur as a result of rational decision processes, whereby participants weigh the pros and cons of their involvement in the movement (Klandermans, 1984, p.583), rather than the “consequence of predisposing psychological traits or states” (Klandermans, 1984, p.583). More traditionally populated by lower class citizens, the resource mobilization theory focuses primarily on matters of economic and political distress (Pichardo, 1997). It asserts that participants are, in fact, rational and will use resources accordingly to shed light on a political issue. Criticisms surrounding the resource mobilization theory highlight the notion that the theory falls short in explaining how social movement groups do, in fact, find success in bringing social change with a limited amount of resource and that it does not assign enough (or any) emphasis to grievances, culture or ideology (Klandermans, 1984). “The fact that grievances and ideology cannot explain the rise of social movements does not mean that they do not play a role in the decisions of individuals to participate in a social movement” (Klandermans, 1984, p.583).

Today, a new theory is challenging traditional social movement theories, as well as the resource mobilization framework. Focusing primarily on societal, cultural and human rights issues, the new social movement (NSM) theory claims to attract middle class citizens focusing primarily on bettering their quality of life rather than economic or political issues (Pichardo, 1997). According to Buechler (1995), the NSM theory is rooted in European traditions of social theory and political philosophy. “This approach emerged in large part as a response to the inadequacies of classical Marxism for analyzing collective action” (p.2). The 1960s gave birth to new forms of social movements including green initiative movements, the peace movement, animal rights and second-wave feminism (Crossely, 2003). What resulted from these movements was a need to reexamine and redefine our understanding of social movements in a post-Marxist world. According to Marxist philosophies, societal classes acted as agents of historical change (Crossely, 2003), where working class movements were seen as “instrumentally based actions concerned with matters of economic redistribution” (Pichardo, 1997, p.412). The social movements we have experienced over the past fifty years have outgrown Marx’s capitalistic model of society. We are living in an era where the focus is on “quality of life, equal rights, individual self-realization, participation, and human rights” (Habermas, 1987, p.392 as cited in Barket & Dale, 1998, p.70).

According to Touraine (1971), the defining events sparking the shift from traditional social movements to the NSM theory were the wide-scale student protests that took place in France and Berlin in 1968 and in Italy in 1969 (as cited in Pichardo, 1997, p.412). Moreover, the United States experienced a similar type of radical departure during the rise of the student antiwar movements in the 1960s (Pichardo, 1997). It was around this time that Marxist theorists were, “unable to provide a convincing explanation for why students had become the vanguard of

protest and why movement demands centered around quality of life rather than redistributive issues” (Pichardo, 1997, p.412) Shifting away from working class protesters to global citizen protesters, “Marxist theorists saw the need to reformulate their ideas” (Pichardo, 1997, p.412). With this shift, Bucheler suggests, came criticisms from prominent social movement theorists like Plotke (1990) and Brand (1991). The central argument against the NSM theory puts the ‘new’ in ‘new social movement’ into question. Plotke (1990) and Brand (1991), for example, argue that new social movement discourse tends to “overstate their novelty, to selectively depict their goals as cultural and to exaggerate their separation from conventional political life” (Bucheler, 1995, p.447). The argument posits that the NSM theory has not evolved to such an extent to justify the creation and adoption of a new branch of social movement theory. Moreover, Buechler (1995) argues that movements focusing on social and human rights (such as temperance and vegetarianism) were taking place long before the 1960s. In relation to the Kony 2012 movement, the NSM theory is important in understanding why participants became interested in a movement that would not affect them directly; rather, their actions would help change the lives of people living in distant and remote locations. Protesting *on behalf* of others for a better quality of life rather than waiting on government authorities to help free child soldiers, people used the available platforms to create a network of support in an attempt to raise awareness and create significant change in the lives of Kony’s child soldiers. Reflecting back on Marxist definitions of social movements, protests tended to focus on issues at a local level (for example, workers compensation).

In today’s virtually connected sphere where people have access to information regarding human, cultural and gender related issues from around the world, the NSM theory supports the notion of collective action to generate change on an international scale rather than relying solely

on state policy makers and governments to make it happen. Through the lens of NSM theory, it is interesting to examine the data I collected for this research and gain a better understanding of why participants joined the conversation and what was being said in relation to the campaign and to the movement as a whole.

Collective Action Theory

In 1971, Mancur Olson published 'The Logic of Collective Action', in which he attempts to understand the efficiency of groups as agents of change. In most situations, people who strive for a common goal will form groups or organizations to achieve their desired revolution (Anesi, 2009). "Social psychologists have long understood that while it doesn't take much to make a group of people feel they have a common identity, it is considerably harder to make them act in the interests of that community or make individual sacrifices in its name" (Morozov, 2011, p.188). As stated in Bennett's and Segerberd's (2012) dissertation on collective action, one of Olson's core assumptions is the idea that groups are made up of individuals who posit "weak levels of commitment" (p.749). Olson termed these individuals as 'free-riders' (Bennett & Segerberd, 2012). A free-rider can be compared to an individual who fails to pay their taxes but benefits from the services due to the contributions of others in the group (as cited in Bennett and Segerberd, 2012). "As the incentive to shirk grows with group's size, large groups are consequently expected to be the most affected by the free-rider problem" (Anesi, 2009, p.198).

According to Tilly (2004), the effectiveness of collective action with the purpose of creating change depends on what he describes as the ability to display, "'WUNC': worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment" (p.75). Adding to Tilly's theory, Bennet and Segerberd (2012) argue that today's activist movements are remarkable in terms of their reach and speed, however, "the very features of a contemporary protest that are so impressive are also the ones

that may undermine conventional political capacity such as maintaining agenda focus and strong coalition relationships” (Bennet and Segerberd, 2012, p.773). They claim that loosely organized, ‘opt-in/opt-out’ type of movements lack the level of commitment needed to produce real change and to fulfill Tilly’s WUNC requirements (Bennet and Segerberd, 2012).

In researching the details that makeup the benefits and consequences of the collective action theory, I found several connections to Morozov’s slacktivism theory, which suggests that participants become involved to fulfill a personal void and to feel a sense of satisfaction about contributing to the greater good (Morozov, 2011). The theory posits that virtual collective action requires so little in terms of commitment and money that it deters people from committing to taking major strides in an attempt to create lasting change (Morozov, 2011). In his book *The Net Delusion*, Morozov quotes Oxford University professor, Alan Ryan, who wrote, “The Internet is good at reassuring people that they are not alone, but not much good at creating a political community out of the fragmented people we have become” (Morozov, p.189, 2011). The collective action theory and slacktivism theory possess interesting ideological overlaps and help to provide thought-provoking insight into the Kony 2012 movement.

