

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

SOCIAL MEDIA IN MODERN POLITICAL EXPRESSION
THE CASE OF THE LEBANESE ANTI-SECTARIAN MOVEMENT

by
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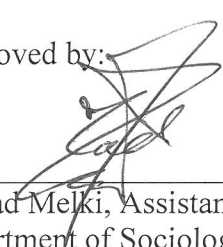
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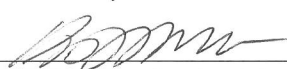
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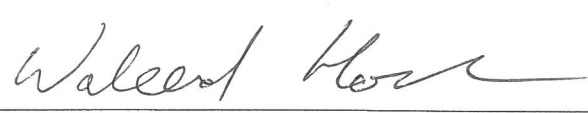
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Karen David Abi Saab for Master of Arts
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The “Arab Spring” revolutions, most notably the events in Tunisia and Egypt, elevated social media networking sites to prominence in the socio-political arena. Their relatively cheap cost and their easy accessibility to anyone with a mobile phone and an internet connection, gave social movements the perfect tools to mobilize and communicate with supporters. As this phenomenon gained ground in Lebanon, the Lebanese Anti-sectarian movement, also turned to social media to organize its protests. This study explores whether Facebook was an effective medium of communication and organization for the movement. For that purpose, a protest survey was conducted on 158 participants in the last protest organized by the Anti-Sectarian movement on the 6th of May 2012. Facebook groups affiliated with the anti-sectarian movement were found to have played an essential role in spreading awareness around the cause online, organizing the protest digitally, and sustaining an online community that felt generally comfortable communicating in the digital world and participating in the real world.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The centrality of media to democracy and political life is an area of continuous evolution and study (Alam, 2011, p. 18). As communication technologies develop cheaper, easier, and more accessible ways for the dissemination of information, modern-day debate focuses on the impact of social media and innovative communication technologies on the political life of engaged citizens (Van de Donk, 2004, p. xvii). Social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, took center-stage in the recent “Arab Spring” protests, sparking an interest among scholars in defining the effects social media have on social movements and political expression (Alam, 2011, p. 18).

Media has always had an intricate relationship with social movements, a relationship that was kicked-off by the first newspapers, and then grew with the advent of radio and television news. Koopman (2004) summarizes the need of social movements for media in three major purposes that these movements aim for: mobilization, validation and scope enlargement. In its coverage of trending issues and the activities of social movements, media shed light on what is important at a specific point in time, focusing the public’s attention on those issues and informing those that otherwise the movement would not be able to reach in their own homes.

Koopman asserts that beyond the need to convey a message to their public, movements need the media to ultimately validate their cause as a noteworthy issue. As the media focus the spotlight on a particular movement and its activities, the latter

ascends to an important standing where the wider public, at home, and the government can no longer afford to ignore it. Through this process, a movement is validated as an important actor (p. 368).

Today, traditional media are not the only type of media entering this relationship with social movements. Social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, have increasingly crossed over to become a source of online news. The importance of social media's impact on news was among the most researched, studied and talked about topics in 2011; especially the act of sharing news online (Christian, Mitchell and Rosenthal, 2012, p. 1). Sharing news to a big extent focuses the spotlight on Facebook, and to a lesser extent on Twitter. These two social media giants have created a meeting point between news and online social behavior (p. 1).

Not only do these social media sites give consumers a platform to search, find and share news with friends and family; but they also significantly contribute to re-routing traffic to top news sites from shared links and search words (p. 2). However, the study goes on to confirm that although these social media news consumers have adopted modern methods of obtaining news, social media news sources remain an additional source of news and not a replacement to traditional media (p. 3).

Another noteworthy point is the fact that people consume news differently on each of Facebook and Twitter. Facebook emerges as the more representative platform of the overall survey population when compared with Twitter. Twice as much people would follow news recommended on Facebook than on Twitter, and more people notice news items in their Facebook timelines than in their Twitter feeds (p. 4).

The transformation of media, or rather the growing inter-connection between traditional news sources and social media news sources, has not gone unnoticed in the Arab World. The growing importance of the relationship of social media with social movements has brought a new dimension to the way the public communicates and takes on political initiative. Traditional media, more specifically satellite television, opened up a new space for political communication and created a new kind of public sphere that broke the state's ability to control the flow of information (Lynch, 2011, p. 302).

This new kind of public sphere showed no signs of slowing down or backing away as the 2000s ushered in the era of social media. As the number of Facebook and Twitter users grew across the globe, Facebook alone amassed over 21 million Arab users by 2011. These users were now widely dispersed across the different strata of society and across the different regions. Lynch (2011) emphasizes that such a wide dispersion gave rise to an obvious correlation between these new sources of information and political and social activism. He refers to the popular mobilizations and protests following Israel's reoccupation of the West Bank in 2002, the protests against the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the 2009 Iranian Green Revolution and finally the defining uprisings of 2011 in Egypt and Tunisia, to shed light on the role these social media platforms have played in the political life of the region (p. 303).

In his reading of the conditions surrounding the Tunisian Revolution, Mabrouk (2011), further supports the increasing importance of social media as players in modern political action. He writes that this new internet culture served to build the working ground from which these revolutions launched. Social media networking sites acted as

a weapon youths used to support and continue their protest against their government, by giving them a medium to expose lies, inform a wider public and focus attention on their struggle not only nationally, but globally. He emphasizes the role social media played in carrying the issue to a higher and wider level, a condition that allowed the revolution to go on and ultimately remove President Ben Ali (p. 141).

In Lebanon, manifestations of the important role social media are playing in modern political action and expression have not been so historically defining or ground-breaking. However, a movement has appeared in the last few years and has been making use of Facebook to inform the public of its goals and organize for its protests. The Lebanese anti sectarian movement first made a noteworthy appearance in 25 April 2010, when under the initiative taken by its biggest community Lebanese *Laique Pride*, it organized a march dubbed “March Towards Secularism”. According to news website *NowLebanon*, some 2000 citizens participated in the march that kicked-off a series of annual marches in 2011 and 2012 (Lee, 2010)

Lebanese *Laique Pride* organized its second march on 15 May 2011 and its third on 6 May 2012. Reports by local media suggest that the number of participants in the last two marches did not exceed 700 people each, amounting to less than half of the original number of participants in the first protest. (Salhani, 2012 & Sikimic, 2011).

While Lebanese *Laique Pride* is the biggest and most visible community within the Lebanese anti-sectarian movement, a quick look at Facebook (the number one media platform the movement is using to inform and mobilize supporters) reveals that the movement is in fact a sort of coalition between five anti-sectarian communities, all with their own Facebook pages. These include - in addition to Lebanese *Laique Pride*:

* لا للطائفية* - الشعب اللبناني يريد إسقاط النظام الطائفي ** - All for Secularism and No Sectarianism.

All of the above-mentioned groups' pages are active, and news is posted daily or weekly to their Facebook group walls. An examination of the material posted on their walls reveals a pattern adopted by the anti-sectarian movement in informing and mobilizing supporters: all the groups post motivational facts; they also regularly update followers on any news related to the movement in general, in addition to regular links to any media coverage of their activities.

Such patterns of information suggest that these groups, or communities, have readily adopted the low-cost of social media mobilization. As Shirky (2011, p. 5) observes when describing similar Facebook groups, in doing so, these large, rather loosely coordinated groups, are able to maintain their presence and organize protests by capitalizing on the tools available to them, with the added benefit that these tools come at the cheapest cost.

Social movements aim at persuading and causing change within a society (Van de Donk, 2004, p. 31), and therefore employ for that reason any communication and mobilization tools available at the time to inform citizens, garner support, and mobilize groups towards substantial political action (p. 1). It is not surprising then, that social movements have embraced the opportunities social media platforms offer them. By consequence, the world too, has had to adapt to the way it receives its news and engages in political and social activism. Since 2009, phrases such as "Twitter

* No to Sectarianism

** The Lebanese People Want the Removal of the Sectarian Order

revolution” have been used following mass mobilizations and protests that initially relied on online communication to spread the word and organize. The numbers of such recorded cases, linking “social unrest” to social media have risen, not only in democratic countries but more noticeably under authoritarian rule in the past few years (Borge-Holthoefer, Gonzalez-Bailon, Moreno & Rivero, 2011, p. 3).

But as Shirky (2011) mentions, the use of these online organizational tools does not guarantee any specific outcome yet (p. 2). However, these channels of communications have in more than one way empowered political and social activism. They have created a shift in the balance of power, tilting the scales in favor of the public rather than the government or authoritative power (Lynch, 2011, p. 3), to the extent that ignoring their impact, or failing to account for it, becomes dangerous for both the governing and the governed.

While social media networks and online communication present a new challenge to political structures and existing social orders (Lynch, 2011, pg. 2), both exceptional positive benefits and risky negative limitations characterize their use in influencing social and political change. Social media present social movements with the opportunity to circulate information, amass support and mobilize masses virtually at the cheapest cost; however these channels are not reliable in their outcomes and many scenarios may result.

These developments and the increasing role of social media in the activities of social movements give rise to the following questions: What are the possibilities social networking sites offer social movements in terms of mobilization and political

activism? Is the communication of goals through online media successful at creating accurate awareness and an informed public? Is the transformation of virtual communication into concerted political action significant? Is digital activism a reliable measure of on-the-ground political activism?

The Lebanese anti-sectarian movement, one of the most prominent local cases of a social movement's reliance on social media to convey its messages and organize its supporters; will serve as the case study of this thesis. Not only has this movement garnered online support, but local traditional media have also taken notice of its online and offline presence by reporting on its activities, and thus validating its significance to the local political scene. While this thesis aims at answering the previously listed questions, the online activity of the anti-sectarian movement, in addition to its organized marches and protests, will be the starting point of the study. Supporters of the anti-sectarian movement will be the primary source of data to study its online presence and how this translates into actual political activity.

