

**THE ACTIVIST TALE OF EMERGENT CROWDS & MOBILIZED COMMUNITIES:  
INVESTIGATING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN CONSUMER ACTIVISM &  
CONSUMER COLLECTIVES**

**LEAH SCHNEIDER**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**GRADUATE PROGRAM IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION  
YORK UNIVERSITY  
TORONTO, ONTARIO**

**OCTOBER 2016**

**© Leah Schneider, 2016**

## ABSTRACT

Consumers are collaboratively and collectively engaging in activist performances in the marketplace to challenge market(er) hegemony and power. Facilitated and enabled by online technologies, consumer collectives are waging battles both behind and outside of the screen, but is the performance of activism from a collective perspective influenced by the nature of the collective itself? This dissertation explores the intersection and interplay between consumer activism and collectives by addressing the questions of how the nature of a primarily online consumer collective influences its performance of activism, and conversely, how the performance of activism influences the evolution of pre-existing collectives. Analyzing five activist campaign sites using a netnographic method, this dissertation proposes that two types of collectives, the Emergent Crowd and the Mobilized Community, differ significantly in terms of their identity work and leadership organization and structure. These differences impact the campaigning behaviors exhibited; knowledge, resources, and platforms used; and tactical choices developed and enacted that constitute the activist performances. Furthermore, Mobilized Communities are shown to experience relationship transformations within and external to the collective that impact both individual behavior and the collective's evolutionary trajectory. In particular, alliance formation efforts, particularly enabled by social media platforms, are examined and discussed, ranging from non-responders to collaborative partners. Conclusions for practical and research applications regarding the distinct performances of activism in light of the collective a company or cause encounters, including suggestions for managing and taking advantage of value-creating opportunities, are suggested and discussed.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first thank my committee members and colleagues who stuck by me through the long process of bringing this dissertation into being. Rob, I could not have done this without your enthusiasm and encouragement every step of the way, which was instrumental in developing a story of fan activism into a theoretically-based research study. Eileen, I wouldn't have made it to the finish line without your guidance and support, especially in the final stretch of this journey. Detlev, I very much appreciate your positivity and feedback throughout this process. Hope, you have been part of my journey even before I was officially on it, and it was an honor and privilege to have you be part of when I finished it. To each of you, I thank you and appreciate the sacrifice you made to help me achieve what you saw possible.

To Glenn Christensen, your friendship, guidance, support, and enthusiasm for marketing was instrumental in guiding me to and through this path of academia. You changed my life the moment you exposed me to the world of marketing, took me under your mentorship wing, and then told me that in no uncertain terms that I needed to get my doctorate in marketing. I hope that one day I can do for someone what you have done for me over the past ten years.

Mom and Dad, you set the example for me and never stopped encouraging me and supporting me throughout my education and life. I look up to both of you in every way possible and am proud to be your daughter. To Loo and Ryan – you kept me sane when we were young, and I am so grateful not only to be your sister, but your friend. Grams and Gramps, I have no doubt that I stuck this dissertation out in part because of your stubborn genes coming through, but also because of the unconditional love and support you have shown me my entire life. I love you guys!

I would like to thank the one person who never gave up on me, sacrificed his time on weekends and in the evenings so that I could work, encouraged me every step of the way, and has been there beside me as I've worked to complete my degree and this dissertation. Michael Schneider, it is an honor to be your partner in life and I share this accomplishment with you.

Finally, this dissertation would not exist without those who contributed their stories of consumer activism. This research hopefully does justice for what each of you set out to accomplish and reflects the hard work, energy, and dedication you likewise showed to achieve your goals. Thank you for sharing a part of your life and experiences with me.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
List of Figures .....	vii
Prologue .....	1
Chapter 1: Consumer Activism: A Conceptual and Historical Overview .....	8
Defining Consumer Activism .....	8
Theoretical Evolution of Academic Perspectives .....	11
Chapter 2: Collective Activism Research: Key Theories and Market Insights .....	18
Theoretical Explorations of Collective Activism in the Marketplace .....	18
New Social Movement Theories .....	18
New Social Movements in the Marketplace .....	24
Resource Mobilization Theory .....	27
Political Opportunity Theory .....	31
Contemporary Consumer Activism: The Next Generation .....	35
Chapter 3: Collective Activism Online .....	36
Understanding the Internet as a Resource in Collective Activism .....	39
Speed & Cost .....	40
The Activists' Guide to Cyber-Protest .....	42
Mass Communication Facilitates Communication, Recruitment, and Mobilization .....	45
The Interplay Between Online & Offline Activism Tactics .....	50
Cautionary Warnings .....	54
Insights of Contemporary Cyberactivism .....	57
So What? .....	63
Chapter 4: The Art of Campaigning .....	67
Consumer Campaigns 101 .....	68
Protesting the Power: Popular Tactics in Consumer Activist Campaigns .....	72
Boycotts and Buycotts .....	72
Letter-Writing and Petitioning .....	75
Fan Activism: An Underappreciated Niche of Consumer Activism and Campaigning .....	77

Moving Forward .....	81
Chapter 5: Consumer Collectives & Relationships .....	82
Understanding Marketplace Relationships .....	83
Consumer – Consumer Relationships: Building “Communities” .....	84
Consumer – Brand & Product Relationships .....	94
Consumer – Company Relationship: Basic and Co-Creative Interactions .....	97
Consumer Collective – Company Alliances .....	100
Consumer Collective Relationships: A Summary .....	102
Chapter 6: Research Questions, Design, and Method.....	104
Research Design.....	105
Researcher Identity & Stance.....	107
Researcher Identity .....	107
Researcher Stance .....	109
Data Collection .....	109
Site Selections.....	109
Elicited Netnographic Data: Selection & Description of Interview Informants.....	113
Data Analysis .....	117
Limitations .....	120
Case Selection Limitations .....	120
Methodological Limitations.....	123
Site Descriptions .....	124
“Save Jericho”.....	124
“Save Chuck”.....	126
“Save Polaroid” .....	127
“Netflix Pricing War” .....	128
“Applebee’s Firing Fiasco”.....	131
Findings Overview .....	132
Chapter 7: Impact of The Collective on Activism Performances .....	136
Collective Identity.....	137
Emergent Crowd Identity Work.....	137
Mobilized Community Identity Work .....	145

Leadership & Organizational Structure .....	148
Comparing Campaign Efforts & Behaviors.....	153
Time Commitment, Effort, and Overall Longevity of Campaigns .....	153
Recruitment Efforts.....	157
Creative Work.....	160
Alliance Formation .....	165
Utilization of Codified Protest Tactics .....	167
Emergent Crowds & Protest Tactics.....	168
Mobilized Communities & Protest Tactics.....	174
Cumulative Protest Knowledge .....	179
Utilization of Online Platforms.....	185
Chapter 8: Transformational Impact of Activism on Mobilized Communities .....	195
The Mobilization Effect: Shifting Towards Goal-Oriented Action.....	196
Relationship Fluidity: Internal Dynamics and External Forms .....	200
Consumer – Consumer: Leadership Organization & Governance .....	200
Consumer – Focal Marketer: Learning and Playing the Market Game .....	203
Consumer – External Marketers: Creating Strategic Relationships .....	205
Consumer – External Marketer: Company Engagement Spectrum.....	208
Activism Aftermath: Consumer-Product and Consumer-Consumer Conflicts .....	218
Chapter 9: Discussion .....	222
Emergent Crowds Discussion.....	222
Mobilized Communities Discussion.....	229
Chapter 10: The Epilogue .....	237
Emergent Questions For Future Research .....	239
References.....	243
Appendix A: Data Exhibits.....	257
Appendix B: Construct Development.....	262
Appendix C: Findings Summaries .....	263

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Areas of Activism Performance Distinctions .....	136
Figure 2: Emergent Crowds' Shared Memes.....	160
Figure 3: Consumer Created Designs for "Save Polaroid" T-Shirts.....	163
Figure 4: Consumer Created Comic Strip for "Save Polaroid" .....	164
Figure 5: "Save Jericho" Pass Along Cards.....	165
Figure 6: "Saving Jericho" Website Homepage .....	191
Figure 7: "Save Polaroid" Website Homepage.....	192
Figure 8: "We Give a Chuck" Website Homepage .....	193

## PROLOGUE

David versus Goliath. Luke versus Darth Vader. Harry versus Lord Voldemort. Frodo versus Sauron. Political, religious, ideological, or mystical battles, whether in ancient Biblical Israel, a galaxy far, far away, a magical castle, or Middle Earth, are often depicted as an archetypal underdog taking a stand against the bigger, more powerful enemy to achieve a higher purpose or greater good. Although conflict narratives typically revolve around the central, adversarial relationship between a focal protagonist and antagonist, these stories would be incomplete without an understanding and appreciation of the role played by the group of actors that enable the central heroes to succeed: best friends, fellowships, rebel alliances – or in other words, the collective of like-minded individuals fighting to prevail over the perceived enemy and achieve their desired goals, which, in the cases listed above, generally relate to freedom from oppression and domination. These collective groups can alter the scope of battle by enhancing the tactical possibilities, broadening the range of resources available, and increasing the likely magnitude and “noise” within popular discourse of insurgent struggles. Consequently, it is not only the adversary- hero dyad, but also the collective, that merits attention and inquiry in battles waged outside of the page and screen in contemporary society.

The landscape of modern conflict is seemingly limitless in terms of the possibilities of purpose, arena/venue, scope, and players that take part. Rather than attempting to understand and disentangle the wide range of conflict possibilities and occurrences in our contemporary experience, this story of “Nuts, Nerds, and Everyone in Between” focuses on a particular type of battle, specifically activism, being fought by our bands of seeming underdogs: consumers.

Tales of consumers and their exploits of heroic activism arise within the marketplace as active minded consumers fight against the proverbial marketing beast to achieve their individual



and/or collective goals. Activist consumers and their performance of activism in the market context have not only created a dynamic environment for marketing practitioners, but have also resulted in an intellectual and empirical field of consumer activism ripe with theoretical and practical importance to investigate, particularly so as these activist practices and performances continue to evolve given the introduction of new technologies, tools/methods, and participants.

Activism research within the marketing canon to this point has analyzed the ideology of consumer activists, in which the identification of an adversary, development of a collective identity, and desired goal plays a key role in the activist movements within consumer culture (Kozinets and Handelman 2004). “Adversaries”, or “opponents” as they are sometimes termed, are “ideologically linked to illegitimate amoral or immoral pursuits and usually identified in antisocial terms,” in addition to being “represented as an obstacle to the general good” (Kozinets and Handelman 2004, p. 693), with adversaries ranging from specific firms (e.g., Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel 2006; Friedman 1991; Friedman 1996), hegemonic market discourses and movements (e.g., Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007; Kozinets 2002a), and “unenlightened” consumers or their collective indifference to the greater societal good (e.g., Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler 2010), to broader social evils such as poverty or illness.

Extant research on counter-market activism and movements appears to focus predominantly on describing and exploring the story of the activist and adversary, with the role of the collective receiving somewhat less attention. Researchers have studied activism from a meso-level, in particular developing insights into the role of a collective identity in motivating action (Harlow and Harp 2012; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013; Kozinets and Handelman 2004) and normative social influences influencing personal participation in actions such as boycotts (Sen,

Gurhan-Canli, and Morwitz 2001). However, it seems as though consumer research has yet to understand and determine how characteristics of the collective itself, such as the identity work of the collective, impacts the performance of activism in the marketplace.

Compounding this oversight is the advent and adoption of online means of communication by consumers. The overall field of activism is shifting in response to the computer-mediated environment (McCaughey and Ayers 2003) creating a subset of activism, termed “cyberactivism,” that affords distinct advantages over traditional tactics and methods of activism, particularly in the ability and ease with which consumers can congregate and enact their collective goal-oriented agendas utilizing technological platforms and tools. Yet while researchers recognize the power and influence of the Internet in the evolution of contemporary activism and its enactment particularly in the political and cultural spheres (e.g., Castells 2015; Soon & Cho 2014; Bakker and de Vreese 2011; Jenkins et al 2016), it seems that there are unanswered questions regarding the diversity of activism in the marketplace as consumers form their proverbial ranks through online forms of communication and wage war via online, such as collaborative brand attacks (Rauschnabel, Kammerlander and Ivens 2016), and offline tactics. This is particularly problematic given the varied natures and characteristics of online collectives, in particular their goal orientation and contribution distribution of actors (Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau 2008). A comparative study of consumer activism that investigates the relationship between the nature of the collective and the subsequent enactment of activism would provide insight on the role of the collective in consumer activism.

Concurrently, consumer community and collective research has extensively catalogued the various types of consumer groups that arise in the marketplace both offline and online, including brand communities (Muñiz & O’Guinn 2001), hypercommunities (Kozints 2002a),

online collectives and crowds (Kozinets, Hemetsberger, and Schau 2008), brand publics (Arvidsson and Caliendo 2016), consumer tribes (Cova and Cova 2002; Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar 2007), and so on. Significant research in terms of both quantity and theoretical contribution has been conducted to understand the distinctions between the different types of consumer collectives that form in the marketplace, as well as varying dimensions of the collectives (see Thomas, Price, and Schau 2013 for structural classification discussion of consumer communities), including the heterogeneity within communities (Thomas, Price, and Schau 2013), value-creating practices (Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould 2009), distinct roles of community members (Diamond et al. 2009; Fournier and Lee 2009), etc. What is interesting to note in reviewing the body of consumer collectives literature is the often snapshot-like view of said collectives, as researchers often utilize a lens of analysis that precludes the importance of the dynamic, evolutionary nature of consumer communities in order to understand other facets of the communities and their actors, though recent work by Thomas, Price, and Schau (2013) does identify the processes by which consumer communities undergo to maintain continuity despite their inherent diversity.

As Russell and Schau (2014) note that “critical junctures alter relationship trajectories,” (p. 1041), it is likely that consumer collectives and their market trajectories will likewise be altered by critical junctures – or disturbances - that occur in the marketplace. Critical events, in particular the discontinuance of a central brand/product, have been shown to bring into stark relief consumer and marketer tensions that require active negotiation processes (Scaraboto, Carter-Schneider and Kedzior 2013) and provide the motivational catalyst for consumers to collectively engage in and perform behaviors in attempts to right a market “wrong” (Muñiz and Schau 2007). By engaging in coordinated organization, mobilization, and strategic efforts to

campaign for a particular cause, the course and direction of the collective may therefore shift. It is unknown at present how established consumer groups are transformed by engaging in activist-centered campaigns. Thus, not only is current consumer research neglecting the impact of the potential impact the nature of the collective may have on activist behavioral manifestations – particularly given that diversity of online collectives - but it is also lacking insight into the impact of activism on consumer collectives, or in other words, whether engaging in activist behaviors alters consumer collectives in systematic ways.

In this dissertation, I will therefore address the theoretical gap that is seen at the intersection of activism and consumer collectives by answering the following research questions:

- 1) How does the nature of an online collective of consumers (Mobilized vs. Emergent) affect its performance of activism?**
- 2) How does engaging in activist performances affect the dynamics in Mobilized Communities (i.e., communities not originally formed for activism)?**

In order to do so, I narrow my focus of inquiry to consumer activism campaign sites primarily organized and facilitated through online means of communication, as the Internet and its utilization by consumers– and our contemporary American society overall – is becoming increasingly significant to activism efforts (see Chapter). It is important to note, however, that though the primary arena for congregating occurs online, the boundaries of action observed by our consumer activists are not contained to just the screen, but rather include both online and offline (or in other words, “real world” or physical) behavioral manifestations.

Through my research, I demonstrate that consumers’ collective activism efforts vary depending on the collectives as distinguished by their original purpose for existing: the subsequent identity work therein, and leadership and organization structure of the collective each

appear to have direct influence on the mobilization and tactical direction of the campaigns. I show that Mobilized Communities who existed prior to engaging in activist behaviors and Emergent Crowds who arise in response to undesirable market developments differ in terms of how their activist campaigns are enacted– the time commitment and required effort of individual contributors, as well as longevity of the campaigns overall; the recruitment efforts to the collective; creative work encouraged and seen within the campaigns; and alliance formation strategies. Furthermore, Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities differentially utilize codified protest/institutional tactics, cumulative protest knowledge, and online platform technologies when developing and performing their strategic methods of protest within their campaigns.

Answering the second research question, I find that the process of engaging in activist behaviors has a transformative effect on the Mobilized Communities. Performing acts of concentrated, targeted activism impacts the organization and goal orientation of the collective, relationships formed and the fluidity exhibited therein, and practices of consumer communities not only during the active period of protest, but also creates a lasting, residual effect on these collectives and the individuals therein. New opportunities for value creation and relationship development between consumers and marketers therefore arise, particularly in the form of external alliances, generating implications for marketing practitioners when encountering consumer activists.

This story investigating collective consumer activism therefore proceed as follows: the first chapter discusses the phenomenon of consumer activism by defining the concept and reviewing historical academic conceptualizations of activism and its related broader construct of consumer resistance. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the theoretical and empirical insights of

collective activism as it is enacted in the market through the lens of influential theories on activist inquiry: social movement, resource mobilization, and political opportunity theories. Chapter 3 discusses the role and impact of the Internet and social media platforms in collective consumer activism efforts, specifically the organization and enactment of activist activities, to provide the background for the context of the case sites studied and distinct use of technology by collectives in their protest efforts. Chapter 4 dives into the specific behavioral manifestation of collective activism that will be the lens of this investigation: the consumer campaign, or in other words, a concentrated, concerted effort by consumer collectives to achieve their desire goal(s) against the intended target. By so doing, I discuss different types of campaign tactics and make a case for including fan campaigns within consumer activism literature and this dissertation. Chapter 5 then shifts gears to provide an overview and analysis of extant literature on consumer collectives and marketplace relationships overall, in order to set the stage for comparing Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities' activist efforts and the effect that activism has on Mobilized Communities. After so doing, I present my original research, describing and justifying my comparative case study methodology, discuss findings from five consumer campaign sites, and identify key implications of this research for marketing practitioners and researchers alike.

## **CHAPTER 1: CONSUMER ACTIVISM: A CONCEPTUAL AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

Activism colors marketplace dynamics outside the lines of what is considered “normal” or “expected” in the traditional exchange model of marketing, and has a long, storied history in the marketplace. From the tea-dumping in Boston Harbor as protest against political tyranny over individuals to boycotts of Nike products, people have come together to spread their metaphorical wings and challenge dominating forces within the market arena. Before investigating the landscape of collective consumer activism, however, let us first define what consumer activism is and review how activism and the related, overarching construct of consumer resistance, has been characterized and studied historically in order to set the stage for investigating contemporary collective activism in marketing and business research.

### **Defining Consumer Activism**

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, activism is defined as the “policy of active participation or engagement in a particular sphere of activity, specifically the use of vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change.” The Cambridge dictionary defines activism as “the use of direct and public methods to try to bring about especially social and political changes that you and others want.” Likewise, the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines activism as “a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue.” While these definitions point towards the proliferation of activism particularly within the political and social arenas, the desire and associated action to bring about change to practices, policies, decisions, or behaviors in the market space likewise exist.

Consumer activism therefore can be conceptualized as the active, direct efforts of consumers to achieve market-bounded change. Combining this basic understanding and the

above definitions of activism overall with Kozinets and Handelman's (2004) study of consumer activist movements and their ideological elements, consumer activism and the movements associated therein are distinguished by a goal, collective identity, and adversarial identification. Thus, the range of activities on the part of activist consumers is motivated and directed by the desired change(s) that the consumers are fighting to achieve in the market, whether it be the reformation of a practice in retaliation to a specific firm's enactment of power or radical change desired in the market system, the portrayal of their own identity and intentions, and who they are fighting against.

A key component of the conceptual definition of consumer activism is that it is not a passive experience born out of ambivalence and contained within the confines of one's own cognitive musings. Rather, activism necessitates directed action and engagement on the part of the consumer to promote the desired and intended change. Whether the action be individually or collectively enacted, action must occur. There must be, as Roux (2008) clearly delineated, a manifestation of resistance, or in this case, activism. As Peñaloza and Price (1993) indicated when discussing consumer resistance overall, not only must action occur, but it likely will take a strategic route, employing specific methods and strategies to subvert and challenge market influences. Furthermore, manifestations of consumer activism therefore should incorporate actions of some kind that extend beyond the traditional market exchange, but nevertheless occur within the market arena. Thus, a critical component of the putting the "act" in activism is the observance that the actions are market-situated and market-directed. Although consumers may use a myriad of strategies, informed likely by adjacent institutional logics (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013), such as political protests that have likewise engaged individuals in goal-oriented behaviors, these behaviors will also be influenced by the market context.



A second key component of activism is the overarching goal of “change.” Consumer activists act because of the identification or perception that something – whether it be marketer practices, policies, overarching market discourses, apathetic consumers, and so on - occurring in the marketplace is not equal to the ideal. The recognition of a disparity between the perceived ideal and actual existing state of the market creates a motivational state of resistance (Roux 2008) that effectively primes consumers to mobilize, whether individually or collectively, and to act. By so doing, consumers aim to change the discordant element or party within the market with their concentrated, directed actions to achieve the more idealistic state. The goal-orientated nature of activists therefore intertwines with the identification of the adversary, as the sought after changes are considered to be achieved when the offending, or in some cases the less-than-perfect, force or foe’s makes the desired modifications.

Examples of activist acts can include coordinated campaigns such as boycotting (Friedman 1985) and buycotting (Friedman 1996), as well as acts such as complaining (Hunt 1991) and the creation of anti-company propaganda (Thompson et al. 2006). Boycotting, for example, represents a type of activism in which consumers attempt to “achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace” (Friedman 1985, p. 97). Activist efforts can raise awareness in the public eye to a company’s or market’s weaknesses, thereby potentially harming the company image and causing an organization to spend funds on damage control (Garrett 1987; Putnam and Muck 1991). As a result, companies may be motivated to change their policies, marketing mixes, or decisions to address and minimize the negative effects of activist behaviors.

Given the conflict that can and has arisen empirically as consumers’ activist agendas run counter to elements or players within market system, it is not surprising that consumer activism

and resistance literature overall has had itself a lively and at times contentious history in theoretical discourse, as well.

### **Theoretical Evolution of Academic Perspectives**

“For as long as there have been marketing activities, consumers have been rebelling against it” (Ritson and Dobscha 1999, p. 1, citing Friedman 1985). Consumers have fought against market forces in various ways and forms over the years ranging from physical manifestations of activism such as sit-ins to newer forms of activism enabled through Web 2.0 and the Internet; however, theoretical perceptions of consumer activism and the related concept of resistance have not always depicted such resistant behaviors optimistically.

Early conceptualizations of consumer resistance in sociological theory painted a bleak picture for consumers by theorizing and characterizing consumer culture as a manipulative power that enslaved consumers (Izberk-Bilgin 2010). Marx (1867) initiated the theoretical underpinnings of this discursive stance, identifying the exploitation that arises in the capitalist system. Individuals, particularly workers, were considered disadvantaged, as the institutionalization of exchange-value over use-value privileged those who controlled the capital that operated within the system. This inequality, in turn, was theorized to create class conflicts in industrial societies.

Moving forward from Marx’s theory, Frankfurt School scholars further critiqued consumer capitalism to propagate the dominating power of the market and plight of consumers within the system. Championed by Horkheimer and Adorno (1944), the cultural authority model of consumers negated consumer power and minimized the probability of consumer resistance even occurring in the market. Marketers were portrayed as seducers in the market system, lulling consumers into compliance through their use of sophisticated marketing techniques and

application of their knowledge of consumer motivations, trends, and habits (Holt 2002). Resistance against these “cultural engineers” was considered futile. Rather, consumers were considered passive players (Horkheimer and Adorno 1944) in the marketplace through their adoption and internalization of consumer culture. By so doing, consumers were subservient to the subtle forces of conformance whispered and suggested through marketing strategies, mixes, and campaigns. Other Frankfurt School scholars, most notably Ewen (1976) and Baudrillard (1970), supported this theoretical stance in their work on the discursive dominance of businesses and advertising, and the sign-value of goods and the development of cultural codes, respectively. Thus, consumers were considered to be indoctrinated pawns within the market system who propagated the hegemonic discourses and codes themselves through consumption choices that ultimately were controlled by marketers.

The prospect of consumers’ ability to successfully resist market domination through active efforts has therefore been historically painted as a rather bleak picture. Contrary to the exploitative and manipulative discourse characterized as enslaving consumers, a second stream of theoretical work emerged that offered a differing view of the market and consumer opportunities for resistance and success through activist efforts. Gramsci, though recognizing that most consumers do not recognize and by extension fail to resist market forces, presented an alternative view that paved the way for a blossoming understanding of consumer resistance by postulating that enlightened consumers can fight back through appropriation of meanings and alternative applications of appropriated material in the market system (Thompson and Haytko 1997; Holt 1997). Murray and Ozanne (1991), as previously noted, adopted this perspective by introducing the reflexive resistance model into the consumer research canon. Conceptualizing the market as an intricate, complex system of imposed social meanings, the reflexive resistance

model posits that empowered consumers critically deconstruct the “Wizard of Oz”-esque visage that obfuscates the dominating codes and institutions that influence consumer behaviors and thoughts through reflexivity. By looking past the smokescreen of marketing, consumers can develop methods and strategies for defying the determined code in the system. It is within the space created through reflexivity that resistance is possible, as consumers recognize and develop distance from marketer imposed codes and meanings. Thus, the reflexive resistance model requires that individual consumers, in essence, become individually enlightened as to the marketer codes. Once aware in this manner, consumers allegedly have the desire, motivation, and capability to develop and follow their own codes of meaning. Similarly, the consumer sovereignty model outlined by Denegri-Knott, Zwick, and Schroeder (2006) identifies that proponents of this model “assume that aggregate sums of well-informed, autonomous consumer agents possess greater power than individual producers,” (p. 955). Thus, a key part of shifting the power dynamic between marketers and producers appears to not only be enlightening consumers as to marketing, but also the ability of consumers to collectively amass their skills, knowledge, and resources to achieve desired ends.