Review of Literature

Twitter and Activism

Social media, specifically Twitter, has revolutionized communication practices. A form of blogging, Twitter is a platform that allows its users to share 140 characters with the world – better known as a tweet. This form of concise and scalable messaging has adopted the name *microblogging*, which refers to a platform that is characterized by, “(1) short text messages, (2) instantaneous message delivery, and (3) subscriptions to receive updates” (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel

& Showdery, 2009, p.2172). Twitter's instantaneous feature gives people the power to collectively participate and exchange information on any given event, disaster or protest. Thinking back to the advent of the Gutenberg press in 1440, printed communication gave rise to the spread of information and ideas to the masses across Europe (Hargrave, 2013). Similar to today's communication practices, social media builds on the traditional model of pushing information out into the world to be absorbed by an audience. The major difference between Gutenberg's press and today's 21st century practices is the acquired behaviour of two-way symmetrical communication (Saddiqi, 2001).

The evolution in communication practices is part of a broader technology trend called Web 2.0. According to Van Dijk (2009) the act of sharing and responding to content are defining characteristics of today's participatory user. He states that users who create content have a "strong preference to share knowledge and culture in communities" (p.45). He explains that the level of participation within these communities varies from "'creators' to 'spectators' to 'inactives'" (p.46). This style of participatory culture, specifically users creating content, is encompassing of Kierkegaard's research around cyber-citizens.

Cyber-citizens are becoming increasingly involved in the process of content creation and even using mediums like Twitter to keep mainstream media journalists in line with the facts. According to Kierkegaard (2010) Twitter made a name for itself during the political unrest in Iran following its national election. During this event, participants, state officials and on-lookers watched protests unfold through informational Twitter updates and various media uploads (pictures and videos). "This episode demonstrates the recognition that social media has become an important tool in sustaining protests, promoting freedom of expression and e-diplomacy" (Kierkegaard, 2010, p. 2). Furthermore, in a study looking at the use of Twitter during the

Occupy Movement, Thorson et al., (2013) argue that Twitter was essentially used as a tool to network with other activists. Because of this, they conclude that Twitter provides researchers with, “an intriguing window into the public and semi-public communication networks of protest movement actors, offering opportunities to see behind the veil of difficult-to-study social movement processes” (p.426). According to Small, individuals can play an “active role in the process of collecting, reporting, sorting, analyzing and disseminating news and information – a task once reserved almost exclusively to the news media” (2010, p.876). Murthy (2011) argues that Twitter has an army of virtual citizen journalists who use Twitter to participate in the act of sharing and disseminating information to the rest of the world. Once the content has reached the public, Yardi and boyd (2010) observe that people will use Twitter to participate in the exchange and dissemination of information. They disagree with Murthy, however, by stating that people will mostly interact with like-minded Twitter users rather than any arbitrary user, in turn strengthening the group’s identity.

A common way to strengthen group identity is through the use of a Twitter ‘hashtag’. “The # symbol, called a hashtag, is used to produce keywords or topics in a tweet. It is created organically by Twitter users as a way to categorize messages” (Twitter, 2013). The fact that the hashtag is generated by Twitter users indicates that people are actively searching for what Yardi and boyd (2010) call ‘like-minded’ individuals. In a study investigating the use of Twitter during the protests surrounding the G20 meetings in Pittsburgh, Earl, McKee, Hurwitz, Mesinas, Tolan and Arlotti (2013) found that protest-related hashtags saw the most traffic during protest events in the hours directly surrounding the events.

Technological Affordances

Why do people use Twitter for activist movements? Online participation and the exchange of information is free and easily accessible, allowing movements to scale rapidly. Twitter affords its users the freedom to instantly connect to what's most important to them. Users have the option of following friends, celebrities or experts to stay up to date on breaking news or social gossip. (Twitter, 2013). As previously stated, the sharing and dissemination of information was traditionally a field reserved for journalists. Technology has taken great strides in the past decade, creating a destabilization between traditional and modern practices of newsgathering and news distribution. In a study conducted in 2012, Stephen Bernard conducted a critical analysis of changes in the practices of journalism as a result of social media and more specifically, as a result of Twitter. Looking specifically at the platform's technological characteristics and what it affords its users, Bernard argues that "the rise of Twitter has played a significant role in shifting the boundaries of the journalistic field and the course of journalism as a professions" (2012, p.16). Shifts in our everyday lives, in terms of culture, economics or politics create opportunities for people to become innovative and approach situations with new solutions. Understanding what Twitter affords us as 'average' Internet users is crucial in understanding the roles we play as active cyber citizens. Overall, the literature shows that Twitter's instantaneous capabilities and news sharing characteristics are the driving factors for users to log on to Twitter during minor and major events. The freedom to act as democratic news disseminators is appealing to users who feel silenced outside of the virtual community. With this understanding of Twitter as a tool for activist movements, I have developed the following research question: Looking at the Kony 2012 movement, how did the language change from one day to the next by following a user generated hashtag during the Kony 2012 movement?

Methods

Research Site

When Invisible Children posted their 30-minute documentary on YouTube, it garnered over 3 million views in 24 hours. This amount of traffic generated thousands of comments from users who provided personal opinions and reflections after watching the video. Originally, I wanted to look at user-generated comments to gain a better understanding of what people felt after watching the documentary and therefore considered looking at YouTube as my research site but decided against it for a number of reasons. First, the comment section under the Kony 2012 video had been disabled, prohibiting anyone from reading previous comments or adding new ones. (Whether this was disabled by Invisible Children or not is unknown, however, it speaks loudly to the overpowering amount of criticism the organization experienced.) Second, I was curious to understand how people used a social media platform to mobilize one another to take some form of action. After conducting research on activism and social media, I found that Twitter would be a more suitable research site for this type of study, because it possesses characteristics of grouping, connectivity and like-mindedness through functions like hashtags and retweets. I was more interested in understanding the language people used and how it evolved throughout the movement rather than direct reactions to the documentary on YouTube. It is important to note, however, that due to Twitter constraints, I was unable to collect data published over a year ago directly from Twitter's platform therefore, I used a third party archiving software application called Topsy.

Topsy provides comprehensive analyses of billions of tweets. It was used during the last presidential election campaign to track user sentiment and is highly regarded in terms of credibility and reliability. "Topsy enables users to discover, quantify, predict and make decisions

using the world's most powerful social analytics products" (Topsy, 2013). Topsy was able to provide me with an aggregated set of tweets that were considered as being the 'most relevant' tweets of the campaign. Relevancy is based on weighted scores that combine various factors. Factors: the number of followers associated to the author's account, the number of re-tweets the actual tweet garnered, the presence of an external link, and finally, *who* is following and re-tweeting that specific author. According to Topsy, the aforementioned factors can organize the tweets in a way that represents them as 'most relevant' to 'least relevant'. Due to the nature of Twitter, users who have a high number of followers are often generating more discussion as a result of their celebrity status. Their tweets are being seen and retweeted by hundreds, and sometimes thousands and millions of people. Topsy's 'most relevant' list of tweets is therefore often made up of celebrities due to their reach on Twitter. The more retweets, mentions and @replies author X receives, the more relevant his posts become. Initially, I had hoped to collect data from 'average' Twitter users, however, Topsy's aggregated list of tweets, mostly made up of high profile celebrities, creates an interesting perspective on how these people use Twitter as a form of activist communication. What is more fascinating is the idea that hundreds, thousands and millions of people are reading these tweets and further disseminated the information to their own respective followers.