CHAPTER 2

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose here is to study how social media act as a communication and organization tool for social movements, more specifically for the Lebanese Anti-sectarian movement. Reliance on online platforms to inform publics and organize popular protests, is a subject that has garnered major attention following the Arab Spring events (Borge-Holthoefer et al., 2011, p. 3). This study also aims to broaden our

understanding, as researchers, of the audience these networking tools can reach and the impact they leave on public opinion. Moreover, it highlights the attitudes of citizens towards new media, measuring their expectations and their level of trust.

For the purpose of this study, what is meant by social media, or alternately called social networking tools, are specifically those online websites created to build and maintain social relations among like-minded users. These virtual social relations are maintained when users group around a similar interest or activity (Dubai School of Government, 2011, p. 3).

Social media networks allow users to find, share and contribute to ideas, activities and events. It allows them to build groups, organize and communicate. By creating such networks, the effects of social networking tools have taken on a bigger meaning, impacting both local and global society and government (Dubai School of Government, 2011, p. 3). The ways in which a society communicates and acts within the public on political issues has been redefined increasingly by the effects of social media, especially with the latter's growing inter-connectedness with social movements (Lynch, 2011, p. 302).

Most notably, Facebook has emerged as the primary network that gives individuals and communities these communication spaces and sustains them in a virtual environment. News pieces and links shared on Facebook are twice more likely to be followed and noticed than on Twitter (Christian et al., 2012, p. 4); in other words, the typical Facebook user is more compelled to click on a shared news story, read it and share it with their own network of friends than the typical Twitter user.

As a result of these findings, this study focuses on the Lebanese anti-sectarian movement's presence on Facebook only, manifested in the existence of 5 online communities, otherwise known as Facebook groups: Lebanese Laique Pride, لا للطائفية - إسقاط النظام الطائفي - All for Secularism and No Sectarianism. These Facebook groups have independently and collectively shared news, called for action and reported on their cause; while their members have engaged in discussions and debates and worked towards organizing on-the-ground activities.

A survey carried out on protesters studies exactly how the Lebanese anti-sectarian movement used its Facebook groups to share information with its supporters, and then eventually organize them into a protest. The survey was done on participants during a protest organized by the movement itself on Sunday 6 May, 2012. Surveying protests allows the researcher to take a snapshot view and gain immediate insight into a situation at the time of its development (Verhulst & Walgrave, 2011, p. 220), capturing the specific characteristics of a situation as they unfold and take shape. In this case, it provides the facts on how social media was being used by protesters themselves (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 363) within the timeframe being studied here.

Not only that, but a protest survey also allows the study to take the individual protester as its focal point and to study his relationship to each of social media and the anti-sectarian movement, and how these two inter-connect. Since the political outcome of the anti-sectarian movement's protests is not the subject under scrutiny here, the specialty of protest surveys in shifting the importance from the social movement itself to the social individual serves in answering the questions put forth by this study (Verhulst & Walgrave, 2011, p. 206).

This study, however, doesn't focus on whether the anti-sectarian movement has achieved its goals or influenced policy, and doesn't seek to measure the impact this movement has had on political life. The focus remains on what the anti-sectarian movement has achieved in its use of Facebook to communicate with its supporters and members: how it is employing Facebook, whether it is successful in reaching its community and whether this form of virtual communication is effectively being carried on in political activism.

To answer these questions, the focus here remains on the individual protester and his relationship to the social movement; in addition to his assessment of its use of new media to inform and mobilize supporters. Who is the participant in the protest, why he chose to participate and how that individual was informed and recruited are the elements under study here (Guigni, 2007, p. 5).

Finally, this study acts a pilot for further major studies in the area investigating social movements' use of social media. Conducted on a small sample of people, this pilot study relies on a standard questionnaire survey aimed at extracting knowledge from protestors on the subject (McNabb, 2004, p. 106). It helps identify whether this specific instrument, the questions involved and the procedures employed do in fact serve the purpose underlined here. As a result, changes to the method can be applied on larger attempts, to better address the questions raised (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001, p. 3).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis attempts to address a specific aspect of the growing relationship between modern social movements and social media. It focuses on the technical facet, exploring how social movements today use social media to inform and mobilize their supporters; while also measuring the effectiveness of this tool. As a result, it aims to answer the following three major questions and their related sub-questions:

- (1) Has the anti-sectarian movement secured a significant presence online?
 - a- Are people aware of the movement online?
 - b- Do people take part in the communities the movement has created online?
- (2) Does Facebook allow for the creation of engaged and well-informed communities?
 - a- Do people trust the information communicated on Facebook?
 - b- Do people trust each other within the communities the movement has created on Facebook?
- (3) Does Facebook allow for the effective organization of the anti-sectarian movements' protests?
 - a- Do news and updates shared on Facebook incentivize people to participate in protests?
 - b- Is participation online indicative of participation offline?

These research questions were selected following a social media boom in the region. Since the events of the Arab Spring, starting with Tunisia and following in

Egypt, social movements have been increasingly depending on social media platforms to inform and organize their supporters for the purpose of protests (Borge-Holthoefer et al., 2011, p. 3). As a result of the increasing popularity of social media in the context of society and politics, Facebook has stood out as the foremost social networking site people use to communicate on issues of interest, and more so to organize events by creating and sustaining virtual communities (Christian et al., 2012, p. 4).

CHAPTER 4

LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 A Brief Introduction

The following sections delve into the details of social movement theory, exploring the writings of Della Porta, Diani, Freeman, Christiansen and Weber. Described as small informal groups set to change the realities of social and political life (Alvin, 2000); social movements are characterized generally by four factors that act as pre-requisites for their existence (Freeman, 1999). Since their first emergence, social movements then enter into four stages that delineate their development; starting with emergence, coalescence, bureaucratization and ending in decline (Christiansen, 2009). Throughout their development, and until they reach their full potential or achieve the goal they set out for, social movements rely on the intricate connections formed by their members to prosper (Weber, 2011, p.28).

The second section focuses on the relationship between media and social movements, highlighting the importance of the former in elevating the issues of

importance to the public sphere and giving them their rightful place on the political agenda (Wolfsfeld, 1984). A two-way communication is established then, between social media and governments, as news travels back and forth, from the public to the government and vice versa (Koopman, 2004); giving insight to each of these two entities on each other's respective ideas and actions. Finally, as the relationship evolves, social movements have created their own regulation strategy, to arbitrate and influence media institutions – monitoring and correcting the way media cover and report news (Carroll & Hackett, 2006).

The third section moves on to describe the new relationship social movements have had to craft with emerging social networking sites. The latter have become one of the most important tools at the disposal of social movements and these have jumped at the opportunity to use them to their benefit (Christian et al., 2012). Facebook stands out prominently among these sites as a news and mobilization portal, combining the added benefits of voluntary selectivity, flexibility and speed, and finally a very low cost (Bennett, Breunig & Givens, 2008).

The final section focuses on the role social media networking sites played in the recent Arab Spring protests by creating an alternate public sphere where Arab citizens could engage and talk (Lynch, 2011); the effects of which spilled over into the Egyptian protests of January and February 2011 (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012) and in the earlier Tunisian revolution brought about by the deteriorating economic and social environments (Mabrouk, 2011). Following these events, the popularity of social media did not diminish (Arab Social Media Report, 2012), but the latter have become an

essential coordinating tool, prized for their low cost and mobilizing power (Shirky, 2011).

4.2 Social Movement Theory

Issues of particular interest to a group of people are the starting point of social movements – small informal groups where people get together around one cause. Concerns expressed by individuals transform into a political and social participation process, and become the driving force for mobilization (Alvin, 2000, p. 5). A set course of action aimed at changing the realities of social life (p. 4) then manifests itself into a series of political events and protests that bring the beliefs of such groups to the forefront of public life (p. 16). As a result, the study of social movements focuses in essence on how these individuals first get together, and then carry their ideas, values and interests into a continuous movement based on the concept of collective action (p. 5).

The facts are that most social movements have unclear and less than remarkable beginnings. By the time the ideas of such groups and their organized movement has had some effect on social and political life, the details of how people initially got together and what situation propelled their action into movement are forgotten (Freeman, 1999, p. 7). However, a closer look at four social movements in the sixties and seventies reveals the existence of recurring characteristics that seem to explain and answer how social movements begin. The civil rights movement, student protests, the welfare rights movement and the women's liberation movement all provide insight into these elements (p. 7). The first characteristic is the necessary existence of linkages between

the individuals that get together following a specific issue. As groups form, these informal social networks need to have a base of commonalities between the people that form them – an already existing communications network based in an already existing institution. For example, the civil rights movement witnessed its beginnings in churches and college campuses, while the welfare rights movement was born out of already existing anti-poverty agencies (p. 24). If the people affected by one crisis do not have such pre-existing communication networks, rarely do they transform into a social movement (p. 8).

However, a communications network alone is not sufficient. The individuals must also have similar experiences and shared beliefs and values; they should be able to think alike and work together in the same direction. In addition to that, the individuals should be located at close proximity from each other and should be able to relate to the same background. When these characteristics are present, only then can these individuals carry their ideas into the communications network, exchange them and build them up into significant action (p. 8). As a third characteristic, the individuals within these established networks will need to experience a crisis, or a series of crises, that push them into action (p. 9). For the civil rights movement for instance, this was manifested in Rosa Park's refusal to give her seat on the bus to a white man (p. 26). Only such events, as diminutive as they are, can reinforce the need for change and give proof of the dissatisfaction the group is suffering from (p. 27). Finally, all these elements must be brought together and exploited by an organizer, who works on organizing protests and keeping the network informed and mobilized. The organizer is

not necessarily the public leader of the movement, but can be anyone skilled with organizing groups of people into collective action (p. 27).

