
THE FACEBOOK PROJECT

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE CHIEF

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ABSTRACT

In light of increasing racial tensions in recent years on the University of Illinois campus, the Ethnography of the University Initiative and Diversity Research Project have called for new assessments of campus climate in regards to race. This paper explores a new but crucial space of race related discourse that plays an important role in the everyday lives of undergraduate students: Facebook.com. Social networking services extend social capital by impacting individuals and groups and Facebook in particular has amplified student support of Chief Illiniwek, the now deposed symbol of the University of Illinois. The pro-Chief social movement is a powerful example of the way Facebook can potentially be abused for a misguided cause. The Chief represents a myriad of issues relating to racial tensions, including disrespect and inappropriate representation of a racial minority group as well as a topic that provokes responses exemplary of colorblind racism or discrimination. Therefore Facebook is an environment where we need to establish sufficient and effective advocacy and empowerment as a method of social change. This paper draws upon previously established survey data (Ginger 2008) and exploratory qualitative content analysis (manifest and latent) to paint a picture of the contemporary and historical usage of Facebook related to the Chief. Student perceptions in regards to campus climate, actions taken in accordance with the Chief are examined in parallel with the character of groups surrounding the topic. Ultimately the findings and discussion render the suggestion to include more administrative and educator awareness and utilization of the same digital venues for social capital in Facebook for social change as well as a call for better communication processes (dialogue) between participants. Given the necessity to alter preferences in order to cause lasting effects on perceptions of race and the high caliber emotional content encountered in Chief-related groups it would seem these digital spaces are an crucial tool and context for actors leading social movements to understand and engage.

KEYWORDS AND TAGS

Facebook, social capital, race campus climate, social movements, social change, Chief Illiniwek

INTRODUCTION

The University of Illinois has a long standing tradition of academic excellence. By fielding a formidable group of internationally renowned faculty, hosting some of the most elite research and conferences and through offering a wide variety of programs the school has achieved an outstanding level of accomplishments and recognition. The university as a whole claims a great deal of racial diversity as over 38 percent of student attendants come from non-majority backgrounds¹. With college attendance rates on the rise and nearly two thirds of high school graduates enrolling in colleges or universities², the undergraduate student audience is becoming both pervasive and of even greater importance to society than ever before.

The fluid shift into the information age has accompanied these trends in education and nearly every student at the University of Illinois is a regular and native user of an extensive array of information and communication technologies (ICT). Of the various technological tools available social networking services (SNS)—websites built around extending and enhancing face to face connections and networks to the digital realm—are rapidly becoming ubiquitous and of monumental significance. Indeed studies indicate sites such as Facebook.com see between a 93-97% uptake rate among undergraduates and the vast majority of participants are visiting at least once, if not three or four times a day (Ginger 2008).

Facebook.com offers a remarkably accurate and immersive portrayal of student life. Many elements of the system are of public domain to site participants and as such present an apt opportunity for social research. Therefore by looking at both individual and group perceptions and usages of Facebook one can easily deduce observations and theories about campus climate. The University of Illinois may boast a high level of racial diversity but the actual interactions occurring between various student populations that relate to issues of diversity are another conundrum entirely.

THE CHIEF AND CAMPUS CLIMATE AT UIUC

One of the most controversial and long standing debates linked strongly to racial diversity is that of the school's former mascot or symbol³, Chief Illiniwek. Recent years have not only seen the removal

¹ UIUC Division of Management Information <http://www.dmi.uiuc.edu/stuenr/index.htm#race>

² Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgcec.nr0.htm>

³ A great debate rages around the proper classification, this paper expresses no formal opinion

of the Chief, but an increase in racial tensions related to racial stereotype theme parties⁴, affirmative action protests and more. The figure of the Chief has become representative of school pride and tradition to many students and the debate surrounding and ultimate decision to remove him after the years of resounding offense and disapproval by Native Americans inspired a great deal of resistance. Held in parallel to the same notions of youth resistance to authority found in such phenomena as Unofficial St. Patrick's Day⁵ many students have a complete disconnect from the actual damaging issues at hand and their own [mis]conceptions of what is right (or best) for everyone. The pro-Chief cause has taken off in full force since the Board of Trustee's decision to retire him in February of 2007, and thousands of students have voiced their support in online petitions, registered student organizations and through various protests. Even just recently in the October 2007 Homecoming parade Chancellor Herman allowed the logo to be used on grounds of free speech and free expression⁶. The debate is very much still alive among the student population and shows signs of intensifying as even more sports fans wear their Chief clothing to events than ever before and persist with overt support.

One of the flashpoints of debate over Chief Illiniwek has taken place on Facebook.com, the current digital mirror of the UIUC undergraduate population. In January of 2007 the tensions intensified after racist remarks about Native Americans were discovered on the pro-mascot Facebook group entitled "If They Get Rid of the Chief, I'm Becoming a Racist" (Garenes 2007). The group featured wall posts by students making statements like *"What they don't realize is that there never was a racist problem before ... but now I hate redskins and hope all those drunk casino owning bums die."* Another student directed a post towards a particularly vocal Native American graduate student, threatening, *"I say we throw a tomahawk into her face"* (Mercer 2007). The page was taken down, but not before provoking a university investigation.

For all of the news and media attention the threats themselves received Facebook still contains a great deal of pro-Chief material and student organization. The single largest group on the UIllinois Facebook network is "Chief Illiniwek Forever" and it's the only one in the top 5 to have grown in the past

⁴ See

http://cdms.ds.uiuc.edu/pages/Research_CDMS/Research_07_08/Countering_Race_Hate_in_Cyberspace.pdf for a glimpse of what this looks like.

⁵ An oddity of student drinking culture, undergraduates fill the streets dressed in green one day a year attending classes drunk and flooding bars early in the day. The incident has caused so many accidents and civic unrest that town and University governing officials are now trying to battle it in any way they can. They've had little luck as the vast majority of students see it as a sort of blessed day and valiant cause.

⁶ The New York Times reports as the Daily Illini seems to be sick of the issue:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/28/education/28mascot.html>

year⁷. Of the Uillinois groups with members numbering in the thousands (there are 28) four of them are Pro-Chief groups. Activity varies greatly by group but many are still active. Other non-explicitly Chief groups, such as the “Class of 2008” feature the Chief logo for their picture. In a similar vein, hundreds of individuals changed their picture to the Chief logo to protest the mascot’s removal. Facebook continues to be reflective of student sentiments and support for the Chief. The University has taken little formal action to counteract this.

Following the formalized retirement of the Chief an outpouring of opinions surfaced among the undergraduate population. In previous years the extended debate consisted largely of informed participants but suddenly with school pride in jeopardy and racial issues coming to the forefront the new social norm became a need to give an opinion for or against. Events like the threats and more generalized discourse reveal a great deal about campus racial climate. Student conceptions of race vary widely, but many feel the Chief is a racist figure and a blatant misrepresentation of Native Americans by a white actor and white orchestrators. Other students feel the Chief is totally disconnected from issues of race and is only abstractly representative of disembodied elements of character such as pride, tradition, and honor. Other opinions relating to relevance, representation, and terminology complicate the mess but in essence the debate rages on and this remains clearly visible on Facebook.

Before delving into the topic of the Chief on Facebook one must understand the history and relevance of each independently. First a quick overview of Facebook, abridged⁸.

THE HISTORY AND SALIENCE OF FACEBOOK

Arguably one of the two most influential SNS websites on the internet, Facebook.com is a comprehensive and encompassing clustering of social networks based on universities and colleges, high schools, work places, and geographic areas. Started originally in February of 2004, Facebook hit its first tipping point in the late summer of that year with the introduction of groups and public posting ‘walls.’ A second surge in growth resulted from Facebook’s introduction to the global public – the site went from consistently hovering around 14 million unique visitors per month to over 26 million (Comscore 2007c). In the span of a little over 2 years - from 2005 to 2007—the user count has grown 10 times in

⁷ Data published in *The Facebook Project Research Proposal*, locatable at <http://jag85.com/facebook/publications/chief.html>

⁸ A shortened version from Jeff Ginger’s MA paper, the full version is available at www.TheFacebookProject.com.

size.⁹ As of June 2007 collectively Facebook now claims over 39 million members (52 million unique visitors) and remains one of the fastest growing websites on the internet (Wakabayashi 2007, Comscore 2007b, Abram 2007). Sources vary, but membership saturation ranges between 85% and 95% at most colleges (Golder, Wilkinson, and Huberman 2006, Arrington 2005, Ellison, Steinfeld, and Lampe 2005, Jones and Soltren 2005).