For the purpose of this paper, I have treated these celebrity tweets as 'individuals' because they are, in fact, individual users expressing their own opinions. A study conducted in 2013 by Stever and Lawson looked to understand why celebrities use Twitter by examining twelve entertainment media celebrities, six males and six females, all taken from 2009-2012 Twitter feeds. Based on their analysis, Twitter appears to be a multiuse tool for celebrities. They found it was primarily used for social communication, just as it is used by non-celebrities (Stever

& Lawson, 2013) The first category of tweets were used to communicate from one individual to another individual while the second category of tweets were used as a marketing tool. “Indeed, MC Hammer indicated that his use of Twitter had as a primary purpose increasing awareness of his television show” (Stever & Lawson, 2013, p.1). The third category of tweets indicated a way for celebrities to communicate with fans without a marketing intent. “Each celebrity has a fan base already, so marketing to that base is in some sense redundant” (Stever & Lawson, 2013, p.1). Another study conducted in 2009 by Stechyson claims that celebrities primarily use Twitter to further their own agendas. The immediacy and simplicity of the platform allows celebrities to promote their personal causes to their followers and fans (Stechyson, 2009).

Data Collection and Analysis

To gain a thorough understanding of how the language changed from one day to the next, I collected Topsy’s top 25 most relevant tweets each day, from March 5th until March 17th. The relevancy of these dates coincided with the release of the Kony 2012 video (March 5th, 2012) and a few days after the arrest of the campaign’s leader, Jason Russell (March 17th, 2012). This analysis provided me with a set of 325 tweets to analyze and classify under nine themes. During the data collection phase, I eliminated any tweets published by news organizations or companies, as I wanted to conduct an analysis of tweets that were written by individuals. I also chose to skip over tweets written by the same author if that author happened to appear in the ‘most relevant’ list more than once. I purposely did this as I wanted to collect data from 25 *different* users in order to obtain 25 *different opinions*. I approached my data using a grounded theory approach and conducted an open coding analysis of the data (Dicks, 2012). Rather than establishing a firm research question at the beginning of my research, I conceptualized each individual tweet and

waited to see if the themes would provide me with any sense of direction for my research question. I believe open coding was the best form of analysis for this type of research due to the nature of the data. Tweets can vary from basic sharing of information to using sarcasm or hashtags. Every single tweet is saying something, and it is crucial as a researcher to approach this data with an open mind and to avoid preconceived themes before getting involved with the data.

Initial coding revealed 15 codes which were then grouped into nine themes: (1) *Initial Trending Tweets*, (2) *Early Sharing of Information*, (3) *Passive Calls to Action*, (4) *Strong Calls to Action*, (5) *Defending Campaign*, (6) *Campaign Criticisms*, (7) *Campaign Mockery*, (8) *Viral Nature of Campaign* and (9) *Jason Russell*. These themes were created to reflect the language within my data and to provide a clearer understanding of how the language (themes) surrounding the hashtag #Kony2012 evolved over a period of thirteen days. Over the course of thirteen days (between March 5th 2012 – March 17th 2012), the language surrounding #Kony2012 changed extensively; therefore, the nine themes were further classified into three phases to better understand the progression and evolution of the tweets. To clarify, these phases do not represent actual phases of the campaign, rather, they are time slices from the same campaign. For the purpose of this paper, however, I will refer to these time slices as Phases 1, 2 and 3.

#Kony2012 Phases

Phase 1 | Joseph Kony

March 5th 2012 – March 7th 2012

Phase 1 of the campaign includes tweets from March 5th 2012 until March 7th 2012. The tweets in this phase focused almost entirely on raising awareness about Joseph Kony and encouraged people to share the 30-minute documentary with followers. The tweets in Phase 1 were sorted

into four distinct themes to best represent the types of messages found within that timeframe.

The themes are (1) *Initial Trending Tweets*, (2) *Early Sharing of Information*, (3) *Passive Calls to Action*, and (4) *Strong Calls to Action*. The data in Table 1 includes tweets from March 5th 2012 to March 7th 2012. The following categories were determined based on common themes that emerged from the data within that timeframe.

Table 1: Coding scheme for phase 1 of campaign | **March 5th 2012 – March 7th 2012**

Category	Description	Example
<i>Initial Trending Tweet</i>	A tweet that uses the hash tag #Kony2012 to contribute to the trend and organize discussion around the campaign. The tweet may or may not include words, however, it does not include any calls to action or links to external sources. If there are words present next to the hashtag, the words in the <i>Initial Trending Tweets</i> theme have a positive sentiment towards the campaign. These tweets are aiming to create a trend to ensure that everyone is aware and becomes active in spreading the information. <i>The Initial Trending Tweet</i> differs from other tweets as it focuses on building awareness during the launch of the campaign. It is the soul driver of this movement and without it, the #Kony2012 hashtag would not have existed without these select <i>Initial Trending Tweets</i> . These users are getting the word out and are considered to be the ‘early’ hashtag adopters.	@Rhianna Rhianna #KONY2012
<i>Early Sharing of Information</i>	A tweet that includes a link to an external source. The tweet may include other words, however it does not include a call to action. This user is sharing information at the early stages of the campaign to build momentum and create further awareness about the movement. The overall sentiment is quite positive and users are taking the time to include additional information for their respective followers. These users are similar to the <i>Initial Trending Tweets</i> users in that they are trying to spread the word and raise awareness	@Simonpegg Simon Pegg It’s a small world and it’s getting easier to paint. #KONY2012 http://t.co/pR2J6yLk

	about the Kony 2012 campaign; however, these <i>Early Sharing of Information</i> users go one step further by providing links (normally to the video).	
<i>Passive Call to Action</i>	A tweet that includes a link to an external source and a passive call to action (PCA).	@Cameroncruz Cameron Cruz It is so important to watch #Kony2012. Discover ur power & make a difference. Share what you learn! Http://t.co/wjhuFd8r
<i>Strong Call to Action</i>	A tweet that includes a link to an external source and a strong call to action (SCA).	@stephenfry Stephen Fry The Vimeo link is http://t.co/f0bygFgz and the pledge site is here http://t.co/Qc9sNgse #Kony2012

Passive Calls to Action (PCA) and *Strong Call to Action (SCA)* words were identified by using the bank of words outlined below in Table 2.