In a similar vein, the liberatory view of consumption and the emancipatory potential of the postmodern consumer proposed by Firat and Venkatesh (1995) in their seminal article portrayed marketing as a totalizing force that regulates and conducts consumption. However, rather than focusing on consumer consciousness and rebellion against codes, the creative resistance model characterized consumers as cultural producers (Holt 2002). Through forms of producer-like consumption and enabled by the increasingly fragmented market space, consumers were able to utilize social spaces to construct their own cultures and identities that contradicted

market hegemony and homogeneity. As a result, consumers resist and escape the cultural authority of the market through the vehicles of fragmentation and production.

As critiqued by Holt (2002), the reflexive and creative resistance models continue painting marketers as cultural engineers, with consumers only able to resist in so much that they are aware and able to free themselves from market influences. Holt's dialectical model of consumer culture and branding constructs a view of the tensions between branding paradigms and consumer culture. A contradiction between the two opposing forces made salient through consumer resistance activities accelerates and facilitates the evolution of both in the marketplace. Rather than dissatisfied, enlightened revolutionaries bent on breaking down the dominance of market agents through resistance, consumers who engaged in resistive behaviors instead were theoretically cast as willing and able participants in market rejuvenating movements. In place of a dichotomized adversarial relationship between consumers and market forces, Holt asserted that "since the market feeds off of the constant production of difference, the most creative, unorthodox, singularizing consumer sovereignty practices are the most productive for the system. *They serve as grist for the branding mill that is ever in search of new cultural materials*" (Holt 2002, p. 88). Working in concert with one another through cultural and countercultural negotiations, "what has been termed 'consumer resistance' is actually a form of market-sanctioned cultural experimentation through which the market rejuvenates itself" (p. 89).

Holt's conceptualization of consumer resistance as "market-sanctioned cultural experimentation" shifted theoretical understanding of resistance as a product of market inequalities and primarily as undesirable for markets and institutions in the system to a more "market positive" view. Based on Holt's premise and subsequent empirical work (e.g., Scaraboto and Fischer 2013; Giesler 2008), resistance may in fact be a necessary and critical component of

effective marketing, business success, and market evolution. Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel (2006), for example, demonstrated that anti-branding activities, such as those evidenced in consumers' doppelgänger propaganda produced against Starbucks, are beneficial to marketers in identifying emotional branding stories and strategies that no longer resonated with consumers. Complaining behaviors similarly indicate exchanges that have not lived up to consumer expectations, resulting in consumer dissatisfaction. By encouraging consumers to voice their issues through complaint management, companies can likewise increase consumer loyalty (Goodman and Malech 1985) and future consumption, rather than having consumers exit the relationship (Hirschman 1970). Conflicting consumer and institutional narratives shown in the Napster drama further reinforced the notion that markets and consumers co-evolve as consumers actively work to resolve tensions and contradictions through dramatic resistance and subsequent reintegration into the market system (Giesler 2008). Consumer activists and resistance activities overall should therefore no longer be characterized as a one-note villain by companies or theoretical pundits alike, but as a component of market evolution. Furthermore, market change, as influenced by activist consumers fighting for their desired goals, can evolve company knowledge of and relationships with consumers in ways that may create opportunities for more effective marketing. Value has been associated and in some cases attributed to consumers actively resisting market-oriented agents (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013).

Theoretically, the concepts and acts of activism and resistance in the market have developed over time to a more positive, celebratory view from a macro-system and individual business level, and marketing literature overall operates from a perspective of consumer empowerment. However, consumers seem to continue characterizing the market system, institutions, and discourses as influential, oppressive powers that necessitate activist behaviors to

right the system, so to speak. Consumers likewise do not limit feelings of oppression and hegemony to business actors, but also consumer culture in general. Research has investigated market forces that consumers may fight against that are not specific companies or institutional structures. Kozinets and Handelman (2004), in particular, detailed activists' perceptions of mainstream consumers, and the negative influence that consumer culture exerts over consumers who are either unaware or unmotivated to seek for change in the marketplace. In their efforts to protest unsavory market practices or behaviors, these activists likewise sought to transform the adversarial consumer culture. Consumers have also resisted one another's opinions and perspectives, drawing on cultural, moral, and market resources to animate market conflicts (Luedicke et al. 2010). Moral myths, in particular, were shown to provide the foundation for forming adversarial characterizations that drive identity negotiations of moral superiority and inferiority, which in turn narrated consumer clashes. Activism and the ideological underpinnings of activism movements are therefore not limited to simply consumer-company foes (Kozinets and Handelman 2004), but rather involves various market forces and foes ranging from specific organizations or consumers to system dynamics and discourses to overall social ills.

Much like the theoretical perspective of consumer activism and resistance, marketplace dynamics as they relate to activism have evolved and continue to evolve. New innovations, technologies, and collaborative logics being injected into the market influence activism as it is observed and enacted in the market space, expanding the theoretical field of inquiry of contemporary consumer activism. The introduction and adoption of new technologies, such as social media, in particular have empowered individuals to congregate and collectively enact their activist agendas in ways that were not possible in previous eras of resistance and activism

(Hollenbeck and Zinkhan 2006; Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia 2014), as well as accelerated the diffusion of protest practices (Earl and Kimport 2009) and logics into consumer culture and the marketplace overall.

In summary, as consumer resistance and activism research has progressed over time, we know that not only can consumers engage in resistive behaviors through activist actions, but that they do engage in these behaviors to achieve distinct goals, against a range of marketplace adversaries. Further, the value of activist behaviors cannot and should not be understated, not only for the individual consumer or collective, but for market progression overall. Marketplace resistance activities, though momentarily problematic for companies, can be beneficial to the markets in which they occur over time. Consumers exert their voices and rights through directed, goal-driven action, and by so doing, challenge the dynamics that traditionally exist in market relationships. Conversely, companies can be alerted to practices that violate consumer values or trends and marketing strategies that no longer resonate with their intended consumers. Activist efforts and the subsequent resolutions by marketing entities can ultimately influence market evolution and the development of new structures, narratives, and practices.

Having established the conceptual overview of consumer activism and the historical theories relating to activism and resistance in the marketplace, let us therefore now move our discussion to investigate the theoretical and empirical work that has characterized activist research, particularly collective consumer activism, inquiry in business and marketing research in order to focus more narrowly on our convergence of the interplay between consumer collectives and activism.



## **CHAPTER 2: COLLECTIVE ACTIVISM RESEARCH: KEY THEORIES AND MARKET INSIGHTS**

Investigation into collective activism across different academic disciplines has drawn on a number of theoretical perspectives to explain the existence, development and enactment, and impact of collective activism on the institutional systems against which collectives resist. Predominantly, the theories that appear to have the greatest impact on collective activism research within marketing, particularly in recent years, are the new social movement theory as discussed prominently by Touraine (1985) and Melucci (1989), the resource mobilization theory proposed by McCarthy and Zald (1977), and political opportunity theory as developed by Eisinger (1973) and Tilly (1978), which will each be discussed relating to their theoretical contributions and empirical support from marketing and business research.

### **Theoretical Explorations of Collective Activism in the Marketplace**

#### *New Social Movement Theories*

Collective action, according to Rao, Morrill, and Zald (2000) is “a broad range of purposive collective behavior, the most organized of which are social movements that occur over longer time stretches, are driven by long-term goals, and develop formal organizations” (p. 242). Brunsting and Postmes support this conceptualization of collective action by defining it as “actions undertaken by individuals or groups for a collective purpose, such as the advancement of a particular ideology or idea or the political struggle with another group” (p.527) and that it represents “an intergroup act”. Our starting point for exploring theoretical explanations of collective action with social movement theories therefore seems appropriate. Before analyzing new social movement theories, we must first define what a social movement is on a conceptual level.

Social movements, as defined by Diani (1992), are “networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups, and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities” (p. 13). Key elements of this definition aid in differentiating social movements from other possible collective actions: (1) the presence of conflict, (2) the informal nature of the networks, which distinguishes social movements from more formalized organizations, (3) the presence of an identity that exists beyond any event or campaign, and (4) the possibility of a ‘social movement dynamic’ proper, in which movements oriented towards achieving like goals can coalesce in a broader, longer-term collective effort at a more macro-level of operations (Diani 2000).

In subsequent work and exposition regarding the conceptualization of social movements as networks, Diani (2003) dissected social movements further, noting that social movements “are distinctive because they consist of formally independent actors who are embedded in specific local contexts, bear specific identities, values, and orientations, and pursue specific goals and objectives, but who are at the same time linked through various forms of concrete cooperation and/or mutual recognition in a bond which extends beyond any specific protest action, campaign, etc.” (p. 301). Diani likewise proposed in his 2003 work that four central movement forms distinguished by their network centralization and network segmentation: clique movements; policephalous movements; centralized, nonsegmented networks; and segmented, decentralized networks. Network centralization was posed as affecting how movements operate and build their identity, as more centralized networks will be influenced by specific actors who direct the flow of communication. Diani suggested that network segmentation related to the barriers of communication within a network, whether ideological differences, level of interest in the issues, and so on, divided a network into more specific, segregated parts. By so doing, Diani recognized

that not all collectives who engage in social movements are created or operate equally, and that specific distinctions exist between collectives that will influence the observed behaviors within the collectives.

The backbone and foundational work of collective activism therefore arises in social movements, or in other words, the congregation of individuals who form a type of bond or shared identity foundation with like-minded others to achieve specific goals related to a central conflict, though those collectives vary in terms of their structure and behaviors. Though traditionally considered to be the result of irrational fringe extremists and problematic for the systems in which they arose, social movements are being re-conceptualized within sociological work as normal, necessary forces that challenge hegemonic dominance (Buechler 2000).

With this in mind, new social movement (NSM) theory is a collection of theoretical proposals that attempt to explain why there was a significant increase of movements in contemporary society, and to answer questions that arose in connection with these movements that could not be answered by Marxist theory (Pichardo 1997). By so doing, NSM theorists and researchers depart from sites of conflict rooted in industrialized society and move towards addressing conflicts that have arisen in our post-industrialized, post-materialized society that impacts issues such as identity work and human rights (Buechler 1995; Pichardo 1997).

As proposed by Touraine (1981) and refined by Melucci (1989), a social movement's ideological foundation is built on the following components: (1) identity; (2) opposition, and (3) totality. Opposition refers to the adversarial foe central to a social movement's efforts, in terms of who the adversary is and how members of the group perceive them. Thus, the presence, identification, and description of an oppositional force is a central part of the ideology of social

movements. Likewise, totality refers to the indication of goals or objectives surrounding the movement, or as Touraine described it, the stakes which “define the field of conflict” (p. 760).

### *New Social Movements and Identity*

The third component of the NSM ideology is the definition of a collective identity – a concept that is widely used to understand how individual actors come together and sustain collective action over time, but still considered to be an abstract, elusive concept, as detailed in Fominaya’s (2010) overview of the issue. Polletta and Jasper (2001) defined the concept as “an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution” (p. 285) - situating this concept within the individual and their experience in connection with a collective. However, a broader number of researchers have theorized collective identity as being the work of and outcome related to interpersonal interactions and agentic work. Taylor and Whittier (1992) defined collective identity as “the shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests, experiences and solidarity” (p. 105). Friedman and McAdam conceptualized it as “a shorthand designation announcing a status as a set of attitudes, commitments, and rules for behavior” that likewise serves as an announcement to others of an individual’s affiliation with and connection to a group (p. 157). By so doing, a collective identity can influence an individual’s own identity – an outcome which Friedman and McAdam suggested may act as an incentive for participation.

Underlying these definitions is Melucci’s (1995) work on collective identity that suggested a key departure from previous theories: collective identity is the result, not a given, of social movements. The process of developing a collective identity was proposed to be a central part of a social movement, and is done through repeated interactions among actors that ultimately lead to a negotiated collective identity as individuals work to define the desired

outcomes, means for attaining the outcome, and overall boundaries of the conflict in which they are engaging. This work is then carried out through specific rituals, practices, cultural artifacts that maintain the relationships and cognitive framework (or shared meanings) that have been developed through this process. This process sets the group apart from others, enabling members to identify the “we” vs. “them” and “others.” Melucci’s conceptualization stresses key characteristics of collective identity that help translate this abstract concept into something much more concrete, as Fominaya (2010) discusses in her comprehensive review on collective identity research: (1) the importance of emotional and affective ties in identity formation, (2) the presence of boundary work that identifies similarities and differences between a group and others, (3) the role of dominant cultural and sub-cultural practices from which a social movement identity is formed in opposition to, (4) shared leadership, organization, ideology, and rituals, (5) the utilization of symbolic resources to signify the collective identity, and (6) shared meanings or consciousness. Collective identity is therefore considered to be a socially constructed concept. Thus, implicated within the negotiated process of collective identity development is the recognition that an a NSM actor “both actively constructs and is constrained by a world of social meanings rooted in specific historic contexts and based in the experiences of and identities of race, gender, class, and nationality,” and that “within these contexts, the new actor identifies and constructs the meanings that designate the relevance for mobilization of grievances, resources, and opportunities” (Mueller 1992, p. 21-22).

The process of developing and individual member adoption of an identity unique to a certain group is critical to not only the existence but the viability and potential success of a social movement (Melucci 1996; Gamson 1992), and its influence on a social movement is felt at each stage of organization and enactment (Friedman and McAdam 1992). A collective identity

can influence the initial organization and recruitment efforts of a movement, as Friedman and McAdam (1992) proposed that successful movements draw on existing organizations and groups as the basis of the emerging activist identity. They suggested that established groups can influence recruitment and commitment to a fledgling movement by redefining the existing roles within the established organization, and that by so doing, members would participate so as to not lose their membership in the group. Further, once a group has gotten their operations of the ground, the collective identity can determine the appeal of a group, impacting the number and type of people likely to be attracted to it – particularly through the determination of whether to be inclusive or exclusive (Friedman and McAdam 1992). The more inclusive, however, Friedman and McAdam cautioned, the more difficult it is to control, the less obligation felt by “members” to actively join and participate in the collective forms of action, and the more ambiguous the identity will evolve to become. On the flip side, the more exclusive an identity, the less likely it will be to recruit a broad number of participants, but the more incentivized members will feel to join and actively participate. By extension, participation in a social movement has been considered to be a transformative experience for individuals when they assume and internalize the collective identity, directing their identity work and actions to align with the collective (Mueller 1992; Carroll & Hackett 2006).

We can see, then, that the concept of collective identity plays a significant role in the potential success of a social movement and the achievement of their ultimate goals. However, while social movement theorists primarily focus on debates primarily regarding the definition, conceptualization, and impact of collective identity on the social movement group over time, we must turn to empirical work to determine how this concept, as well as the other theoretical components within NSM theory, are used to explain marketplace activism.

## *New Social Movements in the Marketplace*

Kozinets and Handelman (2004) drew on the social movement theories to investigate consumer movements. Their findings from three activist sites (Anti-Nike, Anti-advertising, and Anti-genetically engineered food and crops) led to interesting findings regarding the ideological foundation of consumer movements. First, their research found that American consumer activists draw on evangelical, religious identities when developing their collective identity – a finding that, as Kozinets and Handelman suggest, offers an interesting counterpoint to the ideology of consumerism propagated through branding and contemporary marketing and that had not been linked by scholars of social movements at that time. These enlightened consumers assume a “Puritanical” perspective in their reform-seeking efforts – an identity and perspective that links their actions with a self-described higher purpose.

Second, with regards to opposition, Kozinets and Handelman discovered that not only are corporations considered to be an enemy to consumer activists, but also unenlightened, mainstream consumers are considered to be adversarial foes who need to be vanquished, even though they were not the intended target of the activists’ actions originally. This finding is considered to be problematic when considering the reaction of mainstream consumers to their own vilifying characterization. Kozinets and Handelman discuss the need of activists to not privilege their perspective at the expense of casting themselves as superior to, and by extension, separated from other consumers. Drawing on Friedman and McAdam’s (1992) discussion as stated above, the exclusivity or inclusivity of a collective’s identity can impact recruitment potential and possibly influence the cooptation of a group’s identity by the public, transforming it into a public good that is no longer controllable or an incentive for action – a possibility that Kozinets and Handelman likewise echo the balancing act necessary when characterizing your

potential army simultaneously as your biggest foe. Thus, the question remains as to how to fight against a greedy consumer consciousness when consumer participation is required to sustain a movement's momentum.

Third, Kozinets and Handelman highlighted the specific goals their activist groups were attempting to achieve, but also noted their consumers also sought broader changes in consumer culture and consumer ideology overall. This overarching goal to realize an enlightened evolution in consumer culture was subtly intertwined in the more defined, site-specific goals of each group, suggesting that subsequent research into consumer protest sites must not only be aware of and potentially investigate the role that the broader ideological and cultural movements play in consumer activism.

Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2006) also utilized NSM concepts to understand online anti-brand communities, suggesting that these communities are a new form of social movement. From their research, Hollenbeck and Zinkhan identified four reasons why these anti-brand communities form, as well as the behavioral manifestations associated with an anti-brand community. One of the behavioral manifestations was the development of a collective identity, which in turn was proposed as a means for self-identity developments – concepts which align with NSM theories.

Den Hond and De Bakker (2007) implemented NSM theories to understand how activist groups seek to influence and drive corporate social change activities. By drawing on NSM theories, Den Hond and De Bakker investigated the interplay between activist groups' ideological positions and the tactics used to stimulate corporate change, suggesting that radical and reformative activist groups will differ in their strategic choices to better represent the group's ideological standpoint. Thus, a group's set of shared beliefs and attitudes relating to the conflict



at hand was found to be a determining factor in the deployment of certain tactics, from actions that either materially or symbolically damage or benefit organizations. This insight is important in that it connects the conceptual foundations of a social movement to the behavioral manifestations and strategic direction evidenced in the marketplace. Further, this research supports the idea that specific choice of tactics and strategies can be more or less effective depending on group-specific factors within the social movement, a proposition that works in tandem with King's (2008) research that highlighted the contextual factors that impact an organization's concessions to boycotters. Contextual factors overall should therefore play a significant role in the choice and employment of protest tactics in the marketplace.

New social movement theories have indeed proved a fruitful and insightful fit for organizational theory development, as researchers have utilized the theoretical concepts to study issues such as covert collective action within organizations (Morrill, Zald, and Rao 2003) and the rise of shareholder activism (Davis and Thompson 1994). Studies have also documented the complicated relationship organizations have with movements, and the different roles that organizations play when movements seek to change corporate actions. For example, research by King (2008) demonstrated how organizations become targets of movements seeking to encourage change in corporations, whereas O'Mahony and Bechky (2008) showed how organizations can become collaborators and allies with movements through social movement efforts. Organizations were also shown to be sites of contention that can foster and sustain social movements (Briscoe and Safford 2008).

NSM theories have also been used to describe the impact of collective action at the institutional level. Rao, Morrill and Zald (2000) proposed that social movements contribute to the evolution of new organizational forms, thus serving as a form of cultural innovation.

Hargrave and Van de Ven (2006) echoed this insight in developing their collective action model of institutional innovation. By examining social movement insights in conjunction with technology innovation management research, Hargrave and Van de Ven suggested that the institutional change is the result of “a dialectical process in which opposing actors in the organizational field frame issues and construct networks in an attempt to introduce new institutional arrangements” (p. 865). As a result, by using social movement research, this work complemented extant research that sought to explain institutional change (i.e., institutional design, institutional diffusion, and institutional adaptation models), and introduced a focus on a collection of actors seeking to construct new institutional arrangements. By so doing, Hargrave and Van de Ven identified the need for a holistic perspective, indicating that each of the models offers a view of institutional change that in their totality provides a nuanced, comprehensive view of the processes involved as institutions evolve.

From these examples, we can see that the application of NSM theories can provide researchers with analytical and explanatory power to explain change-oriented marketplace behaviors, whether from a consumer, corporate organization, or institutional level. However, while NSM theories have proven useful to address questions regarding why movements have arisen and dissecting the processes through which groups negotiate their collective foundation upon which actions is based, questions remain regarding how movements form and engage in collective action. Turning our attention to the resource mobilization theory paradigm, we can analyze how scholars have undertaken to understand the “how” of collective activism.

### *Resource Mobilization Theory*

The resource mobilization theory presents diverges from the new social movement theories to investigate the mobilization and enactment processes groups engage in to pursue their

goals by drawing on political sociological and economic theories, rather than social psychological perspectives of collective behaviors (McCarthy and Zald 1977). As proposed by McCarthy and Zald (1977) in their seminal work on resource mobilization, this theoretical paradigm at its core casts social movement participants as rational actors who seek to obtain and effectively utilize resources in the mobilization of the collective and achievement of its goals. The focus, as McCarthy and Zald (1977) proposed, is on examining “the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements” (p. 1213). Developing the idea that the obtainment and utilization of resources is central to a movement’s success, McCarthy and Zald is another departure from the NSM literature, as this suggests that not all movements will have equal chance of success. Rather, much like companies operating in capitalistic economies, those collectives with access to the most resources will likely be more successful than their competitors.

Resources that contribute to a movement’s success are varied and debates continue regarding the types of resources that are significant to movements and their potential success (Jenkins 1983). Freeman (1975) suggested that resources can be divided into tangible and intangible assets, whereas more recent theoretical work asserts that resources can be categorized into five groups: moral, cultural, human, material, and social-organization resources (Edwards and Gillham 2013). Moral resources include intangible resources such as legitimacy, integrity, and celebrity. As discussed by Edwards and Gillham, these types of resources are often external resources that individuals and organizations outside of the collective bestow upon the movement, particularly in response to how the movement group conducts itself in light of cultural expectations. Cultural resources are resources generated and propagated within a particular

culture, including specialized or tacit knowledge regarding the “how to’s” of successful mobilization and protest. Human resources identify that individuals acting within a collective represent a source of possible strategic advantage based on the experience, skills, expertise, and leadership characteristics that each individual brings to the table, so to speak. Material resources are the tangible resources of movements, including the financial and physical capital acquired by a movement. Finally, social-organizational resources refer to assets generated by access to infrastructures, social networks, and organizations that have resources based on their operations. Tapping into social-organizational resources often requires the formation of relationships or coalitions.

More recent theorization has shifted from questioning resource availability for movements to resource access, as scholars find that resources are unevenly distributed through society. As a result, collectives need to find ways to access different resources, whether internally or externally, and it has been proposed that collectives do this through four mechanisms: self-production, aggregation, co-optation/appropriation, and/or patronage (Edwards and Gillham 2013). Self-production refers to when individuals and collectives themselves produce their own resources. Aggregation identifies that individuals can congregate their personal resources within a collective in order to help pursue collective goals. Co-optation/appropriation suggests that some movements access resources by drawing on relationships with other organizations and utilizing their previously produced resources within the collective for the movement’s goals, and by so doing, can lead to a transformative effect on the resources. Finally, patronage refers the opportunity given to certain movements who receive donations, grants, or other desired resources from patrons and donors.

By accepting the possible types of resources and the processes of resource acquisition, two points emerge as important and salient, particularly for this dissertation. First, it becomes important to recognize the possible dependence that movement groups and their success have on forming relationships external to the organization. This reliance on and advantageousness of external alliance formation can not only lead to greater tangible resources and assets, but also afford a more expanded range of intangible assets that can be as important, if not more so, in the mobilization and sustaining of a movement and its actions. Questions of the network associations and alliances formed remain, particularly as online forms of activism have become more prevalent and opportunities to connect with possible sympathizers and influential allies (whether individual or organizations) exist on a broader scale (e.g., Castells 2015). Second, as Carroll and Hackett (2006) noted in their analysis of media activism and the virtues of resource mobilization theory application, “different kinds of collective action are enabled by different organizational forms” (p. 89), as evidenced in their research by the organizational hierarchy displayed in different groups studied. Thus, the manifestation of organized, collective activism may differ depending on the type and structure of the group that is enacting it.

Though resource mobilization theory has been critiqued in scholarly works (e.g., Jenkins 1983; Klandermans 1984; Piven and Cloward 1991; Buechler 1993) in efforts to further develop the theory and its application in understanding collective action, resource mobilization has nevertheless been useful in providing theoretical concepts to explain empirical research on activist sites, particularly in cyberactivism work. The advent and adoption of the Internet, which will be discussed at length in this dissertation as an influential force on contemporary activism, has provided a platform for access to and the facilitation of acquiring resources that had been previously unavailable to consumers – a fact which was instrumental in sites of activist

resistance such as the Egyptian Revolution (Eltantawy and Wiest 2011) and the Austrian student protests of 2009 (Maireder and Schwarzenegger 2012). Utilizing online communications as the primary means for mobilizing and enacting their activist program, these groups were able to generate intangible resources, such as media attention and sympathetic support, as well as access to other networks and organizations outside of their own collective. Furthermore, these collectives were able to organize and recruit more effectively, thus increasing the access to and possibility of a more expansive range of human and material resources. Echoing Eltantawy and Wiest (2011), because of their “ubiquity and potential for communicating messages to massive, global audiences, social media technologies may be seen as an important, instrumental resource for collective action and social change” (p. 1218). In consumer activism research, Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2006) support the assertion that the Internet acts as a resource itself and a means for acquiring an unprecedented amount of resources for consumer activists, citing the speed, convenience, anonymity, and virtual formation as advantageous characteristics that facilitate and enable activism.

