

# An Alternative social space for socio-political participation: Facebook and Youth of Social Movements Organizations in the US

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## Research Paper

### ABSTRACT

In the field of ICT4D, social movements have long been recognized as key collective actors in the process of social change. Social movements are contesting traditional centers of power and generating emerging forms of organization and well being while transforming the nature of political participation. Despite this recognition, the intersection between social movements and IC4D still remains an understudied area of inquiry. This paper helps expand existing knowledge on the relationship between youth, social media and social movements. In particular, it helps to better understand how the mediations of Facebook have broadened the participation opportunities of youth participants in Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) linked to the Immigration Reform Movement in the US. It also shows how youth participants have gained power within these organizations and in other sociopolitical scenarios and social movements. This paper also suggests that the interactions that SMOs' youth participants have through Facebook, have contributed to transform the SMOs interaction among the agents that encompass the SMOs and their stakeholders.

**Keywords:** Facebook, Social Movements, USA, Political Participation, Communication, Social Change

### INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, several studies have shown that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have changed not only the ways activists communicate, collaborate and demonstrate but have also impacted political processes and civic engagement, specially of youth people (B. Bimber, Stohl, & Flanagin, 2009; M Castells, 2007; Castells, 2009; Chadwick & Howard, 2009; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Juris, 2008). Castells (2007), for example, has pointed out that the diffusion of Internet, mobile communication, digital media, and various tools of social software have prompted the development of horizontal networks of interactive communication. These networks have induced the rise of a new form of

communication that allows insurgent politics and social movements to intervene more decisively in that new communication space.

After social mobilizations such as “Soy 132” (Spanish for "I Am 132") in Mexico, “Occupy Wall Street” in the US, or the “Arab Spring” in Tunisia and Egypt, one could easily conclude that Internet-based technologies, especially Social Media (such as Facebook, Twitter or Blogs), have altered both the form and the results of contemporary protests, social movements, and other forms of collective action. Furthermore, Bimber, Flanagin & Stohl (2005; 2003) have demonstrated how rapid technological innovation is dramatically broadening and accelerating changes to the terms and structures of collective action, which are increasingly more sensitive to the flow of events and information and less reflective of the traditional organization of interest. Moreover, Bennett, Breunig, and Givens (2008) posit that ICTs may now enable sustainable interpersonal network organization on a large scale that is (to varying degrees) independent of, and in some cases may act upon, conventional institutional organizations.

Recent studies hold that young adults are the main users of social networking sites (SNS) in the USA. As a result, social media has become an important factor in youth political involvement and mobilization. The studies also show that Facebook is the dominant platform of SNS in the USA, and its users tend to be more politically engaged than other social sectors. According to Pew Research Center (2012), young adult Internet users in the USA are more likely than others to use different forms of SNS.

Donk (2004) also asserted that there is still a theoretical disconnection between the studies on social movements, as such, and the ones that analyze the uses of ICTs by social movements and the complex networks that comprise them. These arguments show that it is important to explore the ways in which ICT have been integrated in extra-institutional spheres of politics, and if these ways also challenge the same forms in which social movements have been conceptualized.

Though there are many indications that social mobilization and political participation have been transformed by ICT developments, challenging the ways we understand collective action and social movements, we still know little about the degree and complexity of those transformations and how human interactions with Social Media are altering both individual participation in collective action, and the course and outcomes of these efforts. Particularly, we still know little about the use of social media by youth members of social movements and the ways this is changing, if so, the practices and performance of social movements.

This paper is part of a larger research which explores how social movements interact with Facebook, and it also examines the mediations<sup>1</sup> of Facebook in the information and communication practices, identities, and performativity with three SMOs in Washington State. The current work embark upon the following research questions: how have the interactions between social media and youth members of SMOs have been transformed, and how these transformations have impacted the youth participation within these organizations as well as SMOs performativity<sup>2</sup>?

The result of this study helps to better understand the ways in which the mediations of Facebook have broadened the participation opportunities of youth participants in Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) linked to the Immigration Reform Movement in the US. It also shows how youth participants have improved their position and power within these organizations and in other sociopolitical scenarios and social movements. The paper also suggests that the interactions that SMOs' youth participants have through Facebook, have contributed to transform the SMOs performativity.

Moreover, this study suggest that while Facebook has not transformed the SMOs' practices or the forms of their collective actions, Facebook has helped to enable a set of mediations in the interactions between SMOs' participants that enhance their relations and their actions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **ICT and Social Movements**

In North America many studies that incorporate the examination of social movements and ICT came from analysis of the civil rights and labor movements (Ramirez, 2011). These social movement studies, including cultural, African-American, and communication studies, deal with questions on how media, and the systems in which media are embedded, can enable or constrain collective struggle, and how cultural practices and structures favor the use of media for mobilization (e.g. Garland, 1982; Morris, 1984; Roscigno & Danaher, 2001; Ward, 2004).

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<sup>1</sup> In ANT mediators, are actors (human and non-human) that transform and multiply differences during the interactions among these actors, in a sort of 'cooperative' work.