Table 2: Calls to action word bank

Call to action	Words	Example
Passive Calls to Action (PCA)	Watch, share, checkout, speak out, click here, spread the word, stop Kony, retweet, forward	@tedwards6 T Help us end #LRA violence. Visit http://t.co/fl9cW5kH @SenatorLeahy Join us for #Kony2012 EMPOWER THE POWERLESS
Strong Calls to Action (SCA)	Pledge here... Sign the pledge here... Pledge your support here... Help us... Find out why and how here... Donate here... Here's where you can buy Kony2012 merch...	@flint_ic_events IC Evangelist I pledge to bring Kony to Justice! #Kony2012 #InvisibleChildren make the pledge at http://t.co/pJtqZ1nX http://t.co/vO0iP4Jm

Phase 2 | Campaign Criticisms

March 8th 2012 – March 15th 2012

Phase 2 of the campaign includes tweets from March 8th 2012 until March 15th 2012. The Tweets in this phase addressed issues that were not previously discussed in phase 1 of the campaign, therefore, additional themes were added to the original four categories from phase 1. Some tweets in phase 2 continued to raise awareness about Joseph Kony however, the themes began to shift into a more critical analysis of the campaign itself rather than tweeting about Joseph Kony. The language within this phase influenced the creation of the four following themes: (5) *Defending Campaign*, (6) *Criticisms of Campaign*, (7) *Mockery of Campaign* (8) *Viral Nature of Campaign* (See Table 2 for example of themes). The data in Table 3 includes tweets from March 8th 2012 to March 15th 2012. The following categories were determined based on common themes that emerged from the data within that timeframe.

Table 3: Coding scheme for phase 2 of campaign | **March 8th 2012 – March 15th 2012**

Category	Description	Example
Defending Campaign	A tweet that encourages users to remember the real issues at hand rather than become carried away with the criticisms against the campaign.	@resolvereports Paul Ronan Those criticizing @Invisible on #Kony2012 should see the great depths of their partnerships with local civil society in #LRA areas of #Congo
Campaign Criticism	A tweet that includes a statement of criticism or provides a link to an external source criticizing the campaign.	@fieldproducer Neal Mann Interesting NY Times piece looking at the potential problems with the #KONY2012 campaign http://t.co/EBHSXTeH

Campaign Mockery	A tweet using humour or sarcasm to poke fun at the campaign for its lack of credibility.	@borowitsreport Andy Borowitz #Kony2012 got me excited about YouTube as a force for good in the world, and then I remember Rebecca Black
Viral Nature of Campaign	A tweet speaking of the viral nature of the campaign.	@Irainie Lee Rainie The #Kony2012 video was the No. 1 story on Twitter last week: http://t.co/49HW5WSh

Phase 3 | Jason Russell

March 16th 2012 – March 17th 2012

Phase 3 of the campaign includes tweets from March 16th 2012 until March 17th 2012. The tweets in this phase addressed issues that were not previously discussed in phase 1 or 2 of the campaign, therefore an additional theme was added to the original eight themes from phase 1 and 2. The primary theme emerging in phase 3 focused around the campaign leader, Jason Russell, rather than Joseph Kony or the campaign itself. Therefore, the ninth and final theme added is called *Jason Russell* (See Table 4 for example of theme). The data in Table 4 includes tweets from March 16th 2012 to March 17th 2012. The following category was determined based on common themes that emerged from the data within this timeframe.

Table 4: Coding scheme for phase 3 of campaign | **March 16th 2012 – March 17th 2012**

Category	Description	Example
Jason Russell	A tweet focusing primarily on Jason Russell rather than Joseph Kony or the campaign itself. The tweet either	@actualbenbiller Ben Miller Dilemma: really want to support #KONY2012 but I find it hard to

	provides a link to the events that occurred on the day that Jason Russell exposed himself in public or the tweet attempts to defend Jason Russell and all the work he had done up to that point.	achieve an erection in public.
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Findings

The following section consists of several tables to clearly represent the findings from the data analysis. Dates from which data were collected are clearly identified in the left hand columns. The right hand columns are statistical representations of the amount of tweets for theme X for that day.

Theme #1 | *Initial Trending Tweets*

In total, 72 tweets of the 325 tweets were *Initial Trending Tweets*, which makes up for 22% of the data I collected – making it the largest theme in my data set. Users in this theme used the hashtag #Kony2012 to contribute to the trend and to organize discussion around the campaign. In certain circumstances, these tweets also included other words or emotional statements; however, they did not include any calls to action or links to external sources. The initial impact of the documentary, with its message of raising awareness and making Kony famous, appeared to encourage people to create a trend around raising awareness about Kony 2012. Because of the activist nature of this campaign and the need for users to take action on some sort of level, I categorized these tweets as *Initial Trending Tweets*. Based on my data, I categorized them as *Initial Trending Tweets* because the use of the hashtag was absent of any calls to action in these tweets suggesting that the circulation of the hashtag itself was the action that these users were taking. Besides making Kony famous, these users were not contributing any substantial messages demanding mobilization. Although trending tweets with a lack of call to action continued to

occur throughout the campaign, they differed from *Initial Trending Tweets* as they did not speak about the launch of the campaign, making Kony famous or raising awareness. Rather, participants used the hashtag function to create trends around other issues that arose as time progressed.

Throughout the three phases of the campaign, *Initial Trending Tweets* accounted for the highest amount of tweets at 24% during phase 1 and 25.5% during phase 2 of the campaign. During phase 3, *Initial Trending Tweets* decreased significantly to represent merely 4% of total tweets for that phase. Based on this table, it is interesting to see how the *Initial Trending Tweets* were present in greater numbers during phases 1 and 2 of the campaign and decreased drastically during the final phase of the campaign - phase 3 (See Table 6). To provide further context to the kind, type and style of tweet that would have been included in the *Initial Trending Tweets* section, refer to the coding table (Table 1) outlined in the Methods section.

Table 6 | Statistics on *Initial Trending Tweets* tweets

Date	Statistical representation per day
Phase 1: Joseph Kony 2012	Initial Trending Tweets
05-Mar 2012	4.0%
06-Mar 2012	40.0%
07-Mar 2012	28.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 1 for Initial Trending Tweets	24.0%
Phase 2: Critiques of the Campaign	Initial Trending Tweets
08-Mar 2012	32%
09-Mar 2012	44%
10-Mar 2012	20%

11-Mar 2012	48%
12-Mar 2012	12%
13-Mar 2012	28%
14-Mar 2012	16%
15-Mar 2012	4.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 2 for Initial Trending Tweets	25.5%
Phase 3: Jason Russell	Initial Trending Tweets
16-Mar 2012	0.0%
17-Mar 2012	8.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 3 for Initial Trending Tweets	4.0%
<u>Initial Trending Tweets made up for 22.2% of all tweets collected</u>	

Theme #2 | *Early Sharing of Information*

In total, I identified 54 tweets of the 325 tweets to be *Early Sharing Information* tweets, which makes up 16.6% of the data I collected – making it the third largest theme in my data set. In the first three days of the campaign, users contributed to this theme to share information with one another. *Sharing Information* tweets included a link to an external source, however, these tweets failed to include any kind of call to action. Generally, the links being shared within this theme were that of the Kony 2012 documentary itself (this was known as it was prompted in the language within the tweets). Table 7 represents the way in which this theme evolved overtime.