### *Political Opportunity Theory*

Researchers and proponents of the political process, or political opportunity, theory, seek to explain when social movements are likely to arise and how movements differ, from the tactics used to the possibility of achieving success in a given resistance site. A key component of this theory is the dependent relationship between the resistive individuals’ agency and the structure of the political context in which the resistance efforts arise. In other words, activist choices, tactics, and efforts overall are not considered to occur in an isolated lair of resistance mayhem, but rather are dependent upon characteristics and factors that exist in the opportunity and context of their resistance behaviors. Not every opportunity will be fruitful for activism to arise, nor will

each opportunity be as likely as the next to be successful in achieving activist goals. Rather, certain factors within a political site that indicate an adversarial foe is vulnerable lead to an increase in the likelihood of activist manifestations. For example, change to public policy or law, changes in the economic landscape such as recessions or the makeup of the workforce, or government concessions to previously excluded constituencies may indicate a climate favorable to change. Thus, in summary, as Tarrow (1998) proposes, political opportunities are “consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics” (p. 19). Additional components of this theory include the necessity of collective consciousness towards a particular grievance, which Meyer (2004) suggests that the political context impacts the salience of perceived injustices around which activists mobilize, as well as the requisite operational strengths such as leadership and resources for a movement to be successful. The political opportunity theory correlates with both the new social movement theories by highlighting the necessity of a collective consciousness that drives collective action (which will be discussed below in terms of a collective identity), and the resource mobilization theory in highlighting the necessity of external resources and capital to enable a successful movement.

Eisinger’s (1973) work on American race and poverty riots during the late 1960s was the first to propose the political opportunity framework (Meyer 2004), identifying the distinct “open” and “closed” structures that impacted the likelihood of cities experiencing protests. By so doing, Eisinger pointed towards the importance of contextual factors that play an influential part in the manifestation of activism. Tilly (1978) continued to develop this line of thinking, suggesting that opportunities are dynamic – they change over time. Further, the contextual landscape, or opportunities, from which activists are embedded likewise indicates the most

efficacious tactics to use against a particular opponent at a particular time period. Meyer's (2004) contributions to the theoretical development of political process theory center on recognizing the dynamic nature of political opportunities and calling for a re-focusing on the processes of political opportunities, rather than correlative studies between opportunities and outcomes. Meyer argued that "the presumption underneath a political opportunity approach is that the development of movements reflects, responds to, and sometimes alters the realities of politics and policy, although most work gives short shrift to how" (p. 139). She then proposes that by adopting a dynamic, process-oriented approach, scholars can examine how opportunities work and the responses they engender.

Extending this theory even further, Tarrow (1998) and McAdam (1995) identified the interplay between and influence activist movements have on subsequent movements. Tarrow proposed that the existence of an activist movement provides the signal to other malcontents that a political system is weak and ready for attack, potentially acting as the catalyst for subsequent activist behaviors. McAdam further posited that while "initiator" movements emerge in response to favorable political opportunities, "spin-off" movements are influenced by the cognitive or cultural effects of the prior movements. This indicates that not only do characteristics of the adversary matter in distinguishing between activist sites, but also the existence and nature of activist movements themselves play a part in the battlefield of activism as movements evolve and protests continue (Staggenborg 1998). Political process theory therefore seems to address the "when" and "how" questions of collective activism and the associated movements therein.

A theoretical model that arose from the political opportunity theory is the political mediation model developed by Amenta and his colleagues (e.g., Amenta, Carruthers, and Zylan 1992; Amenta, Dunleavy and Bernstein 1994; Amenta, Caren and Olasky 2005). This theoretical



model incorporates the political opportunity idea by suggesting that likely influence of a movement on an intended target is mediated by political circumstances. King (2008) drew on this model to explain the range of outcomes experienced in the marketplace when consumers challenged corporations through boycotts. King hypothesized that when corporate conditions are ripe for change, such as when sales are already declining or the firm's reputation has experienced a decline in reputation, boycotts will be more likely to be successful in obtaining concessions and promoting change within the corporation. However, beyond this study in management literature, it would appear that political opportunity theory has not yet been widely applied within consumer research to examine sites of collective consumer activism.

In summary, new social movement, resource mobilization, and political opportunity theories appear to provide a comprehensive, nuanced view of collective action. These theories, when employed by marketing researchers, also provide an analytical foundation to explain market-based activism and its manifestations. However, with that said, questions nevertheless remain, particularly from the consumer perspective and experience of collective activism. More specifically, while participating in a social movement has been said to be a potentially transformative experience for the individual, how is it transformative for the group itself, particularly groups that have been established in the market yet are new at mobilization and goal-oriented, activist-like efforts? How does the nature of the collective (e.g., its purpose, identity formation and strength, leadership organization) influence the performance of activism, and conversely, how are established consumer groups change when attempting to enact change in the marketplace? Also, while collective identity has been posed as a key ideological component and force within social movements, diverse forms of consumer collectives develop in the marketplace with varying degrees of identity formation and development. Is there a difference

between the activist performances of collectives when a central identity is well developed and formed within a collective, thus impacting collective commitment to the group and cause and subsequent activist actions, versus a weaker central identity? Is there a difference in the resources used and tactics engaged in when collectives are emergent versus well established?

### **Contemporary Consumer Activism: The Next Generation**

Discussing the theoretical and empirical insights of modern day activism as evidenced in the marketplace merely sets the stage for what researchers and practitioners alike are increasingly encountering: the evolution of activism from traditional, offline practices into the online arena. Activism and its enactment in contemporary society is changing as consumers adopt online forms of communications to connect with one another and engage in activist behaviors. However, given the dynamic and distinct nature of the world behind the screen, the influence and power of the Internet on the performances of activism remains a theoretical and empirical area of interest, as well as how collectives utilize online platforms to achieve their desired purposes. Thus, a burgeoning area of research across disciplines including media studies, sociology, political studies, communications, and business is the intersection of the Internet and activism. Our next chapter therefore analyzes why and how the Internet has become a resource that enables and amplifies consumer activism, recent research illuminating the state of contemporary cyberactivism, and the questions yet to be answered by contemporary researchers regarding collective consumer activism as it is facilitated and performed through the screen.

### CHAPTER 3: COLLECTIVE ACTIVISM ONLINE

The introduction and adoption of the Internet and the social media platforms developed therein has dramatically altered the landscape of contemporary society, impacting not only political, social, and cultural spheres, but also redefining consumer culture, roles, and relationships in the market in complex and strategic ways (Henning-Thurau et al. 2010; Hendrix 2014). Indeed, as Jenkins (2006) noted, “the new media operate with different principles than the broadcast media,” namely “access, participation, reciprocity, and peer-to-peer rather than one to many communication (p. 219). As a result, not only do consumers have greater access to products and information, but the rise of social media sites has likewise given consumers greater access to another key resource: one another.

Prior to the advent of social networks fostered in the online arena, consumers were segregated and separated by geographic boundaries. As a consequence, one’s consumption experience was a phenomenon primarily influenced and linked to other consumers who shared strong relational ties- often familial or social bonds- reinforced through face to face contact. However, social media platforms and other online communication resources have not only enabled but also fostered the ability to connect consumers with a myriad of different “groups” of consumers: new acquaintances made in real life, long-lost friends from one’s past, strangers who share similar interests (such as in brand or fan communities), and so on. Defined as “a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, p. 61), social media platforms such as micro-blogging sites (e.g., Twitter), blogs, social networks (e.g., Facebook) and media sharing sites (e.g., YouTube and Instagram) represent online spaces in which consumers can and do congregate, create, and exchange content at will.

Because social media platforms and Internet communication technologies overall help to eliminate the geographic limitations inherent in direct, face-to-face interactions, consumers connect with others to share in their consumption experiences and creations. Consumers readily share consumption stories, insider information, conspiracy theories, commentary, and frustrations that arise throughout the course of individual consumption encounters on a variety of platforms: blogs, forums, chat rooms, and social networking sites. Thus, what was once a more private experience has become opportunities for public engagement and mediated through the public arena (Bimber, Flanagin and Stohl 2005).

Pertinent to this dissertation is the fact that the Internet and social media networking sites facilitate linking consumers one with another, and by so doing, have contributed to the evolution and enactment of collective activism in the marketplace by creating a more flexible, decentralized form of collective action and networked social movements as groups take advantage of the facilitative characteristics of the internet to communicate their message to broad audiences (Bimber 2003; Castells 2015) and enact their strategic tactics. The ability to congregate and collaborate online can act as a destabilizing force in market interactions, shifting potential power to consumers which may turn the tide in an activist campaign. Indeed, as Labrecque, von dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak and Hofacker (2013) identified, the Internet empowers consumers through four distinct power sources: demand-, information-, network-, and crowd-based power. Crowd-based power, in particular, is the power connected to consumers' ability to share, organize, and mobilize resources in ways that benefit both individual consumers and the collective overall, thus pointing towards the impact of online technological advances in the power asymmetries that color activist-adversary dynamics. Further, as Castells (2015)

suggested, the ability to connect with others enables one to overcome fear with enthusiasm, which can transform individuals into “a conscious, collective actor” (p. 247).

Researchers primarily from media studies and sociology have investigated the role and power of the Internet in influencing the process an enactment of activism, leading to the birth of social movements primarily driven through the online screen which have be termed cyberactivism (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011). Though this field of Web-based activism is continually evolving given the dynamic nature of the Internet itself, recent academic work has by and large indicated that social media platforms – and the Internet overall - have become important resources for the mobilization of consumers around the world to achieve their activist-oriented goals (Earl and Kimport 2009; Harlow and Harp 2012; Postmes and Brunsting 2002; Diani 2000; Eltantawy and Wiest 2011; Maireder and Schwarzenegger 2012; Rauschnabel, Kammerlander and Ivens 2016), particularly by younger audiences (e.g., Jenkins, Shresthova, Gamber-Thompson, Kligler-Vilenchik and Zimmerman 2016; Kim, Russo and Amenå 2016; Bakker and de Vreese 2011). In turn, not only has the Internet become a vital component of many activists’ strategic responses, but the act of adopting and adapting computer-mediated communications for activist purposes has likewise substantially changed what can be considered as “activism” overall (McCaughey and Ayers 2003).

The part that the Internet plays with relation to this dissertation is therefore a central, leading role to developing insights relating to the influence of the collective on the performance of consumer activism, and vice versa on established consumer groups. The online arena forms the primary context by which the data for the case studies will be collected and analyzed; given the preponderance and increased utilization of online platforms by activists to collectively form and achieve their desired ends, studying consumer activism as it is contemporarily performed

necessitates an investigative context which not only takes into account, but also treats the online world of activism as the significant piece of the collective activism puzzle that it appears to be. In addition to providing the underlying context for our window into consumer activist performances that comprise this study, the use of technological platforms by distinct consumer groups may likewise be a contributing element in differentiating the activist work performed by distinct collectives. As such, this chapter presents and analyzes research on collective activism enacted online and the advantages technological platforms have been shown to afford over offline forms of protest to provide the theoretical foundation for understanding the influence of the Internet and its affiliated social platforms on activism, and, by so doing, the importance in selecting and studying consumer activist sites primarily occurring online. Further, I highlight key insights into the current state of contemporary cyberactivism, particularly in relation to collaborative brand attacks (Rauschnabel et al 2016), and indicate unanswered questions from extant research on online consumer activism yet to be addressed when examining activism through the consumer collective lens, in particular the usage of technological platforms to achieve collective goals and the relation of online and offline tactical decisions.

### **Understanding the Internet as a Resource in Collective Activism**

The empowering and facilitative role that the Web has played and continues to play in activism has been shown to be influenced by certain characteristics of online platforms, particularly in comparison to offline avenues for activism, as well as the creative adaptations of activists when engaging in activism through the Internet. Indeed, researchers are acknowledging that the Internet has in fact become a resource that not only is increasingly central to (Eltantawy and Wiest 2011), but also acts as an accelerant in modern activist opportunities (Earl and Kimport 2009). Consequently, understanding the why and how behind the Internet and social

media platforms' rise into becoming increasingly salient supporting actors in the ongoing dramas of activism necessitates an analysis of cyberactivist activity and the nature of the Internet itself.

Prior to diving into the analysis, it is important to recognize that the following advantages of the Internet and its utilization by activists do not occur in isolation, but rather are interconnected; by extension, the effect and power of the Internet and social media platforms for activism is the result of the cumulative influence of these characteristics and benefits. Thus, while each will be discussed in turn, I want to stress the amplificatory impact that is experienced as these facets of the Internet weave together to create a very tangled web of power. A second point to emphasize is that the positive and useful characteristics of the Internet for cyberactivism that will be discussed are made possible by a significant cultural shift within consumer culture that emphasizes and rewards sharing and collaborative consumption among consumer circles and social networks (e.g., Belk 2010; Belk 2014). The willingness of consumers to share information, products, insights, stories, tricks of the consumer trade, and so on, plays a central role for activists' utilization of the Internet.

### *Speed & Cost*

Prior to the Internet, consumers learned about current events, gossip, and information primarily from traditional media sources and through word-of-mouth – admittedly slow, grassroots forms of communication dissemination. In the early days of the Web, the familiar dial-up tone was the quintessential cornerstone for what would be slow, painstaking browsing experiences. In comparison, the Internet today is marked by faster connections that seem to only be getting faster and more reliable year to year. Consequently, the speed at which consumers are alerted to, learn about, discuss, and subsequently spread information is infinitely faster and more timely than ever before. For Austrian student protests, the speed at which communication

traveled allowed students to quickly and efficiently mobilize and direct their activist efforts, particularly in the recruitment of new supporters (Maireder and Schwarzenegger 2012). Because information is colloquially said to be tied to power, the speed at which information can be disseminated through a collective and even to parties external to a collective is an advantageous advancement to previous eras of activism, enabling faster reaction times that snowballs into efficient and timely mobilization efforts, and ultimately organization among interested parties (Gurak and Logie 2003). Thus, the Internet breaks down the time lag that bogs down activist efforts dependent on traditional methods of communication and enables faster reaction times and action overall (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan 2006).

Not only was time and speed of mobilization a concern in earlier activist activities, but the costs were also a potentially prohibitive factor in coordinating collective efforts. Readyng the troops, relaying information, gathering materials and supplies for protest tactics such as sit-ins, and time off from work to participate in person were detrimental costs to not only the longevity of, but the possibility of organizing efforts in the first place. Internet communication tools allow for not only fast but also efficient communication that minimizes the potential costs associated with organizing and enacting an activist agenda. Further, because cyberactivist tactics are waged from the comforts of one's own home, potential costs from participating are likewise mitigated. This may include financial costs one would incur, but also the social costs and risks associated with campaigning in perhaps socially unpopular or fringe groups. However, given the relative anonymity of the Web and decentralized methods of communication and action, the potential fear of aligning one's self with and actively engaging in minority causes is likely reduced, thus heightening the likelihood of consumer participation (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan 2006).



### *The Activists' Guide to Cyber-Protest*

In the children's series "Harry Potter", there exists within the magical castle of Hogwarts what the students call the "Room of Requirement": a room that transforms itself to become exactly what an individual needs at that specific moment in time. Whether it be a bathroom, a fortified classroom for unauthorized and rebellious wizardry, or a place to hide one's deepest, darkest secrets, the "Room of Requirement" changes to become what one needs most.

Throughout the course of the series, the "Room of Requirement" is utilized by the protagonists in small ways and great, but it is the pinnacle, climactic quest at the end of the novels in which the "Room of Requirement" plays a pivotal part in the action. As Harry searches for the lost diadem of Ravenclaw in order to defeat the villainous Lord Voldemort, he deduces that the crown was in the "Room of Requirement" when it would take the form of a storage room to hide objects students wanted to stay hidden. Upon entering the Room to find the diadem, Harry was shocked at the vast stores of items students had hidden there and likely had remained in the Room for decades upon decades. Thus, the "Room of Requirement" in this form had become a veritable trove of secrets and treasures – if only one was in need of them and would take the time to look.

Much like the "Room of Requirement," the Internet can be said to be a repository of knowledge and information. Innumerable websites and social media platforms exist with vast amounts of collected knowledge that answer questions that range from the mundane to the complex. In the case of cyberactivism, information about effective activist methods can be an invaluable resource for fledgling groups to get off the ground. The most successful tools will be the most likely to be talked about, promoted in celebratory ways, and thus adopted and adapted by a group for their specific purposes (Tarrow 1998; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001). Should these once again prove successful, the diffusion process will likely continue to another group,

creating a more widespread impact on cyberactivism overall by contributing to this “digital toolbox” of cyberactivists, or their “repertoire of contention” (Costanza-Chock 2003; Van Laer and Van Aelst 2010). This repertoire of successful tools/methods spreads when experienced activist consumers share their insights or even record their wisdom on websites that exist to instruct groups on the “how to’s” of activism. Thus, the Internet enables battle-savvy actors to pool their individual knowledge in readily accessible ways that results in a codified collective form of cumulative resistance – an extension of the individualized form of cumulative resistance proposed by Roux (2008), who posited that the accumulation of resistive experiences produces a “global set of negative cognitions and emotions encoded, over time, by the consumer concerning past episodes of resistance” (p. 67) that can influence subsequent resistive actions. This collective cumulative resistance is shared with potential activists across a variety of institutional fields – guiding and instructing them in the ways of protesting and ultimately giving way to the next group of eager activists (Earl and Kimport 2009).

It is possible that knowledge of previous attempts at protesting and activist-oriented action might spur a collective to creatively adapt a tool/method in order to stand out, avoid stagnation, and make the tool their own. Conversely, it is also possible that tactics used that lead to successful outcomes may more simply be adopted by collectives because of their proven track record, with little adaptive work by the collective to “make the tool their own.” A resulting question therefore remains as to the role and impact that the cumulative knowledge of activism, particularly as specific tools have been used in instances of consumer activism, has on collective action – how is past experiential wisdom used in the process of developing tactics and guiding consumer campaigns overall? Does cumulative protest knowledge to adopt vs adapt codified protest tactics, and is this differentially seen in diverse collectives?

Consumers not only utilize the Internet as a repository of activist knowledge to draw on in times of mobilization and action, but we are also seeing an evolution of tactics and methods as activists adapt to the unique online environment in ways that can both complement or even replace traditional protesting (Postmes and Brunsting 2002). Institutionalized tactics of protest are being coordinated through online forms of communication as consumers connect with one another, thus the Internet is acting as an avenue for facilitating and reinforcing traditional forms of protest. Internet communication tools are also being utilized in the development of emergent forms of campaigning, such as online petitioning, lobbying, mass emailing, site hijacking, and virtual blockades. These online equivalents, such as sites like petitiononline.com, can supplement an activist group's offline methods, but in some cases, may act as substitutes for the costlier, more time-intensive traditional protest methods (Postmes and Brunsting 2002). Furthermore, consumer activists acting primarily online have been shown to favor certain social media sites for gathering and performing their activism, such as Twitter; however, there is a recent trend of consumer activists integrating their use of social media applications and tools, suggesting that the strategy of consumer activism may in fact be evolving as new technologies are adopted by activists to achieve their goals (Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia 2014).

In summary, the shared knowledge of protesting tactics and subsequent successes that has been recorded within and shared among social networks, in conjunction with the expanded opportunities for tactical maneuvers both online and offline, has broadened the scope for activist action in terms of the potential scale of campaigns (Diani 2000). Activists are more informed and can knowingly tailor their activist programs to best fit their conflict at hand, and are utilizing increasingly integrated platforms to achieve their goals (Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia 2014). As a result, modern activism, as informed by online activities and performed through

online technologies, may lead to protests that are potentially more efficient, effective, and specific to the market context than previously possible. However, do all collectives draw on cumulative protest knowledge similarly when developing their activist efforts? By extension, do collectives not only adopt but adapt institutional protest tactics as learned through cumulative protest knowledge to reflect their particular context, or are there differences in collectives' tactical adaptation in relation to cumulative protest knowledge? Furthermore, how do consumer collectives utilize online platforms to achieve their desired ends? Do diverse collectives use different interaction platforms, or do consumer activist collectives use the same interaction platforms, but do so differently? Are some collectives more creative and diversified in their usage of internet technology and spaces than others, thus engaging in more integrative work between platforms? These questions yet remain unanswered in contemporary activism research.

#### *Mass Communication Facilitates Communication, Recruitment, and Mobilization*

Traditional mediums of communication – with the exception of face to face communications – have historically been monitored and controlled by organizations with their own political and financial agendas. As Harlow and Harp (2012) noted, the protest paradigm suggests that traditional media will likely not take a positive stance on social movements, slanting reports (if any) to be negative. This suggested bias against minority and marginalized movements and the subsequent impact on reported coverage could hurt a group's mobilization actions and possibly de-legitimize their group's efforts in the public arena. The ability of a marginalized activist group to broadcast their efforts in a positive or even unbiased fashion to a wide(r) audience was therefore a daunting and somewhat unattainable goal. However, as Castells (2015) theorized, "as these [Internet social networks] are spaces of autonomy, largely beyond the control of governments and corporations that had monopolized the channels of communication

as the foundation of their power,” (p. 2) individuals who utilize these spaces to produce mass media messages and develop their “autonomous networks of horizontal communication” are able to “build their projects by sharing their experience” and “subvert the practice of communication as usual by occupying the medium and creating the message”; consequently, “they overcome the powerlessness of their solitary despair by networking their desire” (p. 9). Castells goes on to argue that creating places of autonomous communication, which in today’s networked society are primarily online and through platforms of wireless communication, are central to social movements in that they foster community by facilitating togetherness and create a public space that can be used for congregating, debate, and action. As Jenkins (2016) likewise asserts, grassroots media is “being deployed as the tool by which to challenge the failed mechanisms of institutional politics” (p. 3).

Thus, utilizing the Internet as a resource and medium for activism has therefore enabled consumers to bypass traditional media gatekeepers, challenge hegemonic forces within the broader culture who bias and stifle information, and reach a broader public to broadcast their message to a wider, potentially interested public (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Jenkins 2006)— an advantage that gives a public voice to the group that may have been blocked by political, social, or cultural forces (Couldry 2010), greater control over the message shared, minimizes the problem of distortion as a message is shared through third-party mediums such as media channels, and offers an alternative viewpoint in public discourse. As a result, the ability to communicate a group’s message to a mass audience can ultimately legitimize the group and their purpose in public discourse and sentiment, generating issue-centric discussions which can likewise spur mobilization efforts (Nah, Veenstra and Shah 2006), and overall increase public exposure to activist issues and tactics. Furthermore, protest groups are utilizing social media

platforms, such as Twitter, to efficiently and effectively distribute information directly to those concerned, thereby facilitating not only the spread of information, but the timeliness of said distribution (Theocharis 2013).

Recognizing that social media platforms make up a cornerstone of the Internet and consumer activity online, it is intuitively clear that one of the key characteristics that enables these platforms to facilitate and accelerate activism is that they foster social connections through the open-sourced, consumer-produced forms of mass communication. As stated earlier, consumers who may have previously kept consumption experiences private are now sharing them with others through online mediums. By so doing, groups of like-minded consumers can and are forming collectives online that build upon shared interests and passions, regardless of geographic location. Isolated, marginalized consumers can congregate and collaborate, negotiating experiences through the collective. Social media platforms, in particular, are useful in promoting a sense of community and shared identity (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011), which in turn may provide a solid collective foundation should the need for activism arise.

For cyberactivists, the ability to come together regardless of geographic limitations poses an “opportunity to transform sets of geographically dispersed aggrieved individuals into a densely connected aggrieved population” (Diani 2000 – pg. 4) – a population that enables fast, efficient, and more numerous mobilization possibilities that would have been possible via traditional activist methods. Furthermore, the connections formed between cyberactivists and the ease with which communication occurs can lead to increased interactivity (Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia 2014)– a potential boon for strategizing and coordinating creative tactics, as well as strengthening community bonds and relationships (Eltantawy and Wiest 2011). An interesting feature to note about cyberprotests is the nonhierarchical structure that has been observed in

certain collectives, in which leaders of movements are often retroactively identified and consider themselves simply as participants (Gurak and Logie 2003). This may also positively contribute to the possibility of interactivity and participation among individuals, as the opportunities for engagement may be more open than in a more formal activist structure. However, the structural pendulum may also swing in the opposite way in other consumer communities, as Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) noted that the identification of and attention given to institutional entrepreneurs in the Fatshionista community online provided an inspirational and motivational power to other frustrated consumers. The result, however, is the same in that action is promoted through interaction among community members.

Likewise, the Internet has enabled what Castells (2015) termed “mass self-communication” in that messages can be sent and received by a multiplicity of individuals, and that the communication process and decisions are autonomously decided by the sender and self-directed by the individual. This state of “mass self-communication” that the Internet affords is therefore based “on horizontal networks of interactive communication that, by and large, are difficult to control by governments or corporations,” and are multimodal, allowing “constant reference to a global hypertext of information whose components can be remixed by the communicative actor according to specific projects of communication” (Castells 2015, p. 7). The ability of individuals to therefore tailor messages (while yet maintaining connection to broader institutions of society) and broadcast them to a wider audience allows for activists to propagate ideas and recruit others through their networks of communication.