Social movements are not a political party or political elite; nor are they a trend adopted by citizens. While the former are stable long-term entities with power, the latter are unorganized and have no defined goals – neither of these two categories accurately describes a social movement (Christiansen, 2009, p. 2). A social movement is a social entity that while organized, remains an informal network. Its members share a specific collective goal that aims to change a reality causing discontent to the group. Its members also have similar beliefs that allow them to work together and communicate together (p. 2). These informal social entities are capable of influencing change in their society (p. 1), and while scholars have spent countless efforts trying to understand how they come to be and who participates in them, another important aspect to address is what are the stages these social movements go through and how do they achieve the goal they had set out to (p. 2). Generally, all social movements go through four stages of development, starting with emergence, coalescence, bureaucratization and ending in decline (p. 2). Emergence, the first stage, is characterized by a general sense of discontent among a particular population or group of individuals. However, at this stage, nothing past individual complaints or grievances occur. There is no organization yet, nor have the individuals focused their goal or strategy (p. 2). It takes a series of unfortunate events to propel a social movement from emergence to stage 2, coalescence. At this stage, the source of discontent becomes focalized and individuals become aware that others within the same community are as unhappy and distressed as they are. Such a realization moves the individuals forward into creating a more

organized and strategic approach to express their sentiment. It is usually at this stage that a leader takes control and leads the group into some form of collective action, usually protest (p. 3). Moving into the third stage, bureaucratization, becomes necessary when a social movement has successfully raised awareness among its members and has created a suitable environment for coordinated collective action. While protests and rallies might have been enough in the second stage, the third stage requires the efforts of professionals to carry the social movement's goals into development and to inspire people to continue their fight. If mass excitement for the cause is lost, the movement itself is more or less lost too. Mobilization at this stage requires better organization and better motivational starting points (p. 3). The final stage any social movement goes through is decline – not necessarily read as failure. The decline of a social movement can take place if it reaches its goal. Small social movements with very specific goals dissolve once that goal has been achieved, marking their movements as successful. Other social movements dissolve when their activities are repressed by an authority and it becomes increasingly impossible for them to carry out their strategy. Another reason social movements dissolve is outright failure in maintaining public interest in their goal and mobilizing into tangible action. And finally, social movements dissolve if their work is co-opted into a large institution or adopted by the masses (p. 4).

Social movements thrive on social capital, otherwise described as the valuable connections between individuals. It is only when individuals are aware of other's struggles, share a mutual interest in change and trust each other to work together towards achieving that change that social movements can be maintained and grown

(Weber, 2011, p. 28). The interconnectedness of individuals occurs at two levels, both horizontal and vertical. The horizontal relationships are those which individuals create with individuals of the same background and goals, while vertical relationships are those characterized by cooperation and submission to higher powers and authority. It is the horizontal relationships that allow social movements to thrive and to foster solidarity, tolerance and trust. These sentiments in turn encourage civic engagement and allow social movements to progress and develop successfully towards their goals (p. 28). Social relationships built on the concept of reciprocity, mutual interest and objectives give individuals the tools to mobilize, challenge authority and exercise influence on social and political affairs (p. 27).

4.3 Media and Social Movements

How do social movements influence social and political change? And how do they find the balance between a need to be heard and a restriction in available resources? In their search for ways to be heard, social movements more often than not find themselves entering into a special relationship with the mass media. The mass media are a greatly important element to any movement that adopts protesting as a strategy to voice its concerns and goals (Wolfsfeld, 1984, p. 365). As social movements scramble to put their resources to use, the mass media have risen as the inevitable inexpensive platform for them (p. 363). The mass media give social movements, no matter how small and unstructured they are, the exposure they need to position themselves on the agenda of important issues, whether socially or politically (p. 365). The amount of exposure a social movement needs however is directly proportional to

the goals it sets for itself – the bigger the goals, the more important it is to garner the most media coverage possible. Media coverage gives social movements the appearance of influence in the beginning stages and helps them maintain their activity and take on more supporters at later stages. (p. 366).

However, the relationship between social movements and media does not end there. This relationship in reality can be described in terms of a two-way communication, where media act as the middle-man between social movements and government (Koopman, 2004, p. 370), giving insight to each of these two entities on each other's respective ideas and actions. By simple reasoning, a social movement needs media coverage because it validates its role as an important player - in other words a protest worthy of media coverage equals a protest worthy of a response from authorities (p. 374). This "coverage need" can be broken down into three major purposes social movements work for: mobilization, validation and scope enlargement. Not only does a social movement need media to inform the public of its goals, but it also needs it to inform the larger public - that which is inaccessible through the movement's own media mechanisms - and more importantly to inform the authorities of its goals and demands. A social movement is validated by being "heard of" through news media, a validation necessary to incite a response from government. Conversely, governments need media to pinpoint the movements worthy of attention and most often these respond to movements according to how media cover them and not to how these movements are in reality (p. 368-369). Finally, in the reverse direction of this equation, social movements rely heavily on media coverage to learn of the attitudes and decisions governments, third parties and the larger public take on issues central to their goals and

demands. It is the rule in this relationship that communication happens through the pathways of media outlets, therefore while social movements need news media to communicate their own demands, they also need news media to receive the answers to those demands. This serves in guiding them in their decisions towards the next course of action (p. 370). This view of a give-and-take relationship between media, social movements and governments solidifies the view that social movements rely heavily on traditional media to get their point across. However, news media's selectivity and tendency to follow fads, might downplay the prominence of some social movements and render their efforts hopeless. The alternative is a harder but more durable and stable means of communication: social movements should work on solidifying their horizontal channels of communication through social and organizational networks. It is true that these channels offer a slower alternative at spreading the news however if successful they overcome the "fad" syndrome traditional media imposes in its coverage (p. 385).

The short-comings of media coverage for social movements have actually been an area of study for scholars, especially with the rise of corporate media moguls. These media outlets have been under close scrutiny for the obstacles they put forth, most notably consumer-driven ideologies and the intervention of political power (Carroll & Hackett, 2006, p. 83). However, social movement theory has adapted to these new realities giving birth to what has become known as democratic media activism (p. 83). Ever since the mid-90s, civil society groups have focused all or part of their efforts towards influencing media institutions and re-dressing the way media cover and report news. As a result, the reformation of mass media – what is being covered, how is it

being covered, who is financing coverage, who has access to the resources of media – is no longer an exclusively governmental task; but rather an area of public political action (p. 84). Social movements strive to influence the content of mass media, advocate government reform policies for media and empowering audiences to question and debate what the media presents (p. 88 – 89). However, what has emerged out of this activity is the realization that social movements rely on media for coverage and for the collection of supporters in greater measure than the media’s reliance on movements for credibility (p. 87). The alternative therefore has been for social movements to create unconventional ways in which to reach their publics. Collective action in modern societies now depends on media monitoring and internet activism as ways of reaching their supporters and controlling their image and message (p. 89). Not only does this offer social movements certain control but it also lowers the costs that burden social movements in acquiring media coverage (p. 91). It is true that while democratic media activism reinforces the tools of social movements, such as a dynamic public sphere and a well-informed society (p. 99); this struggle to democratize mass media tends to also deflect the attention from a social movement’s key goals, often running in parallel and requiring as much attention and effort as a movement’s driving goal. In fact, the democratization of mass media might be doomed to remaining a cause in itself (p. 100).

4.4 Social Media and Social Movements

One of the most powerful tools that have emerged at the disposal of social movements is social media networking sites - positioned as a possible choice of

horizontal communication within the structures of social movements (Christian et al., 2012, p. 2). As sites such as Facebook and Twitter have been confirmed as news sources to the modern internet user, more and more social and political groups have adopted them as means for communication. Facebook emerges as the leading platform between the two, with more than double the users on Facebook following news links than on Twitter (p. 2). Facebook news consumers also mirror the overall population better than the Twitter news consumers (p. 5). However, despite these findings, it is worth noting that while social media have emerged as alternate methods of getting news, they remain supplements at best to traditional news media, rather than replacements (p. 2). Although more than half of digital news consumers receive news from social networking sites, this is not a clear indication that this is happening at the expense of news sites and news search engines (p. 4). On Facebook, news consumers get their news from friends and family and half of that population ascertains that had they not gotten the news via Facebook, they probably would have obtained it from another source (p. 5).

But the most important factor for social movements in the shift from exclusive dependence on traditional media to the more empowering use of social media networks lies in their mobilizing power. On social networking sites, people can choose freely to receive news from a particular movement, can choose freely to associate themselves with it or to dissociate themselves from it. Such freedoms that do away with more formal forms of membership have revived collective action (Bennett, Breunig & Givens, 2008, p. 270). In addition to that, the inherent flexibility of social media networking sites and their post-bureaucratic appeal have allowed them to become

channels of swift organization and coordination – a notion that has become apparent following the 2003 global anti-war protests (p. 270). Finally, digital networking comes at a low cost, thus creating an ideal medium for social movements to create and sustain “loose, voluntary and nonhierarchical relationships” (p. 271). These factors come together to transform the way social movements now collect supporters, mobilize their followers and communicate with them. Up to 80% of protesters surveyed confirmed they had used the internet to learn about the cause they were protesting for, and to actually organize and coordinate for the protest itself (p. 272). This simplified version of individual involvement at a digital level accounts for the growing and quickening pace at which protests across nations are being mobilized. A clear shift can be observed from the more ideological and hierarchical mass social structures such as political parties to the more personal individualistic affiliations driven by choice and lifestyle; most prominently observed among the younger participants in protests (p. 285). However, this shift raises some concerns on activism and mobilization: can these flexible networks based on personalized communication channels result in consistent and sustainable collective political action, were it protests or larger-scale political and social change (p. 286)?