Table 7 | Statistics on Sharing Information tweets

Date	Statistical representation per day
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Phase 1: Joseph Kony 2012	Sharing Information
05-Mar 2012	20.0%
06-Mar 2012	20.0%
07-Mar 2012	32.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 1 for Initial Trending Tweets	24.0%
Phase 2: Critiques of the Campaign	Sharing Information
08-Mar 2012	12.0%
09-Mar 2012	12.0%
10-Mar 2012	8.0%
11-Mar 2012	12.0%
12-Mar 2012	32.0%
13-Mar 2012	28.0%
14-Mar 2012	8.0%
15-Mar 2012	24.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 2 for Initial Trending Tweets	17.0%
Phase 3: Jason Russell	Sharing Information
16-Mar 2012	8.0%
17-Mar 2012	0.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 3 for Initial Trending Tweets	4.0%
<u>Sharing of Information made up for 16.6% of all tweets collected</u>	

Phase 1 of the campaign represents the highest amount of information sharing activity. During the first three days of the campaign (phase 1), 24% of tweets were allocated strictly to sharing information about the video and about the campaign. Users were providing their followers with links next to the hashtag to encourage followers to gain further information on another site. During phase 2 of the campaign, which focused more on the campaign itself rather than Joseph Kony, 17% of tweets were used to provide further information for respective followers. Sharing of information within this phase seemed to continue with the theme in phase 1, which was to share the actual Kony 2012 video with followers on Twitter. Overall, 16.6% of tweets from the data I collected were used to share information with followers and subsequently encourage them to click on a link and become more informed on any given topic.

Theme #3 and #4 | *Passive and Strong Calls to Action*

Although these themes are separate, they are presented together to demonstrate the drastic differences between passive and strong calls to action. In total, I identified 43 tweets of the 325 tweets to be *Passive Calls to Action* and 12 tweets of the 325 tweets to be *Strong Calls to Action*.

Table 8 | Statistics on Passive and Strong Call to Action tweets

Date	Statistical representation per day	Statistical representation per day
Phase 1: Joseph Kony 2012	Passive Calls to Action	Strong Calls to Action
05-Mar 2012	52.0%	24%
06-Mar 2012	28.0%	12.0%
07-Mar 2012	32.0%	8.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 1	37.3%	14.7
Phase 2: Critiques of the Campaign	Passive Calls to Action	Strong Calls to Action

08-Mar 2012	28.0%	0.0%
09-Mar 2012	4.0%	0.0%
10-Mar 2012	12.0%	4.0%
11-Mar 2012	4.0%	0.0%
12-Mar 2012	0.0%	0.0%
13-Mar 2012	8.0%	0.0%
14-Mar 2012	0.0%	0.0%
15-Mar 2012	0.0%	0.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 2	7.0%	0.5%
Phase 3: Jason Russell	Passive Calls to Action	Strong Calls to Action
16-Mar 2012	4.0%	0.0%
17-Mar 2012	0.0%	0.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 3	2.0%	0.0%
	PCA made up for 13.2% of all tweets collected	SCA made up for 3.7% of all tweets collected

Table 9 | Combined representation of overall calls to action during the entire campaign

Phases	Passive and Strong Calls to Action (combined)
Phase 1 Joseph Kony 2012	26%
Phase 2 Critiques of the Campaign	3.8%
Phase 3 Jason Russell	1%

According to the data in tables 8 and 9, March 5th 2012 accounted for the highest number of *Passive and Strong Calls to Action*. On the very first day of the campaign, 52% of tweets on March 5th were made up of *Passive Calls to Action* and 24% of *Strong Calls to Action*. Phase 1 of the campaign, which focused almost entirely on raising awareness around Joseph Kony, garnered the highest volume of calls to action than any other time in the campaign. By March 6th,

Passive Calls to Action dropped by 24% and *Strong Calls to Action* dropped by 12%. During phase 2 of the campaign, when users focused primarily on issues surrounding the campaign itself, 7% of tweets included a *passive call to action* whereas 0.5% of tweets included a *strong call to action*. By the third phase of the campaign, which focused primarily around Jason Russell, 2% of tweets were dedicated to passive calls to action and 0% of tweets represented strong calls to action. Table 8 provides a clear breakdown of the decreasing calls to action across the phases. 26% of tweets during phase 1 of the campaign were made up of calls to action. During phase 2 of the campaign (or within the 4th day of the campaign), the overall calls to action dropped from 26% to 3.8%. And finally, the third phase of the campaign focusing primarily on Jason Russell represented the least amount of calls to action at 1%. Table 9 is a statistical representation of the total number of overall calls to action broken down into each phase. This table is intended to give a sense of the overall calls to action, regardless of their strength, throughout the phases of the campaign.

Theme #5 and #6 | Defending Campaign and Campaign Criticisms

Although these themes are separate, I wanted to present them next to one another to observe the drastic differences between the tweets that were defending the campaign versus the tweets that were criticizing the campaign.

Table 10 | Statistics on Defending the Campaign and Campaign Criticism tweets

Date	Statistical representation per day	Statistical representation per day
Phase 1: Joseph Kony 2012	Defending Campaign	Campaign Criticisms
05-Mar 2012	0.0%	0.0%
06-Mar 2012	0.0%	0.0%

07-Mar 2012	0.0%	0.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 1	0.0%	0.0%
Phase 2: Critiques of the Campaign	Defending Campaign	Campaign Criticisms
08-Mar 2012	8.0%	16.0%
09-Mar 2012	4.0%	28.0%
10-Mar 2012	0.0%	36.0%
11-Mar 2012	4.0%	0.0%
12-Mar 2012	0.0%	32.0%
13-Mar 2012	0.0%	16.0%
14-Mar 2012	0.0%	72.0%
15-Mar 2012	4.0%	56.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 2	2.5%	32.0%
Phase 3: Jason Russell	Defending Campaign	Campaign Criticisms
16-Mar 2012	0.0%	4.0%
17-Mar 2012	16.0%	12.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 3	8.0%	8.0%
	PCA made up for 2.8% of all tweets collected	SCA made up for 20.9% of all tweets collected