The fact that consumers are engaging one with another and establishing social networks online can raise awareness and generate attention of the activist cause among two potentially vital groups to an activist’s cause: new members and friendly sympathizers (Postmes and

Brunsting 2002; Castells 2015). Reaching these potential audiences through social networks can therefore impact the recruitment effort, as well as lead to more public discourse and discussions on various platforms, thereby increasing the positive “buzz” surrounding the activist group and their goals when it is being propagating by supportive friends. In addition to reaching potential members and sympathetic bystanders, the opportunity for mass communication through online means likewise may build connections between the activist group and potential organizational allies. This may include other activist groups fighting for similar reasons (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011), paving the way for a joint task force (of sorts) of coordination among the consumer camps, as well as institutional actors such as the media (Castells 2015) – a possibility that the Tunisian rebellion fighting for democracy experienced as satellite television networks, particularly Al Jazeera, broadcast individuals’ images and information to the broader public (Castells 2015) and consequently played a central role in the development of this particular rebellion, especially as this effort garnered worldwide exposure and support. Organizations in the marketplace who might be impacted by or could benefit from the war being waged may also be alerted to the opportunity for engagement through online discussions and communication – opportunities that likely would not have been presented or deemed salient and relevant in pre-cyberactivism times. With this said, do all collectives exert similar effort and directed action by to form alliances, particularly through online platforms? Or is there a different in alliance work based on the collective’s nature?

Finally, the application of social media platforms in cyberactivism open avenues of communication with a harder to reach consumer group: youth. It is no surprise that younger aged individuals more readily adopt new technologies. In the case of social media spaces, younger consumers populated the recesses of platforms such as Facebook and Twitter before older



consumers learned what a hashtag was. Having grown up using social media platforms, it is also not surprising that social media platforms are the preferred mediums through which youth engage in political activity and protest (Velasquez and LaRose 2014; Bakker and de Vreese 2011; Kim et al 2016; Castells 2015; Jenkins et al 2016). The speed, ease, and minimal costs of participation, coupled with youth's familiarity with social media platforms, likely lower resistance to actively participating in extracurricular causes. Further, as suggested by Maireder and Schwarzenegger (2012), the minimal obligations of participating through online forms of protest and the loose bonds that comprise social media networks also work in concert to encourage participation because young consumers can easily opt out at any given time with few (if any) repercussions. Consequently, there is a wider potential audience and recruiting base that exists for activists that may otherwise have been a more difficult group to reach when they utilize online communication tools and mediums.

### *The Interplay Between Online & Offline Activism Tactics*

The last point to consider with regards to the empowering capabilities and characteristics of the Internet for activists is the interplay between online and offline activism. This area of inquiry is a rather contentious one particularly in popular discourse following Gladwell's (2010) article that contended the networked form of activism that occurs through online platforms does not provide the necessary motivation for individual action offline. In response to Gladwell's claims, blogger and journalist Luke Allnut (2010) argued in his blog post that to draw a distinction between traditional activism and digital activism is problematic, as the two "overlap and complement each other," in addition to the fact that "the reality is that these days a good deal of activism will have some kind of digital component," as "activists fighting oppressive regimes want to get their messages out and, unlike politicians who tend to fetishize technology they just

want to use the most effective tool, whether that's a print flyer, a sit-in, or a Facebook group – or a combination of all of the above.” While Alexis Madrigal (2010), a journalist for The Atlantic, supported Gladwell's claims that weaker ties are likely prohibitive for the organization and dedication necessary to perform in-person Revolutionary (vs. revolutionary) work against more formidable foes, she nevertheless took issue with the contention that relationships formed through mediums such as Twitter are in fact weaker given the longevity of communication that online interactions may experience, further indicating that Gladwell's arguments regarding the state of online communications and the influence on offline are debatable.

Thus, a question for researchers and activist practitioners alike has been the relationship between online and offline actions, and of particular importance to this dissertation work, the interplay between the selection and utilization of online and offline tactics for activism as enacted by consumer collectives. Brunsting and Postmes (2002) found that the online and offline actions of activists were distinct in their motivations, as online actions were “slightly more motivated by cognitive calculations (efficacy) and less by affective factors (identification)” (p. 525), thereby indirectly indicating a potential hurdle for bridging the online and offline action divide. Brunsting and Postmes likewise found that there was a noticeable difference in the perceived effectiveness of the tactics utilized by activists, depending on the nature of the tactic itself. “Soft” tactics, or those tactics that are considered to be less direct and confrontational, are were considered to be equally effective both online and offline, whereas “hard” tactics were considered to be less effective overall, particularly for the online variations of “hard” tactics. Consequently, a question can be raised regarding how collectives develop the avenue and platform for their action and tactics – might some collectives be more motivated based on their

affective and relationship ties within the collective to utilize tactics offline, in addition to those used online?

Harlow and Harp (2012) in their study of online and offline activist behaviors in the United States and Latin America, found that their respondents viewed social media sites as an essential part of activism, using the sites as primary methods for mobilizing and communicating with their fellow activists. Their respondents reported that regardless of their primary arena for engaging in activist pursuits – whether it be online or offline – they still participate in offline activist actions to the relatively same degree. Online activism was found to not only translate off the screen, but also to promote and generate offline activism. It was also that discovered that survey respondents did not privilege online activism over offline activism, or vice versa. Rather, it was indicated that both online and offline actions are necessary in today’s day and age in order to be effective – an insight that is important when considering the question of whether online activism might replace offline action in the future given primarily the ease of participation and the other beneficial aspects of online activism. Supplementing this research, Kim, Russo and Amenå (2016) found that age plays a part in online and offline actions, as late adolescents used online participation as the gateway to offline action, whereas young adults experienced the opposite effect. Bakker and de Vreese (2011) likewise contended through their research findings on young consumers’ political participation that “‘being connected’ online is positively related to both on and offline forms of participation” as several positive associations were found linking the use of the Internet and both online and traditional forms of political participation, thus indicating that “online activities may be equally important measures in research on younger people’s participatory behavior” (p. 465).

Given Harlow and Harp's research, it would appear that from the consumer perspective, the greatest chance of success for activists in part the strategic utilization of both online and offline action. This proposition is supported by Castells' (2015) assertion that the occupying of space both online and offline is critical to achieving social change, as shown in activist contexts such as the Egyptian Revolution where individuals gathered both through online platforms and offline in public spaces (e.g., mosques, public squares, streets), which "all contributed to the spontaneous, largely leaderless, multimodal networked" (p. 57) and demonstrated the power of the networks. Acting both online and offline is most likely derived from the practical understanding of the benefits and drawbacks associated with online and offline activism, and that engaging in action in both arenas allows for a complementary and amplificatory power that mitigates the negative aspects and takes advantage of the positive characteristics related to action in front of and away from a screen, as well as creating Castells' (2015) autonomous spaces of communication. Furthermore, engaging in offline action via public spaces in particular can be of value to activist efforts by allowing the media to record and report the protests, which further enables mass communication to a broader audience and public in general (Castells 2015). An interesting observation from Castells' investigations into the Occupy Wall Street movement was that "Internet social networks mobilized enough support for people to come together and occupy public space, territorializing their protest" and that "once the camps were organized, they established their presence as specific occupations on the Internet" (pgs. 176-177) by setting up websites or Facebook pages. This indicates that a potentially hybrid, dynamic interaction between online and offline spaces can exist, in which there could be a cyclical, dependent influence of the development of online and offline actions based on one another.

What is yet to be addressed in extant research, however, is the extent to which collectives who congregate and mobilize through online platforms pursue action both behind and outside of the screen. Do consumer collectives differentially utilize and encourage their members to perform actions both online and offline? Is there a distinction between the tactics chosen and the method through which the tactics will be deployed, based on the collective and its nature?

### **Cautionary Warnings**

Though this chapter has thus far focused on the positive aspects that the Internet provides activists to engage in their practices and actions, a discussion on the power of the Web would be incomplete without first a cautionary warning: all that shimmers is not necessarily gold – or at least 24 karat gold. While the Internet has been shown to indeed be a useful resource and facilitative tool for activists, there are factors that may also dampen the efficacy of the Web for activists. In particular, while information can and does spread quickly, it can be riddled with authentication problems, in terms of its credibility, authorship, and source materials (Gurak and Logie 2003). Essentially, an elaborate game of “Telephone” (a children’s game which demonstrates the problems associated with message distortion) can occur online when individuals talk and share information without verifying the veracity and source of the intel. The result can be unfounded opinions, inflammatory rumors, and premature, ill-advised action.

A second concern with over-praising the advantages of the Internet is that weak(er) ties may be said to be formed online through social networks that undermines sustained collective action (Van Laer and Van Aelst 2010), because they are not reinforced face-to-face, may in fact impede the formation of a collective identity, which, as discussed in the previous chapter, is presumed to be a necessity for social movements. The issue of weaker ties is particularly problematic in riskier activist efforts, as McAdam (1988) found that participants in the Freedom

Summer campaign of 1964 stayed when they exhibited and had strong ties to the movement; with this said, given the relative anonymity and minimal personal repercussions for activism enacted behind the screen, it is possible that the strength of relationship ties may not in fact be a significant contributing factor to the performance of activism by consumer collective online. Furthermore, Granovetter (1973) argued that weak ties may yet prove fruitful, particularly by enabling the spread of information between groups, and can lead to integration in communities. Thus, are the supposedly weak ties that may be generated through online communication platforms a hindrance to collective action and the activist performances by collectives?

Ayers (2003) drew attention to the possibility and theoretical snag of weaker ties formed through online mediums in his comparative case study of an online and offline feminist group, as the online group did not coalesce in a way that the offline group did, which enabled the achievement of desired goals for the offline group. Ayers concluded that online collective identity work is hindered to a degree because of the distance between group members, but *not impossible*, and called for subsequent research to find out whether other online-generated groups are more or less successful at developing a collective identity. Soon and Cho (2014) likewise found that political bloggers in Singapore who belonged to online-based groups did in fact share strong ties and continued their communication post-campaign, though the bloggers studied who belongs to offline-based organizations exhibited greater social influence and collectiveness with one another.

Thus, the issue of collective identity and strength of ties to the collective overall within consumer activist groups is at best complicated, and points towards questions that have yet to be addressed in current research: how do online collectives differ in terms of their collective identity, and if there is indeed a distinction in the strength of the collective identity and ties that

bind the consumers therein, how does this impact their performance of activism via their tactics chosen, creative work, recruitment efforts, and so on? As Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) argued, the development of a collective identity is a necessary component for motivating individual consumers to action, in spite of the fact that not all may members assume and identify with the collective's identity, thereby indicating the potential for some community identities to be less powerful and influential among a collective. Thus, does the strength and centrality of a collective identity and the commitment to the collective by individual consumers impact the evolution and direction of the collective's actions and tactics when acting in an activist capacity? These question will be addressed subsequently in this dissertation.

A third sticking point amongst researchers investigating cyberactivism is a problem that arises in relation to the low obligations and ease of participation that is apparent in cyberprotests and actions (Maireder and Schwarzenegger 2012): what can actually be construed as activism online— a tweet, a post, signing an online protest? At what point does an individual go from being just a frustrated consumer to an activist? Are they actually part of a collective when they are simply employing the same hashtag and engaging in conversation surrounding a hot topic issue? The issue of placing boundaries around what is and what is not counted as online activism difficult question to address (McCaughey and Ayers 2003), particularly given the low barriers to participation and communication in online platforms, as well as the fluidity and weak(er) ties of online relationships. However, my perspective on the issue of defining online activism will hearken back to the definition of consumer activism discussed in this dissertation. When consumers knowingly and proactively take action – whether big or small, tweet or letter-writing - to address something undesirable in the market against identified adversary, then the resulting actions should be counted as a form of activism.

Fourth, an important consideration to note is the amount of time, attention, and specialized technological knowledge that may be required to make online activist actions effective (Lebert 2003). Though considerable time and skills are likewise needed for offline actions to occur, and the question of whether collectives will engage in primarily online or a hybrid of online/offline activities remains, it is important to remember that the ease of use for engaging in cyberactivism does not negate the reality that more prominent participation will require an investment of one's time and abilities in order to positively contribute to a collective's tactics.

### **Insights of Contemporary Cyberactivism**

Up to this point, we have analyzed the value and role that the Internet and social media platforms created and used therein have played in the rise of cyberactivism, in addition to the potential cautionary issues to be aware of as the Internet is used to achieve activist ends. This story, however, would be incomplete without examining what researchers have proposed and found in relation to the evolution and state of cyberactivism in contemporary society, particularly the implications and practice of it within the marketing realm.

Cyberactivism, much like the Internet itself, has evolved over time – a contention central to Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia's (2014) analysis and arguments used to understand contemporary activism as it occurs online. Termed "Cyberactivism 2.0," Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia proposed that activism and specific components associated with activist performances, such as recruitment, flow of information, and interaction, have shifted from offline forms of activism to Cyberactivism 1.0 to the current state of Cyberactivism 2.0. Cyberactivism, in comparison to previous "forms" of activism, is characterized by a broader reach of the activists. The global nature of communication and interaction enabled by current



internet communication technologies reduces borders such that there are little to no barriers to action which would constrain actors joining in the fight. Ideas and overall viral impact of cyberactivists was likewise said to greater in via Cyberactivism 2.0. The diffusion of ideas was found to occur primarily through websites, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, in comparison to more traditional media and websites that were utilized in Cyberactivist 1.0 efforts – thus enabling access to a collective’s efforts to the broader public. Furthermore, the organization of these collectives was argued to be more horizontal, independent and self-organized, rather than exhibiting more centralized leadership and dependent organizational structures that offline activism and Cyberactivism showed.

Within the activist performances, Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia found that Cyberactivism 2.0 is further distinguished by instant updates to content and a constant flow of data and information to concerned actors. Recruitment was shown to be permanently online, with engagement likewise being online, instant, and permanent. As the authors argued, “in a traditional social protest, the interaction ends on the streets and after meetings,” whereas “Cyberactivism 1.0 increases the flow of information using email and allows for exchanges using this technology, along with websites to present claims,” and that by contrast, “Cyberactivism 2.0 allows regular participation without time or place restrictions and increases the different levels of participation and engagement, allowing an individual to support the protest with a simple link to others” (p. 368). Likewise, rather than a more 50-50 split between online and offline actions found in Cyberactivism 1.0, current cyberactivists exhibited more online than offline interactions. Thus, we can see that nature and performances of contemporary activism appear to be influenced by the adoption and utilization of more advanced Internet communication

technologies, and that cyberactivism in practice is evolving as consumers take advantage of available technologies for their goal attainment.

Not only are elements that comprise what we consider to be cyberactivism shifting over time in their organization and enactment, but overall the style of activism that is emerging as a result of the convergence of political, cultural, and online realms is distinct –which Jenkins (2016) considered to be a more playful style that taps into cultural symbols and references that will appeal to and be understood by not only the specific groups of individuals, but to the larger public. These actions create what Jenkins referred to as “participatory politics” where “that point where participatory culture meets political and civic participation, where political change is promoted through social and cultural mechanisms rather than through established political institutions, and where citizens see themselves as capable of expressing their political concerns – often through the production and circulation of media” (p. 2), indicating that creating and diffusing consumer-generated content is becoming a key part to contemporary activism and participation. It is because of this transmedia activism, defined as “a framework that creates social impact by using storytelling by a number of authors who share assets and create content for distribution across multiple forms of media to influence social action” (Srivastava n.d.) that Jenkins and his fellow authors view the media to be a part of social movement formation, helping to “cement bonds within an emerging social movements” and “creating a context for shared identities or mythologies which...enables participants to act collectively to achieve their social agenda” (pgs. 25-26). As a consequence, Jenkins et al (2016) contended that networks of individuals play a central role in educating newcomers on engagement and participative actions, connecting interests to political engagement, motivating action, and maintaining continued involvement of existing members. Overall, it would appear that cyberactivism and the tactics

used by those considered to be “activists” are transcending political, social, media, and popular culture institutional boundaries to gain awareness of, resonance with, and potential participation among a broader group of individuals, and that the development of content and media across platforms as political engagement acts to further solidify the bonds formed through networks.

With that said, cautionary warnings continue to abound in examining the contemporary environment of cyberactivism, particularly given the increased exposure and vulnerability that online technologies exhibit as potential supporters, haters, and overall unintended audiences can access a collective’s content and utilize it for their own purposes and means. Furthermore, Jenkins (2016) asserted that transmedia activism and mobilization is unstable and fluid, as groups shift and respond to changing conditions and differential access to media tools and technologies.

It is important to not only recognize the state of cyberactivism as it is occurring today, but also to recognize that the culture of cyberactivism that is generated by the proliferation and global reach of online activists likewise plays a part in networked social movements and the might and power exhibited by these collectives. With regards to the Tunisian rebellion, Castells (2015) suggested that one of the contributing factors to understanding why the Tunisian rebellion was instrumental in ushering in a new form of networked social movement in the Arab World was the fact that Tunisia not only had a high rate of diffusion of Internet use, but that there was a strong cyberactivism culture that had continually critiqued the political regime for more than decade, in which individuals had published their feelings of outrage towards the inequality and injustices experienced. As Castells said, “the pre-condition for the revolts was the existence of an Internet culture, made up of bloggers, social networks, and cyberactivism” (p. 27), indicating that cyberactivist actions over time bleed into creating an overall culture that can not only facilitate,

but contribute to setting an advantageous forum and opportunity for future activist efforts. What researchers, practitioners, and lay users are observing regarding cyberactivism today may therefore be simply a precursor to subsequent activist work as cyberactivism and the performances exhibited attain further reach and impact both online and in the physical world.

Rauschnabel, Kammerlander, and Ivens (2016) recently published work further illuminates the increasingly public role that cyberactivism is playing in the contemporary market realm with their theorization and findings relating to what the authors term “Collaborative Brand Attacks”, or CBAs, which are also referred to as Online Firestorms. Defining CBAs as “joint, event-induced, dynamic, and public offenses from a large number of Internet users via social media platforms on a brand that are aimed to harm it and/or to force it to change its behavior” (p. 381), CBAs were discussed as having increased substantially in recent years given the increased traffic online, generating significantly problems for organizations as negative user-generated content and discourse is spread both online and offline. Despite the increasingly prevalence of these attacks online, Rauschnabel and his colleagues contended that academic work aimed at disentangling the tangled web of CBAs remains relatively scant and lacking understanding of “when and how such online attacks occur and under which conditions they are amplified or mitigated,” (p. 382) and as such, addressed this oversight by developing a theoretical model of CBAs that examined the triggers, amplifiers, and reaction strategies of firms to CBAs.

Within this model, three factors were demonstrated as triggers to the rise of a CBA, specifically the unethical behavior of an organization, problems in the core business (e.g., quality problems and problems in customer service), and communication issues, whether intransparent communication of company decisions or unprofessional behaviors therein. Further, their model proposed that the lack of fast and appropriate reaction by the target, unfair use of the brand’s

power, triggers being spread by influential, third-party organizations such as the media or informal interest groups, and the generation of appealing trigger-related content to be shared will be amplifying factors that strengthen a CBA's, whereas these factors are considered to be of lesser importance for traditional offline brand crises. Rauschanbel et al's research likewise demonstrated that most CBAs start on a brand's social media platform, whereas "only a few cases initially emerged on external platforms, such as a YouTube channel unrelated to the brand and later emerged to other social media platforms" (p. 391), indicating that the use of online platforms to engage in CBAs may be distinct from other activist work performed by consumer collectives.

This research into collaborative brand attacks echoes and aligns with the line of inquiry taken within this dissertation work, in that Rauschnabel, Kammerlander, and Ivens opened up the theoretical field of contemporary cyberactivism to investigate a distinct form of attacks that consumers en masse appear to be waging against organizations via social media platforms. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, collectives that engage in CBAs are viewed as distinct from other collectives who existed prior to central crisis at hand, and thus Rauschnabel et al's work provides important supporting theoretical and empirical findings that demonstrates not only the existence of, but the impact and complexity of CBAs as they occur in the marketplace. Additionally, by finding via their cases that CBAs typically start on the target brand's or company's social media platforms and rarely are generated on external platforms, Rauschnabel and his fellow researchers highlight the possible distinction that collectives who emerge solely to address a market grievance may in fact exhibit boundaries with their technological platform selection and usage that perhaps other collectives may not experience – a consideration that merits further inquiry.

## **So What?**

Through the development of this chapter's discussion, we have focused on identifying and analyzing why the Internet, and in particular, social media platforms, have become part of the activist repertoire of action in contemporary society and provide a platform for collective action that directly attacks organizational problems or grievances (Rauschnabel et al 2016). Summarizing the key insights leads us to establish a basic principle that the Internet has an enabling power for activists, which in turn engenders frequent and ready use of the Internet and its various platforms for achieving activist goals. Using online communication tools enables: (1) enhanced mobilization, organization, and efforts that are timely and more cost-efficient, (2) activists to become more informed and savvy to institutionalized forms of protest, (3) mass communication efforts that impact mobilization and recruitment efforts, legitimization of a group in public discourse, and the development of connections that support and facilitate a group's success, and (4) a supplement to offline action which can ultimately influence the potential for success. Furthermore, by identifying and analyzing recent insights into contemporary activism as it occurs online, we have seen that cyberactivism is itself evolving in relation to the development and adoption of new technologies and platforms by consumers, and that the power of cyberactivism may grow as consumers utilize symbols, discourses, and interests from popular culture and other institutional fields to give meaning to their fights, as well as the development and proliferation of a cyberactivist culture overall. This is not to say that the application and utilization of online platforms is not problem-free for activists. In addition to the cautionary warnings discussed above, the availability of and access to alternative viewpoints both within and external to a collective that online platforms provide may present potential opportunities for conflict – cognitive, ideological, or personal – for individuals and the collective. In a similar vein, the proliferation of online “distractions” and opportunities for exploring diverse interests,

such as new apps, websites, and entertainment options, can likewise be considered to dampen the positives of online platforms for activist purposes.

With that said, we can therefore see that the Internet seems to be playing a critical and crucial role as a resource in the evolution of activism as it is being enacted by consumers in a variety of institutional fields within modern society, and in particular, the market space. This point provides insight as to why this research draws on sites of consumer activism in which consumers primarily gather online – with the distinction that action is not only limited to just what occurs on online platforms but may also include offline tactics and behaviors. As has been indicated throughout this chapter, there are unanswered questions that have yet to be addressed in extant research – questions that are of particular importance to marketers and marketing researchers alike as consumers band together using online technologies to address marketplace concerns and achieve their strategic purposes.

First, although it appears that online platforms contribute activists' success in their collective efforts by acting as a resource and venue that provides greater access to one another and facilitating faster, easier forms of communication and by extension, coordination abilities, are technological platforms utilized in distinct and innovative ways as activists not only communicate but enact certain initiatives through online mediums? Or do some collectives rely on existing platforms as merely the facilitators to communicate as they are primarily intended to be used? Furthermore, do some consumer collectives appear to constrain their activities to certain de facto gathering platforms (e.g., Twitter and Facebook) or do some collectives expand their online presence by creating their own platforms and integrating among the various venues for engagement? Is there also variation in terms of the online and offline repertoires of action, in that some collectives may use approaches from both the real and virtual worlds, whereas others

may stick to primarily online forms of protest, given the advantages it affords over offline tactics?

Second, given that online platforms appear to facilitate forming connections not only with other consumers, but with potential allies and sympathizers, how are consumer activist groups exploring and developing these potential alliance formation opportunities through online mediums, and do consumer collectives do so differentially? By extension, how are the potential ally partners responding to and engaging with the collectives? Is there a difference in terms of alliance formation tactics used by collectives, depending on the nature of the collective?

Third, already posed in this chapter, what is the role and influence of collective cumulative resistance in a group's decisions regarding their tactics online- and by extension, offline? At present, the role of historical, codified knowledge seems to be underdeveloped in activist literature, with the exception of Earl and Kimport's (2009) study on the diffusion of protest tactics among online fan collectives. Through their research, Earl and Kimport found that institutional practices of protest are transcending political boundaries and being adopted for non-political sites and suggested that an outcome of social movements is the diffusion of tactics through other institutional fields, a phenomena which is being propagated and facilitated by online activist efforts. Thus, if we accept that successful protest tactics and methods are becoming codified through online communication tools and are indeed spreading to activist sites beyond the political arena, the question remains as to what influence cumulative resistance knowledge yields within a collective and the direction of their tactical choices. Does cumulative resistance knowledge enact a structuring force within a community as they develop their strategic decisions and tactical direction, and if so, in what way? Earl and Kimport (2009) limited their study to the use and diffusion of traditional tactics, without acknowledging the



possibility of collectives adopting and subsequently adapting institutional tactics in creative, unique-to-the-collective types of ways. Does knowledge of successful tactics constrain collectives to stick with institutionalized forms of protest or does it act as a force for creative, personalized (to the collective) evolution of institutionalized tactics? Is there a difference between collectives in relation to their original founding purpose and leadership structure that may influence this potential factor in developing specific activist tactics?

Additionally, while the relationships structure of the collective is also proposed to play a part in the development of and enactment of activist behavioral manifestations, the diverse nature of collectives found online creates problems for marketers and researchers alike as both parties grapple with understanding how activism changes from collective to collective and the forces that underpin observed differences. As stated in this chapter, social media platforms connect individuals and enables consumers to form collectives and networks that can be mobilized to attack market adversaries. However, not all collectives are created equal, and not all social movements and the associated actions are structured in the same way (Diani 2003). As such, let us now turn to the behavioral tactics of consumer activists as they form their coalitions and generate their activist plan of attack.