Facebook ranks as one of the most visited websites on the internet, with sources claiming as high as the 3rd most visited based on page views, and they now account for about 1% of all time spent on the internet (Freiert 2007, Abram 2007). More than 60% of members log in daily and many sign on multiple times a day while the average visitor spends over three hours of time on the site each month (Lipsman 2007a, Arrington 2005). The most common activities (based on time spent) overall are in descending order: browsing profiles, interacting with applications, browsing pictures, joining or visiting groups, searching for members and groups, and joining and browsing networks (Online Education Database 2007). Most users are between the ages of 12 and 24, however nearly an equal number amass in the age demographic of 35 and up (Lipsman 2007a). Ullinois is by comparison to other networks is relatively large, ranking in at nearly 60,000 profiles¹⁰. Preliminary studies have answered the critique that simple membership and login rates are inaccurate predictors of SNS popularity by measuring the use of the Facebook message system and finding intense patterned activity (Golder, Wilkinson, and Huberman 2005). This study further illuminated the regularities of time use of college students and their respective social lives. The website shows no sign of slowing down or diminishing in influence over now the entire internet user population.

HISTORY OF THE CHIEF

Chief Illiniwek was introduced in an era long past when questions of race were still levied at powerful institutions and social norms such as Jim Crow. The American Indian population plummeted during the years after the civil war as a result of disease, slavery, war, and forced removal and at the turn of the century stood on the brink of total extinction with only 237 thousand some people nationwide (Nagel 1996). The Chief came into existence just as the American Indian cultural renaissance and revival had begun in the 1920's. This effort of rejuvenation would reach a tipping point by the 1960's but effectively when the Chief was spawned Native Americans represented only one quarter of a

⁹ Based on comparisons between news reports.

¹⁰ Ullinois statistics page on Facebook.com September 2007

percent¹¹ (0.0025) of the total American population, and held virtually no power whatsoever. In short, the creators of the Chief could concoct the symbol without any regard to authenticity or involvement of native populations because they were so few and so insignificant (in the eyes of the majority) at the time. Chief Illiniwek is not based on an actual American Indian Chief (the Illini are no longer with us) nor has a historical figure with that name ever existed. Furthermore only white men (and one woman) have ever played the role of the Chief.

For the sake of simplicity and a concise introduction this brief history is based primarily on the summaries found on the News-Gazette (Wurth and Heckel), a local UIUC newspaper, and the Chief Illiniwek Wikipedia (5 Nov 2007) entry. Other more extensive sources on the topic are abundant but unnecessary for the scope of this paper. The Chief figure was first established in 1926 and spent the first sixty some odd years of his existence without any considerable resistance or protest. Starting in 1989 Charlene Teters roused the first bouts of awareness protesting that “Indians are Human Beings” after being shocked with her children at a sports game. Thus the controversy was born, and student and alumni organizations started sprouting up for and against the Chief. Numerous political and academic proceedings were to follow, with varied resolutions ranging from making the Chief the official symbol of U of I to multiple unsuccessful calls for a consensus decision on the issue to formal requests by Native American tribes to end the Chief. Throughout it all the local and student community resolutely supported the use of the Chief, despite the many minority voices with feelings to the contrary. The crippling blow came in the form of the NCAA decision to ban UIUC from hosting postseasons competitions because of their use of the American Indian imagery. With such a staggering potential loss of funding (that might rival what money would be lost by protesting alumni if the Chief were retired) the Board’s decision is rumored to have been strongly economically motivated in nature. This change came in stride with an accumulation of persistent protest from many groups both in and outside of the university and the STOP coalition¹² meeting that filled Foellinger Hall and called in hundreds of watchers over the internet that issued an ultimatum to retire the Chief.

Historically two main perspectives (Akitunde et. al 2004) have been presented by people on each side of the issue (pro and con, apathy and indecision suspended). The Pro-Chief sentiment generally follows that the Chief is not a mascot but a symbol; a focal point, inspiration, and a tradition

¹¹ Derived from census data (<http://www.census.gov/population/censusdata/urpop0090.txt>) and cross referenced with Nagel – this number was estimated to be about half way between the 1920 and 1930’s data.

¹² Check <http://www.iresist.org/> for more information and footage.

that draws faculty and students together in school spirit and unity. Some individuals even contest that Native Americans who live outside of the state should have less of a voice in the issues of their imagery in Illinois than any given Illinois tax payer. Others insist that the usage of the symbol is a compliment and raises awareness of Native American culture. And still others voice that any given mascot or symbol doesn't have to be a problematic representation, others such as the Fighting Irish or Florida Seminoles don't inspire such levels of controversy. The opposing view, though less widely held, is found among most reservation born American Indians, other racial minorities, and social science academics. Most anti-Chief aligned individuals express that the Chief is demeaning, degrading, and belittling of Native Americans and serves to be more of a mockery and statement of dominance or ownership than honor or gratitude. The dance was eventually proven to be unauthentic and many adversaries to the Chief contend that the whole entourage misappropriates Native American culture and perpetuates harmful or racial stereotypes. The dance is also considered by some to be a religious ceremony and thus a highly offensive act comparable to a Christian Priest or minister dancing around on the field during football games. And finally a substantially sized group levies the insinuation that letting a white majority member represent a minority figure is on par with blackface and other gross misrepresentations of the past.

As so many curtly point out, mascot or symbol, the Chief fails in promoting unity and on the contrary has sparked some of the strongest negative feelings insurgent on campus. Facebook has become witness to the passionate expressions regarding the Chief and has even served as a grounds for facilitating social capital among Pro-Chief groups. If social change is to happen then the digital mediums of exchange must be addressed in kind with their reflections in the offline world.

SOCIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

The potential avenues for the influence of Facebook are numerous, especially among US college populations. Education and research have a great deal to learn from the incarnations, uses, interpretations and social movements of new media. As sociology concerns itself with informing people of the shifts of the future we ought to pay attention to the influences Facebook will have, especially as it becomes nominally interlaced into the work place and expands its influences across the globe. Facebook extends the interactions of the face-to-face world and virtually everything it encapsulates, including the effects and impacts of the many social groups and analytic categories traditionally of concern to sociology: gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, ability and mental illness,

class and geography, age and education, and countless others. The ramifications of this claim insinuate that examination of Facebook ought to intersect with all subsets and variations of sociology be they areas like transnational studies and demographics or methodologies such as historical comparatives, content analysis, quantitative data collection, or ethnographies. Social networking services and Facebook are imperative to modern Sociological study.

The issue of Chief Illiniwek quintessentially raises the question of racial campus climate at UIUC and elates discussion over the impact of imagery and ownership of symbols as they relate to cultural identity. The Chief is a complicated racialized dispute and reveals institutionalized racism, internalized covert (and occasionally overt) racist tendencies in individuals, and implies disconcerting social norms in operation among University students. The escapade is adamantly social in nature and thus ought to be matched with the capable lens of sociology.

Key to this statement of relevance is Facebook's relationship to the formulation of policy. The purpose of this paper is to identify and explain Facebook as a **tool of social capital** and **social change** as well as a distinguished **reflection of student perspectives** at the University of Illinois. This study demonstrates that by employing survey research and content analysis policy makers can better understand student perceptions surrounding the racialized issue of the Chief and thus learn to more adequately address and counteract issues of ignorance, racism, and inappropriate behavior. Further, the findings here exemplify the potential dangerous role Facebook could play in perpetuating harmful or hateful social mass-movements among uneducated or ignorant students. Policy makers need not only watch and observe on Facebook but also advocate appropriately and effectively there too.

THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is based upon sociological analysis pertaining to social capital, social informatics (technologies), and a social work based model of social change. An auspicious consideration of the pertinent literature and theory sets up for the eventual research questions.