<sup>2</sup> Based on (Melucci, 1994; Law, 2009) performativity here implicates an understanding of the different actors that encompass the SMOs and their multiple, fluid, and temporary interactions.

This study developed an extensive literature review that includes studies in many different contexts. Thus the international literature that informs this research is organized on different but complementary aspects in three main tracks:

- Social Movement Studies (SMS) that incorporate analysis of the presence and use of ICT in collective action (e.g. Castells, 2004; Manuel Castells, 2007; Cohen & Rai, 2000; della Porta & Tarrow, 2012; Ruggiero & Montagna, 2008; Smith, Chatfield, & Pagnucco, 1997);
- Multidisciplinary studies of ICT that focus on the ways that social movements and collective action use and integrate these technologies, that according to Garrett (2006) in the mid-1990s matured into a stable research area and e.g. (Bennett et al., 2008; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Garrido, 2006; Gillan, Pickerill, & Webster, 2008; Lim, 2012), and,
- Information and Immigration studies that analyze the relationships between ICT and social movements and collective action (e.g. Baron, Neils, & Gomez, 2013; Fairlie, 2007; Garcia, 2011; Landry & Kuglitsch, 2009).

The review also incorporates some of the salient literature of multidisciplinary studies on ICT and collective action in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) (e.g. Baron, Rodriguez, Wiesner, & Martinez, 2003; Leon, Burch, & Tamayo, 2005; Unas, 2010).

These tracks points out four major conclusions: (1) Within the field of Social Movement Studies there are relatively few examples that incorporate analyses of the presence and interactions of social movements and Internet-based technologies. However, some recent studies on transnational and/or global mobilizations have paid more attention to the uses of ICT and their relations with networks, the diffusion of mobilization strategies, and with new forms of political participation.

(2) There are many multidisciplinary studies on relationships between ICT and different forms of collective action (protests, civic engagement, social mobilizations, and social and network movements). Several of these studies emphasize four theoretical frameworks that come from Social Movements Studies - resource mobilization, mobilizing structures, opportunity structures, and framing processes. These studies apply very diverse research methods without a significant use of mixed methods, and few studies use ethnographic approaches. Sociological and historical case studies on particular movements or events are prevalent, and many of the studies give priority to 'critical events' as well as massive protests and uprisings that have been highlighted in the national and international media.

(3) Despite the social and academic relevance of transnational immigration issues, and the number of people and grassroots organizations mobilizing for immigration rights on different levels, there are still

very few studies that analyze the relationships among information, immigration, and collective action, and even fewer studies on Internet-based technologies and Social Movements.

(4) Most research in the field of Social Movements and ICT have tended to omit or not clearly present the theoretical frameworks they are using to understand technologies, social movements, and the relationships between them. Such omissions and lack of clarity have an impact on the methodological decisions that drive these studies, with significant effects on the findings they are presenting: they tend to produce more deterministic and simplistic perspectives on the roles and influence of ICT on social movements, and to obscure their the degree of the ICT impacts on collective actions, and their influence in the broader political process.

### **Studies focusing on Social Media and Youth**

Among the extensive literature referred above more recently reports of the Pew Research Center show that between February 2005 and May 2013, the use of social media among young adult Internet users jumped from 9% to 89%, almost a tenfold jump. Hispanics are more likely than Caucasian and African American users to use social media<sup>3</sup>. Young people, African Americans, Hispanics, the highly educated and those with a higher annual household income are more likely to use social media on their phones than other groups.<sup>4</sup>

The Pew Research Center<sup>5</sup> also shows that social networking sites are increasingly used to keep up with close social ties, and Facebook users have more close relationships and they are more trusting than nonusers. However, the average Facebook user gets more information from their friends on Facebook than they give to their friends. Moreover, the Pew Center maintains that SNS have become an important additional arena for politics, and Facebook users are much more politically engaged than most people.

Multidisciplinary studies on ICT and social movements, as well as immigration and information studies, reviewed for this study, have paid important attention to the youths' uses of ICT. These include the use of social media, as well as their involvement in social movements. In particular, the studies on the recent

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<sup>3</sup> See more at: <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Coming-and-going-on-facebook.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> See more at: <http://pewinternet.org/Commentary/2012/March/Pew-Internet-Social-Networking-full-detail.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> See more at: <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Coming-and-going-on-facebook.aspx>

protests and revolutions (such as the Arab Spring or Occupy Wall Street) show noteworthy connections between youth activism and their access and use of ICT during social mobilizations. For example

Khamis & Vaughn (2011) show that a new media revolution erupted in the Arab world after 1990, inspired by the introduction of both satellite television channels and the Internet. The authors point out that use of the Internet rapidly grew and expanded, especially among young people, particularly the 20 to 30 year old age group. This group used the net more avidly compared to the rest of the population. Beinín & Vairel (2011) show that the social and political context that led the revolutionary attempts in many countries of the region also had high youth unemployment (youth under the age of 30 comprises 50-60% of population in Arab countries); low salaries; high inflation; high Gini coefficient; police repressions and tortures; and corruption.