In total, I identified 9 tweets of the 325 tweets to be *Defending the Campaign* and 68 tweets of the 325 tweets to be *Criticizing the Campaign*. Users that were dedicated to defending the campaign used Twitter to highlight the positives about what Invisible Children was doing and to remind people of the issue at hand rather than become distracted with external noises. Criticisms were often tweeted as title's of articles, meaning, users wrote the title of an article into their

tweet and provided a link to the article responsible for criticizing the campaign often adding negative words regarding the campaigns validity. These themes were not present during phase 1 of the campaign because the language was focused on Joseph Kony rather than the campaign itself (See Table 10). Therefore, phase 1 represents no data with regards to defending or criticizing the campaign because this language did not surface until phase 2 of the campaign. In phase 2, 2.5% of tweets defended the campaign against the 32% of users who were criticizing it. March 8th, the first day of phase 2, saw the highest number of defending tweets, which accounted for 8% of all tweets for that specific day. During the rest of phase 2, however, defending tweets continued to decrease. The criticisms in phase 2 saw several increases and decreases between March 8th and March 15th but reached its highest volume of criticism on March 14th with 72% of tweets being critical. By Phase 3 of the campaign, which focused primarily on Jason Russell, *Defending the Campaign* experienced a slight increase while *Campaign Criticisms* experienced a steep decrease. The decrease in criticism is not a result of less criticism; it is a change in the direction of criticism, meaning users were not tweeting to critique the campaign; rather, they began to critique Jason Russell, which required an entirely different theme. In total, defending the campaign accounted for 2.8% of all tweets for the entire campaign, making it the lowest percentage of tweets within a theme. Alternatively, *Campaign Criticisms* accounted for 20.9% of all tweets for the entire campaign, making it the second highest amount of tweets within a theme, only 1.1% away from matching the highest amount of tweets within a theme, *Initial Trending Tweets*, at 22%. To provide further context to the kind, type and style of tweet that would have been included in the *Defending Campaign and Campaign Criticisms* themes, refer to the coding table outlined in the methods section.

Theme #7 | Campaign Mockery

In total, I identified 16 tweets of the 325 tweets as falling into the *Campaign Mockery* theme.

This theme consisted of tweets that were poking fun at the campaign and mocking the organization’s credibility as a charity. This theme was not present during phase 1 of the campaign because the language was focused on Joseph Kony rather than the campaign itself.

Therefore, phase 1 represents no data with regards to *Campaign Mockery* because this language did not surface until phase 2 of the campaign. In phase 2, 7.5% of tweets were made up of tweets that were mocking the campaign (see Table 11). The highest number of tweets, which included statements of mockery, occurred four days into phase 2 on March 11th at 20%. Based on the statistics, there is reason to believe that the language changed so drastically during this phase because of an article that was posted on March 8th by a student living in Nova Scotia, Canada.

The article criticized the Kony 2012 filmmakers of reckless spending of charitable donations.

The article garnered over 1.1 million views in the first 18 hours and over 2.3 million view in the first 4 days following its release. Finally, the article settled at around 3.2 million unique views

(Oyston, 2013). By phase 3, the focus had shifted completely from the Kony 2012 campaign to Jason Russell, creating a 5.5 % decrease in *Campaign Mockery* tweets. Overall, 4.9% of tweets

mocked the campaign. To provide further context to the kind, type and style of tweet that would have been included in the *Campaign mockery* theme, refer to the coding table outlined in the methods section.

Table 11 | Statistics on Campaign mockery tweets

Date	Statistical representation per day
Phase 1: Joseph Kony 2012	Campaign Mockery
05-Mar 2012	0.0%

06-Mar 2012	0.0%
07-Mar 2012	0.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 1 for Initial Trending Tweets	0.0%
Phase 2: Critiques of the Campaign	Campaign Mockery
08-Mar 2012	0.0%
09-Mar 2012	8.0%
10-Mar 2012	12.0%
11-Mar 2012	20.0%
12-Mar 2012	16.0%
13-Mar 2012	0.0%
14-Mar 2012	0.0%
15-Mar 2012	4.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 2 for Initial Trending Tweets	7.5%
Phase 3: Jason Russell	Campaign Mockery
16-Mar 2012	0.0%
17-Mar 2012	4.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 3 for Initial Trending Tweets	2.0%
<u>Sharing Information made up for 4.9% of all tweets collected</u>	

Theme #8 | *Viral Nature of Campaign*

In total, I identified 17 tweets of the 325 tweets as falling into the *Viral Nature of Campaign* theme. The *Viral Nature of the Campaign* became a topic of conversation on its own as users

began to see the Kony 2012 campaign as a case study for virtual activist movements rather than focusing on the real issue at hand. This theme was not present during phase 1 of the campaign because the language focused on Joseph Kony rather than the campaign itself. Therefore, phase 1 represents no data with regards to the *Viral Nature of Campaign* because this language did not surface until phase 2 of the campaign. Moreover, 8% of tweets during phase 2 used Twitter to discuss the viral nature of the campaign and share information about the speed at which the movement spread in the online world (see Table 12 below).

Table 12 | Statistics on Viral Nature of Campaign tweets

Date	Statistical representation per day
Phase 1: Joseph Kony 2012	Viral Nature of Campaign
05-Mar 2012	0.0%
06-Mar 2012	0.0%
07-Mar 2012	0.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 1 for Initial Trending Tweets	0.0%
Phase 2: Critiques of the Campaign	Viral Nature of Campaign
08-Mar 2012	4.0%
09-Mar 2012	0.0%
10-Mar 2012	8.0%
11-Mar 2012	12.0%
12-Mar 2012	8.0%
13-Mar 2012	20.0%
14-Mar 2012	4.0%
15-Mar 2012	8.0%

Average number of Tweets during phase 2 for Initial Trending Tweets	8%
Phase 3: Jason Russell	Viral Nature of Campaign
16-Mar 2012	4.0%
17-Mar 2012	0.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 3 for Initial Trending Tweets	2.0%
<u>Sharing Information made up for 5.2% of all tweets collected</u>	

On March 13th, six days into phase 2 of the campaign, 20% of tweets represented language that spoke solely on the nature of the campaign and the effects social media can or cannot have on activist movements. By phase 3, the focus had shifted completely from the Kony 2012 campaign to Jason Russell, creating a 6% decrease in the language surrounding the viral nature of the campaign. Overall, 5.2% of tweets from the entire data set attempted to gain a better understanding of the way in which activist movements can spread in the online world. To provide further context to the kind, type and style of tweet that would have been included in the *Viral Nature of Campaign* theme, refer to the coding table outlined in the methods section.

Theme #9 | Jason Russell

In total, I identified 35 tweets of the 325 tweets that spoke solely of *Jason Russell*, which makes up for 10.8% of the entire data collection. Users in this theme used the hashtag #Kony2012 to contribute to the trend and organize discussion around Jason Russell’s public mental breakdown. This particular theme was not active during phase 1 of the campaign because the language was focused on Joseph Kony and Jason Russell had not exposed himself to the public until phase 3 of

the campaign. Therefore, phase 1 and phase 2 do not represent any form of data with regards to Jason Russell’s mental breakdown because the event did not occur until March 15th, 2012. The language surrounding Jason Russell garnered 10.8% of the overall data from the campaign tweets. More specifically, on March 16th, 80% of tweets touched on the theme of Jason Russell and decreased by 20% from one day to the next (See Table 13). Based on the data, it appears that the 20% decrease was due to the fact that people began to speak about the organization’s credibility as a whole, increasing the amount of tweets for the *Campaign Criticisms* theme. On March 17th, 93% of tweets focused entirely on Jason Russell’s mental breakdown. (below).