4.5 Arab Social Movements in the Digital Age

The transformation of the information environment and the associated challenges social media present to authoritarian government have been sweeping over the Arab World since the late 1990s. The adoption of satellite television created a new kind of public sphere where political communication and the flow of information

escaped state control to beyond borders it could not skip earlier (Lynch, 2011, p. 302). This transformation continued throughout the early 2000s as internet and smart phone penetration rapidly grew and extended this public sphere to include a wide variety of Arab citizens. By 2011, 21 million Arab users were on Facebook. As political change swept across Egypt in the beginning of 2011, a strong relationship could be established between this new information medium and the shocking political and social activism that defined this era. But this relationship started budding early in this decade with social media networking sites, when popular protests were organized in 2002 to protest Israel's reoccupation of the West Bank, and then spilled over and continued in protests against the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and 2009's Iranian Green Revolution, culminating finally in the Arab uprisings of late 2011 (p. 303). These social networking sites empower horizontal networks and shift the balance of power towards individuals and social movements rather than states and governments. Social media enables individuals to create networks to inform and mobilize movements and allows an escape from state censorship that traditional news media have not been able to circumvent. But, although these new outlets provide movements with an alternate pathway, their effects cannot be noticeable, or in fact change-inducing, unless supported by existing powers, the still-important role of traditional media and more importantly the deteriorating social and economic situation as in the case of Egypt (p. 303).

However, social media did provide protesters in Egypt's Tahrir Square a news source that the regime could not control. It also provided them with a tool to organize and coordinate in real time, as the protest unfolded. Protesters were surveyed during their participation in the protests in January and February 2011 with special focus on

three elements: what did they learn of the protest through social media, how they decided to participate and finally how was their participation documented through social networking sites (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 363). The results of the survey revealed that more than a quarter of the protesters heard about the protest for the first time through Facebook. In addition to that, it was revealed that protesters used Facebook, Twitter and blogs to share information from the demonstration itself (p. 374). This highlights the centrality of social media to the events in Egypt, and this role can be traced back to the first emergence of blogs and personal websites to the increased use of Facebook and Twitter at a later stage (p. 364). The biggest boost social media sites received was the introduction of Facebook in Arabic in 2009: online political content multiplied and online activism reached new heightened levels.

But it wasn't until after unrest broke out in Tunisia that the effects of social media spilled over into the streets in Egypt. By January 25, 2011, activists staged the largest protest in Tahrir Square and relied heavily on social networking sites to report from the scene despite government- initiated internet shutdowns (p. 364). This exposed how social media had altered the tools available to the Egyptian public sphere and had created new vulnerabilities for its regime. Despite the government's attempts at shutting down communication, the Egyptians were capable of coordinating an effective collective demonstration through a new communication infrastructure. But this infrastructure is not solely explained in terms of social networking sites. It is rather the meeting point of three favorable factors: the availability of internet connectivity, the rise of Facebook and Twitter, and finally the low cost of owning a mobile phone (p. 365). These three factors combined made political discourse available to the masses

and subsequently mass public dissent that later manifested into demonstrations (p. 366).

The Tunisian revolution is another example of the observations mentioned earlier. While social media played an important role in bringing about change, none of the scenarios that unfolded in Tunisia would have been possible without other social and economic factors building up over the years. It is that combination that helped bring about and compound the anger and determination the Tunisians demonstrated throughout the revolution, namely the deteriorating economic and social factors in the country characterized by unemployment and marginalization, the public sector's ambivalence to the needs of its people and finally the suicide "ethos" brought on by a general loss of value among unemployed and marginalized youth (Mabrouk, 2011, p. 136). But still it cannot be denied that social media networks have emerged as a principal factor in sustaining the uprisings. Social media networks allowed the Tunisian youth to broadcast their suffering to the world and most importantly, embarrass the political regime (p. 140). By drawing attention to what was happening on the ground through live coverage on social networking sites, these youth were able to better inform protesters and the world of the daily lies produced by their government and the daily aggressions they suffered from (p. 142). They revolutionized the way people received their information on what was happening during the protests, and were thus capable of keeping the spark alive and nurturing it more and more (p. 141).

Following the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, the popularity of social networking sites did not fade, indicating a more organic transformation in the way the Arab individual now communicates and connects with the larger public sphere (Arab Social Media Report, 2012, p. 1). Where previously social media was used purely for

its social aspect, today, it stands as social, entrepreneurial and political networking tool at once (p. 2). Moreover, the Arabic format of Facebook and the large number of users it registers further indicates the participation of the mass public in contrast to earlier use by limited elites (p. 13). The Arab mass public now recognizes the positive impact social media plays on cultural and political attitudes in addition to it being an effective tool for change within communities and nations alike. As it exposes individuals to a wide array of ideas and opinions it strengthens tolerance and acceptance of the other and reinforces one's belonging through the virtual connections its establishes and nurtures (p. 6).

But, it must be noted that the results social media networking sites offer in such cases as the Egyptian and the Tunisian revolutions are not dependable. There is no sure outcome expected out of the use of social media networks to inform public opinion and support public protest. However, and despite their undependability, social media have become coordinating tools for almost all the world's social movements (Shirky, 2011, p. 2). Their appeal lies first and foremost in their ability to cut costs necessary for coordination and organization. By providing social movements cheap and easy ways to communicate with their supporters, inform them and mobilize them, social media have ultimately provided large groups a tool that is both easy to use and develop, and that is hard to censor and shut down by state mechanisms (p. 5 & 6). Social media networks are also "long-term tools" that can be effectively used to nurture social awareness and ultimately strengthen communication and coordination within a strengthened public sphere and civil society (p. 3). The downfall of social media networks is the fact that they cannot cover for real-world action. In other words, while these online tools are

important for coordination, they are ineffective in causing any real change if action is not taken in the real world. Social media networks are important to inform and document but cannot replace traditional political action (p. 7). Another downfall is the fact that social media networks might be problematic in globalizing local issues. Outsiders to a country, or society, will not be able to accurately capture the facts of unfolding events as social media users offer very personal and spontaneous accounts of them. Often, this will taint efforts of external support (p. 3).

In addition to this, the use of social media can easily lead to the oversimplification of complex issues. The focus of social movements here is to attract more and more supporters, more often than not compromising the actual complexity of the issue at hand; and limiting the scope of a cause to a slogan (Budish, 2012, 755). Adding to oversimplification, the absence of any real sacrifice or material cost from the end of the supporter, can lead to passive participation. People might sign an e-petition or send in donations, but eventually be satisfied with this minimal effort. The end result, is large numbers of mostly idle supporters (p. 750).

But perhaps the biggest problem here lies in the increasing dilemma authoritarian regimes are being faced with: they can either shut down social media networks to contain and control the flow of information; or they could employ that flow to their own benefit. Many reports have come out of Egypt, Syria and Iran (among other countries) detailing the use of social media by government agencies to collect information on protesters and their activities (Dewey T. et al., 2012, p. 29). In Egypt, the government has used social networking sites to identify and threaten protesters; while in Syria the government has gone as far as setting up a Syrian Electronic Army

dedicated to the online surveillance of dissidents (p. 30). In this sense, social media can impede the work of social movements and open the way for more government repression and possible reprisals on its own members (p. 29).

4.6 Conclusions

The existence of a structure that allows for the public to come together around a shared set of values or a desired goal is a pre-requisite to the emergence of movements (Freeman, 1999). Following from this logic, the existence of social networking sites can be perceived as the starting point of digital activism, as their emergence provided a new, easy-to-use communication structure. The strength of social media – and also the characteristic that makes them indispensable to social movements – lies in their ability to inform individuals and heighten their sense of awareness of a shared situation and destiny with others (Christiansen, 2009). As people become more aware of the commonalities they share with their community, and of the shared interests that unite them (Weber, 2011), the spark for socio-political activism is effectively ignited. In addition to the needed exposure (Wolfsfeld, 1984) and the validation (Koopman, 2004) mass media offer social movements, the new breed of social media takes things one step further, giving social movements a tool that circumvents both state and traditional media control. Social media allow movements to control the content of reported news and influential stories, empowering them to get their message across unhampered by the restrictions political relations impose on governments and traditional media (Carroll & Hackett, 2006). As the Arab world has come to realize the power and the positive impact of social media (Mabrouk, 2011), it also remains clear that despite the many

benefits of the latter, traditional media are indispensable and often do support them (Lynch, 2011). Social media, at the current state of affairs, remain a supplement to traditional media as much of the world still receives its news from television, newspapers and radios (Christian et al., 2012).

However, does social media allow for a better-informed public sphere? There is no doubt that in the modern world, social media have solidified their status as news sources for the individual, stemming from a horizontal communication structure between family and friends (Christian et al., 2012). These horizontal relationships allow for solidarity, tolerance and trust to grow between the communities that share similar interests and mutual grievances. As people trust each other more, social media increasingly become effective tools of information and mobilization. Communities are given the power to influence and possibly change socio-economic situations they find undesirable (Weber, 2011). As people are able to connect with these communities at a very low cost, in addition to the selective freedom social media offer them, the public sphere moves into the digital world which becomes an ideal medium for people to learn, discuss and debate the change they would like to see materialize (Bennett et al., 2008).