As part of the immigration and information studies Appadurai analyzes global process of immigration and social mobilization, and he argues that electronic media has had an impact in helping vulnerable and marginalized sectors build new spaces of power. He also shows these media have helped these sectors with their *work of the imagination* which allows people “to resist state violence, seek social redress, and design new forms of civic association and collaboration, often across national boundaries” (Appadurai, 2000, p. 6).

Other studies of the information and immigration field show innovative uses of ICTs for civic engagement and networked activism, as developed by the immigrant rights movement in the United States. For instance (Costanza-Chock, 2008, 2011), points out that the immigrant rights movement has developed a rich repertoire of tactics to use ICTs to engage immigrant communities and their allies, mobilize supporters, generate debate, raise funds and take direct action. However recent studies sustain that social media, particularly Facebook is not a good gateway to civic engagement. For example Lewis, Gray, & Meierhenrich (2014), findings reveals an inverse relationship between broad online social movement mobilization and deep participation.

The present study helps expand existing knowledge on the relationship between youth, social media and social movements. In particular, this work helps to better understand the ways in which the mediations of Facebook have broadened the participation opportunities of youth participants in the SMOs, as well as their position and power within these organizations and in other sociopolitical scenarios and social movements.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### A connectedness among three interactive frameworks

This study lays three interactional frameworks against one another to help unlock ICT, social mobilization and political participation in a new way: Actor-Network Theory (Latour, Law and Callon); The New Social Movements approach (Melucci); and Multi-sited ethnography (Marcus).

ANT suggests the idea on the interactions between human and non-human agents. Latour describes human and nonhuman relations in terms of various forms of mediation (Latour, 2009). The notion of mediation is a sort of 'cooperative' work between human and non-human agents, and implies that non-human can develop diverse forms of mediation which can transform, translate, distort or modify meanings or elements (Latour, 2007, 2009).

This research operationalizes Alberto Melucci's work (1994, 1995, 1996) to better understand the complexity of social movements networks and their symbolic and communicative character. Melucci also helps to comprehend the importance of information, which has become a crucial resource for contemporary complex systems, as a terrain where new forms of power, discrimination, and conflict come into being (Melucci, 1994, 1996).

This study conducted a **multi-sited ethnography**. **Multi-sited** ethnography is a method of data collection developed by Marcus (1995) to examine transnational dynamics and the increasing interconnectedness processes of globalization. These practices move from conventional, single-site locations, contextualized by macro-constructions of a larger social order, to multiple sites of observation and participation. Multi-sited ethnography informed this research project allowing me to follow different contemporary collectives (such as SMOs) which are related to transnational dynamics (such as migration that links local and international dynamics); interconnected social spaces and times (offline and online); as well as practices, symbols and technologies (such as social mobilization, stories and social media).

### Research Sites: SMOs working with immigration in Washington State

Thus, inspired by Marcus's Multi-sited Ethnography, this project is focused on three organizations that work with immigration issues in Washington State; it does not build on a series of case studies but uses four complementary data collection procedures that help highlight the interactions between them: (a) participatory observations of face-to-face interactions (34 events); (b) in-depth interviews with SMOs staff (n=22); (c) online surveys focused on SMOs beneficiaries (n=144); and online observations of technologically mediated interactions (100 Facebook posts). Qualitative content analysis and descriptive

statistics were used to analyze the data collected as well as to present the results. However some key examples of the statistical significance (confidence intervals) of the surveys were developed.

The selection process focused on SMOs that included Latino communities among their beneficiaries considering that (1) Hispanics constitute the fastest growing group in Washington State over the past decade (11% of the state's 6.7 million residents);<sup>6,7</sup> and (2) 68% of Hispanic internet users in US say they use Facebook, Twitter or other social networking sites.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, priority was given to organizations that were able to work collaboratively and facilitate the researcher's interacting with members and supporters of the organization, as well as access to public and internal (non-sensitive) information, and to participate in meetings, workshops, Facebook pages, and mobilization activities.

Based on the criteria presented above, the selected SMOs for this study are the following: **OneAmerica (OA)**, which advances the fundamental principles of democracy and justice at the local, state and national levels by building power within immigrant communities in collaboration with key allies; **Latino Civic Alliance (LAC)**, which promotes civic participation and empowers Latino communities in the State of Washington; and **Entre Hermanos (EH)**, which promotes the health and well-being of the Latino Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and encourages the participation of the members of the LGBTQ community in activism and human rights. Appendix 1 shows a reference chart of the participating SMOs. Appendix 1 shows a comparative chart of the SMOs included in this study.

The **units of analysis** of this research project were the three SMOs retained in the study, and all the research design focused on them. However, **this is not a collection of three case studies**, because this is an interactional study. Moreover, it is important to take into account that SMOs interactions with larger movement networks, as well as its interactions with its participants, are constitutive of these kinds of organizations, of the approach favored by ANT, and of the multi-sited ethnographic design. The implementation order of the data collection procedures were as follows: (1) the in-depth interviews with different members SMOs staff, (2) observations (face to face and technologically mediated) of key events of each SMO, and (3) online survey with SMOs beneficiaries. All of the four data collection procedures included staff members and the in-depth interviews and observations assured the inclusion of different voices and experiences among staff members.