Table 13 | Statistics on Jason Russell Tweets

Date	Statistical representation per day
Phase 1: Joseph Kony 2012	Jason Russell
05-Mar 2012	0.0%
06-Mar 2012	0.0%
07-Mar 2012	0.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 1 for Initial Trending Tweets	0.0%
Phase 2: Critiques of the Campaign	Jason Russell
08-Mar 2012	0.0%
09-Mar 2012	0.0%
10-Mar 2012	0.0%
11-Mar 2012	0.0%
12-Mar 2012	0.0%
13-Mar 2012	0.0%
14-Mar 2012	0.0%

15-Mar 2012	0.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 2 for Initial Trending Tweets	0.0%
Phase 3: Jason Russell	Jason Russell
16-Mar 2012	80.0%
17-Mar 2012	60.0%
Average number of Tweets during phase 3 for Initial Trending Tweets	70.0%
<u>Sharing Information made up for 10.8% of all tweets collected</u>	

Using three distinct phases of time to better understand how the language unfolded overtime provided me with a thorough appreciation of where and how the language evolved over a thirteen day period. To provide further clarification, Table 14 demonstrates which themes were most prevalent and least prevalent overall throughout the campaign.

Table 14 | Representation of most tweeted to least tweeted themes

Top tweet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Theme	Initial Trending Tweet	Campaign Criticisms	Sharing of Information	PCA	Jason Russell	Viral Nature of Campaign	Campaign Mockery	SCA	Defending Campaign
Statistic	22%	20.90%	16.60%	13.20%	10.80%	5.20%	4.90%	3.70%	2.80%

Table 15 | Representation of all data for all phases

Phase 1 Joseph Kony KONY 2012	Initial Trending Tweets	Sharing Information	Passive Calls to Action	Strong Calls to Action	Defending Campaign	Campaign Criticisms	Campaign Mockery	Viral Nature of Campaign	Jason Russell	All Categories
05-Mar	4.0%	20.0%	52.0%	24.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
06-Mar	40.0%	20.0%	28.0%	12.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
07-Mar	28.0%	32.0%	32.0%	8.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

Average for phase 1	24.0%	24.0%	37.3%	14.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
Phase 2 Critiques of the campaign	Initial Trending Tweets	Sharing Information	Passive Calls to Action	Strong Calls to Action	Defending Campaign	Campaign Criticisms	Campaign Mockery	Viral Nature of Campaign	Jason Russell	All Categories
08-Mar	32.0%	12.0%	28.0%	0.0%	8.0%	16.0%	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%	100.0%
09-Mar	44.0%	12.0%	4.0%	0.0%	4.0%	28.0%	8.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
10-Mar	20.0%	8.0%	12.0%	4.0%	0.0%	36.0%	12.0%	8.0%	0.0%	100.0%
11-Mar	48.0%	12.0%	4.0%	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%	20.0%	12.0%	0.0%	100.0%
12-Mar	12.0%	32.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	32.0%	16.0%	8.0%	0.0%	100.0%
13-Mar	28.0%	28.0%	8.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	100.0%
14-Mar	16.0%	8.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	72.0%	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%	100.0%
15-Mar	4.0%	24.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.0%	56.0%	4.0%	8.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Average for phase 2	25.5%	17.0%	7.0%	0.5%	2.5%	32.0%	7.5%	8.0%	0.0%	
Phase 3 Jason Russell	Initial Trending Tweets	Sharing Information	Passive Calls to Action	Strong Calls to Action	Defending Campaign	Campaign Criticisms	Campaign Mockery	Viral Nature of Campaign	Jason Russell	All Categories
16-Mar	0.0%	8.0%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.0%	0.0%	4.0%	80.0%	100.0%
17-Mar	8.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.0%	12.0%	4.0%	0.0%	60.0%	100.0%
Average for phase 3	4.0%	4.0%	2.0%	0.0%	8.0%	8.0%	2.0%	2.0%	70.0%	
All Phases	Initial Trending Tweets	Sharing Information	Passive Calls to Action	Strong Calls to Action	Defending Campaign	Campaign Criticisms	Campaign Mockery	Viral Nature of Campaign	Jason Russell	All Categories
Grand Total	22.2%	16.6%	13.2%	3.7%	2.8%	20.9%	4.9%	5.2%	10.8%	100.0%

Discussion

Seven of the nine themes [(1) Initial Trending Tweet, (2) Sharing of Information, (3) Defending Campaign, (4) Campaign Criticisms, (5) Viral Nature of Campaign, (6) Campaign Mockery, and (7) Jason Russell] incorporated some form of sharing of information. Users were providing their followers with information as well as personal opinions about the campaign's credibility, Joseph Kony, and even Jason Russell's mental breakdown. These seven themes have been grouped together under one category tilted 'Sharing Information' because these themes lacked the

necessary information and calls to action to foster any tangible change. The last two themes, Passive Calls to Action and Strong Calls to Action makeup the final 2 categories in my findings. These tweets came closest to initiating a movement as they asked respective followers to take some form of action in support of the movement. Essentially, whether or not the content and context changed overtime, the hashtag was always used in the three following ways: (1) Sharing Information, (2) Passive Calls to Action, (3) Strong Calls to Action.

Sharing information

In their research around hashtag usages, Bruns and Burgess (2011) found that the hashtag was primarily used to organize discussion around specific topics or events. It was not used to create change, mobilize masses or send calls to action; rather, it was used to organize *discussion*. In the case of Kony 2012, there was a lot of information sharing around the hashtag #Kony2012, resulting in a movement that raised an abundance of awareness around several different issues with few calls to action. Out of the nine themes that surfaced in the data, I've classified all themes, with the exception of passive and strong calls to action, under sharing information. To reiterate, the seven themes are (1) Initial Trending Tweet, (2) Sharing of Information, (3) Defending Campaign, (4) Campaign Criticisms, (5) Viral Nature of Campaign, (6) Campaign Mockery, and (7) Jason Russell.

The language found within all seven themes was disseminating some form of information to their respective networks and never included a passive or strong call to action. Whether the tweet was sharing information around the campaign itself, Jason Russell's mental breakdown, or how viral the whole movement became – users were bringing light to an issue they wanted their respective followers to be aware of. Collectively, the seven themes falling under sharing

information make up for 83.2% of the data. The Initial Trending Tweet theme represented 22% of the entire data set, making it the most populated theme. This was a particularly interesting finding as it demonstrates how nine characters have the potential to start a movement if it gains enough traction and popularity; however, this also demonstrates that users are relying on nine characters to start a movement. This is where Anesi's (2009) 'free-rider' problem comes into play. Users will rely on the more devoted activists to take real action while the free riders reap the benefits of seeming involved based on their Tweets. The Initial Trending Tweet theme indicates that almost a quarter of users within the data wanted to contribute to the movement in terms of growth and popularity by strengthening the trend through the hashtag but ultimately relied on other users to take on more demanding sacrifices.