But how well does digital activism carry into the real world? While there is no sure outcome out of the use of social networking sites by social movements, both the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions and related protests stand testament to the important changes the former have imposed on the social and political spheres. Despite their undependability and the many possible scenarios one can expect, social media have become coordinating tools for almost all of the world's social movements.

While this importance is recognized, it is not enough if digital movements remain confined to the internet. Digital activism has not replaced tangible action (Shirky, 2011). The good news is that the endless flexibility of social media has positioned them as the most effective tools for swift organization and coordination in this era. A recent study shows that up to 80% of respondents have used the internet to organize and coordinate a protest (Bennett et al., 2008). The stand-out characteristic in this form of activism lies in the ability of individuals to organize and coordinate in real-time while events take place (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012), merging the benefits of digital activism with the irreplaceable impact of tangible action. Years of deteriorating social and economic conditions and the build-up of dissatisfaction among citizens remains the ultimate pre-requisite for any kind of activism (Mabrouk, 2011).

But coupled with the low cost and availability of mobile phones and internet connections (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012), social media have come to add the ultimate ingredient to pave the way for popular protests: a coordinating tool controlled by the public and which effectively connects its members and simplifies the journey towards social and political activism.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

5.1 Method

For the purpose of this thesis, a survey conducted at the Lebanese Anti-sectarian movement's latest protest was required. The survey allowed the researcher to study the role social media played in informing, mobilizing and organizing individuals' participation in the protest by assessing their attitudes and perceptions towards 3 key factors:

- 1- Whether the anti-sectarian movement is successful at creating an online presence
- 2- Whether Facebook allows the anti-sectarian movement to better inform and engage with its communities
- 3- Whether the anti-sectarian movement can effectively organize protests through Facebook

Protest surveys have become an increasingly popular tool among scholars as protest participation has become more common in the process of modern political expression (Verhulst & Walgrave, 2011, p. 203). As more and more people favor protest participation to express their political views and preferences over the more traditional forms of political participation such as elections, party membership and campaigning; protests today appeal to a larger variety of people from different backgrounds. Protests are no longer simply the arena of workers and students but rather offer insight into a highly diverse population (p. 203) As a result of these changes, it

has become more relevant to study the individual rather than the movement as a whole, focusing on the new fluid dynamics of protest mobilization and organization (p. 206). Protest surveys are designed to take place as oral interviews on the spot, during protest events. The questions comprised in a survey focus on shedding light on who are the participants in a specific protest, how they were mobilized and what motivated them to participate and express their views or demands (p. 203).

Demonstrations have been found to be the most popular form of protest (Guigni, 2007, p. 3). Protest surveying carried out at demonstrations where a group of people moves from one point to the other are useful, feasible and reliable (p. 2). The usefulness of protest surveying lies first and foremost in its ability to shed light on why participants in a protest decide to participate (p. 5). By going straight to the source and asking the protestor himself why and how he chose to participate, protest surveying is effectively accessing information that cannot be obtained otherwise.

As for feasibility, protest surveying ensures a high response rate due to the personal nature of interviews conducted, where the interviewer is face-to-face with the interviewee. The personal contact lessens the chances of non-participation (p. 12) and raises the percentage of questions answered on a survey (p. 13). The issue of reliability is tackled with a structured plan for the field work. Once the bias of choosing interviewees is eliminated by employing a strict selection method to be followed by all interviewers contributing to the study, the findings will be representative of the whole protest population thus making them reliable (p. 21).

The Anti-sectarian movement's demonstration brought out 600 participants (Salhani, 2012). After the elimination of incomplete and faulty questionnaires, a sample of 158 participants remained. If the confidence level is taken at 95%, the sampling error is 4%.

5.2 Participant Recruitment

Protest surveying presents a set of problems when it comes to the selection of participants in the survey. Protests are characterized by a constant flow of people into and out of a protest, in addition to the moving nature of the activity (Guigni, 2007, p. 11). While past scholars such as Waddington, Jasper and Poulsen, and Della Porta remained vague on the details of participant selection in their various works, a common aspect between these studies reveals that attempts were made to ensure equal distribution over the whole moving crowd by having the interviewers proceed along with the protest (p. 11). In fact, sampling is better done when the crowd is moving to make sure that the sample of participants shifts and changes from a clear starting point and towards a defined end (p. 12).

Selection bias is not only restricted to where interviewers pick participants from (the beginning, middle or end of a protest march) but also extends to the type of people interviewers will choose. Interviewers can be prone to choosing a specific type of participant based on characteristics or approachability (Verhulst & Walgrave, 2011, p. 212). This reinforces the need for a strategy that ensures interviewers choose participants without any bias and with the added guarantee of overall dispersion over

the whole crowd. Perhaps the most practical and workable method of selection was designed by Favre and Fillieule, a French team that attempted a systemized selection of participants in a moving protest following the below plan: teams of interviewers start at two different points of the protest and count rows – choosing participants from every n^{th} row. Additionally, and to ensure all participants had an equal chance of being selected, they chose people from both sides of the row and from the middle (p. 212).

The method is based on three core factors:

- (1) Having one team start at the beginning of the crowd and moving back; and the second team starting at the end and moving to the front,
 - (2) Skipping the same number of rows throughout the whole protest,
 - (3) And choosing participants from the left, right and center of every chosen row
- (p. 213)

This systematic way of choosing participants guaranteed that whether people chose to stand at the front, middle or back of a protest, or whether they chose to stand at the center or at the margins, they all had the same equal chance of being selected; disregarding any interviewer bias. Once selected, a participant was then handed a questionnaire and the interviewer took the participant through it orally (p. 213). This method is especially beneficial in cases where participants are not moving within specific blocks of affiliated groups or organizations. The more random the choice is for participants where to walk and at what pace, the more this method is applicable and less prone to dispersion issues (p. 214).

In the case of this thesis, the Anti-sectarian movement chose to move from Sanayeh towards Ain El Mreisseh. People who participated were free to choose where to walk as

no specific groups were created and members of the same Facebook groups did not group on the ground. By implementing Favre and Fillieule's method, two teams of three interviewers were formed. Each team started at one end of the moving protest, one at the beginning and one at the end, and then moved inwards towards the center of the group. Individuals on every 4th row were approached, and interviewers asked one person on the left, one on the right and one in the center (Verhulst & Walgrave, 2011, p. 212). They were introduced briefly to the study and presented with a consent form that explains the purpose of the study, informs them of their role and asserts that the survey is completely anonymous. Those who expressed a willingness to participate were then presented with a questionnaire consisting of 16 multiple choice questions. No personal information was asked of participants and no record of names and contact information was kept in order to protect their anonymity. The survey, however, does account for the age of those who participated in the study. This will serve in defining the age group that most identifies with and makes use of social media platforms versus the age group that participates on-the-ground, though not virtually. Both of the consent form and the questionnaire were available in English and Arabic, depending on the participant's preference.

5.3 Procedures

The survey was administered during the latest protest held by the anti-sectarian movement to date. On May 6, 2012, supporters of the anti-sectarian movement marched from Sanayeh to Ain El Mreisseh in a march called for and organized by

Laique Pride, the most prominent movement among those under the banner of anti-sectarianism.

When participants were approached, they were given a brief idea on the study and then presented with a written consent form to indicate their willingness to take the survey anonymously.

All material handed out to participants was previously examined and approved by the IRB office. All questionnaires started with general socio-demographic questions (Guigni, 2007, p. 6) and then moved on to more specific issues evaluating the participants' opinions regarding the anti-sectarian movement's use of social media and the mobilization process (p. 6). The protest survey aimed to address the core questions that can only be answered through this method: who is participating in the process, why they chose to do so and how were they mobilized. These questions can only be successfully addressed within the protest itself as the answers vary greatly from one protest and the other (p. 7).

5.4 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire did not take more than 5 minutes to complete on average and featured 16 questions that asked participants about their beliefs, their attitudes and their thoughts (Klandermans, 2002, p. 3) concerning three major aspects - whether the participant is digitally active and to what extent, how the participant rates the activity of the anti-sectarian movement on Facebook especially in what relates to the quality of information and communication; and finally the effectiveness of Facebook in organizing the protest:

- The first variable in the questionnaire tackled the age of the participants. The choices followed an ordinal scale.
- Section 1 focused on Facebook's role as a source of information and contained 5 questions (questions 2 through 6 on the questionnaire). The variables in this section aimed to answer the first research question: Has the anti-sectarian movement secured a significant presence online?

To provide an answer to the first part of this research question – Are people aware of the movement online? – Variable 2 referred to the source people first heard of the movement from. Variable 3 considered whether participants conducted an online search of the movement had they not heard of it online first. Finally, variable 4 explored where participants found the best information online or offline on the anti-sectarian movement. The choices for each variable followed a nominal scale.

Part two of this research question - Do people take part in the communities the movement has created online? – was answered through two variables. Variable 5 considered whether participants belonged to any of the Facebook groups affiliated with the movement, while variable 6 checked the frequency with which participants visited the Facebook pages.

- Section 2 of the questionnaire tackled the second research question: Does Facebook allow for the creation of engaged and well-informed communities? 7 variables measured on a nominal scale were used.

Variables 7 through 10 answered the question of whether participants trusted information they obtained through Facebook, by asking them to rate the quality of post updates and information dispensed through the groups. Participants were

also asked whether they trusted this information and whether they considered themselves appropriately informed.

Variables 11 through 13 answered the question of whether participants trusted other people within these Facebook groups. Participants were asked whether they felt comfortable posting updates themselves and entering into discussions with other members.

- The final section of the questionnaire, consisting of 3 variables, attempted to answer the third research question: Does Facebook allow for the effective organization of the anti-sectarian movements' protests? The options to these variables were measured on a nominal scale.