GROWING UP ALONG SIDE THE INTERNET

Current generations of students are growing up with the internet as an integral, central and normalized part of their lifestyle. Many college students have had access to personal computers in their homes long before coming to college, and some even owned their own PC before departing for school. In coming of age concurrently with the internet and in confluence with the economic boom of the

nineties the student group that now dominates the majority of Facebook commands both a native and latent understanding of these technologies. As with the case of television, the telephone and other vastly influencing technologies “*research has been preoccupied with the search for evidence of negative effects; and much of it has been based on implicitly behaviorist assumptions*” (Mcmillian and Morrison 2006, quoting Buckingham 2002). Growing up hand in hand with the internet has impacted youth perceptions and factors of socialization in regards to self, family, real communities, and virtual communities. New forms of media enact as a conduit to understanding, an altered form of language, and a robust platform for both personal and cultural development.

FACEBOOK AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

With Facebook’s Debut in 2004 now every college student attending college was around for its inception. It’s become a veritable rite of passage into the cool adult world (boyd 2007) and up until just recently Facebook was seen as a college-centric SNS. Indeed, during the summer some of the most active groups are those comprised of high schoolers who’ve just received their university ID and consequently access to a school network¹³ (Jones and Soltren 2005). Students are meeting one another online even before they pack up and ship off to school. Some page up future roommates to see who they’ll be meeting come fall, others try to meet potential love interests, and still others joins sports clubs and activities even before setting foot on campus. Beyond additional waves of privacy concerns and droves of irrational fears, a phenomena attributable to the *American Culture of Fear*¹⁴, college conduct on Facebook remains mostly unchanged (Ginger 2008). Students are very aware of their identity online and they want to sculpt a digital representation of themselves. Facebook is comparable to a sort of comedy or drama, reminiscent of our over the top TV shows that plague mass media today (Mathias 2007). Participant understandings of public and private space in the digital realm are simply different than they used to be. The Facebook environment is increasingly used as a theatrical extension of college life, perhaps just as much as it is as a platform for communication or networking.

IMPLICATIONS OF HYPER-PERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND ANONYMITY

Other studies have unearthed implications for psychological well-being and the internet and show that “*individuals’ preference for online, rather than face-to-face, social interaction plays an*

¹³ This was also observed on the Uillinois Facebook network during the summer of 2007.

¹⁴ See Jeff Ginger’s MA paper for the full explanation: www.theFacebookProject.com

important role in the development of negative consequences associated with problematic internet use" (Caplan 2003). If Facebook is becoming a stronger and increasingly pervasive extension of personality into the online world then it stands to amplify this effect – indeed many users prefer Facebook interaction over interactions in person much like they prefer instant messaging to face to face conversation. Even relatively secure and confident introvert individuals can find loop holes in social norms on Facebook – it's like all of those things you want to know but without having to deal with asking. Virtually everyone with moderate levels of technical competence feel safer, more efficacious, confident and comfortable with the benefits of hyper personal communication (Caplan 2003). Benefits include increased editing abilities and opportunities for reconsideration of statements, temporal boons such as selective and strategic control over timing of messages, and in general an environment that facilitates for the formation of an idealized impression and more intimate circumstances. In other words, most people feel like they can think more about what they wish to say, have less obligation or pressure to say it perfectly (the "AIM" effect), and can call upon the internet and all its connections to enhance what they do say.

Though Facebook allows users to be identified by their profiles there is a sort of anonymity to the system as well as any user can message any other user on another network, or post in large network or global groups. Anonymity in CMC tends to minimize status differences, reduce fear of retribution, and create an environment where people are generally less fearful (Rains 2007). These aspects apply almost perfectly to interactions between groups and individuals on Facebook and also help to explain the high levels of trust in the system. Attribution becomes central to source credibility, however, which is where the analogy to Facebook can also easily be dismantled – someone shouting posts on a message board can be easily dismissed once you look at their profile and see they're a member of the 'College has taught me absolutely nothing' group¹⁵. Even so, with evidence showing "*anonymity provided by electronic meeting systems may undermine source credibility and influence*" (Rains 2007), this paper argues perceived reduction in authority, threat of retribution, and fear (at least among racial majorities) is enough to condition the context of the Facebook environment.

STUDENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE WEB: FROM SELF TO COMMUNITY

¹⁵ That's right, I just made this up, typed in it, and low and behold there was a group by the very name: <http://uillinois.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2221876113>

Findings indicate a tendency among students to identify dualities within their perceptions of self, family, real communities, and virtual communities. Sally Mcmillan and Margaret Morrison explore the impacts and implications of this in their piece *Coming of Age with the Internet: A qualitative exploration of how the internet has become an integral part of young people's lives* (2006). Many students found the internet parallels their active and passive development of self as they determined their identities growing up. Most participants felt the internet was an active place of participation where they could solidify their offline identities and utilized an instrumental more than hedonic approach in their exploration (Mcmillan and Morrison 2006). Students acquired skills more so on their own than from the aid of educators, parents, or other outside forces because they found motivation as a result of relevance of the internet to their everyday lives. Mcmillan and Morrison's study, in agreement with numerous others, found that most of the time youth were not concerned with radically altering their personality online and felt their identities on and offline were not substantially different. Though concerns about sexual predators and masquerading criminals run rampant, the actual negative outcomes for even the most vulnerable of participants, high schoolers, are almost non-existent and in fact educators ought to pay more attention to the extension of more common face to face world problems on Facebook, such as student behavioral disorders and misconduct (National School Boards Association 2007). It would seem that even Lisa Nakamura's identity tourism (2002) fades away in the face of Facebook's non-fantasy based and typically thoroughly evaluative identity representation system. This trend is further enforced by Facebook's policy to remove false profiles and the recent influx of older members.

In regards to older internet participants, Mcmillan and Morrison's study found the family was partitioned into two halves – the young and the old. Siblings and other younger family members were perceived as insiders embedded in the social webbing of the net and as catalysts for the learning and usage of technology, whereas parents and the elderly were classified as hesitant and disabled users who were seen as lacking confidence and sometimes even 'being afraid' of the internet (Mcmillan and Morrison 2006). In contrast, the youngest generations were viewed in positive terms as they were fated to grow up even more so immersed in new media. Much like Haythornthwaite and Wellman's earlier findings (1998) evidence suggests an acceptance of new media in both the worlds of work and play. Lastly mentioned in the Mcmillan Morrison study was that though the internet was fundamental in sustaining and enhancing real communities, the medium spurred profound impacts in student conceptions of community – enabling them to connect to global and virtual social groups in ways previously unknown. Some respondents in Mcmillan and Morrison's study even expressed definitions of

community or society determined by technology; their grandparents and parents generations were defined by telephones and the television, and their generation was hallmarked by the internet. This kind of outlook sounds almost reminiscent of technological determinism, suggesting that the sheer gravity of perceived influences of the internet is a significant factor of socialization. Most respondent portrayals of the internet found themselves housed in the utopian/dystopian dichotomy, either hating or loving the impacts and wonders of virtual and global communities. Inherent to every level of analysis was a certain level of dependency on the internet – respondents typified a life built and fueled largely upon access and usage of the web. Details aside, the on-going theme was the emphasis and notability of the internet and its integration into daily-life. Facebook’s success is contingent on this generational conception of virtual community and self-identity development. Regularity is just one piece of the puzzle – dependence on and benefits from the web are yet another indicator of student inclinations towards Facebook. An effective measure of this is social capital.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND THE WEB

Social capital as it’s referenced in this paper follows the Wellman-Haase-Witte-Hampton (2001) model¹⁶. This stipulates that social capital encompasses three forms: network capital, participatory capital, and community commitment. **Network capital** refers to relationships with friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers who provide significant companionship, emotional aid, services, information and a sense of belonging (Wellman et al. 2001). **Participatory capital** is a measure of involvement in politics and voluntary organizations that facilitate opportunities to bond, recognize shared desires and interests, and found collaborative movements. **Community commitment** centers on a strong and responsible sense of belonging: being a motivated and conscious member who is able to mobilize – effectively uniting both organizational/political urges (participatory capital) and interpersonal interaction (network capital) (Wellman et al. 2001, referencing McAdam 1982). The three combined adequately illustrate an inclusive and comprehensive basis of realization of social capital.

Facebook’s role as hurricane of both a tacit and overt emergent cosmologies¹⁷ stands as an almost real-time ordering of patterns of relationships and associations. Participants log on several times daily, enabling their actions and deposited identities orchestrate the system beyond their initial involvement. Facebook’s context and space is fundamentally and incessantly permanently beta in

¹⁶ Which pulls from Robert Putnam’s model (1996, 2000).