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<sup>6</sup> This study is based on data collected by the Census Bureau in March 2007. See more at: [http://www.cis.org/immigrants\\_profile\\_2007](http://www.cis.org/immigrants_profile_2007)

<sup>7</sup> See more at: [http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2014312959\\_censusoverview24m.html](http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2014312959_censusoverview24m.html)

<sup>8</sup> See more at: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/03/07/vi-social-networking/>



All instruments and data collection procedures of this research project were tested and validated with prospective target groups and within selected scenarios of observation. To accommodate the bilingual characteristic of SMO members, support for native speakers of both English and Spanish was incorporated in the design, piloting, and application of procedures and instruments. This support was also considered for translation tasks.

The design did not include other important voices and perspectives that could be useful to consult in order to better understand the SMOs interactions with other social movements and social actors, such as journalists, mass media, or general public participating in SMOs public events (marches, protests, conference, and meetings, to mention a few). People and activities of other social organizations in the Seattle region<sup>9</sup>, linked in different capabilities with the selected SMOs, were informally interviewed during the observation of face to face events such as rallies, meetings and workshops; they provide valuable insight and feedback for the general analysis I present, but they are not technically part of the sample.

## FINDINGS

This study found that the interactions that SMOs' youth participants have through Facebook, have contributed to transform the SMOs performativity, creating a *social space for youth expression and socio-political participation*: This helped SMO's youth position their voices and participation in the SMOs and larger social movements for immigration reform, among others. Facebook in the hands of multicultural youth enabled them to develop new languages and codes, and to become better “cultural translators<sup>10</sup>” between key stakeholders in different social spaces. The new voices, stories and forms of participation from youth using Facebook reenergized and transformed the SMOs' practices and strategies and

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<sup>9</sup> Participants from other organizations included Casa Latina, which works to empower Latino immigrants through educational and economic opportunities; Latino Advocacy, which helps organizations to immigrant-run build bases within their communities to work for immigration reform; the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWRP), which promotes justice for low-income immigrants by pursuing and defending their legal status and Columbia Legal Services, which advocates for people who face injustice and poverty, among the most relevant.

<sup>10</sup> In ANT, “translation” is an important concept that refers to a relation that induces two mediators into coexisting. (For Latour the aim of the sociology of associations (ANT) is to show that “*there exist translations between mediators that may generate traceable associations*” (Latour, 2007, p. 108).

contributed to revitalizing the immigration reform movement. This claim is schematically represented with a graphic and it is described in more detail below, as well. “Cultural translators” refers here to the capability of people and communities, especially younger generations, to enable communication with other people and institutions that were outside of the SMO’s networks.



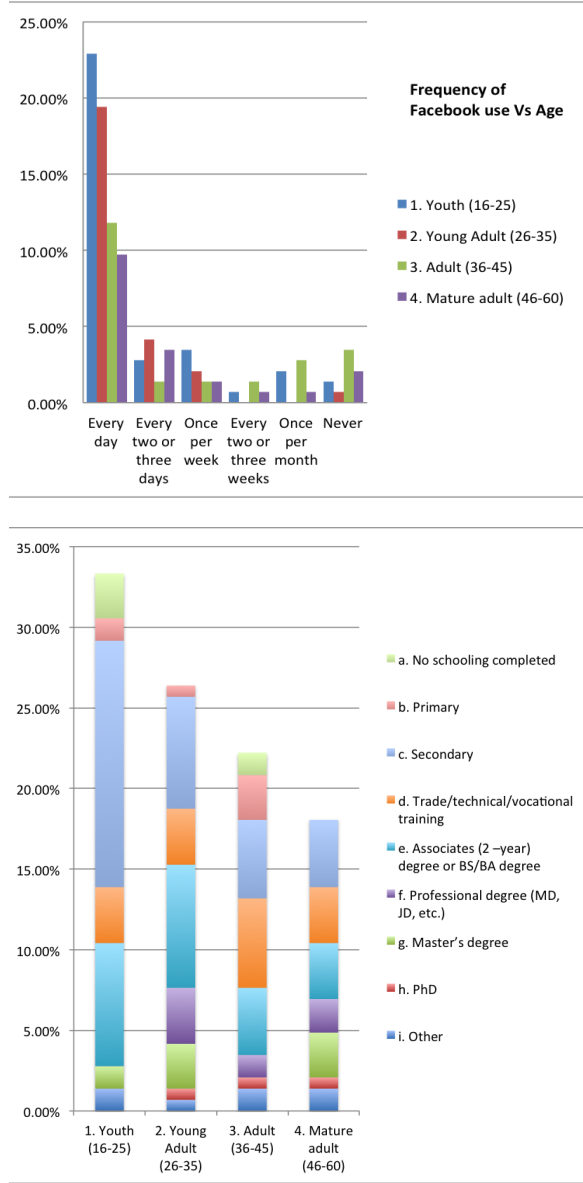
### **Facebook mediation on SMOs' performativity: the voices of youth**