## CHAPTER 4: THE ART OF CAMPAIGNING

Collective consumer activism, as has been shown theoretically, centers on collectives of individuals who gather, challenge, and attempt to right what they perceive to be market wrongs or injustices through directed, strategic action. Some consumer collectives are oriented towards achieving long-term, broader market change, such as the Fatshionistas discussed in Scaraboto and Fischer's (2013) work. These collectives would appear to parallel and represent social movements as discussed in Chapter 2, as their individual and collective efforts are more longitudinal in their time commitments, more intensive in their member commitments, and employ a variety of tactics and logics to achieve their market-level goals over the extended period of time. In order to accomplish this, they might design and enact shorter-term campaigns that aim to achieve successive goals that will ultimately lead to the realization of the broader goals within the market overall.

This type of activism as a means for ultimately realizing system and field-wide goals, which I will term as "Consumer Activist Movements", is distinct from other manifestations of activism in the marketplace. Consumer collectives may engage in more focused activist efforts against a direct, identified market foe to achieve a more narrowly defined goal, such as the reversal of a company decision. These consumer activist sites are typified by their specially organized and designed actions that coalesce into campaigns that aim to achieve goals that likely benefit a smaller subset of consumers, and occur over a relatively a shorter time frame. The time commitment, projected longevity, and required level of participation may be less burdensome on the members in comparison to the Consumer Activist Movements; however, these microbursts of activist activity within consumer groups, whether in pre-existing brand/fan communities or emergent protest groups, are nevertheless an interesting theoretical and empirical area of

consumer behavior that warrants attention and discussion. Not only do consumer campaigns represent sites of visible resistance, but these campaigns also represent a nexus of pertinent consumer considerations: individual expression (Kozinets and Handelman 1998) market relationships and their evolution, shifting and contentious power dynamics between consumer-producers, market development overall, adoption and appropriation of market and adjacent field logics by consumers to strategically achieve their goals (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013), and so on. It is also worth investigating consumer collectives' adaptation, in addition to adoption, of tools from adjacent fields of activism to be more effective within the market context and to reflect the identity and personality of the collective itself. This chapter therefore discusses the specific form of activism, the consumer campaign, the tools and tactics being used by consumers to achieve their activist goals, and insights from marketing and consumer research derived therein. I then argue for the inclusion of fan campaigns within the broader consumer activism literature given the corollary nature of fan communities to brand communities.

### **Consumer Campaigns 101**

Campaigns are a concentrated form of activism where a breach between consumers and producers has motivated consumers to take action in the marketplace against a particular adversarial force via strategic protest tactics. Consumer campaigns represent activism in action in ways that mirror campaigns enacted in both the marketplace and adjacent fields, such as politics. Common elements of campaigns, regardless of the field in which one occurs, include the use of specific, strategically selected and designed tactics by a particular person or group to achieve specific goals usually during a specific time period, with a key component being specificity. A campaign from a marketing perspective therefore reflects a coordinated, strategic effort by an organization or marketing entity to promote a product, service, or brand to a target

audience through the use of a variety of mediums. These campaigns are usually of a shorter time duration to avoid oversaturation and consumer adaption to the promotions. Political campaigns likewise represent a directed form of action tailored to achieving desired objectives within the political realm, including lobbying campaigns, election campaigns, and so on. Consumer activist campaigns are organized efforts by a collective of consumers centered on communicating a specific message to a specific target audience or company that represents a grievance or complaint to be remedied, using specific methods of protest and resistance in order to achieve the desired objectives of the campaign in the market. It is important to note that the institutional boundaries between campaigns occurring within these above-identified fields may in fact be fluid and overlap with one another. For example, individual motivation to join a political campaign and a consumer activist campaign may well be the same, particularly when the overarching goals of the specific campaigns across the fields align as political and market grievances intersect or are at least affiliated in certain situations or contexts. The distinction of the different campaigns therefore lies within the space that change is desired, the adversary/opponent resides, and action is directed.

Permeating tactical decisions across activist-oriented campaigns is the inclusion and use of (extra)-institutional tactics of protest. Institutional tactics represent activities used to subvert and challenge dominant forces that both operate outside of traditional, hegemonic processes and inputs (McAdam 1982) and transcend specific fields, logics, and discourses. Behaviors such as letter writing, protests, picketing, sabotage/vandalism, sit-ins, demonstrations, and so on, have become part of the activist canon and strategy of protest, guiding would-be activists in the development of their campaign efforts across time and specific conflicts. Institutional tactics can be used to negatively impact the offending party directly through destruction of property,

disrupting normal operations and routines (King 2011; Cress and Snow 2000; Gamson 1990; Piven and Cloward 1977; Rojas 2006), inflicting costs on the organizations (Luders 2006), or heightening public awareness and criticism (King 2008). Institutional tactics can also be instrumental in damaging an adversarial opponent's reputation with other industry players, particularly when such actions raise media awareness and commentary in the general public (King 2008).

Earl and Kimport (2009) argued that practices and tactics of activists traditionally manifested in political and social resistance are diffusing across institutionalized field lines to infiltrate activist action within the fan activist realm. Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) likewise found evidence of this diffusion as activist-minded consumers borrowed and adopted logics from adjacent fields, such as the Civil Rights Movement, to give meaning to and legitimize their site of contention – indicating that the logics witnessed in political struggles are being appropriated by consumers within areas of market battles. The tools and strategies used by consumers to fight the good fight against their identified market foe are therefore being influenced by exposure to and knowledge of successful campaigning evidenced in other areas of society as well as in the market – a phenomenon has been shown in the previous chapter to be amplified by the Internet. However, unanswered questions remain as to the impact of consumer knowledge relating to past successes of institutional tactics within the marketplace on subsequent tactical decisions in consumer activist campaigns, as well as whether consumers not only adopt, but adapt institutional tactics to the marketplace context as they engage in their activist-oriented behaviors. Are certain collectives likely to adapt institutional tactics of protest more so to fit the context of their particular fight, such as the collective itself and the market space, than others?

In addition to the diffusion and adoption of activist tactics and strategies, coordinated campaign actions are driven by their ultimate goals in the selection and utilization of possible tools from the array of protest tactics available. Den Hond and De Bakker (2007), in their typology of activist tactics between social movement organizations and firms, found that the intended outcome of collective activist efforts directly correlated with the use of specific tactics. Specifically, they proposed desired outcomes differed based on two dimensions that led to the adoption of specific tactics: whether the desired outcome was a material or symbolic outcome, and whether the outcome is intended to damage or reward (gain) an organization. Thus, when the intended outcome is material damage, consumers likely would use boycotts, a mass participatory form of action, or more intensively participative forms of action that relied on an elite few, such as sabotage, hacktivism, or lawsuits. Conversely, when material gain was the desired outcome, consumers likely used boycotts or cooperation. Symbolic damage moves from inflicting real damage on a company and their operations to harming them in ways more subtle that nonetheless harm companies, likely through tarnished reputations: writing letters, petitions, rallies, generating negative publicity, and so on. Finally, when the goal is symbolic gain, Den Hond and De Bakker suggested that consumers will voluntarily act (likely in a form of co-creation or co-production) or work to generate positive publicity.

In summary, consumer campaigns and the tactics used therein to achieve the desired objectives vary as institutional tactics are adopted and diffused into the market, in addition to the desired outcome of the collective's activist agenda. In a similar vein, consumer campaigns have been shown to arise both within pre-existing communities (e.g., fans' Star Trek cancellation campaign) who originally organized as a community to share experiences with a brand/product/cultural text and collectives that originate as advocates for a particular campaign

cause(s) organize and act (e.g., the anti-Nike collective studied in Kozinets and Handelman 2004). By acknowledging that campaigns can and do occur in different types of collectives, with differing purposes and by extension, distinct histories and practices within the collectives, I echo the question posed in the previous chapters: what is the impact on the performance of activism when consumer collectives differ in terms of their nature, particularly when their very identity and purpose for coming into existence are so widely diverse? I will yet again return to this question in this work. However, for the time being, let us analyze the popular methods of protest being used by consumers in their campaigning efforts and the theoretical insights generated from extant empirical investigations into these campaign sites: boycotts, buycotts, letter-writing, and petitioning.

### **Protesting the Power: Popular Tactics in Consumer Activist Campaigns**

#### *Boycotts and Buycotts*

Boycotts are defined as “an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace” (Friedman 1985, p. 97) and have been used by consumers for a number of years to express dissatisfaction with companies (Zack 1991). Boycotts, termed consumption resistance in this dissertation as consumers wield their consumption power in persuasive bids against a company or companies, are forms of protest used to fight for a change in the targeted company’s marketing mix or within the entire market overall (Garrett 1987; Friedman 1991). Participation in a boycott campaign requires sustained action by individuals in support of the cause, increasing the obligations associated with membership in groups that boycott. This manifestation of activism is considered to be typically triggered by ethical concerns associated with a company’s products or practices (Yuksel and Mryteza 2008), or by a corporate act considered egregious by

consumers (John and Klein 2003; Braunsberger and Buckler 2011). By withdrawing their participation in market exchanges, consumers attempt to materially injure and inflict monetary damage on companies to punish the target companies for their unethical or egregious decisions, which can likewise lead to compromised reputations within cultural and market discourse as a boycott gains awareness among the general public. As such, the use of boycotts by consumer collectives can be considered to be a formidable threat to companies (John and Klein 2003; King 2008).

Though considered to be a collective effort, boycotts are nevertheless highly individualized. First, boycotts reflect individual expressions of morality and moral self-realization (Kozinets and Handelman 1998; Braunsberger and Buckler 2011) and individual motivations, such as the desire to make a difference (Klein, Smith and John 2004) or concerns and trust regarding management (Hoffman and Müller 2009). Individual participation within a boycott is also influenced by consumers' individual perceptions of the boycott's likelihood of success and their personal susceptibility to normative social influences (Sen, Gurhan-Canli, and Morwitz 2001). Second, researchers have also analyzed the decision-making process consumer collectives have engaged in when determining whether to boycott. Conceptualized as cost-benefit analysis, consumers individually weigh the potential costs against gains to be achieved through a boycott (John and Klein 2003), costs which include the personal inconvenience of constrained consumption (Klein et al 2004) or the possible inconvenience caused in the event of lacking an available and desired substitute (Sen et al 2001).

The choice to boycott is intended to maximize the negative repercussions for corporate violations by hitting the company where it hurts: the bottom line. However, boycotts are not as successful as some might think, as Friedman (1985) found that only a quarter of all publicized



boycotts were successful in achieving company concessions. Corporate responses to boycotts have been shown to be mediated by two key variables: media attention on the boycott and the company's reputation prior to the boycott commencing (King 2008). If a company has experienced a decline in their reputation prior to boycotts, King found that companies are more likely concede, probably in an effort to minimize the negative impact a boycott could and would cause. Thus we can see that while boycotts have been and continue to be popular in contemporary market struggles, success is anything but guaranteed.

Boycotts, on the other hand, represent consumer campaign efforts directed at rewarding companies for their favorable practices and market offerings (Friedman 1996). Drawing on Friedman's conceptualization of boycotts, buycotts are fundamentally distinct depending on whether they are calls to boycott or actual buycotts. Friedman suggested that calls for buycotts occur when an individual or organizations either directly or indirectly appeal to the public through mass media to boycott. Conversely, actual buycotts represent what is discussed in this dissertation: action taken by a collective of individuals to achieve a desired end, and this is accomplished through coordinated buycotting campaigns. Consumers undertaking a buycott can reward an actual company for their behavior or a surrogate company in cases where the desired target is inaccessible. Targets of buycotts can be single targets or multiple targets, though single target buycotts are less frequently occurring.

In comparing boycotts and buycotts, Neilson (2010) argued that boycotts commonly target a single organization, whereas buycotts are often enacted to benefit multiple targets, supporting Friedman's (1996) earlier assertion. She also posited that personal boycotts are likely the favored tactic by activist groups who lean towards traditional protest strategies, a fact which may appeal to certain consumers versus others. From her research, she found that women and

individuals who are more trusting, altruistic, and volunteer more frequently are more likely to boycott than boycott – an interesting empirical insight that lends weight to the idea that chosen tactics among collectives influenced by a variety of factors: their desired end goal, the composition of the group based on individual orientations and characteristics, and, perhaps, the nature and history of the collective, whether an emergent congregation of protesters or pre-existing community.

### *Letter-Writing and Petitioning*

In comparison to boycotts and buycotts, letter writing and petitioning campaigns desire to inflict symbolic damage on companies (Den Hond and De Bakker 2007) and do so when large number of consumers participate. Letter-writing campaigns seek to have consumers of the collective send personal letters (form letters are strongly discouraged) to the intended target, stating the point of contention and wishes of the consumers. Likewise, petitioning is a time-honored tradition of protest, in which mass dissatisfaction and resistance takes the form of signatures that support an edict or call raised by an individual or collective. The time commitment of participation for consumers is more limited than in boycotts or buycotts, possibly leading to higher participation among consumers overall. Members of collectives who engage in campaigns that use letter writing and petitioning need only sign their name to the named petition or to send a single letter in order to be considered “mobilized.” However, it is possible and happens that consumers, when exceedingly passionate about a campaign cause, may send multiple letters to the intended target.

Less empirical research, particularly within business literature, has been devoted to understanding and investigating letter writing and petitioning behaviors. This may be in part due to the difficulty in ascertaining company responses to private letters. Regardless, letter writing

and petitioning does occur and is often a cornerstone of consumer, and especially fan, campaigns, including the “Star Trek” and “Cagney and Lacey” cancellation campaigns. An interesting observation of letter writing campaigns is instruction by campaign leaders to the masses in how to write an effective letter. For example, Bjo Trimble’s “Do’s and Don’ts of Letter Writing ([http://www.bringbackkirk.com/bjo\\_tips.html](http://www.bringbackkirk.com/bjo_tips.html)), was written and disseminated among fans to teach perhaps the newer campaigners the protocols and strategies that appear to be more effective in generating a desirable company response and likely to structure a campaign overall that could lead to positive public perceptions. As Jenkins (2012a) noted, Trimble’s suggestions still inform “save our show” campaigns today – indicating that historical precedence can play a structuring role in contemporary campaigns as it is passed from consumer groups.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Internet has transformed traditional tactics of protest as online equivalents have emerged (Postmes and Brunsting 2002). This is especially apparent for letter writing and petitioning, as online sites exist that facilitate and promote participation in these types of campaigns. Furthermore, with the advent and adoption of social media sites, letter writing has evolved from sending traditional, physical letters, though campaigns still recommend sending actual letters to the target company; this may be because conventional wisdom suggests that it is harder to ignore a physical letter and that ultimately a letter writing campaign is more impactful when a pile of letters covers executives’ desks. With that said, letter writing and the principle behind it has transformed online, as consumers express their individual opinions and feelings towards companies via Tweets, Facebook posts, blog and forum comments, and so on. What we are left asking after analyzing each of these popular, institutional tactics is whether collectives utilize these tactics in similar ways, or if there is a

differential deployment and use of these tactics based on a collective's nature, such as their identity.

### **Fan Activism: An Underappreciated Niche of Consumer Activism and Campaigning**

A marginalized form of consumer activism and consumption overall that appears to not be significantly addressed in consumer and market research are fan campaigns. Fan activism has been defined as “forms of civic engagement and political participation that emerge from within the fan culture itself, often in response to the shared interests of fans, often conducted through the infrastructure of existing fan practices and relationships, and often framed through metaphors drawn from popular and participatory culture” (Jenkins 2012a, 1.8), in which the activist goals and action are “not about the mix between political concerns and culture, but rather action that looks like political activism but is used towards nonpolitical ends (Earl and Kimport 2009, p. 221). Fan activists typically focus their efforts on program-related issues, ranging from program outcomes (Scardaville 2005) to specific themes desired to be portrayed in the program's content (Ross 2008). However, as Brough and Shresthova (2012) note, fan activism is not limited to a collective's focus program/narrative, as “fan groups may organize around real-world issues through extended engagement with and appropriate of popular culture content,” which means that “fan activism can thus also be understood as fan-driven efforts to address civic or political issues through engagement with and strategic deployment of popular culture content” (2.3). This further emphasizes the point that political and consumer (or in this case, fan) activism can, and does, intersect in particular contexts and situations. Indeed, as Kligler-Vilenchik (2016) and Jenkins et al (2016) explore, fannish civics (i.e., “participatory political practices that directly build on existing fannish practices, p. 115) and cultural acupuncture practices not only abound

(Jenkins 2012a), but offer “a powerfully resonant means to connect and mobilize young people towards collective concerns” (p. 108).

Research on fandoms has received attention in media and cultural studies (e.g., Tulloch and Jenkins 1995; Sabal 1992; Brower 1992), as well as select consumer research that primarily investigates consumer community behaviors (e.g., Kozinets 1999; Kozinets 2001; Russell and Schau 2014), though inclusion and analysis of fan activism as sites of consumer analysis are by and large not discussed within marketing research. This is an interesting exclusion, given that fans are consumers – albeit consumers of textual narratives and entertainment vehicles who join together based on mutual interests - but an exclusion that may yet reflect broader cultural exclusions and stigmas. Fans congregating together in these fandom groups received their name from the word “fanatic” – a word that likewise evokes a cult-like following of consumers obsessed with the object of their obsession and thereby may be stigmatized in mainstream consumer culture or considered to be merely ‘audiences’ (Jenkins 1992).

Nevertheless, fandoms, or fan communities, are consumer communities built on relationships around cultural texts, genres, or subgenres (Jenkins 2012a), and with other consumers of like minds and interests. While the ideological components of a brand community may be somewhat distinct in a fan community setting, such as the potential lack of a sense of moral responsibility that Muñoz and O’Guinn (2001) proposed in their seminal work on brand communities, fans participating in a particular fandom exhibit a shared consciousness and rituals and traditions that are distinct and unique to its members – points which Jenkins noted in his examination of fans in attendance at Comic Con (2012b). Kligler-Vilenchik, McVeigh-Schultz, Weitbrecht, and Tokuhama (2012) also argued that fan activists rely on community relationships, shared identity, and repeated interactions when engaging in their organized group behaviors,

once again emphasizing the existence and centrality of a shared consciousness and identity among fan group members. Moreover, Scardaville (2005) found that perceptions of fan activist success in part related to the bonds formed between the community during the activist campaign, thus indicating the importance of the social relationships that develop and are maintain as consumers fight together to achieve their common goal(s),

If we therefore accept that fandoms are at their core consumer communities, then their activist efforts should be researched in tandem with traditional brand-centered communities' activist manifestations, thereby allowing for a genesis of understanding that transcends the type of community to allow for a holistic investigation of consumer community activism overall. Furthermore, they are likely a useful site for examining the effects of mobilization and activism within pre-existing communities, given that activist efforts can and do arise within pre-existing communities in response to market changes.

Providing further evidence for the inclusion of fan activism studies within marketing literature overall and consumer activism literature specifically, Liesbet van Zoonen (2004) suggested that activism and fandoms are well suited to one another as the behaviors fans engage in within the bounds of the fandom (e.g., strong communal discussions, debates regarding what they would do if the fans had their way) are all the specific "customs that have been laid out as essential for democratic politics: information, discussion and activism" (2004, p. 46). Earl and Kimport (2009) explored this intersection of activism and fandoms, identifying the role of the Internet and diffusion of political and social movement practices to nonpolitical issues as key facilitators in the increasing presence of fan activism.

Furthermore, Earl and Kimport specifically argued for the validity and viability of fan activism studies when exploring consumer-producer power dynamics at play, stating that

“studying fan activism offers one window into the private power dynamics of corporate-civil contests, potentially offering insight into the shifting dynamics between consumers and producers” (p. 239) They further argued that “while it might be tempting to dismiss fan activists as unimportant or irrelevant to the study of contentious action, dismissing favorable corporate reactions to fan activists as simple cooptation risks missing some corporations’ acknowledgment of the changing role and force of consumers,” and that “future research on the reaction of producers to consumer-driven protest could offer an interesting opportunity to study cultural production dynamics that likely lie between what social movement scholars might label accommodation or cooptation” (p. 239). Thus, fandoms and campaigns enacted therein provide an opportunity to study consumer culture and marketplace questions that lie at the heart of contemporary consumption struggles and grievances.

Furthermore, fan campaigning and the specific tactics employed during campaigns have a rich history in consumer pop culture. Campaigns have been waged historically on behalf of shows such as “Star Trek,” “Cagney and Lacey,” “Roswell,” and so on, as fans have lobbied media companies to reverse cancellation decisions in order to protect a beloved product from disappearing from the market and in some cases, motivate changes in the entertainment market system of measurements of success and decision-making policies. These and other fan campaigns have utilized traditional letter-writing and creative petitioning methods, including boycotts (e.g., threatening to and/or actually stopping consumption of a network’s other products), to capture the attention of companies and challenge the unilateral practices and specific decisions of companies in the cancellation of beloved products. By so doing, fan campaigns represent sites where a variety of protest tactics have been used, and in some cases successfully, thereby providing an opportunity to explore the influence of historical precedents,

traditions, and practices that are handed down from fandom to fandom (Jenkins 2012) within subsequent fan campaigns. In summary, I argue that there are rich possibilities for theoretical development of consumer activism by including sites of fan activism, specifically fan campaigns, within this dissertation alongside company-directed consumer campaigns.

### **Moving Forward**

Over the preceding four chapters, questions have been raised from extant theoretical and empirical work on collective consumer activism that have highlighted the potential complexity and areas of interest when examining consumer activism through the lens of the distinct collective forms that exist, particularly online. Before moving on to the original research and findings of this dissertation to address the overarching research questions, we therefore must first dissect the concept of the consumer collective, reviewing in particular research that has undertaken to categorize and understand online consumer collectives. We must also investigate the other relationships that underpin consumer collectives in order to establish the possible influences that engaging in activist behaviors might have on the dynamics within established, originally non-activist-oriented collectives.



## CHAPTER 5: CONSUMER COLLECTIVES & RELATIONSHIPS

Echoing Giesler's (2008) assertion that when marketplace dramas are "reduced to one-sided cultural parasitism, our attention is directed away from the co-evolutionary relationship" (p. 751) between market narratives and institutionalized market structures, when marketplace conflicts are reduced to hero-enemy tales of market rebellion and heroism we miss important collective components of consumer activism. Given that consumer campaigns rely on consumers working together to achieve desired ends, the collectives in which consumers aggregate and enact activist efforts is central to observations of consumer activism. However, certain issues remain a mystery in marketing and consumer research at the nexus of consumer activism and collective organization.

As discussed in the previous chapters, a resounding question remains as to how activism is enacted when collectives differ, particularly given their history and original purpose for coming in to being, leadership, and relationship structure. In addition to this area of inquiry, marketing and consumer researchers have yet to investigate the impact of mobilizing a collective to engage in activist behaviors. In existing consumer communities that are structured and built on relationships in the marketplace yet not oriented towards achieving change within the market, enacting organized plans that protest for and attempt to bring about a market-centered change might impact collective itself. Critical events that threaten a collective have been shown to affect communities as consumers actively attempt to negotiate the threat (Scaraboto, Carter-Schneider and Kedzior 2013) and provide the motivational catalyst for consumers to collectively engage in and perform behaviors in attempts to right a market "wrong" (Muñiz and Schau 2007). By facing these critical junctures through coordinated organization, mobilization, and strategic efforts to

campaign for a particular cause, relationship trajectories change (Russell and Schau 2014) and the course and direction of the collective may therefore shift.

However, we are left wondering how the dynamics and relationships within established consumer groups are transformed by activist performances. In particular, how are consumer relationships, such as the consumer-consumer, consumer-focal marketer, and consumer-product relationships transformed when collectives engage in activist agendas, specifically those collectives whose purpose initially was not activist-oriented change? Are new relationships built through the process of engaging the marketplace in resistant ways, and what purpose do those relationships serve?

Addressing these gaps in the literature and unresolved questions requires a move beyond the cultural and strategic components of consumer activism. Understanding and synthesizing existing research on consumer collectives, with a focus on the relationships and organizational structures, practices, and goals/purposes of consumer collectives, is therefore a necessary final step in setting the stage for empirically investigating what happens when consumer collectives mobilize and become activists.

### **Understanding Marketplace Relationships**

The marketplace is built on relationships of exchange (Bagozzi 1974). By definition, a relationship connotes a connection, association, or involvement. Both interpersonal and brand relationships in the market are characterized by four key conditions beyond mere association or connection (Hinde 1995; Fournier 1998): (1) reciprocity between independently acting parties, (2) purposiveness, in that they contribute to the structuration of meanings in a person's life (Berscheid and Peplau 1983), (3) diversity in form and function, and (4) dynamism, as

relationship exchanges are repeated over time and evolve in response to the interactions between one another and fluctuations in the environment in which they operate.

Market relationships from a consumer-centered perspective may exist between consumers in communities, between consumers and the brands/products that they consume, and between consumers and marketers (McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002). Additionally, relationships exist between companies in the form of company alliances, which are used to build strategic advantages in the market. Each overall type of relationship and individual relationships themselves vary in the levels of reciprocity, purpose(s) served, and dynamism. In order to understand the social complexity of market exchanges, it is therefore necessary to deconstruct and discuss individual types of market relationships and how they operate in the market.

#### *Consumer – Consumer Relationships: Building “Communities”*

Consumers build relationships with one another in the market. Beyond casually making idle chit chat in the Wal-Mart check-out line, consumers interact with one another individually and communally in strategic ways. Consumers disseminate marketing information and opinions to one another through word-of-mouth methods as influenced by consumers’ character narratives, communication forums, communal norms, and the nature of the marketing promotion (Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki and Wilner 2010). Acting as experts or market mavens, certain consumers capture followers who value their market-oriented opinions, recommendations, and information (Feick and Price 1987). One purpose of consumer relationships, particularly within communities, appears to be the sharing of valued information between more knowledgeable consumers to novice consumers – a purpose that is amplified when consumers congregate and communicate online.