¹⁷ Collective activity that gives rise to identity and corresponding worlds of thought and discourse, see Schopflin 2001.

nature (Ginger 2008) which facilitates a sort of adaptive engineering style of participation through communication, identity sharing, and media exchange. One could not select a more representative environment of digital social capital. The system offers an unprecedented efficient and extensive opportunity to establish, maintain, and strengthen ties with family, friends, neighbors, students, and anyone else who provides the camaraderie, aid and welcoming feelings evocative of network capital. No research to date has been explicitly conducted on Facebook's differing influences on strong versus weak ties, but this paper postulates (in chorus with danah boyd) that the system really can manipulate both to a significant degree. Generally students log in and see what all of their friends are up to with a glance of the newsfeed, go check up on pictures of recent events, post announcements in a public manner on one another's walls, manage their events for an upcoming weekend, and sneak around getting glimpses into the digitally manifested lives of others. Social networking services, are in essence, simply built upon networked capital.

Participatory capital dons a new cloak in the realm of Facebook, as it's a performance realm and belongs to a relatively advantaged population who've spent their lives immersed in the individualistic capitalistic oriented America. Participatory causes, therefore, take on sometimes funny or unusual forms, as evidenced by mass collective membership in groups about the Oregon Trail videogame¹⁸ or double spacing papers. Not everything on Facebook is a big joke, however, one of the most popular applications is devoted to user-designated worthwhile causes and boasts over 219,000 daily active users¹⁹. Various Darfur support causes have rallied together thousands of members, raised significant sums of money and roused awareness amongst both students and even politicians by sending notifications to senators and representatives (Jordan 2007). The largest group on Facebook at the time of this writing stands at over 1.6 million members – built completely on fears that Facebook would be shut down. Members flocked in throngs to lend their support to a cause that was perceptibly popular – and shows just how much people are invested in the system when they fear they might lose it. Students bond through these group, application, and cause memberships – they show similarities, collaborate, and cause the movements that churn the wild winds of Facebook.

Political causes are no joke either – Stutzman (2006) suggests that it's the ultimate in new political cause platforms, a place where any given interest group or cause can create a temporary event

¹⁸ See *The Facebook Project research Proposal*, available at www.theFacebookProject.com

¹⁹ See the details on the Causes application at <http://www.facebook.com/apps/application.php?id=2318966938&b&ref=pd>

or group to push their agenda. Politicians are keenly aware of this fact and now typically sport profiles and groups to promote their image online (Baldinger 2006) and can even link into applications. The snowball effects are potentially tremendous and yield staggering results. The night of the Virginia Tech shootings students held a candlelight vigil in response to the tragedy (Pelofsky 2007). The event's organizing agent? A collaborative Facebook social epidemic. Evidence at UIUC suggests that trends may not be short lived – those campaigning on behalf of Chief Illiniwek have built up a few thousand member groups that have been active for years. Still yet global groups dedicated to larger causes like sex education or environmentalism drive the SNS's political important to a new level, with members numbering in the tens of thousands.

Perhaps the most often cited reason Facebook is so popular is the sheer frequency and depth of participant involvement in the site. Students find extensions of the same offline experiences tied to social capital, interpersonal and organizational, and naturally let the same feelings and obligations migrate to the digital space. Community commitment, if properly facilitated, can thrive on Facebook. People feel compelled to login at the sight of a new Facebook email and continuously bound through one another's pages strengthening old relationships, initiating (or perhaps more commonly investigating the possibility of) new ones, and otherwise becoming socially informed. Most participants spend a few hours (at least) a month trouncing around the place. Organization and event leaders update their corresponding groups and can mass-message their members. Though not the purpose of this paper, (and thus lacking data) the social norms amuck on Facebook have formulated a surprisingly intricate performative and public space. If a member posts on another's wall they're almost always obligated to respond in a similar public fashion. If an ex-boyfriend you wish you didn't date lists this detail in your 'how you know this person' section it might open up a ferocious argument. Fraternities and sororities go to painstaking lengths to hide or display specific information about members in order to best recruit more. Or, in the case of the Chief, Facebook assumes the role of a semi-public environment (previously thought) unenforced by official authorities in which students can flex their personal vindications for social justice or school pride. Users can create or join groups, events, and applications to assert their affiliations and community memberships and do so with an eagerness never seen before online.

Early studies of ICT influences on social capital indicate that the internet supplements and extends communication as well as social capital but may not dramatically change it (Wellman et al. 2001). Fortunately, a more specific and exceedingly helpful study on the relationship between social capital and Facebook is now available. One of the only reputable sources of viable academic

professional caliber in existence directly on Facebook.com itself, Nicole Ellison, Charles Steinfield, and Cliff Lampe investigate a positive effect of membership on Facebook.com in their paper *Spatially Bounded Online Social Networks and Social Capital: The Role of Facebook* (2006). They seek to study and measure social capital, or resources, actual and virtual, that accrue to participants in the Facebook SNS. While social capital is invariably linked to social outcomes, the article focuses particularly on the positive effects afforded by Facebook and examines both bonding and bridging social capital. Results from multiple regression analysis of the 800 person random sampling from the Michigan State University undergraduate population indicate that Facebook had a significant impact on students' ability to maintain bridging social capital at college (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe 2006). General internet use, as compared, did not make a significant difference in determining social capital. The social capital of students who reported low satisfaction with MSU life and low self-esteem were most positively impacted by Facebook intensity (use). Interestingly enough white students were more likely to have this than non-white students. Having more friends who use Facebook, using Facebook to connect with offline contacts, and using Facebook for fun accurately predicted rates and trends of bridging social capital, but not bonding social capital (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe 2006).

As the paper notes in its general discussion, the relationship between Facebook and social capital does not determine causation – students bring with them a plethora of connections and resources to the SNS environment and consequently take away new ones. The point is that the two worlds are interconnected and coproducing of one another – invariably linked and dependent reproducing both weak ties, potential and realized, as well as strengthening social bonds.

SOCIAL CHANGE

The model for social change employed in this paper follows a composition of theories and concepts from distinguished experts in the field of Social Work²⁰. Ideas found here pull notions from David Bornstein, Sarah Alvord, Barbara Crosby and John Bryson and otherwise follow suite with the modern social work theory taught at the graduate college at the University of Illinois. This paper seeks to illustrate the potential connection of Facebook to social movements through an overview of some of

²⁰ Initially gathered by previous co-author Elena Chiappinelli, a graduate student in Social Work at UIUC, Jeff is less familiar with this material and so provides tentative, contingent reference.

the fundamental aspects of their formation and operation processes. Social capital is absolutely vital in any social movement and as such Facebook becomes an important venue for support or resistance.

RIDING THE WAVES

Traditionally leaders and social entrepreneurs have a masterful command over both interpersonal engagements and towards interpreting the larger social processes afoot that set the context for a given situation. They take note of the potent and large-scale forces of change in operation in society, which in the case of Facebook and the Chief is the US's heightened transformation into the information age and the considerable extension of student life onto the web combined with the massive student populace's allegiance towards sports and colorblind regard towards race. Any context provides opportunities and constraints and while Facebook offers more weak ties than ever before critics quickly call in to question the utility and ease of activation that these ties actually carry with them. Local and situational context is paramount in the case of the Chief – very few people outside of the UIUC community even know much of anything about the debate. Pro-Chief leaders, whether they've done it explicitly or not, have appropriately positioned themselves in relation to the broad and tight social context in place at U of I. What's more is that they've aptly tapped into a very emotional and volatile issue which is more likely to rouse involvement among the student populace.

MAKING THE RIGHT MOVES

Having the context on your side is only the first step to inspiring social change, however. Social movements are at root about altering the way people think and behave and what strategies might best accomplish this task are not always clear. Philosophical debates rage over what methods are appropriate or effective, vying between altering attitudes vs. behavioral emphasis, positive vs. negative inducements, and challenging or changing societal processes vs. working within processes for a substantive outcome. The pro-chief escapade at U of I seems to assume a given attitude (most students are already sympathetic to their cause) and thus rallies many of its efforts towards rousing protest or shows of solidarity. They have the positive (or negative, depending on how you frame it) inducement of peer pressure, students want to feel like they belong to a cause together with their friends and acquaintances. And lastly because most students don't hold significant positions of power (this is one of the few ways besides age that they might feel marginalized) pro-chief groups often wish to challenge decisions or processes related the Chief (the whole 'down the NCAA' spirit).