Variable 14 explored why participants chose to participate while variable 15 delved into whether participants repeatedly engaged in demonstrations, in order to measure whether the news and updates shared on Facebook incentivized people to participate in protests.

Finally variable 16 addressed whether participants indicated their participation (or lack of) in the protest online.

5.5 Data Analysis

A total of 158 questionnaires were collected during the May 6 protest. The information collected will be analyzed on SPSS and Excel using descriptive statistics and delineating frequencies for each option in a variable. The results of this survey will describe the status of the anti-sectarian movement's online presence and how well has awareness been established. They will also shed light on the quality of information

diffused and whether this has served to build trust within the communities. Finally, the results will clarify how communication on social media platforms helps create and organize protests (Borge-Holthoefer et al., 2011, p. 2). The expectations, real possibilities and limits of these platforms will be explained based on the analysis of the feedback collected from these involved citizens.

5.6 Limitations

The procedure of surveying a protest does involve a number of limitations. The biggest of which, is the fact that it gives researchers a simple snapshot of a single protest; one which might be part of a series of protests (Guigni, 2007, p. 30). The researcher can only look into the characteristics of this one protest and will not be able to provide analysis from the entire series of protests. The study is limited to one instance, and so are the results which only describe this specific event and not the overall situation. Moreover, protest surveying can only yield information on participants in a protest and only those who choose to participate in the survey itself (p. 31). The assessment of mobilization is therefore limited only to those who did show up to the protest, and not all those who supported and agreed with the need for action.

On the technical side, conducting a protest survey is difficult to plan. As the protest moves and progresses, it is hard to ensure participant selection is fair and comprehensive. The best way to deal with this limitation is, as mentioned earlier, for the researchers to move with the protest (Verhulst & Walgrave, 2011, p. 208). Another difficulty is the fact that although participants might be willing to take part in the survey, they might be distracted while addressing the questions in the noisy moving

setting (p. 208). To overcome this, interviewers helped the participants go through the survey orally, immediately explaining a question when it seemed the participant was having difficulty.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS

A total of 158 questionnaires were completed during the May 6, 2012 protest of the anti-sectarian movement. Participants were chosen according to a counting system mentioned earlier in this paper, where people were approached every 4th row from the left, right and center of the group. 62% (98) of participants were aged between 18 and 27 years old, while 38% (56) of participants were dispersed across the ages 28 to 42. Only 2.5% (4) of participants were older than 42.

6.1 A significant presence online

Questions in this section focused primarily on whether participants were aware of the anti-sectarian movement's online presence. To verify the latter, participants were asked where they first heard of the anti-sectarian movement. 43.2% (67) indicated Facebook was their first source of information on the anti-sectarian movement, followed closely by 38.7% (60) indicating from friends.

Table 6.1.3 *Frequencies and percentages showing where participants first heard of the anti-sectarian movement*

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Newspaper	1	0.6
	Television	3	1.9
	Friends	60	38.7
	Facebook	67	43.2
	Twitter	1	0.6
	Other	23	14.8
	Total	155	100
Missing	System	3	
Total		158	

To further illustrate the presence of the anti-sectarian movement online, participants were asked where they had found the best information on the anti-sectarian movement's goals. The answers revealed Facebook as a major contributor with 50.8% (60) of participants picking this choice, followed by 22% (26) from online newspaper articles and 18.6% (22) from blogs.

To address the second part of this research question on whether participants take part in the online communities the movement has created, participants were asked to indicate whether they belonged to any Facebook group in support of the anti-sectarian movement's activities and goals? 59.7% (92) of participants answered with yes while 40.3% (62) replied with no. A follow-up question asked participants to indicate which groups they belonged to, the results of which are displayed below:

Table 6.1.2 *Participants' belonging to the anti-sectarian movement's Facebook groups*

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Lebanese Laïque Pride	77	57
	لا الطائفية	3	2.2
	All for Secularism	2	1.5
	الشعب اللبناني يريد إسقاط النظام الطائفي	3	2.2
	Other	5	3.7
	All of the above	11	8.1
	More than one of the above	34	25.3
	Total	135	100
Missing	System	23	
Total		158	

6.2 An Engaged and Well-informed Community

To answer the second research question two groups of variables addressed the two sub-questions in this section, first to find out if participants trusted the information communicated on the Facebook groups and second to find out if participants trusted other people within these communities. People who did not belong to any of the groups could still answer these questions since belonging and engagement online are exclusive – one can not belong to a group online but still read posted material and engage with the community in the group.

To evaluate whether participants trusted information posted on the groups, they were first asked to rate the quality of post updates the Facebook groups they followed posted. 64.8% (92) of respondents attributed positive characteristics to the post updates choosing adjectives such as informative, engaging and motivational. 12% (17) chose negative adjectives such as unsatisfactory and vague, and 23.2% (33) indicated that the post updates needed improvement.

Participants were then asked to rate their knowledge on the anti-sectarian movement's goals and activities based on the information posted by the Facebook groups. 49.7% (71) of the respondents indicated that although they were sufficiently informed, they also complemented their knowledge by reference to traditional media, readings and discussions with friends. 39.2% (56) considered themselves well-informed while 11.2% (16) described their knowledge as vague.

Finally, participants were asked whether they trusted Facebook as a primary source of information on political issues and public action. The majority, 56.1% (83), said that they are sometimes not sure of the information.

To answer the second research question, participants were asked whether they felt comfortable posting material relevant to the cause on the group’s wall and whether they felt comfortable engaging in discussions with other members. 54.9% (79) of respondents felt comfortable posting to the Facebook groups’ walls. And while 47.2% (67) of respondents remained reserved about engaging with others in the group, a large number was also comfortable responding and engaging with others at 43% (61).

Table 6.1.3 Valid percentages showing participants' willingness to post and discuss on Facebook groups

		Posting		Discussing	
		Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Definitely	79	54.9	61	43
	Sometimes/if others remain non-defensive	62	43.1	67	47.2
	Never	3	2.1	14	9.9
	Total	144	100	142	100
Missing	System	14		16	
	Total	158		158	

6.3 An Effective Organization of Protests

To measure whether the anti-sectarian movement’s online Facebook groups act as incentive for people to participate, the first question in this section of the questionnaire asked participants why they chose to take part in the demonstration. 60.3% (91) chose to attend the protest because they supported the cause, 7.3% (11) chose to participate because they received an invitation on Facebook for the public event, 5.3% (8) attended because their friends had chosen to, 3.3% (5) chose to participate because they attend all events announced by the Facebook group they belong to, and 2.6% (4) attended because of all the previously mentioned reasons. A further 21.2% (32) chose to attend for more than one of the previously stated reasons.

The following question measured whether their choice to participate in the protests organized by the anti-sectarian movement was recurrent or not. 52% (78) said they had attended all of them, 28% (42) none before, 18.7% (28) said most or some, and 1.3% (2) answered with other.

The final question in the survey aimed at measuring whether participation online was indicative of participation offline, asking participants whether they indicated their participation or not, on the group's page or the event's page. 69.3% (104) indicated that they do reply to the invitation as "attending", 13.3% (20) said that they reply with "maybe" and 17.3% (26) said that they do not respond to the online invitation.

6.4 Analysis of the Findings

With 62% (98) of respondents to the survey between the ages of 18 and 27 years old, the sample points to a young community. While this might be reflective of the notions and concepts supported by the anti-sectarian movement, it can also be indicative of the exclusion of older generations who might not be familiar with the technology, in addition to those sections of the population that do not have access to it. But the most plausible explanation seems to be that, to people within this age group, communication online comes naturally and has become an essential part of life. This generation recognizes the positive impact of social media and has seamlessly incorporated it into their lives (Mabrouk, 2011, p. 6). For the modern user, social media not only acts as a portal for social relationships, but also as a news sources (Christian et al., 2012, p. 2). The horizontal relationships created by social media have solidified the

process of exchanging information that crosses over the many aspects of life.

The pre-existence of social media as a platform to reach out to others, as discussed by Freeman (1999, p. 24), allowed for the coming together of like-minded people and the initiation of an awareness campaign. As 43% (67) of respondents to the survey had first heard of the anti-sectarian movement through Facebook, followed closely by a 38.7% (60) who heard of it first from friends, it becomes clear that the anti-sectarian movement successfully capitalized on the existence of horizontal social relationships to spread awareness between friends and acquaintances. More importantly, it strongly points towards a large dependence on personal connections; more heavily on those that preceded the connections formed online. Whether online or offline, the biggest source of information is friends. This solidifies the premise that people who had not heard of the movement online could still have heard of it somewhere else (Christian et al, 2012, p. 5). It is the personal connections that matter here, more so than the tool that helped spread them.

However, Facebook was indeed the best source of information on the anti-sectarian movement for those who went looking. 50.8% (60) of respondents said that they had found the best information there, while other online platforms such as blogs (18.6% or 22) and online news articles (22% or 26)) also contributed. The various forms of digital media gave the anti-sectarian movement the exposure it needed (Wolfsfeld, 1984, p. 365), as its news reached people through daily social interactions and common activities such as catching up on blogs and connecting with friends. With the added benefit of having control over content, especially on social sites (Carroll & Hackett, 2006, p. 89), people were directed towards the news the anti-sectarian

movement wanted them to see; successfully putting the message it aimed for at the forefront of important news.