The SMOs' youth participants found in Facebook a proactive space to tell their stories and to express their emotions, ideas and dreams in a familiar, friendly, non-threatening space. They used particular codes and languages: memorable titles, short stories of self-introduction, intense use of humor, and compelling pictures showing youths in action (having fun, deliberating, protesting, interacting with different social agents). Data from the online observations as well as from the surveys show that on Facebook, young participants of the SMOs shared their thoughts and aspirations on politics, democracy and immigration more vocally and more frequently than older participants. Their practices on Facebook reflect their ideas and ideals on politics, democracy and immigration, which mainly relate to collectivity and diversity, openness and freedom of participation, and friendly and peaceful scenarios of dispute. The following post portrays the way youth members express diversity and their political aspirations:



The interviews as well as the open-ended question also show that Facebook also fits well with their ideas and ideals because it was understood to be outside of the political institutions and mass media control. Even though the majority of young people recognized Facebook's links with the economic/corporation world, they use and adapted it for their own political and cultural purposes. The evidence of this study suggest that Facebook not only provided the SMOs' youth participants with alternative vehicles for the expression of personal, ethnic, political and gender ideas and emotions. Many of the youth also found a suitable space to connect these aspects with each other.

They also used Facebook to test and improve their stories and discussion topics. The technological and communicative capabilities acquired through Facebook also facilitated their roles as mediators and translators (of languages, information and cultural worlds) among SMOs' participants, as well as with other stakeholders. These included elected officials, mass media and other social movement and organizations. Youths' technological, multicultural and communication capabilities helped to position their voice and participation in the SMOs, as well as in other social movements and other types of organizations. The majority of the younger participants of the SMOs had high levels of educational attainment, were immigrants to the United States since a very young age, and were digital natives. These capabilities helped younger participants not only to mediate and extend the SMOs' strategies with immigrant communities, but also to mediate and extend the SMOs' interactions with key stakeholders, particularly institutional authorities and mass media. The following tables from the survey show the use of Facebook by youth members of SMOs as well as their educations level.



The findings of this research show that youths’ uses of Facebook have reenergized and transformed the SMOs practices and strategies, especially the ways in which the SMOs (1) use storytelling as a mobilization strategy; (2) express and reframe their collective narratives and identities and (3) plan and deploy their activities. These three transformations are related with the symbolic, material and technological practices of the SMOs, the following fragment of an interview expresses the way the youth interacting with Facebook have contributed to change SMOs and their interactions with other social actors.

*“The DREAMers<sup>11</sup> changed the movement, they gave it a little more publicity, because the media love youth. They learned how to use Facebook to get more attention for the movement (...) they brought more longevity, reenergized people who have been working for long time...”*  
*Interview with a SMO member (Female 26-36)*

The evidence presented shows that youths’ stories on Facebook have gained legitimacy and their stories had the power of the emotions, spontaneity and entitlement in which many of the immigrant activists were socially characterized during the fieldwork, particularly the DREAMers.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the ways in which youth members of the SMOs built memories and reported on their events through Facebook activated conversations with their local and larger networks of friends and families. Their memories and reports on Facebook also gave the youths’ networks the possibility to attend the events from other locations both in real time and deferred. Several times these memories and reports also encouraged many of them to take online and offline actions. For example, during one of the observations in a workshop (February 1, 2013), in which one of the SMOs provided information and training on how to deal with the paperwork for applying to the DREAM Act, a couple of young participants told me they were texting with some of their friends through Facebook. They were telling to them that the event was very useful, and that they still had time to come to the event. They also told me they had previously posted on Facebook that they were attending the event.

The observations show that on Facebook younger participants in SMOs recreated and re-signified institutional and cultural symbols, such as the American flag, historical figures as well as English language itself. These recreation and re-signification processes helped the SMOs frame their narratives and identities. For instance on Memorial Day a post of one the SMOs highlighting the contributions of youth immigrants in the military triggered 12 “likes” and 2 shares among Facebook friends.

The evidence of this study also shows that youths’ style also helped the SMOs to make immigrants’ narratives more compelling and socially acceptable. These practices have also helped the SMOs to change their public presence, as well as their interactions with their stakeholders, especially with institutional authorities and mass media. The following fragments of an interview as well as the post

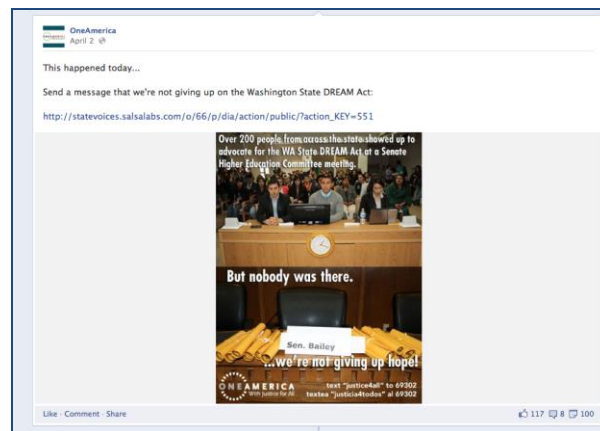
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<sup>11</sup> The DREAMers is a term used in the immigration reform movement to refer to young immigrants who might benefit from the Obama administration’s Deferred Action For Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Initiative.