The movement leaders have successfully captured at least one common objective: keeping the Chief alive, or even bringing him back. Their powerbase remains primarily among students at the University but the scope broadens when they include alumni around the nation and local people (so called 'townies'). Their target group is largely the undergraduate populace, which is precisely why Facebook becomes a substantial component in the game. Other objectives remain a little more obscure, such as the size and extent of the change sought (and details about what to do about those who feel his presence is offensive), time frame, and techniques to alter behavior. The crux of the issue is that the students have little formalized institutional power, and must fight the quick turn over rate inherent to a university environment.

One place the pro-chief advocates have managed to do well is by expanding objectives to include other groups, stimulating coalition building. Perhaps the most powerful example is the Marching Illini, where severe social stigmas might be attached to anyone who is even neutral in regards to the Chief, much less against him. The band director himself is one of the most vigorous advocates and the influence of the group also bleeds into a wide variety of sporting and school pride organizations. The Greek community has latched on to it strongly as well, whose member features a disproportionate number of white and advantaged members who are more likely to come from a colorblind background²¹.

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

Facebook offers a superb opportunity to research the pro-chief social movement at U of I. Between containing a comprehensive record of student perspectives and consequent exchanges as well as potential avenues of social capital generation and use, researchers can track the ways Facebook has served as a platform to support and mobilize resources amongst students to keep the pro-chief campaign alive. Furthermore, Facebook is an environment where new social movements are bound to take place, and researchers should consequently work to enhance or combat these in the future. This paper goes on to suggest a partial approach to dealing with the current pro-Chief interchange as it is encountered on Facebook. In order to do this, however, one must start with inquisition.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

²¹ Unfortunately I don't have the data to say this based on research studies but instead take the stance based on experience conducting race relations intergroup dialogues amongst students.

This entire study spawns from an original question of campus climate in regards to race relations. Or more precisely: How is campus climate negatively reflected and/or perpetuated through student use of Facebook? The partial answer, already detailed above, is through the pro-chief movement evident at U of I. So given this initial notion, several specific questions are raised:

1. What do people think about the campus climate? What actions have they taken in regards to the Chief?
2. What is the character of groups surrounding the topic? What do we notice about group purpose, composition, and activity?
3. What does this suggest about social capital? How might we best frame and inform future social movements?

Obviously these questions only scratch the surface of more insidious issues of race and student perspectives but do offer a solid start towards understanding and dealing with attitudes. Since the information and records available on Facebook persist over time these questions can be answered in a temporal context as well, which helps us to gauge recent activity and the overall ebb and flow of the movement. The ordinary research limitations of Facebook notwithstanding²², the web service offers a robust environment to observe and as such this paper takes a multi-method approach.

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study takes a two pronged approach by drawing upon data from a previous survey on Facebook and blending it with new specific content analysis. This combinational approach was selected in part because of its convenience but also to help establish both a broad and focused understanding of the events that have transpired on Facebook. Unfortunately time limitations prevented in-depth interviews or true digital ethnography work so the findings are constrained to be mostly surface-level and quantitative-feeling in nature.

THE FACEBOOK PROJECT 2007 SURVEY

The second in a series of yearly surveys on Facebook, the survey used for this paper was sent out over the summer of 2007 to a formal randomly selected portion of the undergraduate student population. All respondents were full-time degree-seeking students over the age of 18. The decision was made to exclude part-time and non-degree seeking students after it was determined they were

²² See Jeff's MA paper on www.theFacebookProject.com for a better understanding of these.

statistically more likely to be of a significantly older age and only comprise a minimal, outlier population at UIUC. Students under the age of 18 could not be included for ethical reasons. In total the official university statistics department, the Division of Management Information²³, pulled an 1100 person sample randomly from the entire undergraduate student population. The response rate to this survey was very poor due to a survey response limit mistake²⁴ as well as the sheer length of the survey and technological limitations that prevented collection of partial or specific responses.²⁵ All told only 75 students (a pitiful 7%) fully completed the survey, which effectively means the data is not generalizable to the overall student population to a statistically significant degree. Despite these shortcomings the survey, when paired together with content analysis, presents a number of interesting findings about the student populace that can be easily confirmed via more in depth qualitative study. It is best to consider it a sort of scout work to inform future investigations and inquiries.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

This study employs a rather exploratory method of content analysis, being that the researcher is entirely new to the method in general. Pertinent data was organized and reduced to uncover patterns of human activity, action and meaning through both simple conceptual and introductory discourse analysis. Though deductive in nature the methods were not purely social-anthropological, as the researcher does command a certain native perspective but cannot claim to extensive specific ethnographic experience. The analytic task as always, however, remains to both identify and explain the ways people perform in the Facebook setting; how they've come to understand things, account for, take action, and generally relate to the pro-Chief Facebook cause in their day-to-day life. In order to avoid misunderstandings and ensure reliability only two small and particularly volatile Facebook groups, "Don't Like the Chief? Go Somewhere Else... fuckin Idiots!" and "Pro-Chief People Wouldn't Know Racism if it Bit Them on the A\$\$" were closely coded and studied, but in total 17 Chief-related groups were overviewed and scouted out. The validity of the text observed from these groups is obviously bias but aptly demonstrates the emotional fury surrounding the issue amongst students. This study does not seek to suggest that these groups are by any means representative of the whole student populace, the

²³ See www.dmi.uiuc.edu for more details.

²⁴ An ambiguous category for the number of responses was embedded amongst questions pertaining to per respondent limitations – I initially mistook it to be the number of times a single respondent could fill out the survey.

²⁵ The DMI requires the use of the University built survey builder application which does not allow for skip logic or multiple user pathways, nor does it capture responses of partially filled out surveys.

same way the survey is only a sampling. Quotes were not taken out of context and the research attempted to best consider all relevant aspects of messages in question, which necessitated the extension of analysis to include latent content beyond the obvious manifested content.

Two levels of content analysis were conducted for the extent of this study. The first dealt only with high level, non-complex units of analysis consisting primarily of obvious features gathered about the 17 groups selected for overview. These original 17 were subjectively selected based on a query return of several hundred Chief-related groups. The criteria for consideration consisted of both group size and prospective emotional engagement. Non-serious groups, like being pro-Master Chief from Halo, were disregarded, as were most smaller groups. The exception came in regards to anti-Chief groups, as their relative scale was minute in comparison to the pro-chief giants. A 70-some person pro-chief group is tiny but pretty darn big for anti-chief groups. All in all only 4 anti-chief groups were picked (there were so few and this number was about proportionate to their rate of occurrence) as compared to 13 pro-chief groups. Sadly this analysis did not include several 500-800 person pro-Chief groups, which shows the sheer severity of the cut-off line for selection. The information cataloged for the high level analysis included basic identification information such as the group name, URL, the date observed, classification category, and other inconsistent information such as website or location. A summary of the groups' written purpose was recorded for reference purposes. Special attention was paid to group composition²⁶, which included the number of members, officers, administrators, and listings of relevant related groups. The relevance of related groups was once again a subjective judgment as massive joke groups like "When I was your age Pluto was a planet" were disregarded but political, sporting, and race-related cultural groups were noted. This set the stage for the second level of content analysis.

To effectively uproot some of the strong attitudes surrounding the issue of the Chief research took to a intense study of two of the most volatile pro and anti chief groups on all of Facebook. Other large groups would have also been an excellent field for observation but unfortunately would have taken too much time to adequately dismantle. Instead sociological-style coding was applied to the wall and discussion topic posts to capture rudimentary understandings of topic, tone, issues of identity, and potential connection to social capital. Due to the subjective nature of this method and inexperience of the researcher, however, this analysis is really best considered exploratory.

²⁶ This originally included group racial composition, but due to limitations in the reliability of collection was abandoned in favor of a dependable simple analysis. Instead it paved the way for suggestions pertaining to future research.

FINDINGS

For the sake of time, space, and interest this paper only includes a summary of some of the pertinent findings amongst the data. A full report and analysis is available upon request²⁷.