The majority of content the anti-sectarian movement's network reads and shares comes straight from the people, thus allowing it to validate itself on its own terms (Koopman, 2004, p. 37). The resultant complex networks this creates moves it towards the second natural stage in its development: coalescence. As individuals became more and more aware of each other and their shared grievances (Christiansen, 2009, p. 3), the ties created by the simple act of sharing news incite the need for action. This stage is best represented by the 59.7% (92) of respondents to the survey that indicated they belonged to a Facebook group affiliated with the anti-sectarian movement. It is the creation of these groups which moved the movement from a simple news story to a community, which eventually enabled it to mobilize its public into action (Lynch, 2011, p. 303). However, these results do not do away with the offline incentives that gear supporters into action. 40.3% (62) of the participants in the protest do not belong to a Facebook group and therefore, must have found incentive elsewhere; most likely from news coverage by traditional media and word-of-mouth.

Lebanese Laïque Pride takes the lion's share when it comes to supporters, with 57% (77) of respondents as members in its Facebook group; possibly indicating a stronger leadership role within this group. However, the group is not unlike others affiliated with the anti-sectarian movement, and follows the same posting strategy, continuously updating its members on news and events related to its goals.

Respondents to the survey mostly attributed a positive reaction towards these posts, with 64.8% (92) of respondents describing them as informative and motivational.

Another 23.2% (33) believed the posts need improvement. 56.1% (83) of respondents also indicated that they do not always trust Facebook as a primary source of information, and 49.7% (71) consider themselves sufficiently informed by the Facebook groups but supplement their knowledge through traditional news, readings and discussions.

The previous results represent two very important aspects of activism through social media. First, while social media helps spread information and awareness, it does not replace traditional media, but is rather supported by it (p. 303). People who did not hear of the anti-sectarian movement were also able to get their information elsewhere and participate in the protest, revealing the non-exclusivity of news shared on social media. People could still be informed from other sources, be it traditional media or word of mouth (Christian et al, 2012, p. 5). Secondly, while supporters of a movement might belong to and support an online group, they are still careful about the information said group puts out. The freedom to freely associate with the information or not, to freely agree or disagree with the notions presented within this framework, encourages the creation of voluntary relationships (Bennett et al., 2008, p. 270). The voluntary character of these relationships, while loose, keeps people's loyalty to the cause in check while also giving them the ability to question.

However, not every member of these groups feels comfortable enough to do so. Results revealed that while 54.9% (79) of respondents feel comfortable posting material to the groups, only 43% (61) would go further and enter into discussions with other members in the group. 47.2% (67) indicated they would only do so if the other person remained non-defensive. While horizontal relationships generally foster tolerance and

trust (Weber, 2011, p. 28), it seems that the anti-sectarian movement still has a good way to go in establishing such an environment. This might be, in fact, a reflection of the bigger society rather than the ability of the anti-sectarian movement at creating solid relationships.

However, a third characteristic of horizontal relationships – solidarity - can be observed in the anti-sectarian movement's online groups. When asked why they chose to participate in the protest, 60.3% (91) chose the answer "I support the cause", revealing a level of loyalty and identification with the goals of the group. This is probably the best instance to observe how people who freely choose to associate with a community, go on to aggressively portray their belonging to it in terms of the values and goals its upholds.

Loyalty to the cause and solidarity can also be observed by the numbers attesting to repeated participation in protests organized by the anti-sectarian movement. 52% (78) of respondents had attended all the protests organized by the movement while only 28% (42) had attended none before the May 6 demonstration. Furthermore, 69.3% (104) of respondents do indicate their attendance online when an event organized by the movement is created and only 17.3% (26) do not respond to the online invitation, regardless of their intention to join or not. However, this is not a good indicator of participation. The absence of a binding factor or obligation makes this a rather symbolic gesture than an actual measure of participation.

The results observed here attest to the fact that Facebook has indeed positioned itself as an effective tool for the organization and coordination of protests. The ways in which a society communicates and acts within the public sphere on political issues has

been redefined increasingly by its effects, especially with its growing interconnectedness with social movements (Lynch, 2011, p. 302). Movements have adopted social media networks as channels of communication, reaching more supporters than was ever possible before. This lies in social media's ability to escape the censorship governments enforce on traditional media, giving social media supporters a wider breadth of freedom to communicate thoughts and values that might contradict with the state (p. 303).

Most importantly, social media comes at a relatively cheap price, allowing social movements to communicate more widely with their supporters without the burdening cost. It is the ideal medium to create networks of information and sustain them due to the inexpensive availability of social media networks to virtually anyone with the required hardware - simply a mobile phone (Bennett et al., 2008, p. 271).

The flexibility of social networking sites coupled with the speed in which they allow the transfer of information has allowed them to make the move from being merely channels of communication to being more sophisticated tools of organization. Communication on social media is quick, swift and concise – it sends out just enough of the message to enable coordination among supporters (p. 270). Most importantly, their mobilizing power lies in the freedom they afford supporters: users on social networking sites can choose what to read and what to identify with no outside restrictions. The user is empowered to choose their own affiliation in an informed medium; a luxury that immediately translates into more effective participation (p. 270).

Also remarkable is the fact that social media helps organize political action both prior to and during a protest event. After the initial efforts to get people to

participate in a protest, social media can sustain the momentum of a protest in real time. News, reactions and next steps can be transmitted widely as the events of the protest itself unfold; allowing participants to remain informed and giving them the tools to plan ahead on the spot (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p. 363).

The results of the survey administered for this study revealed that the advancements social media have made to political life were reflected in the Lebanese anti-sectarian movement's processes. The movement employed social media to spread awareness among its supporters online and capitalized on these relationships to create communities. The communities were then used to mobilize supporters into action, organizing 3 demonstrations online. As the last demonstration was the subject of this study, it was established that the anti-sectarian movement was successful at incentivizing online members of its groups to also participate in real protests.

While such positive results offer further proof to the claim that social media have in fact become the coordinating tools for most of the world's movements, Shirky (2011, p. 2) cautions that digital activity has no meaning or effect if no real action is taken. While social media are important tools of information and coordination, they cannot replace true activism. On the other end of the scale, Tufekci and Wilson (2012, p. 365) draw attention to the fact that social media alone are not enough to initiate protests but need a build-up of causes to drive them such as deteriorating social and economic conditions. This in fact was the driving force behind the coordination of such uprisings as the Tunisian revolution on Facebook (Mabrouk, 2011, p. 136).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Despite the positive results in the areas of communication and organization, it would be erroneous to overlook the weaknesses of digital activism. While social media facilitates connections and the flow of information, it is also the tool that opens social movements and their supporters to further scrutiny from the government (Budish, 2012, p. 750). Online surveillance has become a common practice among authoritarian systems, deepening the dilemma of whether social media helps or obstructs democratic change (Dewey et al., 2012, p. 29).

But the most glaring problem with social media is that it also seems to blur the characteristics of social movements; confusing membership with a casual association, oversimplifying complex issues and often overlooking the need for a structured leadership (Budish, 2012).

What does this say for the future of social movements? Without a clear leadership capable of incentivizing supporters towards action, we are faced with the danger of mistaking social fads or trends with social movements. A group of people might be able to amass large numbers online and organize protests successfully, making it to the forefront of news... but does this really reflect a long-term movement? How do we differentiate a social movement from a social trend?

The Lebanese Anti-Sectarian movement did not organize any protest after 6 May 2012, despite on-going activities offline. The reasons for this range from failure to maintain interest in the cause, frustration with more pressing political and social issues and the lack of an inspirational leadership capable of mobilizing people further.

On 14 July 2013, the movement's biggest group "Lebanese Laïque Pride" posted an open invitation asking people to organize this year's protest. The post was looking for a leader, and stated "who is up to organizing this year's protest"? The post received barely any engagement and no volunteer stepped forward to take on the role of organizer. This hints at the movement's core problem: the lack of leadership. Following from, Christiansen's four stages of social movement, it seems the Lebanese Anti-sectarian movement has failed to move past stage 2, coalescence (Christiansen, 2009, p. 2).

I will not attempt to answer the question of sustainability here, as my study was limited to a specific stage in the development of the anti-sectarian movement. But an attempt to study its success in spreading awareness and organizing a protest, has led to a number of questions to which this study can be a preliminary step. Much is still to be learned about the evolving relationship between social media and social movements, and how this affects the structure of the latter. A more in-depth and long-term study would be more useful to observe the specificities of leadership, membership and the sustainability of movements that adopt new media; and whether these, in essence, are a class of their own.

APPENDIX A: ARABIC CONSENT FORM

التاريخ _____

وسائل الإعلام الإجتماعية والتعبير السياسي المعاصر

في قضية الحركة العلمانية اللبنانية

مستند موافقة إشترك

يتم دعوتك للمشاركة بدراسة بحثية عن دور وسائل الإعلام الإجتماعية الحديثة في التواصل والتنظيم السياسي. تدير هذا البحث كارن ابي صعب من قسم العلوم السياسية والإدارة العامة، تحت إشراف الدكتور جاد ملكي من قسم علم الاجتماع والإنسان والإعلام في الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت. إن هذا البحث جزء من أطروحة الماجستير.

لا توجد مخاطر ملحوظة إن قررت المشاركة في هذه الدراسة البحثية، ولا تتوجب عليك أي تكاليف. سيتم إستعمال المعلومات التي ستوفرها لمساعدة الباحث في تقييم دور وسائل الإعلام الإجتماعية في الحياة السياسية المعاصرة وستظهر في قسم عرض نتائج البحث. يستغرق إكمال الإستفتاء ما يقارب الخمس دقائق. قد لا تعود هذه المعلومات بفائدة مباشرة إليك، إنما من المفترض ان تعود بفوائد عامة ضمن نطاق البحث.

يتم إكمال الإستمارة دون أي تعريف شخصي، فلا تكتب إسمك عليها. لن يتم التعرف على هويتك ولا على اجوبتك، كما لن يتم الكشف عن مشاركتك أو عدم مشاركتك بهذه الدراسة. من الممكن ان يتم فحص نتائج الإستفتاء من قبل Institutional Review Board. إن تم نشر هذه المعلومات، لن يتم الإفصاح عن أي معلومات شخصية.