Consumers also create more organized communities, networks, and tribes among themselves in which they exchange social, market, and consumption knowledge and experiences (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; McAlexander et al. 2002; Cova, Kozinets, and Shankar 2007). Consumer collectives arise both online and offline among consumers who exhibit similar interests, values, goals, tastes, lifestyles, skills, and consumption preferences (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 2002; Kozinets, Hemetsberger, and Schau 2008; Muñiz and Schau 2005). As Thomas, Price, and Schau (2013) found, heterogeneity does exist within communities, but by depending upon one another for certain resources, continuity amongst collectives can be maintained.

By introducing communal relationships into the consumption experience, consumer groups enhance personal consumption experiences and impact consumer behavior by affecting relationships and identification with a focal brand (Algesheimer, Dholakia, and Hermann 2005), new product adoption (Thompson and Sinha 2008), brand loyalty (Algesheimer et al. 2005; McAlexander et al. 2002; Thompson and Sinha 2008), creative innovation production (Füller, Jawecki, Mülbacher 2007) and personal identity construction (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), among other aspects of consumer behavior. Consumer community activities include relationship-focused practices of recruiting new members, socializing members to the group norms, and building strong relationships with one another (Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould 2009). Consumer collectives also play an important role as consumers experience and manage emergent market concerns and issues. For example, the discontinuation or cancellation of a product/brand/text can be a traumatic, trying experience. Coping with this type of loss through a collective affects the withdrawal process consumers experience (Russell and Schau 2014) and negotiation processes used (Scaraboto, Carter-Schneider, Kedzior 2013). With that said, levels

of participation vary within collectives (Kozinets 1999), with some members assuming specialized roles of leadership or expertise within the communities, whereas others are less involved in contributing to the community, preferring instead to be more of observers than doers.

However, before moving forward in our discussion regarding consumer collectives, and more specifically, communities, it is important to recognize that the term “community” and its application particularly when investigating and analyzing online congregations of consumers is becoming increasingly contested in consumer research. Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) documented and developed the concept of “brand publics” to describe the context in which consumers congregate around a focus brand or product online to form a collective of sorts, and yet little to no meaningful relationships are formed. Brand publics will be discussed subsequently in this section, but it bears notice that though consumers can and do form relationships with one another to support and enhance their consumption experiences in the market, relationships are not always developed even when consumers share similar interests and discuss these interests, particularly online.

Kozinets (2015) further supported this insight by suggesting that “rather than the tight bonds of community, an important form of contact guiding human relations in contemporary society seems to be consociation,” in which consociation reflects the more “commonplace, largely instrumental, and often incidental form of association” revolving around “incidents, events, activities, places, rituals, acts, circumstances, and people” (p. 11). Consocial interactions are therefore based on what is shared, rather than defining identity markers of an individual, and while “important and meaningful in the moment, they are entirely contingent upon our continued involvement in a particular association or activity” (p. 11). Kozinets utilizes this insight to indicate that these consocial interactions generate friendly, but relatively weak social ties that

differentially impact community identity and one's membership with the community, particularly in comparing online communities to those based on more traditional identity markers such as race, ethnicity, and so on.

Furthermore, Zwick and Bradshaw (2016) argued that “online customer and brand communities rarely exist in meaningful ways” (p. 92), particularly given the “uncommitted ‘hit and run’ communication” promoted through social media networks that minimizes collective meaning creation (p. 100) – a proposition supported by Žižek’s (1996; 1997) critical perspective on the decline of symbolic efficiency and the paradoxical complexities of online communication that threatens the formation of an authentic community. Rather than fostering a real bond between consumers, the ease with which consumers can exit interactions negatively impacts the binding power that words would otherwise perform (Dean 2010). Furthermore, the proliferation of information being shared through online means works in contrast to building meaningful bonds as “the huge volume of transmission brings us to a state of ‘informational anorexia,’ where we ingest but reject endless flows of information” – which in turn fails to “provide a basis for collectively shared co-produced meaning” (Zwick and Bradshaw 2016, p. 92).

Yet, Zwick and Bradshaw continue to theorize and argue that while the “real” aspect of online communities is argued as suspect, online communities nevertheless “occupy a central place in the imagination of contemporary marketers” (p. 92) by performing an ideological function for social media marketers as they work to resolve contradictions faced in contemporary marketing. Consequently, though the conceptual usage and popularization of the concept of “community” is being critiqued in recent consumer research, in particular relation to online consumer research and application, consumer interactions online nevertheless exist and can yet perform specific functions for consumers and marketers alike. Thus, I will continue to utilize the

term “community” in this work to signify those collectives under investigation that more saliently and concretely exhibit characteristics of the traditionally and sociologically considered communities prior to their mobilization in activist efforts in comparison to those collectives that are born out of a change-oriented purpose, with the caveat that this term is not without its rightful critics.

### Online Consumer Collective Diversity

Consumer collectives are not homogenous entities with identical relationship structures, interactions, motivations and goals, or practices; rather, consumer collectives exhibit heterogeneity within their communities (Thomas, Price, and Schau 2013), and communities themselves can vary in purpose, participation breadth, and core activities (Kozinets, Hemetsberger, and Schau 2008; Schau et al. 2009). In order to understand the variability of consumer collectives and their innovative practices as observed online, Kozinets, Hemetsberger, and Schau (2008) developed and proposed a classification of online collectives according to their goal orientation and contributor distribution (i.e., high and low). This classification is a key conceptual framework for this dissertation for three reasons. First, understanding how collectives differ, particularly given their goal orientation upon inception of the collective (i.e., their original purpose for existing and influencing collective behaviors), and the effects of this difference on their performances of activism is crucial for furthering the empirical and theoretical work regarding consumer activism in the marketplace. Second, because of the transformative and increasingly central role of the Internet in contemporary consumer activism as discussed in Chapter 3, narrowing our focus of consumer collective diversity and heterogeneity to online collectives is a necessity for developing an understanding of current consumer collective efforts of activism as these consumers gather through the screen. Though Kozinets, Hemetsberger, and

Schau utilize their framework to understand the innovative practices of online collectives, I suggest that their framework nevertheless can be extended to understand consumer collectives overall, particularly activist groups and brand/fan communities that primarily interact with one another online. Third, because their framework incorporates contributor distribution, the different types of collectives that result from their conceptual groupings take into account the likely structure of the collective, which is another key issue to understand when considering the nature of the collective and how it affects activist campaigns.

According to their online creative collective classification, Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau first suggest that groups differ based on their goal orientation. Telo-specific communities aim to achieve particular goals, which in turn drive the specific creative acts that the group engages in. Each activity and decision is geared toward and deliberately chosen to attain the desired end. Activist groups overall may be considered a type of Telo-specific community considering their groups are driven by (a) goal(s). These types of collectives, as we have discussed, exist to challenge something or someone within the marketplace in order to achieve the goals set forth by the collective. Consequently, every practice, decision, and act that activist groups engage in, particularly within consumer campaigns, is tailored to realize the outlined goals.

On the hand, Communo-ludic communities do not structure their communities around specifically determined goals, but rather exist to celebrate and share hobbies, lifestyles, information, and so on. Brand communities (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001) and fan communities may in general be considered Communo-ludic in their goal orientations, suggesting that their purpose for existing, and by extension their practices and activities, is not specifically tailored to achieving direct, actionable goals that are exhibited in Telo-specific, activist groups. Rather, the



collective is focused on the central brand/product/text and expanding their consumption experience by engaging in value-creating practices that these collectives typically demonstrate (Schau et al. 2009). Thus, collectives that arise in the marketplace who align with what has been conceptualized as brand/fan communities likely fall within the Communo-ludic arena rather than the Telo-specific – a distinction that impact the behavioral manifestations and actions of the collectives as these groups are formed and develop and may likewise influence how a Mobilized Community engages in an activist campaign. Thus, it is worth considering the role that the originating goal orientations/purpose of collectives may play in the mobilization and subsequent activist action of brand/fan communities via consumer campaigns, in comparison to collectives that have organized specifically to protest/act in accordance with desired goals.

Looking at the second dimension proposed, Kozinets, Hemetsberger, and Schau suggested that online collectives can be distinguished by the contributor distribution, whether the number of contributors was few (therefore a high concentration) or the number of contributors was higher (and therefore less concentrated). When collectives feature a high number of contributors, the necessary level of participation is distributed amongst the members, thereby lessening the amount required by a single person. Conversely, if the contributor distribution is more concentrated, then a core few members will contribute greatly to the creative efforts. By recognizing this dimension of contributor distribution to distinguish between online collectives, we open the door for investigating the organizational dynamics within diverse collectives as they work to enact their activist goals, as well as the distribution of responsibility and actions among consumer.

From these two dimensions, it was proposed that online creative communities generally fall within one of four categories: Swarms (Communo-ludic, Low Concentration), Mobs

(Communo-ludic, High Concentration), Crowds (Telo-specific, Low Concentration), and Hives (Telo-specific, High Concentration). Utilizing this framework as a foundation, I define one type of consumer activist collective as the “Emergent Crowd,” or consumer collectives that arise online in relation to specific market grievances and aim to achieve their change-oriented goals in relation to the particular grievance by developing and enacting consumer campaigns. Indeed, the “Crowd” type of collective from Kozinets, Hemetsberger and Schau’s framework was described as being “organized, focused, and purposive” that “are centered on the achievement of a particular objective, after which they disband” (p. 345), and examples such as petitioning or boycotting were suggested as fitting activities within this type of collective. This group is therefore driven by their project at hand and seek to achieve their goals by maximizing the participation from a number of contributors. Thus, Emergent Crowds of protestors can be conceptualized as distinct from brand/fan communities who mobilize in reaction to undesirable market events, as Emergent Crowds exist because of an activist-oriented agenda. It is noted that “Emergent Crowds” and this conceptualization aligns with what Rauschnabel et al (2016) termed “Collaborative Brand Attacks,” as these crowds demonstrate and arise to engage in collaborative brand attacking behavior. However, I contend that the collective itself that engages in these behaviors requires its own conceptualization and name to define their nature, not just what they do. Furthermore, by labeling these groups as “Emergent Crowds,” this puts the collective first and foremost at the front of the theoretical work engaged therein, and provides a comparison counterpoint to the “Mobilized Communities” groups that will likewise be studied with regards to their activist performances.

Brand/fan communities align more with the classification of “Swarms” – in that they are Communo-ludic and often feature a high number of contributions, though some collectives may

be more concentrated in the number of contributors. Pre-existing communities that mobilize to engage in specific activist campaigning behaviors will therefore be referred to as “Mobilized Communities” for the duration of this dissertation. These collectives do not originally come into being because of a specific, change-oriented goal to be achieved in the marketplace, but rather is the result of consumers finding and developing relationships with others who share a similar passion or interest with regards to a product, brand, etc. Mobilized Communities, however, engage in activist-related behaviors when an undesirable stimulus or change in the status quo is presented and thus provides significant motivation to act in goal-oriented protests to achieve a desired outcome. (See Table 1, Appendix B for Emergent Crowds vs. Mobilized Communities construct distinctions)

The demarcated boundaries between these collective types were characterized as fluid by Kozinets and his colleagues, allowing for the possibility that communities evolve over time in response to external stimuli or natural changes in the community. However, consumer research has not identified how consumer collectives shift, evolve, or transform, particularly in reaction to emergent market threats or concerns. As a result, it appears that consumer community research primarily focuses on describing the practices of consumer communities viewed in brief snapshots or in times where market conditions are relatively stable (e.g., Schau et al. 2009). We therefore do not know yet the transformative impact on the collective that may occur as Mobilized Communities engage in activist performances. What are the effects on the collective of altering the group’s primary orientation and purpose, even if for a brief period, such as during a campaign?

In conjunction with applying Kozinets et al.’s framework to understand the distinctions between online consumer collectives, recent work as briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter by

Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016) has challenged the applicability and utilization of the “brand community” concept that pervades consumer research in social media platforms, as discussed above. Investigating tweets surrounding the Louis Vuitton brand, Arvidsson and Caliandro suggest that consumers who communicate with one another through social media platforms may form “brand publics” instead of a community. Brand publics differ from traditional brand communities in three ways. First, brand publics are social formations (instead of bonds) that are centered on the brand of interest and individual experiences and opinions associated with it – rather than interactions between consumers about the brand. As a result, little interaction occurred between users, turnover rates were high among consumers, and content varied widely from post to post. The sociality that marks a community was absent. Second, Arvidsson and Caliandro suggest that participation in brand publics is not driven by discussions or deliberations with others, but rather is oriented towards the sharing of private affects, particularly the desire for publicity, by applying brand-related hashtags. Finally, brand publics are distinct in that they fail to develop a higher-order collective identity. In contrast to brand communities where shared values, rituals, and traditions lead to the development of a communal identity, brand publics are informed by and built on individual experiences, contexts, motivations, and opinions that impede the development of a collective sense of self.

With the inclusion of brand publics in consumer research, there is further theoretical and empirical fuel to add to the fire relating to the reality and potential importance of differing consumer collectives who engage in activist-oriented consumer campaigns, particularly in light of the rise of cyberactivism. Because brand publics are loose aggregations of consumers surrounding a particular area of interest (in this case, a brand) that engage in communications with one another through social media platforms, there is reason to believe that other online

collectives may exhibit similar characteristics and limitations. Of particular interest is the suggestion that brand publics never develop a coherent, unified identity – a possibility that may also impede the identity formation and subsequent actions of consumers who try to engage in activism through online means. That is not to suggest that successful campaigns may only occur when collectives display strong central collective identities, but rather points towards the significance in examining the existence – or lack thereof – of collective identity markers within Emergent Crowds, particularly in comparison to Mobilized Communities, as another dimension of a collective’s nature that may impact the mobilization and enactment efforts of the activists’ work.

In summary, we know that online consumer collectives are diverse in terms of their goals, activities, member contributions, and community characteristics – distinctions that influence how they generally act and what they do as a group. These distinctions, as suggested, may play a significant role in the performance of activism, specifically in the development of consumer campaigns.

### *Consumer – Brand & Product Relationships*

Consumers form attachments to and relationships with brands and products. Fournier’s (1998) seminal work developed an in-depth understanding of the relationships that consumers form with their brands and the quality of said relationships. Consumers use brands and products to achieve individual purposes. Some brands and products serve as resources used to both construct and portray self-identity (Belk 1988). Brands and products also may act as the glue that link consumers of like-mindedness within communities (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001) the more disaggregated brand publics (Arvidsson and Caliandro 2016).

Consumers perceive brands as independent relationship partners, often ascribing human personality qualities and characteristics to the brands (Aaker 1997), who deliver marketing promises presented in marketing mix elements. Certain products, likewise, are discussed in terms of their relation to the extended self (Belk 1988). Drawing on the humanized conceptualizations of brands and products, consumers experience and articulate their relationships in different ways and according to different dimensions (Fournier 1998), such as the length of the relationship, valence, intensity, and so on. The quality of the relationships varies, effectively creating distinct forms of relational interactions (e.g., casual friends, flings, enslavements, etc.). High quality relationships, such as relationships that have a high connection between brand and self, interdependence, and commitment, provide the foundation for the development of strong, stable brands in the marketplace.

Consumers' relationships with brands and products change over time, as new products enter the marketplace, brand stories and promises are altered as marketing mixes evolve, and consumers break-up with products and brands who have lost their relevance, failed to deliver on promises, or are simply inferior to newer, more innovative market offerings. However, in some instances, brands are discontinued, whether planned or unceremoniously dumped without warning. Though this is a market possibility for all products and brands, but one that nonetheless can traumatize invested consumers and lead to mourning-type behaviors. Russell and Schau (2014) found that when consumer groups experienced the termination of their beloved TV shows, their loss was multi-dimensional, including the loss of the narrative's evolution, loss of the characters, loss of the communal consumption experience and group itself, and loss of one's identity. The processes of accommodating the varied losses was proposed to depend on characteristics of the narrative itself (i.e., the level of closure), and the sociality resources

available to consumers, with some consumers experiencing more resolution than others. From their empirical research, Russell and Schau found that the consumer-brand relationship is also significantly impacted when discontinuation occurs and the accommodation process consumers engage in. Some consumers severed the relationship, which was shown to have personal and communal implications, especially when a consumer was a high contributor within the network. Other consumers were able to continue their relationships with the brand, though in an altered form, whereas others fail to adapt to the loss and experience chronic grief in association with the brand. Finally, consumers who were able to successfully adapt to the loss were able to work through their feelings and get to a point where they can celebrate the brand and what it meant in their life. Consequently, consumer-brand relationships are destabilized when the brands are discontinued, creating an impetus for coping behaviors that depend on more than just the individual.

Though Russell and Schau generated insights into the accommodation processes and brand relationship outcomes consumers experience in light of brand discontinuations, their research was limited in terms of examining organized action of consumers to actively combat the cancellation decisions, and as a result, suggested that investigating the evolution of collective action may provide further theoretical insights into how consumers collectively deal with brand loss. This dissertation seeks to fill this void by examining the interplay of consumer activism and the collective, identifying the impact activist performances have on the collective itself – specifically Mobilized Communities - and the consumer-brand relationships within the collective as consumers actively fight for their brand.

To summarize, consumers form special bonds with brands. These relationships can become a central part of one's consumption experience. However, when the consumer-brand

relationship is threatened, particularly when marketers unilaterally discontinue or change a product/brand without warning or consent, consumers must cope with this change. Though the process of coping with emergent and undesirable market changes has been examined by Russell and Schau (2014), participating within a consumer campaign may yet play a significant, though undetermined, role in influencing consumer-brand relationships that are part of consumer collectives.

### *Consumer – Company Relationship: Basic and Co-Creative Interactions*

Consumer relationships have been shown to extend beyond the confines of the community itself to form relational links with marketplace producers (McAlexander et al. 2002). On a basic level, consumers interact with companies through simple purchase exchanges: consumers buy products that are produced and retailed in the marketplace. The general purpose of a consumer-company relationship is to provide (a) consumers with desired products and services at a price that is appropriate and (b) companies with desired profits to be able to maintain their levels of operations and to financially validate the production and sale of the products. Consumers interact with companies of different sizes, with varying levels of frequency, at distinct levels of intimacy through their consumption of the products and services offered by the marketer. Consumers may also build on relational bonds through consumption of other marketing components, such as marketing communications through advertisements and company blogs, which can reinforce perceptions, beliefs, and feelings towards the focal company. Through the various and ever-growing touch points available in the market, consumers and companies interact with one another, thereby increasing the dynamic co-evolution of these players and relationships in the market.



Consumers and companies are increasingly seeking and finding additional opportunities for interacting beyond the surface levels of product-money exchanges. Participatory, co-creative relationships seem to be taking root in marketing theories and practice (e.g., Zwick, Bonsu and Darmody 2008; Füller, Matzler and Hoppe 2008; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Humphreys and Grayson 2008). Co-creation conceptualizations have further removed the “passive” stigma attached to consumers and instead recast them as market resources for companies to use in the development and evaluation of marketing mixes (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). This reconceptualization of consumers as producers (Firat, Dholakia and Venkatesh 1995) therefore integrates consumers into the production chain and as a result, creates value for the company and the marketplace. Consumers lend expertise and insight to co-create products (Füller et al. 2007), market performances and experiences (Kozinets et al. 2004; Goulding, Shankar, Elliott and Canniford 2009), service spaces (Sherry, Kozinets, Storm, Duhachek Nuttavuthisit and DeBerry-Spence 2001), marketing messages (e.g., through word-of-mouth marketing; Kozinets et al. 2010), and so on. By so doing, consumers are able to share innovative ideas, gain potential entry into the company as an employee, and contribute to the marketing and production of their beloved products (Füller et al. 2007), which in turn fosters positive perceptions of the relationship.

From a company perspective, motivations to get ahead in the market engender positive perceptions of developing relationships with customers through traditional and innovative ways (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, and Evans 2006; Vargo and Lusch 2004). Not only do strong relationships with passionate consumers positively influence customer loyalty, recruitment behaviors, and customer cooperation (Palmatier et al. 2006), but companies also utilize consumer collectives as key sources of innovation and insight into consumer trends

(Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Von Hippel 1988; Füller et al. 2007; Füller et al. 2008).

Although co-creation is generally regarded as a positive evolution of the consumer-company relationship for both parties, the altruistic view of co-creation has been called into question.

Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody (2008) critically analyzed the discourse of co-creation and proposed that co-creation represented an evolved form of market control and discipline over consumers, subtly exerted through consumers' freedoms (Zwick, Bonsu and Darmody 2008).

Thus, co-creation represents a site of transitioning market relationships between consumers and companies.

Research in marketing has co-creative conceptualizations, practices, and outcomes to relationships in which the parties connect over the same product/service (e.g., the consumer who purchases Nike shoes and Nike the company). However, it is possible that as consumer interactions with company dynamically change during critical market junctures, new opportunities for incorporating other parties into co-creative-type relationships may exist, particularly as some activist movements have been able to turn targeted foes into collaborators (O'Mahony and Bechky 2008). Consumer activism may therefore provide an opportunity for innovative co-creative relationship development between market players, as consumers attempt to achieve market change in strategic, market-influenced ways. Furthermore, much like word-of-mouth activities (Kozinets et al 2010), as consumers evolve and build their networks of community relationships, theoretical understanding of co-creation may extend beyond the simple two actor model of consumer and target company to include a broader network of actors, in particular alliance partners.

### *Consumer Collective – Company Alliances*

In an organizational context, firms form relationships with one another in order to combat threats in the marketplace and against potential adversaries. Companies establish vertical supply chains in order to maximize efficiency and profits of their operations, and thereby interact with one another as partners in bringing products to the market. Although companies operating at the same level in a market (e.g., distributors of products) are often competitors, exploring opportunities for alliances with other companies is often a useful strategy to control or mitigate market uncertainty (e.g., Thompson 1967; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). Alliances, or formally established relationships between partners aimed at achieving the strategic goals (Das and Teng 1998), are often the result of company responses to external threats, such as likely losses in their markets or increased competition.

Alliances between businesses can generate various benefits such as resource pooling (Das and Teng 2000), risk sharing (Ohmae 1989), and competency development (Hamel, Doz, and Prahalad 1989). Companies in successful alliances are positioned to develop competitive advantages and respond to external threats and respond to potential adversaries quicker than companies operating autonomously (Kogut 1991). However, not all alliances are wildly successful or without risks.

Selecting and establishing market alliances requires discretion in order to effectively combat threats and adversaries. Not all possible collaborative alliances are desirable, while others possibilities may create more advantages for the original company than others. Identifying potential allies not only depends on evaluations of resources and capabilities, but also judgments of partner similarity (Chung, Singh and Lee 2000). Selecting partners who are trusted, exhibit complementary goals, and have the highest potential of a financial payout

reduces potential disadvantages from collaboration and increase likelihood of alliance success (Shah and Swaminathan 2008; Lambe and Spekman 1997). Furthermore, it is important to note that not all prospective alliances are formed. Rather, some alliances may never make it beyond the supposition stage, while others are dissolved during negotiations. The risks of formation failure or alliance problems in actualization notwithstanding, alliances with external entities seem to be useful market relationships to effectively and efficiently reduce market risk and handle changes in the external environment (Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven 1996).

Interestingly, consumer-centric research is relatively silent on the existence and role of alliances initiated and maintained by consumer collectives, particularly during resource-dependent campaigning periods. Is it possible that as consumers engage in collective activist efforts, they seek out external entities to ally themselves with and provide needed resources and advantages in the marketplace? The ability and desire to form alliances outside of the community may lead a campaign to have an expanded pool of resources available – a fact that the resource mobilization theory indicates as being a factor to a movement’s potential success, as discussed in Chapter 2. However, it is unknown if consumer collectives differentially engage in alliance formation actions based on the nature of their collective. If consumer collectives do engage in this behavior as part of their activist program, how do consumer collectives identify, strategically entreat, and maintain these alliances? From the company perspective, is there a benefit to allying themselves with consumer collectives, particularly in the visible online arena, and how are companies responding to the potential opportunities for alliance development with these activist-minded collectives? Finally, how does the possibility and actual formation of external alliances contribute to the evolution of dynamics within Mobilized Communities as they enact their activist agendas?

## **Consumer Collective Relationships: A Summary**

To conclude, consumers establish various relationships in the marketplace to achieve particular purposes and goals. Consumer relationships, like organizational relationships, do not develop and evolve in isolation. Rather, relationships must navigate and survive market changes that contribute to relationship dynamics and direction, such as critical junctures like a product's cancellation (Russell and Schau 2014), indicating that the trajectory of consumer relationships in the marketplace can be changed in the face of market change or crises. However, we do not yet understand how consumer collectives navigate evolutionary changes within the collective itself, particularly when re-orienting their purpose and actions towards achieving change-specific goals such as in the event of activist campaigning. Thus, echoing a research question central to this research, how are Mobilized Communities and the dynamics therein influenced by activist performances, and more specifically, campaigns?