ESTABLISHING CONTEXT – INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVES

Two sections of the 2007 Facebook Project survey applied specifically to gauging campus climate as it relates to race. The first included a simple series of paired questions relating to safety in the general college atmosphere. Respondents were asked the following questions:

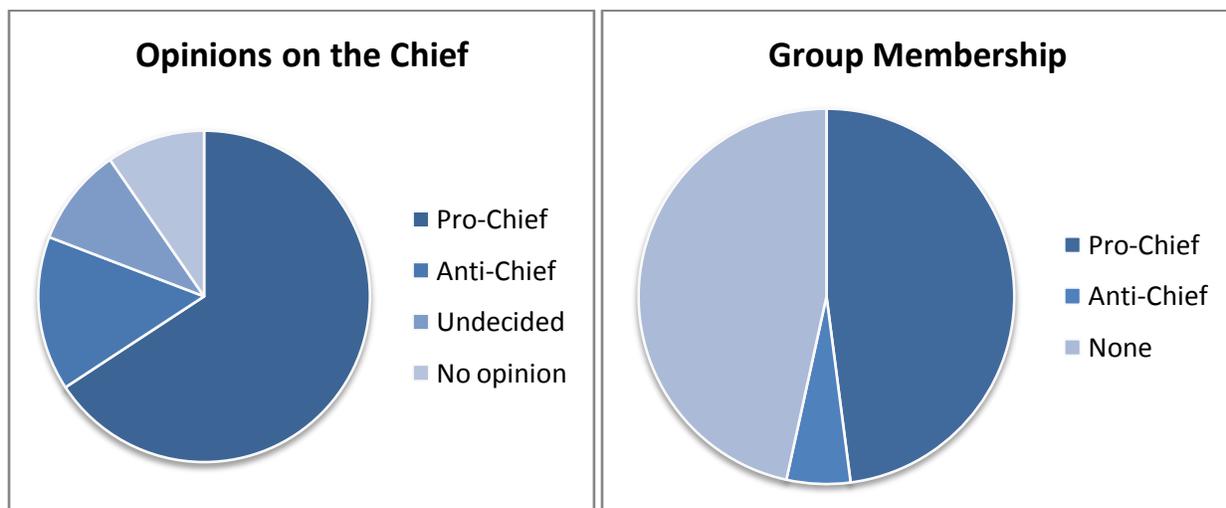
1. Do you believe Ullinois Facebook is a friendly or hostile environment for minorities?
2. Do you believe the University of Illinois campus in general is a friendly or hostile environment for minorities?
3. Do you believe Facebook is a friendly or hostile environment for Native Americans (Indigenous Americans)?
4. Do you believe the University of Illinois campus in general is a friendly or hostile environment for Native Americans (Indigenous Americans)?

Answer choices were given on a spectrum going from very friendly, somewhat friendly, not friendly but not hostile, somewhat hostile and not at all hostile. As it turns out most respondents in general felt both the campus and Facebook were somewhat friendly for minorities (median and mean around 4 with 5 being very friendly) places to be. When filtered to just pro-chief respondents the mean response favoring a friendly view of campus went up, but not to a significant degree. When only anti-chief respondents were selected the mean average dropped almost a full point bringing the average opinion to be somewhere between somewhat friendly and not friendly but not hostile. The true contrast comes when examining perceptions of feelings of hostility towards Native Americans. Pro-chief respondents scored about the same as they did in regards to atmosphere for minorities in general, whereas anti-chief participants felt Facebook was somewhere between not friendly but not hostile and somewhat hostile and campus in general was actually somewhat hostile. The survey did not receive any responses who identified as Native American and very few racial minorities (about 11%), which were almost all Black or Latino/a. So on the whole most Facebook users thought it wasn't a hostile environment for minorities, but anti-chief users did believe it was potentially hostile to Native Americans. What's perhaps interesting here is that despite the threats and powerful exchange of feelings on Facebook most survey recipients thought the face to face world was a more potentially hostile place of exchange.

²⁷ Contact Jeff Ginger at www.theFacebookProject.com to inquire.

PERSONAL ACTIONS

A later section on the survey then inquired into user actions in response to the Chief issue. They were asked about their overall stance on the issue, group membership, and if they took part in the picture-change resistance. The results were a bit staggering, as nearly two thirds (48, 65.8%) of respondents identified as pro-chief. A mere 11 (15.1%) professed anti-chief views and the remaining 14 (9.6% each) were split evenly between undecided and no opinion. Of the 73 active members examined only 4 (5.5%) belonged to anti-Chief groups and 37 (50.7%) professed membership in pro-Chief groups. Active protest was less common, however, as only 13 (17.8%) changed their picture to one of the Chief to protest the removal and 3 (4.1%) put up a 'Racial stereotypes dehumanize' icon in response. No respondents took part in any of the joke/fictitious pictorial reactions such as 'Suppor the chef' or 'Shoop Da Whoop.' As figure 1.1 dramatically displays the proportions below, based on this data we can surmise Facebook is utterly dominated by pro-chief sentiments and pro-chief users. This confirms the previously assumed notion that Facebook is reflective of face to face world pro-chief views.



GROUP BEHAVIORS

This paper establishes only an introductory analysis of 17 Facebook groups and excepts two, highlighted in blue:

1. **Pro-Chief People Wouldn't Know Racism if it Bit Them on the A\$\$! (anti)**
2. I'M anti anti-Chief People (pro)
3. If you hate the Chief then I hate you (pro)
4. F*** the Chief (anti)
5. Do "It" For the Chief (pro)

6. RIP Chief Illiniwek, Forever in Our Hearts (pro)
7. The Native Americans Almost Had Their ENTIRE RACE Taken From Them. (anti)
8. Chief Illiniwek Forever. (pro)
9. Signatures for the Chief (pro)
10. When I went to U of I we had a Chief (pro)
11. Bring Back the Chief (pro)
12. You took our Chief but you will never take our money (again)! (pro)
13. Anti-Chief (anti)
- 14. Don't Like the Chief? Go Somewhere Else... fuckin Idiots! (pro)**
15. Chief Illiniwek, We Will Never Forget (pro)
16. Save the Chief (pro)
17. We'll Never Forget Chief Illiniwek (pro)

Surface-level content analysis reveals some immediate trends in even just the names of the groups here. Several contain high-powered, strong-sentiment words, such as those of explicative (swearing) nature (1, 4, and 14), overt hatred or disdain (1-4, 14), remembrance and nostalgia (6-8, 10-11, 15, and 17), and potentially resistance (5, 9, 11-12, 16). The descriptions of the groups also follow similar trends, with anti-chief groups voicing concerns about respect and representation (1, 4, 7, 13) and social damage or racism (4, 13). Pro-chief groups profess dislike for anti-chief people (2, 3, 14), resistance to or disagreement with the removal decision (5, 6, 9, 10-12, 16, 17), school pride, honor, and memory (8, 15, 17).

Though it cannot be formally statistically backed at this time initial estimates of group membership suggest (and this will seem obvious to most) more white members belong to pro-chief groups and more people of color belong to anti-chief groups. Corresponding to this potential link the largest anti-chief groups (Anti-Chief and F*** the Chief) have only around 250 members each, where as just the biggest three pro-chief groups dominate the largest groups in the Ullinois Facebook scene with Chief Illiniwek Forever (7,900+ members), Save the Chief (5,300+ members which surged to this amount in under a year), and We'll Never Forget Chief Illiniwek (4,300+ members) and numerous other groups numbering over a thousand or high hundreds. The big pro-chief groups often shared each other in common on the related group listings, as well as Illinois Basketball, the Bears, and Illini Pride. Anti-chief groups had common references to racially themed groups like America's Nightmare: Young, Gifted, & Minority and political affiliations, such as promoting Barack Obama. People in both groups seemed to really like Colbert. Videos and posted items were almost never used by any group (may have been added after the inception and most active periods for many of them) and pictures really only ever

consisted of pictures of the Chief or protest. The discourse in operation in each group is where the true findings are to be had.