The themes, Campaign Criticisms and Sharing of Information were the second and third most frequently identified themes in the data. The popularity of these themes correlate with Small (2011), Mohr and Newn's (1990) research around Twitter. The evidence in Small's research, which looked at the use of Twitter during a Canadian political campaign, points to the notion that Twitter is changing the landscape of newsgathering practices. Similarly, Mohr and Newn found that Twitter provides users with the ability to consume, create and exchange information. To further support these claims around Twitter as a tool of dissemination and information sharing, George Washington University found that 52% of people who used Twitter did so for online research (2009). The literature suggests that Twitter's primary function is for users to search and share information deemed relevant and news worthy. Small states, "Whether Twitter contributes to quality information about current events, there should be little doubt that Twitter is changing how people and news organizations exchange and consume information" (p.2). Campaign Criticisms and Sharing of Information focused heavily on the exchange of facts

about the most current and up to date events surrounding Kony 2012. This finding aligns with what previous literature found regarding primary usages of Twitter in any given circumstance.

Passive Calls to Action

Passive calls to action tweets, which included words like: click, watch, share, and retweet made up for 13.2% of all tweets within the data set, making it the 4th largest theme. These tweets indicate that users were asking their followers to perform some form of action. These actions, however, never prompted the reader to go offline to take some form of tangible action. Rather, passive calls to action tweets were prompting users to educate themselves further by watching a video or reading an article. This type of user fits the New Social Movement theory mold, which claims that today's activists are interested in "quality of life, equal rights, individual self-realization, participation, and human rights" (Habermas, 1987, p.392). These users were evidently affected by the information they read or watched around human injustices in Uganda as they proactively took *one step further* than other Twitter users by incorporating a call to action within their tweet. These users are slightly more committed than the ones who are raising awareness as they are providing the follower with additional resources to become more understanding of the issues at hand and encouraging them to watch, share or retweet. These users were tweeting not to become activists but to tell stories, check facts, and raise awareness.

According to the New Social Movement theory, activists no longer feel the need to be members of an organization or committee to plan and protest, rather, activists seek informal networks of supporters to discuss human right related issues. This is very much in line with the Passive Call to Action tweeter as they are seeking their loosely organized network of followers to exchange information and fuel a discussion. While this style of calls to action are a step in the

right direction, this finding resembles Morozov's analogy on collective action, which states: "...while it doesn't take much to make a group of people feel they have a common identity, it is considerably harder to make them act in the interests of that community or make individual sacrifices in its name" (Morozov, 2011, p.188). Essentially, he asserts that users are willing to take limited forms of action, like a passive call to action, to feel as though they are contributing to the greater good. This type of action is what Morozov calls slacktivism. Slacktivism is a term used to describe actions performed online in support of a social cause (Morozov, 2010). The words 'slacker' and 'activist' imply that the user performs very little action but gains satisfaction by publicly participating in a positive cause (Morozov, 2010). Passive Calls to Action peaked during phase 1 of the campaign and declined by phase 2 and 3, indicating that commitment faded as days progressed. A constant shift in language surrounding the #Kony2012 hashtag is a possible explanation behind the decline in Passive Calls to Action. With so many opposing views and distribution of information, users were focusing less on how to create change and more on Kony 2012 the 'movement'.

Strong Calls to Action

Only 3.7% of all tweets were composed of a strong call to action indicating that users were not using Twitter to plan or mobilize, rather, they were using it to create a trend about the movement itself. This finding is directly aligned with Tilly's (2004) WUNC requirements, which states that collective action with the purpose of creating change depends on what he describes as the ability to display: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment. Those using a strong call to action came closest to displaying Tilly's four traits to creating legitimate change. By using Twitter to reach the masses, these users were immediately showing that they were seeking out numbers.

Using the #Kony2012 hashtag demonstrated that they were also seeking out like-minded individuals to create a sense of unity. Unfortunately, there wasn't any evidence that these users were fulfilling Tilly's last two requirements: worthiness and commitment. In the case of Kony 2012, worthiness and commitment are characteristics that were not demonstrated in the online world. Tweeting a Strong Call to Action was not popular throughout the entirety of this campaign indicating that users are not committed to taking movements off line and mobilizing in the real world. This finding is in line with Olson's core assumption, which states that groups are made up of individuals who posit weak levels of commitment (as stated in Bennett and Segerberd, 2012). Interestingly, Invisible Children provided users with two pre-determined calls to action: a passive call to action and strong call to action. The passive call to action asked users to retweet and share the documentary with everyone in his or her respective networks. This call to action gained traction and resulted in making Kony 2012 the most viral video of all time (Grossman, 2012). The strong call to action asked users to take to the streets and cover every city wall with posters of Joseph Kony's face on April 20th, 2012. In the 325 tweets I collected, there was no mention of this strong call to action asking people to show up in person. These findings suggest that, in this case, Twitter was used to promote passive calls to action (i.e.: awareness raising messages) rather than strong calls to action (i.e.: mobilizing messages).

Conclusion

This study examined the language used within the Kony 2012 movement and aimed to understand how the language within tweets changed from one day to the next by following a user-generated hashtag (#Kony2012). Although users were geographically disconnected from the issues happening on the ground in Uganda, the Internet afforded them with the power to become aware of the injustices being carried out against Kony's child soldiers. Looking to Twitter to find

like-minded individuals, users tweeted using the hashtag #Kony2012 to follow the trending discussions surrounding this viral movement. People are using mediums like Twitter and features like the hashtag for more than one reason. Some use it to share information and disseminate findings onto their respective followers; others use it with the intent of raising awareness in the hopes of fostering change. The motivations behind a user's participation in an online movement are very subjective. Although the language within my data exposed several reasons behind a user's involvement, it is difficult to be absolutely certain of a user's intent to use a social media platform like Twitter to foster a movement.

In future research studies focusing on the use of Twitter for activist movements, it would be interesting to conduct face to face interviews with Kony 2012 Twitter contributors to gain a more thorough understanding of the motivations behind a user's engagement. This information would provide richer findings and afford us to understand a user's intention behind their participation in Kony 2012. Furthermore, it would be interesting to take personal agenda's into consideration when examining user behavior in virtual activist movements. Do everyday people, celebrities and organizations partake in online movements to fulfill a PR quota? Is Twitter an extension of an organizational CSR (corporate social responsibility) program? Regardless of the motives, this information would help provide a deeper understanding behind the successes and failures of virtual activist movement.

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