Organizing and enacting a consumer campaign represents a site of destabilized market conditions in which consumers' communal actions address a breakdown between consumers and producers in strategic ways to achieve their desired goals. It is possible that the act of campaigning may therefore transform consumer-centered relationships found within consumer collectives in systematic ways as consumers interact with one another and other market entities to achieve their specific, change-oriented desires. Additionally, consumers may seek to build new relationships in the marketplace, incorporating the strategic use of consumer-generated alliances as a tactic within their campaigns in order to actualize campaign and community goals. However, extant research has not answered questions regarding collective efforts at alliance formation in relation to the diversity of online collectives and the impact that such alliance formation has on the collective and relationships therein. Furthermore, as intimated above, we do

not yet know how third-party companies are responding to consumer collectives as individuals reach out during campaign periods to develop alliance-esque relationships, and the different forms that these alliances take. Consequently, having set the theoretical and empirical foundation for this investigation into the interplay between collective activism and the consumer collective, it is time to turn our story to our specific “Nuts, Nerds, and Everyone In Between” via the original research and findings of this dissertation to determine how consumer collectives differ in their performances of activism, and how the performance of activism influence the dynamics within Mobilized Communities.

## CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH QUESTIONS, DESIGN, AND METHOD

As I have shown over the literature review, collective consumer activism has a rich, vital history in market and marketing relationships. As a dynamic element in market evolution, consumer activism is an interesting area of study, as consumers engage in goal-driven behaviors to achieve their desired ends. While consumer and marketing research has successfully drawn on social movement, resource mobilization, and political opportunity theories to explore facets of consumer activism in the marketplace and its impact on organizations, markets, and consumer culture overall, consumer literature has undertheorized activism in terms of its relational components, particularly when considering the diversity of consumer collectives, particularly as they interact online, who engage in activist behaviors. We do not know how activism and its performance by consumer collectives changes and is impacted based on the nature of the consumer group/collective – whether Emergent Crowds or Mobilized Communities. Consumer research also does not provide theoretical or practical evidence on the effects of developing and enacting activist campaigns within Mobilized Communities. In the same vein, consumer research appears to focus primarily on the short-term, static snapshot of consumer communities, rather than investigating the longer term evolution of these communities, and their relationship formations and changes. Thus, the intersection between consumer activism and consumer collectives/relationships generates a valuable, significant research gap that has not been explored in consumer research.

In this research study, I intend to address the research gap created at the intersection of consumer activism and consumer collectives/relationships by examining sites of consumer protest campaigns. My central research questions guiding my research are as follows:

- 1) How does the nature of an online collective of consumers (Mobilized vs.**

**Emergent) affect its performance of activism?**

**2) How does engaging in activist performances affect the dynamics in Mobilized Communities (i.e., communities not originally formed for activism)?**

By addressing these questions, I introduce into the marketing and consumer literature a more comprehensive view of consumer collectives and consumer activism, alike.

### **Research Design**

The aim of the present study is to investigate consumers' relationship experiences when participating in consumer campaigns. Taking into account the exploratory intent of the study, lack of prior research on marketplace relationships outside of the consumer-company dyad in consumer activism, and the dynamically changing nature of communities during campaigns, a qualitative research approach is appropriate for dissecting the consumer collective issues in relation to marketplace activism and addressing the identified research questions. More specifically, a multi-sited netnography was used to create a comparative case study analysis for unpacking the dynamism and complexities within the consumer communities as they organize and coordinate online.

Netnography, or ethnography on the Internet, can be used to examine consumer activities as they are observed and occur online. Netnography is considered a desirable methodology when the research investigates online interactions and collectives in which "relationships that emerge through CMC [computer-mediated communications] and various other online human social interactive elements will be central, core constructs that the research tries to explain" (Kozinets 2010, p. 64). Netnography is designed to generate insights by systematically collecting data from consumer interactions on online forums, other communication forms, and the researcher's participant-observer engagement and immersion into the community (Kozinets 2002, 2010).



Netnography appears to be well-suited for this study based on the intents of this research study and the nature of the collectives in which activism is occurring. First, the purpose and focus of this proposed study is to examine consumer campaigns and the role of the collective with relation to the activist campaign efforts. The central form of communication is online, and thus the relationship negotiations between campaigners will most likely occur online. Thus, studying the relational component of these collectives lends itself to the netnographic method. Second, the Mobilized Community sites chosen for this study may be considered communities given their real world interactions at fan conventions and other community activities, in addition to the fact that their campaign initiatives extended beyond the online realm. However, these communities are primarily organized online, with the majority of their communications and relationships taking place on community websites and through other online outlets. The campaigns are also initiated, coordinated, and discussed communally online, which then leads individual consumers to enact initiatives on their own in the marketplace. The online component is therefore a significant component of this study, given the online context in which the majority of the action takes place. Of likewise importance are the initiatives offline and relationships that are transformed as a result of the offline activities. Investigations of offline activities has been done through online representations and discussions, such as photographs, reports, and so on, as tangible resistance manifestations in the communities were enacted individually between the consumer and the company, and therefore nearly impossible to observe in person by the researcher.

Likewise, the two Emergent Crowds' sites were selected to provide the comparative lens to address the first research question. These two sites represented consumers congregating online in reaction and relating to an undesirable market development/decision. Given that these two

campaigns featured communication between consumers and to the companies through online mediums, a netnographic study is a valid research method. As such, this research presents a multi-sited netnography from five consumer campaign sites that were engaged in concentrated, activist behaviors. Further, by using multiple data sources from netnographic and interview data, I have created five case sites to compare one with another.

A case study analysis is appropriate when generating theoretical insights in new topic areas (Eisenhardt 1989), and is a method that fits well with examining these time- and brand/product-bound campaigns as each campaign represents a distinct site pertinent to the topic of study. As Yin (1994) suggests, case studies are well suited for studying complex social phenomena in which there are many variables of interest and multiple sources of evidence. By so doing, case studies can address questions particularly geared towards understanding the “why” and “how” of phenomena. Further, the case study method is a desirable method when there is little control over the events as they unfold in real-life contexts. Using a multiple cases enables a “replication logic” of sorts, in that results can be compared across cases to provide support for the theoretical contributions by identifying commonalities, differences, and patterns that arise.

## **Researcher Identity & Stance**

### *Researcher Identity*

A researcher’s identity plays a part in qualitative research, as the researcher is the instrument through which data is identified, collected, analyzed, and interpreted. My identity as a researcher investigating the phenomenon of consumer activism is most likely informed by my perspective on consumer research in general and my own experiences with consumer groups. During the research study period, I have been completing a doctorate degree in marketing, specializing in consumer behavior. Early on in my marketing education, I quickly determined

that I had an affinity toward research that examined the experiences and actions of consumers as they engaged with companies, other consumers, and products within the marketplace. I recognized through extant research that consumers' market interactions represented many tensions, struggles, triumphs, and innovative behaviors and that their individual and collective experiences play a part in the evolution of market developments. As I have learned about the multifaceted nature of consumer life worlds and examined my own consumer actions and frustrations, I believe that consumers deserve to be heard and have their opinions, behaviors, and voices expressed in the marketplace and in research.

Beyond my academic leanings, my researcher identity is also influenced by my experiences with fan cultures. My desire to examine the phenomenon of consumer activism began as a personal interest in fan groups derived from years of participation and interest in media-related fandoms. As a fan of various television shows while growing up, many of which were known for their consumer cult followings (e.g. "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"), I began to regularly seek out fan information and groups for my favorite shows as it became increasingly available with the advent of the Internet. I found and perused both official and fan produced websites, attended fan conventions (e.g. "Star Trek" conventions), and regularly read entertainment media articles regarding my favorite shows (e.g., "Entertainment Weekly" and "TV Guide") as a way to enhance my consumption experience and to share with others my interest in the television shows. I continue to do so in my spare time, keeping up with my latest and favorite television shows through the official and fan outlets.

My avid interest in things entertainment-related has led me to keep tabs on new material entering the market and fan group happenings within the industry. In the fall of 2007, I became aware of a new television show premiering on NBC entitled "Chuck." I watched the show's

premiere and was intrigued by its mix of action, comedy, and adventure story elements, as well as its cast of delightfully quirky characters. I consumed the first two seasons of the show without fail, and although I did not actively participate on the message boards for “Chuck,” I became aware of the first campaign in its early stages from the media. I did not participate in the first campaign and was unable to continue watching the show consistently due to my program requirements. However, I continue to enjoy the show when I have an opportunity to watch it, and I feel a kinship with the “Chuck” community based on my personal opinion about and history with the consumption product.

### *Researcher Stance*

The research stance throughout this study was an interpretivist stance. The ontological perspective of interpretivism is that reality is socially constructed and that “all human knowledge is developed, transmitted, and maintained in social situations” (Berger and Luckman 1967, p. 3). Context is a key component of interpretivism, as “social beings construct reality and give it meaning based on context” (Hudson and Ozanne 1988, p.510), and leads researchers to view individual realities holistically. My position while conducting the study was that of an observer/participant (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994) in the sites and with informants. I therefore intend to describe the life worlds of the informants and consumers from their perspective, and not from my own beliefs and views (Hudson and Ozanne 1988).

### **Data Collection**

#### *Site Selections*

Sites for this study were identified and selected based on specific criteria related to the campaigns and their associated collectives and communities in order to achieve the aims of this research study and address the research questions. First, the campaigns had to be initiated by

consumers. Grassroots campaigns instigated by corporations would not align with the intent of the study to examine *consumer* groups as they engage in activist behaviors. Company or non-profit campaigns would neglect the consumer perspective and community aspects that are central to the theoretical contributions of this study.

Second, two sites were selected to represent emergent consumer protest sites and their associated campaigning activities. It was important to identify activist sites that were generated from consumers who were not engaged in community behaviors prior to the organization and enactment of their campaigns in relation to the target brand/company. On the other hand, three consumer community sites were selected to represent the mobilized, pre-existing consumer communities who enact consumer campaigns. These consumer communities had to exist in some organized form prior to mobilization for the campaigns. One of the central issues within this study is to examine the transformative impact in consumer communities as a result of campaigning. If all of the groups and campaigns selected arose only after a cry for mobilization in the marketplace, the data gathered from such groups would not lend insight into the transformational nature of campaigning for the consumer communities, and would negate a comparative analysis of the two different consumer collective types. As a result, it was necessary to select consumer communities that were in existence prior to the campaigning periods as part of my data set, as well as those who emerged to contest market problems. Evidence of pre-existing communities is determined by gathering sites for the communities, forums, and in-person or online activities organized by members for the community.

Third, I chose to study communities that were faced with a critical and serious problem that threatened the communities and the core relationship structures. In the sites I selected, the threat faced by the communities was discontinuation or cancellation of their product by the

producers or networks. Threats of this magnitude could negatively impact the functioning and longevity of the communities, and as such, would most likely contribute to campaigns in which a higher number of members would be motivated to participate. In connection to the central threat faced by the communities, I also filtered communities based on their level of activity once encountering the central threat. Some communities when faced with a cancelled product merely talked amongst themselves about the prospect of cancellation, the unfairness of the situation, and so on. I chose to study communities that organized to action in order to achieve key goals of either reversing a cancellation decision made, or securing a different outcome from the possible cancellation. These types of goals indicate that the communities were not simply engaged in individual complaining behaviors, but were enacting strategic, communal behaviors aimed at challenging practices and decisions within the marketplace.

Fourth, sites were selected as being targeted to one marketer/company/organization. Consumer campaigns exist that target industry-wide problems, such as the exclusion of plus-size models in the market (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013); however, to maintain a manageable scope of inquiry, I limited my sites to campaigns – and by extension, collectives – that were focused on a singular marketer/company/organization.

With regards to Emergent Crowd collectives and the campaigns organized therein, I selected one site that featured a direct and harmful threat to individual consumption (Netflix price increases), and a protest site that was centered on a company acting unethically in the eyes of consumers by firing a waitress for an offense that many felt was unwarranted (Applebee's). I felt it was important to find a site that mirrored a threat experienced by the established consumer communities - a threat that personally impacts consumption choices and behavior– and a site that echoed more traditional social movements and activist agendas in trying to fight the unethical

beasts of the corporate world. By varying the impetus and motivation behind the campaigns, commonalities that arise in these sites would therefore lead to greater empirical and theoretical insights into the phenomena of emergent consumer collectives and the campaigns they generate.

Finally, I selected sites that exhibited a range of “successful” outcomes. The Applebee’s-focused campaign did not achieve their desired end – or any concessions from Applebee’s corporate whatsoever, whereas the Netflix campaigns may have played a part in the company dropping plans for their company division by services, but maintained their price level changes. The Save Polaroid site was likewise not successful in that Polaroid, nor any established film company, started producing Polaroid instant film as a result of the campaign. However, the Impossible Project which began producing instant film was bolstered by and gained more popular support by the consumer campaign, and as such, could be considered somewhat successful. The Jericho and Chuck campaigns were successful in that the two shows were brought back/saved from cancellation, though Jericho was only momentarily saved with a shortened second season and promptly cancelled again, this time definitively. Thus, there is a range of success from these campaigns, which is important as not every campaign will be successful, but the methods chosen for the campaigns may give insight into more effective strategies overall.

It is important to note that the “Chuck” community, as will be discussed in the following section, organized two campaigns over the course of the community’s lifespan. As such, data from both campaigns will be included in the data set. Additionally, “Jericho” fans created and organized the first major campaign to bring the show back in 2007. After the show was cancelled for a second time, efforts were made by different fans to find the show a new network, but it was not a significant, organized effort by the community with a specific end. As such, this

data will be discussed in terms of after effects of campaigning within a community, but will not be included in a discussion of the community-wide campaigns.

#### *Elicited Netnographic Data: Selection & Description of Interview Informants*

Online interviews are an appropriate and necessary source of data for the purposes and of the study. Interviews with campaign leaders from each of the campaign sites are needed in order to provide in-depth insights into the processes and relevant relationship dynamics in the consumer communities during the campaigning periods (Kozinets 2010). Leaders of the communities during the campaign periods are key informants because of their social centrality in the campaigns, insight into the campaigns, and long-term active participation in the community. In social networks, leaders are centrally located at the nexus of activities and as such are most likely to form and have detailed knowledge of the internal and external relationships in the group (Mehra, Dixson, Brass, and Robertson 2006). Leaders also are privileged with insider information regarding the generation, implementation, and regulation of campaign initiatives. Further, community leaders also tend to be seasoned veterans in communities, actively contributing expertise, experience, and ideas to the collective over time (O'Mahony and Ferraro 2007). Consequently, such informants were believed to be the most knowledgeable campaigning and community experts who would be in a position to discuss in-depth the evolution of the community occurring in connection with the campaigns.

In selecting community leaders to participate in the study, I have used convenience sampling and snowball sampling to find and interview informants from the campaigns. The nucleus of leaders at each central campaign site appears to be fairly concentrated with a select number of high contributors. As such, the pool of potential leaders for each campaign within a community is fairly limited and it is necessary to contact as many of the leaders as possible



within each site in order to maximize chances of recruiting willing participants. For the preliminary and first round of data collection, identifying potential informants for the preliminary interviews began by visiting the campaign websites, community hubs online, and Facebook pages. I contacted the site's creators, main administrators, and primary contributors listed usually under the "About us" or "Contact us" pages on their sites and invited them to participate in the study. As informants agreed to participate and were interviewed as part of the preliminary group, I used a snowball method of acquiring additional informants through recommendations and introductions. I inquired of the informants as to other key players within their community that they believed were influential members within the community during the campaigns. Unfortunately, for the Netflix and Applebee's campaign sites, invitations to participate did not elicit responses. As such, netnographic data from archival services was used to generate a comprehensive view of each campaign case.

From my efforts to contact community leaders and recommendations from informants, I interviewed nine informants in the first round of interviews (four from the "Save Chuck" campaign, three from the "Save Jericho" campaign, and two from the "Save Polaroid campaign) and seven informants in the second round of interviews. The second round of interviews was "Chuck" focused, as the community had enacted a second organized campaign to save the show once again, and as such, new leaders had emerged and were willing to participate in this study and discuss their experiences in organizing a second campaign within the community. At the time that I conducted the second round of interviews, I also conducted two follow-up interviews with key informants in the "Chuck" community who had participated in the first campaign (2009) and the second campaign (2011) in order to contrast their experiences and provide additional perspective on the evolution of the community from the first campaign to the second

campaign. Thus, at the present time, 18 interviews have been collected in total from the three sites community sites.

All but one of the interviews was conducted online, using phone calls. The informants were geographically dispersed over the United States and Canada, thus limiting the ability of the researcher to conduct face-to-face interviews with the informants. One informant lived in the Greater Toronto Area, which allowed for a face-to-face interview. As a result, for the online interviews, I was unable to generate insight into the social or cultural contexts, which in face-to-face interviews contributes to interpretation. However, following Kozinets' (2010) advice on conducting online interviews, steps have been taken to reduce the anonymity and expose other aspects of the informants' lives. I have friended three of the informants on Facebook, thereby obtaining access to their photographs, posts, likes, dislikes, and so on. I also visited personal websites and saw YouTube videos from two of the informants. Further, by conducting the interviews over the phone, I was able to capture the pauses, emphases, and other verbal cues that are key in conveying verbal language, but often difficult to capture in written interviews such as emails.

Following McCracken's (1988) guide to conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews, I elicited a "grand tour" overview of each informant's experience and probed for further detail about relationship formation and transformation using emergent prompts and pre-determined questions. The interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes each, with interview times ranging from 45 minutes to 150 minutes, and were transcribed verbatim by the author. Informants varied in age (20s – 60s), geographic location, gender, and occupations.

## Archival Netnographic Data: Selection of Netnographic Data

Archival data gathered through netnographic methods is a key part to the study, as the campaigns and the interactions among consumers primarily were organized and enacted through online means. Also, leaders in the communities may represent a concentrated, extreme form of participation and engagement in a campaign, which may not be representative of the overall community. As such, it was important to gather data from more than the perspectives of the leaders about the community and campaigns, a necessity which was achieved through gathering archival netnographic data.

Online forums, websites, webpages, and Tweets for each of the campaigns have been found by using Google searches via catch phrases and their variations from the campaigns (e.g., “Save Polaroid,” “Save Jericho,” “Nuts for Jericho,” “Finale and a Footlong,” “Save Chuck,” “We Give a Chuck,” “Say No To Netflix,” “Boycott Netflix,” “Rehire Chelsea Welch,” and so on). Online sites, pages, or posts that identified themselves as the central location for each of the campaigns are considered to be key sites representing that collective during the time of the campaign. Other sites complementary to the central hubs were included in the study when identified as being devoted to the collective and the campaign cause, and have forums or locations for the members to post their ideas, contributions, and so on. Facebook webpages and Tweets dedicated to the campaigns were also included in the data set, the latter of which indicates “real time” action and commentary by members during campaigns. Netnographic ethical norms (Kozinets 2002b) were utilized by the primary researcher when entering sites in order to protect members and demonstrate the credibility of the researcher. By using forum conversations, Facebook posts, and Tweets as part of the data set, I am able to include the

perspective of members as they negotiate the process of campaigning, and the relationship components exhibited during the campaigns.

Additionally, promotional campaign materials generated by consumers during the campaigns will be included in the data set as campaign artifacts. Materials such as videos, art, downloaded postcards, banners, and so on represent creative action on the part of the members to promote, disseminate, and communicate their campaign's goals and objectives to members both within and external to their community. As such, promotional materials are necessary data points when examining the actions taken by members to forge new or transformed relationships with others. Such data was collected and organized according to intent and use of the materials.

Finally, media articles written about the campaigns and their initiatives have been included within the data set, to represent a third-party perspective and commentary on the campaigns, their members, and the industry. Media articles posted online also create an opportunity for consumers to comment and further promote their causes to individuals who are reading the article and becoming acquainted to the causes for the first time. Articles were collected using similar methods to the identification of online sites, as well as searches within periodicals such as "Entertainment Weekly."

### **Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed as it was collected (Miles and Huberman 1994) and followed the iterative case analysis process proposed by Eisenhardt (1989). Interviews were transcribed shortly after completing each interview. Online data was coded as it is collected. The data from each site was interpreted and analyzed, creating a within-site synthesis of themes and findings, followed by a comparative analysis that compares and contrasts insights across the five sites.

The first step was to analyze each interview separately, noting themes that both arise within the data and align with themes pre-determined from the literature through the use and development of specific codes. I classified archival data according to primarily social or primarily campaign oriented, and primarily on-topic or off-topic, as netnographic data from forums especially can be casual or not relevant to the thread in which the communication occurs (Kozinets 2002a). I coded the archival data following the same procedures used for the elicited interview data. Then, I compared the insights from the individual interviews to determine campaign-wide themes, which will then be compared to insights from the archival data.

Moving from within-site interpretations, I then moved to cross-site comparisons in which commonalities and dissimilarities across campaigns will be identified and refined. I proceeded iteratively through the analysis process (Spiggle 1994), comparing the interview findings, archival findings, and existing literature. Moving back and forth between the data and literature allows for a cohesive and empirically based account of the phenomena to emerge.

Specifically, data analysis was accomplished in several phases. Following Strauss and Corbin (1990), after I conducted a holistic review of the interview transcripts, codes were developed using open and axial coding. Initially, three representative interviews were selected to develop coding categories for the coding scheme. As I read the selected interviews, I assigned preliminary codes to quotations based on the contents of the text. For example, quotations in which informants discussed the goals of the campaigns were categorized as *goals*, with subcategories for *internal goals* and *external goals*.

After coding the first three interviews, I wrote code definitions for the codes and coding categories. Then, using the preliminary codes and definitions, I re-coded the three interviews to determine if codes, coding categories, or definitions needed to be revised based on the content of

the interviews. After revising codes and definitions, I coded the complete first set of interviews. I then created axial codes and subsequently used the same codes and categories for coding other data collected at that time. More abstract themes that emerged from the data include: goal orientations, interactions among leaders, interactions with community members, interactions with external companies and parties, historical knowledge/awareness of campaigns, institutional strategies and tactics, consumption strategies and tactics, creative strategies and tactics. Following this same iterative process, I coded the archived netnographic data and artifacts to develop codes and compare codes from the interviews, and continued to refine the code categories to generate higher theoretical, abstract level codes between the Emergent Crowd and Mobilized Community cases, and then across all of the cases (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

### *Evaluation Criteria*

Kozinets (2010) identified key criteria used to evaluate findings and the dissertation report as a whole: (1) coherence, (2) rigor, (3) literacy, (4) groundedness, (5) innovation, (6) resonance, (7) verisimilitude, (8) reflexivity, (9) praxis, and (10) intermix. Following the outlined method of analysis and building on the literature review presented in previous sections communicates the rigor and literacy of the study. Through the process of peer and committee review, I also build a coherent story that represents the perspectives of the campaigners, free of internal contradictions. Of particular interest, I ground the theoretical constructs in the data, and by so doing, introduce new ideas and narratives that more fully and adequately describe the consumer activist experience and its relation to consumer collectives that will be judged by reviewers against existing theories for their innovativeness.

## **Limitations**

### *Case Selection Limitations*

This research study and applicability of findings to other consumer contexts of activism may be considered to be limited by its narrow scope of specific campaigns being organized primarily online and targeted towards specific company organizations. In selecting the cases for this research, I did not include and by extension, did not investigate, sites where activist actions were organized and enacted by market entities, such as companies, against other groups/organizations within the marketplace. For example, activist-oriented actions and agendas have arisen as companies themselves encounter undesirable market developments, such as those that occur when lobbying and potential legislation could impact their operations. As such, these organizations may mobilize against individual consumers and organized lobbyist groups who are leading the charge. By focusing on consumer-led activist campaigns against specific firms, the insights generated within this research may be limited in terms of their applicability in understanding the varied nature of marketplace activism that can and does arise as other market entities engage in activist behaviors.

Furthermore, this research and the findings generated from the cases selected may likewise be limited based on the nature of the campaigns and the goals implicated therein. Both of the Emergent Crowds' overarching goals for their activist campaigns were considered to be anti-Netflix and anti-Applebee's; in other words, the activist campaigns were considered to be acting in direct contrast to and aimed to punish the two focal companies for their actions in an effort to achieve the desired result: a reversal of the unfavorable decisions and actions. In comparison, the three Mobilized Communities' activist campaigns were decidedly pro- the three target product/brand, as they were each fighting to maintain the production and subsequent

consumption opportunities for the products at hand. As a result, the actions undertaken by these consumers aimed at attempting to persuade the companies through positive, non-punitive measures to achieve the desired results, ranging from a reversal of cancellation to prolonged production of the product at hand. Though the findings have sought to develop more meta-level analyses of the campaigns' development and use of resources in deploying the tactics chosen, rather than focusing on the specific campaigning tactics used as the points of difference between Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities, there nevertheless could be limitations in the findings distinguishing Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities based on the nature of the campaigns being specifically anti- or pro- the target company/product/brand.

A third potential limitation resulting from the cases selected relates to the degree of personal threat associated with the specific sites. The cases studied varied in terms of the likely perceived personal threat to consumption, including consumption of the central product and the consumption experience, which could be influenced by personal identification with and interactions within the consumer collective prior to the campaigning periods. The Emergent Crowds sites chosen likely represented very limited perceived threats to individual consumption, particularly the Applebee's site chosen. Individual access to the core product/service as a result of the central instigating incident in this case was not affected and perceived negative implications for participating in the campaigns were likely low or non-existent. The Netflix site selected did represent more of a personal threat to individual consumption, in that the emergent event, specifically a significant price increase, could influence one's access to the service depending on one's disposable income and budget constraints. However, the magnitude of perceived threat was heightened in the Mobilized Communities as a result of the central emerging issue being the (potential) discontinuation of the product/show and by extension, the



potential loss of the collective consumption experience. Thus, the degree of personal threat exhibited is in part due to the cases selected in of themselves, which could not only differentially impact the findings of this study, but also limit the applicability of insights generated from these sites to other instances where the degree of personal threat is not as pronounced, particularly in other potential Mobilized Communities when the central product/brand/show is not in peril.