FACEBOOK AS A DIGITAL SPACE

First, a word on Facebook groups as digital spaces. In any face to face world ethnography researchers carefully observe their environment becoming a sort of unit of measurement. They take into account the collage of noises, aromas, textures, lighting, and tastes of the atmosphere. The digital landscape is a considerably collapsed context but still contains pertinent environmental features. Just like in advertising when sometimes the presentation of a product even alters how customers think it tastes (Gladwell 2007), the interface, layout, demeanor, and interaction mediated by the systems of Facebook plays a crucial role in fabricating the space for participant actors. Some of the automated and unintentional functions in the ecology even have their own sort of agency and might further influence this already complicated web of interaction (Ginger 2008). Luckily for the scope of a Facebook group this is mostly limited.

Facebook group web pages feature the same sort of interconnectivity that is found everywhere else on Facebook. Many components are linked and menus are limited to clean easy to read typefaces and separators. They have a main central column and a side column. Upon visiting a group an observer will quickly notice its title at the top of the central column followed by the main information below, including name, type (such as common interest, used for categorical searches), description and other contact information. Below this resides recent news in short text format, then photos, videos, and posted items all with potential thumbnail previews, a compressed view of the discussion board with a preview of three topics and post data and then the wall, a sort of simple guest-book like form that users can fill out to leave their remarks publicly on the page. Sitting neatly between the wall and discussion board section is a member listing area, with 6 linked thumbnail previews of random²⁸ members and the total members listing, which is linked to a search return for all members in the group. Each wall post contains the poster's name, time and date information, response options, and linked thumbnail picture preview, giving a robust impression as users glance about the page. Really just about everything is linked and tied to the face to face world with pictures. The right column has perhaps the most noticeable element of the group profile, its picture, which is generally pretty limited in size. Right

²⁸ Well maybe not random. My personal observation has lead me to believe these random return queues give priority to returning people you happen to know. Such a feature would make sense as it would encourage more connective use of the system. I haven't conducted a test on this yet

beneath this are navigation and action options, such as the ability to view the discussion board, join the group, or if you are an administrator recruit or manage members and edit the group. Officers are listed below this, with linked names and subtitles pertaining to their position in the group. In the case of most chief related groups these titles are indicative of member sentiments and not actual real-world positions related to an organization. Related groups are found beneath this, with a link listing and category subtitle. Finally at the bottom comes the official group-type information and administrator(s). The layout is both organized and friendly, and adheres to sound principles of graphic design, information retrieval and display, and human-computer interface (HCI). The group architecture is both dedicated to linking people together, but preserves the normal separation of profiles and privacy seen on the rest of Facebook.

The ways users engage with this space and interact with each other within it should be a crucial component to building a user typology, should a researcher take this sort of task on. The actions taken in response to or use of the interface can sometimes reveal a great deal about the interest, capabilities, and preferences of a given user. Even the decision to create or administrate a group in itself (as well as get the group to become popular) suggests something about a given member. With these intricacies and a general idea of the space in mind, we turn to some discourse analysis.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In the case of the most volatile and provocative Facebook groups often people who oppose the group will join it in order to engage in argument or discussion. The two groups chosen for this study involved a number of these such exchanges, making them a virtual battle grounds for the Chief debate.

After some significant multi-stage coding of both of the selected Facebook groups consistent trends began to emerge in the data. Unfortunately since only two groups were analyzed the findings here must be considered only preliminary and may not (probably do not) accurately represent the feelings of the masses, but instead a particularly passionate group of people on either extreme of the spectrum. “Don’t like the Chief? Go Somewhere Else... Fuckin Idiots” was a much larger group with around 800 members, whereas “Pro-Chief people wouldn’t know racism if it bit them on the A\$\$” hovered around 80 at the time of observation. The content on group walls and forum postings provided sufficient material for the analysis. Though topics varied consistently several became reoccurring *conceptual themes* (in no special order of importance):

1. What is referred to here as **homage** – occurrences of reference to the Chief as a figure of honor, loyalty, respect or courage, typically in a pro-chief valorized fashion.
2. **Validity** – instances where topics tackled issues of truth, right and wrong, validity of measure, reliability, and the divide between the sides necessitating a winner or answer.
3. **Hostility** – signified by variance in the responses from the average tone many topics themselves were actually on retribution, hostility, abuse, threats, and the hurtful nature of both exchanges between respondents and the role of the Chief.
4. **Rights** – including discussion of the rights over imagery and portrayal, freedom of speech, the jurisdiction of authorities such as the NCAA, religious freedom, and when jokes and fun have gone too far.
5. **Power** – which could include racism, dehumanization, mockery, and privilege of groups and individuals.
6. **History** – which often came in the form of tradition, calling out to the historically documented memory of the Native American experience or on the opposite end, the way the Chief might help people to learn about and remember Native Americans.
7. **University Representation** – just who or what should represent the university – symbols, mascots, school pride, majorities, minorities and questions of group identity.
8. **Meta-dialogue** – several times posts were created depicting or interpreting the discussions being made, with special attention given to attitudes and behaviors as well as open or close-mindedness.

Obviously just the introductory findings communicate a rather complicated and multifaceted debate. Several of these areas were often found together and in some cases may be somewhat arbitrarily separated. They do, however, stand as a testament to the full range of issues that ought to be addressed by researchers considering the Chief in relation to student concerns and campus climate. What's more is that nearly all of these topics are potentially politically and emotionally charged – these aren't kids trying to solve math problems or insisting Oregon Trail was the best game ever. They're grappling with intense issues and in many cases need to be educated in both the arguments they're making and also become conscious of the process of communication they're taking part in, which leads to the next level of analysis.

As a researcher new to the method of qualitative content analysis and conducting observations without a previously established and tested formalized system of measure it's hard to say assessment of

tone could be anything but subjective. Regardless, based upon the ideas gathered from other studies and the psychological based measurements employed by John Gottman featured in Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink* (2007) the following qualifications for conversant tone were drafted:

1. **Anger/bullying** – which could include disgust or blatant criticism with a connotation that would make it seem insulting.
2. **Condescension** – similar to anger at times but not always, the key point being a sort of criticism that places the accusing party on a higher, superior level than the criticized. Perhaps the hardest to qualify by technical means or single signifying words, it was teased out through certain combinations of topics and tone and formations of sentences.
3. **Sarcasm** – also comparable to condescension but without the required difference in relative ranking, sarcasm typically involves a sort of lying or deception poised in an insulting manner.
4. **Gratitude/praise** – overt and sincere reception and acceptance of a group or individuals.
5. **Open-minded** – as difficult to detect as condescension this tag was scribed for participants whom seem genuinely interested in alternative perspectives and didn't wish to appear all-knowing or arrogant. It can often be denoted by the use of 'I' statements and mindful open-ended questions. Modesty was key in qualifying these statements.
6. **Thoughtfulness** – both in general consideration and criticism or dialectic, marked most by an intellectual and inquiring tone, not seeking dominance or victory but instead conveyance and interpretation of ideas. Paraphrasing and clarification would most often fall under this category.
7. **Diminishing/downplay** – a defensive mechanism or active strategy, sometimes covert and often evident through the use of adaptable words this tone assignment was a common sight amongst more educated individuals seeking to establish dominance through subtler means.

Readers will be quick to notice the many tones that would normally indicate a negative communication process – and they're right, most of the exchanges going on between members in the groups were hostile and argumentative. On rare occasions exceptions could be found, but much akin to the quiet professor in a room full of loud arguing lawyers those employing dialogue and questioning techniques seemed to be listened to less on the whole.

Though originally targeted for identity and social capital analysis neither group on its own revealed anything remarkable enough to build themes or a major typology. Group members placed a

great deal of emphasis on personal racial identity and ethnic heritage when determining legitimacy in regards to racism and discrimination and more often than not it seemed to be the object of prejudice or serve as special qualification of legitimacy amongst participants. Though the research suggests colorblind overtones to the pro-chief group there wasn't enough reoccurring material to allege this claim. Social capital, on the other hand, was most notably of the networked capital type in both of the groups examined. Occasional advertisements for organizational movements populated the walls and message boards as well as news updates related to pertinent Chief issues. It is unknown as to how much administrators orchestrated leadership in the groups or disseminated information to members. Mostly the groups seemed more bent on doing battle and making outlandish statements, and finding allies and alike thinkers at the same time. Rather, the Facebook coverage seems to evidence a level of pre-established community commitment and networked social capital between members. It is unclear as to how much it may have extended or enhanced these connections but certainly suggests to a certain extent the availability and utilization of such ties. The fact that so many pro-chief groups are linked together by the related groups area implicitly propounds a rather massive and connected web of supporters and latent weak ties, despite the lack of explicit talk about such avenues for mobilization among participants. In the end these two Facebook groups appear to be a terrain best suited to solidifying community commitment through argument and opposition.