إن مشاركتك في هذا البحث إختيارية. عن طريق إكمال الإستفتاء المرفق بهذه الإستمارة، تقبل طوعاً المشاركة بهذا البحث. لك حرية الإمتناع عن الإجابة عن أي سؤال لا ترغب الإجابة عليه. لك حرية عدم المشاركة في هذا البحث.

○ إنني قرأت وفهمت الشروط والأحكام المدرجة أعلاه وأوافق على المشاركة بهذا البحث.

إن كان لديك أي سؤال عن هذه الدراسة، من فضلك إتصل بالمكتب التالي في الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت:

Social & Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board
Lina Al Onsi Al Daouk
American University of Beirut
Dale Home, 1st floor
P.O.Box: 11-0236, Riad El Solh
1107 2020, Beirut, Lebanon
Le08@aub.edu.lb
01-350000 ext 5440

APPENDIX B: ENGLISH CONSENT FORM

Date _____

Social Media in Modern Political Expression

The Case of the Lebanese Anti-Sectarian Movement

Consent Form

You are being invited to participate in a research study about the role of social media as a new tool of political communication and organization. This study is being conducted by Karen Abi Saab under the supervision of Dr. Jad Melki, from the Political Studies and Public Administration Department and the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies, respectively, at the American University of Beirut. This study is being conducted as part of a graduate thesis.

There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study. There are no costs to you for participating in the study. The information you provide will aid in research assessing the role social media play in modern political life and will serve as findings in the drafting of a graduate thesis. The questionnaire will take about 5 minutes to complete. The information collected may not benefit you directly, but the information learned in this study should provide more general benefits.

This survey is anonymous. Do not write your name on the survey. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. Individuals from the Institutional Review Board may inspect these records. Should the data be published, no individual information will be disclosed.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. By completing the accompanying questionnaire, you are voluntarily agreeing to participate. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason. You are free to decline participation.

- I have read and understood the above terms and conditions and I agree to participate in the survey.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact the following office at AUB:

Social & Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board
Lina Al Onsi Al Daouk

American University of Beirut

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APPENDIX C: ARABIC SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1

- 18 الى 22
- 23 الى 27
- 28 الى 32
- 33 الى 37
- 38 الى 42

2 - أين سمعت بالحركة العلمانية اللبنانية للمرة الاولى؟

- في الصحيفة
- على اخبار التلفزيون
- من الأصدقاء
- على فايسبوك
- على تويتر
- غير: _____

3 - إن إخترت جواباً يختلف عن فايسبوك أو تويتر في السؤال السابق، هل قمت بأي بحث عن الحركة العلمانية على الإنترنت؟

- كلا
- نعم

4 - أ - إن إخترت الإجابة "نعم" في السؤال السابق، أين وجدت أفضل المعلومات حول نشاطات الحركة العلمانية؟

- في مقالات الصحف على الإنترنت
- في المدونات
- على صفحة فايسبوك لمجموعة تنتمي للحركة العلمانية
- على تويتر

ب - أين وجدت أفضل المعلومات حول أهداف الحركة العلمانية؟

- في مقالات الصحف على الإنترنت
- في المدونات
- على صفحة فايسبوك لمجموعة تنتمي للحركة العلمانية
- على تويتر

5 - أ - هل تنتمي على الفايسبوك الى أي مجموعة مساندة للحركة العلمانية اللبنانية في أهدافها ونشاطاتها؟

- كلا
- نعم

ب- لأي مجموعة تنتمي؟

- Lebanese Laique Pride
- لا للطائفية
- All for Secularism
- No Sectarianism
- الشعب اللبناني يريد إسقاط النظام الطائفي

- غير: _____
- 6 - كم مرة تتفقد صفحة المجموعة التي تنتمي إليها؟
- يومياً
- مرتين في الأسبوع على الأقل
- مرتين في الشهر على الأقل
- فقط إن كانت هناك نشاطات قريبة
- لا أزورها
- 7 - كيف تصف المعلومات المعلن عنها على صفحة المجموعة التي تنتمي إليها؟ (اختر كل الاجوبة المناسبة)
- إخبارية
- تشجع المشاركة
- تحفيزية
- غير مرضية
- مبهمة
- بحاجة للتحسين
- 8 - كيف تقيّم الفيسبوك كوسيلة تواصل لأهداف الحركة العلمانية، تواريخ نشاطاتها ولتبادل المعلومات؟
- غير ناجحة
- بحاجة للتحسين
- ناجحة
- 9 - هل تثق بالفيسبوك كمصدر رئيسي لمعلومات عن مسائل سياسية وتحركات شعبية؟
- كلا
- ربما
- نعم
- 10 - بالإستناد الى المعلومات المعلن عنها من قبل المجموعة التي تنتمي إليها على الفيسبوك، كيف تقيّم معرفتك بأهداف ونشاطات الحركة العلمانية اللبنانية؟
- أنا على حسن إطلاع بأخر الأخبار
- أعرف بما فيه الكفاية إنما أعود الى وسائل الإعلام التقليدية، المطالعة والمناقشات لتزويد معلوماتي
- مبهمة
- 11 - هل تشعر بالراحة لدى مخاطبتك أشخاص منتسبين الى نفس المجموعة على الفيسبوك قد لا تجمعك بهم معرفة شخصية؟
- بكل تأكيد
- أحياناً
- كلا
- 12 - هل تشعر بالراحة طرحك معلومات تتناسب والقضية على حائط صفصة مجموعتك ؟
- بكل تأكيد
- أحياناً
- كلا
- 13 - هل تشعر بالراحة لدى الرد على تعليقات المنتسبين الآخرين ومشاركتهم المناقشات؟
- دائماً

- فقط إن حافظ الطرف الآخر على موقف غير دفاعي
- كلا

14 - لم قررت المشاركة في هذه التظاهرة؟ (اختر كل الاجوبة المناسبة)

- وصلنتني دعوة لهذا الحدث الشعبي على الفايسبوك
- أشارك بكل الدعوات التي تعلن عنها المجموعة التي انتمي لها على الفايسبوك
- إن رفاقي يشاركون في التظاهرة
- إنني أساند القضية

15 - هل شاركت بتظاهرات سابقة للحركة العلمانية؟

- كلها
- كلا، لم اشارك بأي منها من قبل
- غير: _____

16 - عندما تقرر المشاركة بتظاهرة هل تشير بذلك على صفحة المجموعة أو على صفحة الدعوة؟

- نعم، أرد على الدعوة و أؤكد مشاركتي (Attending)
- نعم، أرد على الدعوة بإمكانية مشاركتي (Maybe attending)
- كلا

APPENDIX D: ENGLISH SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1- Age

- 18 to 22
- 23 to 27
- 28 to 32
- 33 to 37
- 38 to 42

2- Where did you first hear of the Anti-sectarian movement?

- In the newspaper
- On television news
- From friends
- On Facebook
- On Twitter
- Other: _____

3- If you chose any other answer than Facebook or Twitter in the previous question, did you look up the anti-sectarian movement online?

- No
- Yes

4- A- If you answered yes to the previous question, where did you find the best information on the anti-sectarian movement's activities?

- In online newspaper articles
- On blogs
- On one of the movement's affiliated Facebook groups
- On Twitter

B- Where did you find the best information on the anti-sectarian movement's goals?

- In online newspaper articles
- On blogs
- On one of the movement's affiliated Facebook groups
- On Twitter

5- A- Do you belong to any Facebook group in support of the anti-sectarian movement's activities and goals?

- Yes
- No

B - To which of these Facebook groups do you belong?

- Lebanese Laique Pride
- La Lil Ta2ifiya
- All for Secularism
- No Sectarianism
- Al Sha3b el Loubnani Yourid Iskat al Nizam al Ta2ifi
- Other: _____

6- How often do you check the group's page?

- Daily
- At least twice a week
- At least twice a month
- Only if there is an up-coming event
- Never

7- How would you describe the post updates on your group's page? (Tick all suitable answers)

- Informative
- Engaging
- Motivational
- Unsatisfactory
- Vague
- In need of improvement

8- How would you rate Facebook as a means of communication for the goals, protest dates and exchange of ideas of the anti-sectarian movement?

- Unsuccessful
- Needs improvement
- Successful

9- Do you trust Facebook as the primary source of on information on political issues and public action?

- Not at all
- Maybe
- Definitely

10- Based on the information provided by the Facebook group you belong to, how would you rate your knowledge on the anti-sectarian movement's goals and activities?

- Well informed and up-to-date
- Sufficiently informed but complemented by traditional media, readings and face-to-face discussions
- Vague

11- Do you feel comfortable communicating to other people in the same Facebook group that you might not know personally?

- Definitely
- Sometimes
- Never

12- Do you feel comfortable posting material relevant to the cause on the group's wall?

- Definitely
- Sometimes
- Never

13- Do you feel comfortable responding to other members' comments and engaging in online discussions?

- All the time
- Only if the other person/persons remain non-defensive
- Never

14- Why did you choose to participate in this protest? (Tick all suitable answers)

- I received an invitation on Facebook for this public event
- I attend all events announced on the Facebook group I belong to
- My friends are attending
- I support the cause

15- Have you participated in previous protests for the anti-sectarian movement?

- All of them
- None before
- Other: _____

16- When you decide to participate in a protest do you indicate so on the group's page or the event's page?

- Yes, I reply to the invitation as "Attending"
- Yes, I reply to the invitation as "Maybe attending"
- No

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