<sup>12</sup> The DREAMers is a term used in the immigration reform movement to refer to young immigrants who might benefit from the Obama administration’s Deferred Action For Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Initiative, targeted to allow legal extension of stay for youth who stayed or were brought to the country illegally while they were minors, and who have served in the military or pursued higher education.

which is mentioned during the interview show not only how younger participants in SMOs recreated and re-signified institutional and cultural symbols, but also how they use them to position themselves with other stakeholders and in other sociopolitical arenas. The post in mention became viral and got more than 170.000 reaches. Later on, members of the SMO told me that the Senate committee organized another meeting with the DREAMers. They also told me that the viral post, and the discussion on Facebook on this issue, had an impact in the decision the committee made.

*“I think social media compliments and enhances the organizing fieldwork and policy work we do. For example, we brought over 200 students and allies down to Olympia to attend a committee meeting to make a statement about the WA State DREAM Act. The Senate committee meeting was cancelled at the last minute, so we decided to have a “People’s hearing” in the committee room anyway. The attached photo was generated and it went viral on social media (thousands of views). Because of our organizing, policy, and social media work, this event got the attention of earned media and I think helped bring more attention to the issue. There probably still would have been earned media without the photo, but social media definitely helped raise the awareness and strengthened our advocacy overall.” Interview with a SMO member (Female 26-35)*



### Facebook post from OneAmerica: Nobody was there

The findings show that younger participants of the SMOs were the main users and at the same time the main targets of social media, especially Facebook and Twitter. These conditions have changed SMOs daily communication practices, who have started to embrace social media in new ways that they did not carry out before. In particular, staff members, community leaders and activists of the SMOs have implemented more routinized practices related to social media use when they plan and deploy their activities. In this sense, they not only adopted regular practices to inform and report before, during and

after their activities, but they also incorporated formal and informal spaces to discuss uses and opportunities of social media, as well as the stories and styles they were going to communicate in.

The new routines and practices in the SMOs, described above, also have had organizational implications. The SMOs not only have increased the resources they invest in information and communication activities and teams, but also have incorporated training on social media use inside their teams as well as with their members and participants. Moreover, younger participants of the SMOs were frequently leading or coordinating these communication activities and teams.

## DISCUSSION

This study is suggesting that *performativity* comprises an understanding of the different agents that encompass the SMOs and their multiple, fluid, and temporary interactions. These interactions encompass the relationships among symbolic, practical and technological dimensions. This idea recuperates, on the one hand, Melucci's (1994) conception of social movements as media that speak through action: their primary message is that they exist and act. In Melucci's approach the actions of movements can be seen as symbols and as communication. As he writes "... this does away with the old distinction between the instrumental and expressive meaning of action, for in contemporary movements the results of action and the individual experience of new codes tend to coincide." (Melucci, 1994, p. 126). On the other hand, this idea regains Law's (Law, 2009) assertions that networks are enacted when they perform. This implies that entities are not real until they are enacted into being. For Law this implicates an understanding that each practice generates its own material and symbolic realities, and they are temporal and are enacted differently in various places. In Law's approach the description of the real is "always an ethically charged act." (Law, 2009, p. 155)

I suggest that the interactions that SMOs' youth participants have through Facebook, have contributed to transform the SMOs performativity. SMOs' youth participants found in Facebook a proactive space to tell their stories and to express their emotions, ideas and dreams in a familiar, friendly, non-threatening space.

The findings of this paper also confirm some of the claims of The Pew Research Center (PRC)<sup>13</sup>, particularly when they shows that the average Facebook user gets more information from their friends on Facebook than they give to their friends. This may be due to the contributions of a segment of 'power

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<sup>13</sup> See more at: <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Coming-and-going-on-facebook.aspx>

users' who specialize in different Facebook activities and contribute much more than the typical user does. Moreover, the data of PRC shows the importance of social media, particularly Facebook in daily life and sociopolitical practices of younger generations, particularly people of color and immigrants.

The qualitative data collected with the open-ended question in the survey point out that obtaining and sharing current information about SMOs' activities was important for the SMOs participants, the majority of them (approximately 60% of the people consulted) were between 16 and 35 years old). Most respondents (more than 50%) underlined the possibility provided by Facebook to obtain and share more current and effective information, especially valued because it is information that is directly produced and controlled by participants in the SMOs' activities, events and services. Moreover the survey, the interviews and the observations show that Facebook represented both a safe place as well as a strategic place to express, support and participate in many SMOs' activities such as rallies, hearings or planning activities.