DISCUSSION

This study only really begins to answer the aforementioned inquiries, as one half semester worth of time would not permit enough opportunity to thoroughly investigate Facebook via qualitative-based content analysis. Nevertheless, it provides some solid evidence with which we can begin to formulate answers.

So what do students think about race in the campus climate and Facebook climate? In general they feel it's a friendly place for people of all colors. According to the data gathered about the only time a group that felt anything was hostile was when people who identified as anti-chief were asked about the hostility of the face to face world campus atmosphere for Native Americans. How about their actions? On the whole there's a lot of showcasing of support of the Chief but on some digital action. Though thousands of students signed petitions to save the Chief online and hundreds changed their pictures to protest it's unclear just how much these actions translated to effect and deeds or

achievements in the offline world. Further studies ought to individually trace impacts through interviews and more in-depth analysis.

As for the character of pro-chief related groups research suggests that they are far reaching in their membership, but only among certain populations. College students have historically been predisposed to racial separation, and in the case of the Chief issue it's unclear (but suspect) if these affiliations and separations were founded before college and if they are diminished in any way over its course. Looking to the [only] research on the subject, Mayer and Puller (2007) suggest that social networks are highly segmented by race and they found by running counterfactual simulations that this is largely driven by preferences rather than institutional features that affect meeting (more minorities doesn't mean integration or friendship). Programs like affirmative action only have limited ability to reduce the segregation and as such policies should be aimed at impacting preferences. Anti-chief groups seem to have little support and even less community mobility. Both have become battle grounds for argument and house members with strong feelings, however. While they might be built for a number of functional purposes their activity seems to center more around what the members themselves really truly care about. **Given the necessity to alter preferences in order to cause lasting effects on perceptions of race and the high caliber emotional content encountered in Chief-related groups it would seem these digital spaces are an crucial tool and context for actors leading social movements to understand and engage.** This paper concludes with a few approaches to utilizing social capital and social change on Facebook, but first a few notes.

LIMITATIONS

As was previously mentioned this study took place over the course of about half a semester. Most of the data analysis is limited to first runs and summaries and severely needs to be double-checked. Many theories ought to be followed up on and the rather rich analysis can easily present more answers and in-depth analysis in the future. The impartial social work theory is a result of the loss of the co-author Elena Chiappinelli who had to step down half way through the process due to personal reasons and family concerns. Nevertheless the work here stands as an exciting start and exploration into just what can be done by researching on Facebook.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Originally this project was to include a full composition break down of all surveyed Chief groups. This would include racial statistics on all members. Furthermore the research plan originally included the possibility of giving surveys to Chief Facebook administrators be distributed to their member populace. The hope was to acquire the variance in perspectives on the Chief within given pro and anti Chief groups. Potential interviews with key players and leaders in the Pro-Chief movement were also on the drawing board, but were the first thing scratched off when efforts became busy.

Furthermore the coding method employed on only two groups in this study could easily be expanded to code all seventeen groups selected, or even more. In fact such a comprehensive analysis would truly adequately answer the research questions and present enough material to motivate large scale policy changes at the University. A collaborative social research approach might also be taken with content analysis. Researchers could easily work with their subjects, presumably anti-chief, in a given setting to accomplish social change or action. Data would be gathered by stakeholders, which would allow for an efficient division of labor, and the same assistants could be reflexively give feedback to inform action, resolve problems or suggest solutions, or answer research questions.

And lastly, an ideal collection of race demographic data could involve two main aspects. A pair (or more) of researchers who could cross-compare race assignment results (and throw out mismatching classifications) or a formalized list of students from the Division of Management Information (DMI) that would include official school racial records that could be used to verify identities. This kind of study would of course provoke a full IRB review and likely take years to complete and as such may not be feasible. This data, however, once acquired, could be tested in the same ways Mayer and Puller (2007) did to project the effect of new policy changes and alterations in the student population.

CONNECTING SOCIAL CAPITAL TO SOCIAL CHANGE

It is our wish to leave you off on a positive note, so breaking with character and form this next section discusses two strong social work born methods that can be combined to instigate social change: advocacy and empowerment.

ADVOCACY

By changing social norms and etiquette in the performative realm of Facebook policy makers and teachers can help to reinforce change. Clearly the communication process that takes place on

Facebook too often resembles debate and not dialogue. Communications and dialogue classes could begin to teach students how to employ the dialogic process online by starting with face to face training and then later challenging students to migrate discourse to blogs and message boards. In stride with this author's previous stance on Facebook, adults, especially educators need to be the change they wish to see and fully understand and participate in the digital realm, including Facebook. The recent influx of older adult and global populations that use the site for social networking, marketing research, and application development is a testament to the possibility. Late adopters need to face up to the challenge and get out there because every moment they spend avoiding it puts them at a greater disadvantage. Education ought to include cutting edge technologies and communication tools, and this doesn't mean the fastest hardware or operating system. Social technologies like wikis and social networking have countless potential beneficial uses in the classroom. Sociology in particular, a discipline that prides itself on the study of social movements and social capital, ought to take heed of Facebook's popularity and shift time and research to consider its impacts.

Administrative policy changes present another avenue for advocacy on Facebook. The Facebook company itself has become a sort of governing authority that maintains a mostly friendly relationship with its users. The revolts against the newsfeed and Beacon made it quite clear – with enough momentum Facebook users can really alter the fundamentals of the system. Facebook has already taken a positive step in banning hate speech, and allows users to active enforce it through easy to find reporting modules. Administrators and educators, once immersed and involved in the system, can use these same mechanisms to encourage proper behavior while remaining anonymous. Facebook itself could also take a stance on the importance of racial identity in its interface and introduce a race/ethnicity category. Finally, publicity efforts such as Inclusive Illinois could adopt Facebook systems in some of the same ways advertisers have. Just like old generations had to learn how to use computers it's now time the current late-adopter remainder learns how to properly use social computing technologies.

EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment, or the act of enabling of persons to the point where they have the power to act and enable others on their own, is another viable method of social change. Clearly Facebook doesn't have enough friendly and familiar spaces for anti-chief members. Perceptions are one of the strongest agents of prevention when it comes to dealing with the digital divide, and Facebook will increase in

perceived usefulness and ease of use the more it becomes friendly for people of minority identification. Really this sort of change can include implicit institutionalized alterations, like the addition of a racial category, or also individual motivated methods, like classes that teach students how to create Facebook applications to fuel their social causes. More than anything the anti-chief side of student life needs a stronger representation online – not one bent on domination but one founding on education and opportunity that stands a chance at truly altering attitudes and teaching others how to pass on what they learn. The Networked Capital side of social capital lies in the personal connections between friends and families – and the more of this on Facebook the better chance it has of facing off against the powerful hegemonic mass. Groups could also use Facebook’s networking capabilities to unify their causes, political and otherwise, in ways never really accomplished before. The May 5th protests remain a solid proof of concept but organizations could place more emphasis on such tasks. Facebook offers a great way to challenge traditional authority arrangements as well as provide resources for self help. Stakeholders and adaptive management (leaders) can work simultaneously together to achieve satisfactory results. Groups, especially ones related to social justice, are often in sore need of technical persons like web designers²⁹ and this is where empowerment comes in. Groups and individuals have to empower each other to know how to use the SNS and properly engage with one another, as well as the opposition, in the space.

Lastly these efforts must be continuously evaluated for effectiveness, sustainability, scalability and diffusion, accountability, and stakeholder involvement (*everyone* who benefits from the change). Leaders should pay special attention to the role of individuals including innovators, idea generators, and carriers and overall remain effective at integrating and deploying resources. Typically this means starting small and growing from there – only involving the most motivated. And of course, on a final note of the importance of sociology, we must understand our audience from an ethnographic perspective and build respect (credentials) all while listening carefully to their views to best take into account opinions and establish solutions.

Facebook is a powerful and important space. Educators and anti-chief advocates can use this power too. Here’s to being the change...

²⁹ Even though management of a Facebook group is really something a trained monkey can do... the barriers to entry are almost non-existent, all it takes are good content management and communication skills plus a little dedication.

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