Furthermore the observations of online interactions show that the posts of the SMOs' Facebook pages mainly referred to local activities and progress on immigration reform and immigrant rights, including LGBTQ rights, particularly for EH, that mainly focused on disease prevention for Latino LGBTQ community. Banners and pictures mainly present immigrant people getting together, discussing, protesting, working or receiving awards. Very few times the SMOs use Facebook to report in real time.

However, based on Khamis & Vaughn (2011), it is important to consider that sociopolitical contexts, in general, and the situation of youths, in particular, impacted youths' practices and uses of ICT as well as their opportunities to participate in social change. In this sense it is important to keep in mind that the young people consulted for this research were active members of social and political activities not only related to immigration issues but also to other cultural, social, academic and sports activities. For example, the survey results show that the majority of the 144 respondents (90%) were active in the SMO in different capacities and 10% said they were not active at all. Moreover 57% of the 144 respondents said they have participated in an election campaign during the last year, and 56% of them have notified the court or police about a social issue and 48% of them have voted in the elections during this time; 86% said they have participated in a protest or a mobilization, or have talked about a social issue in their community, and 84% of them have volunteered for a social organization during the last year.

The findings of this study are also convergent with the quantitative results of Cohen et al., (2012) who study youth participatory politics in the U.S. Their survey shows that large proportions of young people across racial and ethnic groups use online social media regularly to stay connected to their family and friends and pursue interests and hobbies. However, they also point out that new media has the potential to



facilitate an equitable distribution of political participation among young people of color who “are using their digital acumen to leverage their voices and sometimes influence others through online participatory politics. These practices may provide a valuable access point for those who are hoping to amplify marginalized voices in our democratic system” (Cohen et al., 2012: 37).

Quantitative and qualitative results of the survey conducted for this study show that Facebook has provided SMOs’ participants with (1) new possibilities to create and diffuse self-managed information, (2) to communicate constantly among them when events are relevant in the public opinion, but especially to communicate with other social organizations including the mass media, and (3) to connect people and build identity with the SMOs’ goals and values. For example, when survey respondents were asked about the ways they interacted with each SMO through Facebook and what were the primary purposes of each of them the majority of them said: to learn about the SMO's activities (24% in OA; 50% in LAC and 37% in EH). Then the respondents said they used Facebook in order to communicate with other organizations, including the media (21% in OA; 22% in LAC and 14% in EH) and to share with the SMO's identity and values (OA 14%; LCA 6% and EH 21%).

(Costanza-Chock, 2008, 2011), emphasizes the lessons that different experiences provide for the broader use of ICT to strengthen civic engagement and democracy. Among others, those lessons include that a) innovative ICT use for civic engagement can emerge organically from the context of community organizing; b) the most successful use of ICTs for civic engagement takes place across multiple platforms. This study also suggest that younger members helped the SMOs to develop a repertoire of tactics to use Facebook to engage immigrant communities and their allies, generate debate, mobilize supporters, and to take action.

The interviews with staff members of the three SMOs show, for example, that Facebook is understood as a very important social space in which immigrant communities get together, particularly for young members<sup>14</sup> of those communities and their networks of families, friends, and acquaintances. Facebook is also considered a place for youth, who are concurrently connected with other social spaces such as their education institutions, their jobs, their neighborhoods, and the streets. Interviewees also understand that communities of youth are connected with other tools such as texting, Twitter, Flickr, or Tumblr.

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<sup>14</sup> When interviewees talk about youth they mainly referred to: 1) high school students, 2) early college students, 3) college and university students, and 4) young professionals.

Finally, in a seminal work that analyzes the relationship between modernity and globalization, Appadurai (1996) studies the relationship between processes of immigration and communication and information dynamics. He pays special attention to the relationship between electronic media and the promotion of global ideals and the contemporary tensions of the *work of the imagination* as constitutive feature of modern subjectivity. He asserts that imagination represents a peculiar force in social life because, like never before, many people in more parts of the world consider a much wider set of possible lives for themselves and others.

This paper reaffirm Appadurai's arguments and show that Facebook has not only helped younger participants of SMOs to build a space of power inside and outside of their organizations, but also helped them to create common references of their imagined, their dreamed, lives and societies. However, the data also show that Facebook has helped them create new images of youth immigrant stories and youths' forms of sociopolitical action that have helped them position themselves within the SMOs and have opened new avenues of social, cultural and political participation for youth in the organizations and in society. This shows that youths' interactions with Facebook have the potential to help transform the SMOs' vision and strategies as well as their contributions and performativity in the immigration movement in US.

For example the observations I developed show the organizers used the Facebook pages before the events to invite people to come. The participants, especially youth, used Facebook to inform their friends and families about where they were, what they were doing and their first impressions of the activities through their mobile devices. They also encouraged people they were in contact with to attend, using Facebook chats or text messages. Some of the communications by youth did draw people to attend the events; especially those who thought they could obtain something such as legal advice or training for themselves and their family members. The following field notes describe the observations on how participants experienced the events they participated in, both before and after the event, and how they used ICT, particularly Facebook.

*"This afternoon I attended the senate hearing on the DREAM Act in Washington State... During the hearing a young UW student, said something like "When my friends asked me where I am from I have to say I was produced in Mexico but I was assembled in America". Another young and spontaneous guy said "I used to pick the cherries and peaches that you really love, but now I am working on technology with two grants I got from Amazon and Microsoft." When the event finished, members from different SMO and participants hugged and expressed too much satisfaction on the hearing results. SMOs' members reported on the events to their colleagues,*

*calling them by phone. Some of them also sent emails and others used their Twitter accounts. Participants again took pictures, recorded videos and posted them on Facebook or their Instagram accounts.*

*Field notes, Senate Hearing, March 28, 2013*

Three main dangers and other limitations of using social media emerged during the research: (1) Since information can spread incredible quick and broadly, rumors and misinformation against people and organization can be extremely dangerous, information can also be used as a way to locate and prosecute members of SMOs as well; (2) the news, comments and conversations that circulate on Facebook tend to emphasize the “nice” and happy side of agents and events related to the SMOs' activities, and this tendency may hide or circumvent conflicts, debates, and plurality and 3) if people tend to join Social Media that are closer to their thoughts, feelings and experience, these media can make the division in movements more entrenched, because “you are getting very particular views, and you are not necessary been challenged by the people you are not agree with, that creates a way of isolation, a live in silos...” Interview with a SMO member (Female 26-35). However this study does not dig deeper on the dangers and other limitations of using social media (e.g. confidentiality and privacy violations by both governmental and corporate entities) and whether the users of social media such as Facebook are sufficiently sensitive about such potential violations and options.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This paper helps expand existing knowledge on the relationship between youth, social media and social movements. In particular, it helps to better understand the ways in which the mediations of Facebook have broadened the participation opportunities of youth participants in Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) linked to the Immigration Reform Movement in the US. Contrary to Lewis, Gray, & Meierhenrich (2014) findings, this study shows how youth participants have improved their position and power within these organizations and in other sociopolitical scenarios and social movements. The paper also suggests that the interactions that SMOs' youth participants have through Facebook, have contributed to transform the SMOs performativity.

Moreover this study suggest that while Facebook has not transformed the SMOs' practices or the forms of their collective actions, Facebook has helped to enable a set of mediations in the interactions between SMOs' participants that enhance their relations and their actions. This paper emphasis that through Facebook youth members of SMOs developed a social space that help them to enhance their expression

and socio-political participation: Youth participating in the SMOs used Facebook as an alternative space and as a language (a code) to create and share stories about themselves and their social and political activities in a familiar, friendly, and non-threatening platform. This helped SMO's youth position their voices and participation in the SMOs and larger social movements for immigration reform, among others. Facebook enable multicultural youth them to develop new languages and codes, and to become better "cultural translators" between key stakeholders in different social spaces. The new voices, stories and forms of participation from youth using Facebook reenergized and transformed the SMOs' practices and strategies and contributed to revitalizing the immigration reform movement.

This study shows future research challenges on the entanglements of ICT, youth and social movements. This include the use of social media in youths' daily life and its implication for larger social movements and campaigns; the possible dangers and limitation of using social media; the mediation of social media in the interactions between youth members of the immigration reform movement and the LGBTQ movement in the US as well as the interactions between youth members of social movements in the US and other social movements, especially in Latin America; and the technological practices and innovations developed by the SMOs' youth members that involved Facebook and other forms of social media.

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## APPENDIX 1.

**Comparative Chart of the SMOs included in the study**

SMO Name	Mission	Staff	Participants	Access to and uses of Social Media and other ICT
OneAmerica <a href="http://weareoneamerica.org">http://weareoneamerica.org</a>	Advances the principles of democracy and justice at the local, state and national levels by building power within immigrant communities in collaboration with key allies.	Approx. 30 permanent staff with people leading strategic programs supported by volunteers.	Approx. 2.000-3.000 subscribed members in WA. More than 10 active chapters in WA.	Facebook page Facebook Group (youth) Twitter Website & Blogs Use of multimedia activities, which incorporate training and access to computers and mobile phones.
Latino Civic Alliance <a href="http://www.latinocivicalliance.org">http://www.latinocivicalliance.org</a>	Promotes civic participation and empowers Latino communities in the State of Washington.	Platform of organizations and networks, leads by a group of about 10 volunteers.	Representatives of more than 30 organizations working with Hispanics in WA. Gathers 500 to 1.000 participants during its Legislative Days.	Facebook page. No Twitter. Website Extensive use of audio conference and phone calls.
Entre Hermanos <a href="http://www.entrehermanos.org">http://www.entrehermanos.org</a>	Promotes the health and well being of the Latino LGTB, and encourages the participation of the members of the LGBTQ community in activism and human rights.	Approx. 5 permanent staff that work with people leading particular projects and supported by volunteers.	Provides services and promotes activities with about 400 regular members of the LGTB community in Seattle.	Facebook page Twitter Website Extensive use of cultural and social events.