However, with these limitations noted, given that this is the first study to investigate the interaction between consumer collectives and the performance of activism, the findings should yet prove useful in terms of investigating and understanding other types of consumer collectives and activist contexts by providing the foundation for and starting point to a comparative analysis and future inquiry, such as in cases where organizations themselves are enacting activist agendas, when the goals of the Emergent Crowds might be pro- the target company or Mobilized Communities might be fighting against a company, or when the degree of personal threats manifested in the cases is more varied within the Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Community sites.

Finally, the outcomes of the campaigns, while noted, are not under investigation in this work as the cases were selected and analyzed. In order to understand the observed outcomes and their success/failure factors, it would be necessary to gather information from the target companies and their perspective on the campaigns, along with the rationale behind their responses - or lack thereof. Without this data, a necessity to maintain a manageable scope of inquiry, I therefore am limited in my ability to draw connections between the collectives, their activist efforts, and the ultimate outcomes of their work. This, however, will be a potential area for future research to address.

### *Methodological Limitations*

Although data was collected from a variety of sources to inform this research, including both elicited interviews and archived netnographic data, there is a methodological limitation resulting from a lack of interactional data collected. More specifically, interviews with community leaders in the Mobilized Communities were significantly relied upon to understand the development and organization of the campaigns and activities therein. While data from the forums was used to support and provide further insight into the campaigning efforts from the community overall, there was a lack of data supporting the leaders' personal experiences with and opinions as to the process of campaigning and the interactions between the leaders themselves.

Likewise, a methodological limitation exists with regards to the construct development of the Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities, as influenced by the cases selected. Because the cases selected exhibited specific grievances against the target companies, the Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities constructs developed and defined within this research are based on my singular perspective and exposure to these select consumer collectives. Potential collectives, such as those that are pro- a target company or form to fight alongside a company to achieve a market-based goal, may not be representative of the Emergent Crowds or Mobilized Communities concepts, as they have been developed and described herein. As such, it is important to note that the Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities constructs may in fact be limited based on their contra-company identities and activities that formed as a result of these specific case sites and the grievances exhibited therein.

Likewise, data collection and analysis was limited in terms of understanding and exploring actors who may have played a corollary role in the activist campaigns exhibited,

particularly those who espoused an alternative perspective to the mainstream collective and their identified goals driving the overall collective actions (e.g., consumers who were sympathetic to the target company at hand). The data collected and analyzed as part of this research methodology focused on the collective and those who identified with the mainstream collective to achieve the desired goals at hand. As a result of narrowing the inquisitive lens on the pro-collective enactment of activist campaigns and the resources used therein, counter-collective and counter-activist opinions and actions of actors who did not act in accordance with the collective were not included or analyzed in terms of their contribution or impact to the collective and the campaigns developed. This represents a methodological limitation that could be addressed through further data collection and analysis with a specific focus on investigating the interplay and interactions between pro- and anti- opinions and actions both within a collective and external to the collective. However, it is important to note that such research data would in of itself be likely limited to comments on community forums of those consumers or actors who were motivated enough to join in the conversation to provide their opposing opinion, rather than including data on all consumers who think and/or act in direct contrast to the collective.

### **Site Descriptions**

By following the case analysis method, the following descriptions identify the key components of the campaigns, including campaigning periods, gathering sites, central campaigning initiatives, and outcomes, as well as background information on the communities, to give a working knowledge of the case sites at hand.

#### *“Save Jericho”*

In September of 2006, CBS aired a new television series entitled “Jericho,” a show that depicted events in a small Kansas town after terrorist nuclear attacks destroyed 23 American

cities. Fans appeared to be drawn to the apocalyptic storyline, the serial storytelling, and the mysteries central to the first season arc. Fans discussed the episodes online primarily at CBS's forum boards.

For CBS, over the course of the season, the viewership did not justify the production costs of the show and "Jericho" was canceled after its 22 episode first season in May 2007. Fans discussed the relatively surprising announcement on the evening of the cancellation decision on CBS's "Jericho" forum board, and by morning, a group of approximately 20 fans organized the "Save Jericho" campaign. The campaign called for members to save the show by sending peanuts and letters to the CBS offices, an act that symbolized a catch phrase from the show, recruiting new members to the community, and involving other consumer communities in their cause. An online nut company noticed the increase in sales and shipments to the CBS offices and the company volunteered to be an unofficial sponsor of the campaign, providing easy links for online customers to mail nuts to the network and creating an up-to-date account of the pounds of nuts delivered.

By June of 2007, CBS had received over 20 tons of nuts. Factoring in the large-scale, conspicuous, and logistically messy show of support, the network decided to renew the show for an abbreviated second season. In a letter to the fan community posted online, the president of CBS entertainment cited that the "unprecedented display of passion" caught the attention of the network and influenced the reversal of the cancellation decision – and kindly asked the fans to stop sending nuts (see Appendix A, Exhibit 1). The dramatic community, it seemed, had won a small victory. However, the show returned to the primetime schedule to a slightly smaller audience than the first season. The show was cancelled after the second season – this time, permanently. Some fans tried to organize a new community and campaign to send nuts again to

CBS. Others tried to revive the show on the SciFi network, but ultimately, the efforts to continue the show in its televised format were abandoned. Comic books have been produced after the permanent cancellation, however, thus continuing the narrative of the “Jericho” characters.

### *“Save Chuck”*

In the fall of 2007, NBC ran episodes of “Chuck,” a comedy-action-spy-romance-thriller show. Fans discussed the themes of the show, relationships that they hoped to see succeed on the show, and aspects of the show that they enjoyed, such as the music. Fans would gather primarily online, but would congregate at fan conventions such as “Comic Con.”

Though boasting aspects that would attract a wide audience, “Chuck” was “on the bubble” (i.e., an industry term used for television shows that were in danger of being cancelled) for renewal during its second season. Concerned about the prospects of the show, four central community leaders gathered fans on Chucktv.net in April 2009 to participate in the Watch-Buy-Share-Write More campaign and its sub-campaign, the “Finale and a Footlong” (see Appendix A, Exhibit 2). However, the campaigners wanted to set themselves apart from past campaigns, “Save Jericho” included. As such, the leaders designed and promoted initiatives in the community to not only be easy to do, but for some initiatives would also be innovative in the marketplace: sending boxes of Nerds to the NBC head office, buying a foot-long Subway (an advertiser who had done product placement on the show) sandwich the day of the season finale to demonstrate the financial viability of sponsoring the show, signing online petitions, and posting consumer-generated supported banners on Facebook, MySpace, and blog pages to build awareness of the community’s efforts. The show was renewed by NBC at the end of May 2009.

After relatively stable third and fourth seasons, the show was once again rumored to be in peril of cancellation in April 2011. The fans congregated under a new campaign slogan, “We

Give a Chuck,” in which the primary initiatives built on what the first campaign had accomplished: targeting advertisers. Using Twitter, Facebook, and the central hub of WeGiveaChuck.com, community members publicly thanked and demonstrated their support of advertisers who advertised in the actual show or during its commercial breaks as the shows were being aired. The goal of bringing back the show, to the leaders and their followers, appeared to be impacted by incorporating additional advertisers into the fight. Although it is unknown in the community whether or not the advertisers in actuality played a part in the renewal of the show, NBC announced that the show would indeed be brought back for a fifth and final season.

### *“Save Polaroid”*

The Polaroid community was loosely organized prior to the enactment of the campaigns. Polaroid users, a smaller community within the photography world, considered themselves to be rebels against the digital age. Members shared their love of Polaroids and their Polaroids they had taken on sites such as Flickr and Polanoid.net, and had gathered physically in person for Polaroid “Nerd Outs” events in which Polaroid aficionados would wander together in a designated city taking Polaroids of what they see.

Although rumors and signs of the discontinuation (e.g., discontinuing particular lines of film at subsequent periods of time, selling off factories and equipment, etc.) of Polaroid film by the parent company had been noted among community members, the official announcement in 2008 by Polaroid officials about the discontinuation of Polaroid film production motivated the community to organized action. Under the “Save Polaroid” motto and at the central hub site of SavePolaroid.com, a team of seven leaders who had met via Flickr members guided members to learn about the history of Polaroid and why it merited saving, share their love of the film format, and to take action by sending letters and examples of their consumption to film companies such

as Fuji and Ilford. Leaders also held t-shirt contests for individuals to create promotional materials, designed online materials for propagating details about the campaign, and so on.

The campaign came to a surprising conclusion when a Polaroid fan and business owner, Doc Kapps, led a team of investors, engineers, and businessmen to procure Polaroid factory equipment and start The Impossible Project, a business venture during which the team would create a new brand and type of instant film that would be compatible with Polaroid cameras and keep alive the instant film format. One year after its inception, The Impossible Project began producing and selling its film internationally.

### *“Netflix Pricing War”*

In 2011, Netflix had two main services as part of their competitive offerings: DVD-by-mail and the newer streaming service that featured select TV shows and movies. Over half of Netflix’s 23 million consumers at this time paid a monthly fee of \$9.99 per month for unlimited on-demand streaming and access to DVD rentals one disc out at a time (PBS Newshour 2011), with others paying \$7.99 for online streaming. Consumers therefore paid only \$2.00 extra per month to enjoy both streaming and DVD catalogues offered by the company. However, given the increase in costs to acquire online streaming content, the increasing trend of consumers to stream media content versus DVDs, and the cost of warehousing and mailing DVDs, Netflix took drastic measures to improve revenue flow and position themselves to continue their relevance in the entertainment viewing market (Carr 2011).

On July 12, 2011, CEO Reed Hastings announced via the Netflix company blog and a Facebook post that it was doing away with the \$9.99 combined DVD and streaming plan. In its place, they would offer a DVD-only plan for \$7.99 for one disc at a time rentals, and \$11.99 plan for two discs at a time rentals. The streaming only subscription remained at \$7.99. Consumers

wanting both the DVD and streaming services would have to sign up for both a DVD rental service subscription and a streaming subscription, at a cost of \$7.99 each, for a total of \$15.98. In comparison to the previous \$9.99 rate, this price increase equated to almost a 60% price increase for over half of Netflix's consumer base.

Not surprisingly, the price increase and plan changes were not positively received among Netflix consumers. Approximately 800,000 DVD-by-mail customers and 200,000 streaming customers cancelled their subscriptions, with the stock price dropping by a dramatic 44% over the following two month period (Carr 2011). Angry consumers took to the company blog post and Facebook post where the changes were announced to not only complain, but also used this an opportunity to join forces and engage in campaigning behaviors for a reversal of this unfavorable pricing decision. Thus, these two areas become the hubs for the "group" to form. Approximately 41,000 comments were made within 26 hours of the price change announcement on the Facebook post (Mack 2011), with close to 13,000 comments appearing on the blog post. Furthermore, #DearNetflix was the fifth highest trending topic on Twitter following the July announcement (Tsukayama 2011). Consumers not only shared their personal feelings and reactions with the company and other consumers, but also collectively debated what to do in light of the change, created and promoted multiple Facebook group pages and online petitions to boycott Netflix, and encouraged participation amongst each other to coordinate their individual efforts. News articles ranging from the Wall Street Journal, Forbes, New York Times, Huffington Post, and CNN were published highlighting the adverse results and public outrage experienced by Netflix after their pricing announcement, and these articles were reposted and shared among the consumers in their Facebook and blog post comments. Sarcastic memes and videos were also produced and propagated through the online conversations, depicting Netflix



and their decision in a negative light. Consumer participation in the conversations, petitions, and calls for boycotts peaked over the week following the announcement, and then slowly diminished over the coming weeks.

The story does not end there, however. Netflix remained relatively silent during the public uproar, but on September 18, 2011, Hastings took to the company blog once again. In this apologetic post, Hastings attempted to address the concerns raised by consumers and explained the company's rationale for making the pricing and plan changes. He apologized not for the price increases themselves, however; instead, he apologized for how the company communicated this change and the lack of communication overall in connection with the price change. Then, he dropped the bombshell: Netflix was spinning off its DVD by mail service into a new company, "Qwikster," while Netflix proper would become a streaming only business. Rationalizing this decision based on consumer ease of use (as each site would be devoted to only one viewing medium) and other potential advances such as upgrade options for video games, Hastings attempted to sell consumers on this radical plan. A major problem with the division of services into separate companies and websites was the lack of integration among the two. Should you want to have both DVD by mail and streaming options, you would have to set up individual accounts, would be charged for each account, and consumer ratings/reviews for what they watch would not be shared among the platforms.

Once again, not surprisingly, consumers received this information with hostility and disdain. Over 28,000 comments were posted on this blog post and the name "Qwikster" soon became the pun of jokes across consumers and media commentators alike. The stock price continued to plummet and consumers continued to abandon the Netflix ship, until on October 10, 2011, Hastings posted on the company blog that the Qwikster plans had been abandoned, the

July pricing changes were necessary and done (for now), and left it at that. With the damage done to its reputation and financial standing, Netflix had to simply cross their fingers and hope for the storm to blow over.

### *“Applebee’s Firing Fiasco”*

On January 25, 2013, Pastor Alois Bell ate at her local St. Louis Applebee’s as part of a larger party of people. Ringing up a bill over \$200, but asking for separate checks, each person paid for their individual order, with an automatic 18% gratuity charged – a company policy for parties over eight people. Pastor Bell, however, did not want to pay the 18% charged. Crossing out the automatic 18% gratuity (a \$6.29 tip in her case), she put a 0 as the additional tip, and wrote above the tip line “I give God 10%. Why do you get 18?” The server was shocked to see such a thing written on the receipt, and showed the receipt to her fellow server, Chelsea Welch. Welch took a photo of the receipt and posted it on the Reddit site “as a lighthearted joke.” Though she worked with Reddit moderators to remove all identifying information from the receipt when she realized the Pastor’s signature was legible, within a few days of her posting the video, Applebee’s fired her. In the interim between posting the photo and Welch’s firing, Pastor Bell apparently came across an article about the receipt, called the Applebee’s location, and demanded that everyone (her server, Welch, the managers whether on duty at that time or not) be fired.

With this story gaining public scrutiny and awareness over the following week, with the story being published in media outlets such as ABC News, Yahoo News, Gawker, Business Insider, and Huffington Post, Applebee’s released a statement on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, on its Facebook page saying that the firing was the result of a “clear violation of our guest’s privacy and against the franchisee’s company policy that the team Member was provided when hired.”

Over 27,000 comments were posted on this Facebook page, with another 14,000 left on a subsequent post later that day that attempted provided even more rationale for the firing decision. Consumers not only left scathing comments for Applebee's on these posts, but like the Netflix consumers, used these platforms as an opportunity to congregate and fight this decision. Two prominent Facebook groups, "Hire Back Chelsea Welch" and "Boycott Applebee's for Chelsea Welch" were created in response to what many viewed as the unethical and unfair decision to fire Welch for her infraction. "Hire Back Chelsea Welch" garnered over 14,000 likes predominantly in the week following the news picking up the scandal, and "Boycott Applebee's for Chelsea Welch" earning over 1300 likes. Both groups were designed to protest Applebee's actions and petition for Welch's reinstatement. Furthermore, online petitions were formed and promoted with the same goal. A GoPetition sponsored by Huffington Post, entitled "Applebee's: rehire Chelsea & We'll Eat at Your Restaurant at Least Once in 2013" earned over 9000 signatures and 64,000+ views. Another petition at Change.org, "Give Chelsea Welch Her Job Back and Fire Pastor Alois Bell," earned over 6,500 supporters as they petitioned both Applebee's to rehire Welch, and Truth in the Word Deliverance Ministries to fire Pastor Bell. Despite the public uproar and campaigns to protest the decision, Applebee's maintained their stance and refused to rehire Chelsea Welch.

### **Findings Overview**

Bringing together the varying theories and insights discussed throughout the preceding literature review with the observations generated in my research, I found that because Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities have differing purposes for their existence and because Mobilized Communities have engaged in community building activities prior to the consumer campaigns whereas Emergent Crowds are born out of a market crisis, their natures differed

significantly in terms of the development and impact of the collective identity (or lack thereof) and the leadership and organizational structure, which in turn appears to have influenced the campaigning efforts and behaviors in four areas: (1) “required” time, commitment, and longevity of the campaign activities; (2) recruitment efforts; (3) creative work in the campaign; and (4) alliance formation. Furthermore, the resource and tactical usage of the collectives differed in terms of their (1) utilization vs. innovation of codified tactics, (2) cumulative resistance knowledge and influence, and (3) Internet communication platform usage and space creation to mobilize and enact strategic efforts. In relation to the second research question, which focuses on the transformative role of activism performances on Mobilized Communities, I found that these communities experienced the following effects: (1) a shift in the goal orientation of the collective, thereby re-focusing collective conversation and practices on the emergent, change-oriented goal, (2) leadership and governance transformation, (3) adoption of market logics in the development of campaigning tactics, (4) both momentary and longer-term alliance formation, and (5) collective outcomes of longer-term mobilization, individual consumer burnout, and community exit. These results will be discussed at length in the following chapters, and are summarized in Appendix C in Tables 1-4.

Prior to presenting and analyzing the findings, however, it is important to recognize the influence that the technological mediums, platforms, and tools utilized by Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities likely exerted over the activist performances and ultimately the findings of this research. Both Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities used online platforms, particularly social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, not only for communication purposes within the collectives but also to potential consumer activists and external third parties alike. Furthermore, these sites served as the primary platforms for specific actions undertaken by these

collectives as they attempted to achieve their core objectives against the target companies. While I will subsequently compare and contrast the observed activities and campaigning tactics as they were executed and shared among consumers and to others through the online technological platforms, it is important to recognize the structuring influence that these platforms likely exerted over the observed actions.

Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have most likely been adopted and used by consumers prior to engaging in specific activist campaigning efforts for a number of activities ranging in terms of purpose from personal leisure, to communicating with friends and family, to connecting with other like consumers when interests align. Each of these platforms have specific characteristics, capabilities, and limitations (e.g., character limitations on Twitter) that have led to consumers utilizing these sites in certain ways and adapting their actions fit with the platform's strengths and capacities. For example, because of the character limitation on Twitter, consumers have learned to quickly and succinctly express their sentiments and opinions while tapping into the broader conversation with the use of hashtags. Hashtags further facilitate sharing information beyond one's specific followers, as consumers can search for a hashtag or click on it to see what others are saying, regardless of if they are currently following the specific individual. Twitter's capabilities also facilitate sharing and spreading third-party content, such as news articles, to one's followers. However, sharing embedded content like extended-length videos is often not supported and by extension not done on Twitter. With that said, Facebook's posting capabilities and services are much more extensive than Twitter's, which allows for such materials to be posted and shared; reaching a broader audience with said content, however, can be considered more challenging through Facebook, given that consumers must "like" a group's page before seeing content shared from the group in their newsfeed. Also, while Facebook

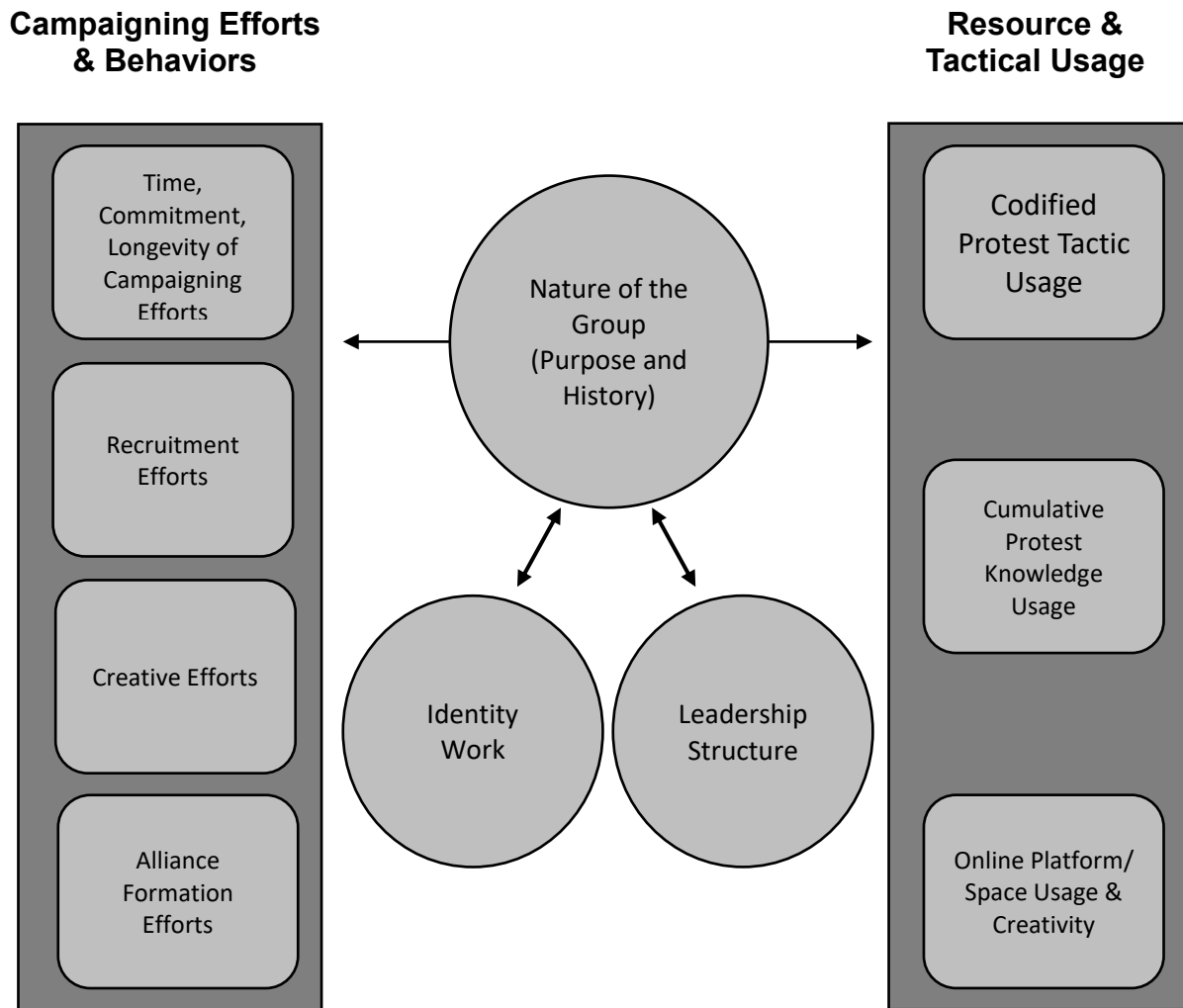
“groups” can and are formed surrounding any number of consumer interests, the functionality of the page and capability of the group to specialize the content and layout is limited to the platform’s interface. In comparison, website templates and website building companies specialize in enabling consumers and companies alike the flexibility and capability to individualize the interface and content as desired, thus facilitating a potentially broader spectrum of actions and content possible should the time and energy be spent creating a website devoted to a specific cause.

Acknowledging that technological platforms have specific strengths and limitations is significant in that the actions undertaken by these distinct collectives studied within this research to achieve their goals were likely influenced by the consumers’ individual use of, experience with, and personal understanding relating to the functional possibilities that each of the sites affords. Consequently, the findings discussed in the subsequent chapters not only reflect the distinctions among the activist performances undertaken by Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities, but also the platforms they inhabited and used in their activist efforts.

## CHAPTER 7: IMPACT OF THE COLLECTIVE ON ACTIVISM PERFORMANCES

From the data, Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities differed significantly in their activist performances, as influenced by the development and adoption of the collective identity by collective members and their leadership and organization structure. In connection with these key differences, the campaigning efforts and behaviors varied between Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities, as did the resources and tactics used by the collectives, as shown below in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Areas of Activism Performance Distinctions**



## **Collective Identity**

Emergent Crowds, by their very nature and definition of being collectives who come into existence to fight particular market grievances, are distinct from Mobilized Communities in that they do not have a collective identity at the outset of their organization to guide their organization and development of activist tactics and performance of activism overall. More than developing the collective identity, Emergent Crowds appear to have privileged the individual perspective within their discourses and actions. However, Emergent Crowds nevertheless demonstrated collective identity work, albeit in more limited ways, that marked their collectives with a collective sense of self. As a result, the more loosely defined and perceived collective identity seems to have impacted the development, evolution, and commitment of individuals to the crowd's campaigning efforts in specific ways. On the other hand, because the Mobilized Communities had community relationships, characteristics, and practices in place prior to the campaign periods, their protesting behaviors as part of and the longevity of the campaigns were directly influenced by their community identity. I will analyze the identity work engaged in by both types of collectives, and then discuss how the differential identity work impacted the development and enactment of specific campaign practices and behaviors.

### *Emergent Crowd Identity Work*

Emergent Crowds, because the impetus for the protests was an emergent market grievance, featured concerned consumers congregating for the first time together in a concentrated fashion via the online platforms, with little else beyond providing the basis for a collective identity to emerge. Furthermore, much like brand publics (Arvidsson and Caliandro 2016), these collectives appear to have used the instigating event (i.e., Applebee's firing decision and the Netflix price change) and the online platforms for the companies or those created in



response to these events to primarily air personal reactions to, opinions on, and individual actions taken relating to the event. The individual perspective appears to be present in the majority of posts and comments communicated in the Emergent Crowds, rather than the collective perspective overall.

For example, consumers in the Applebee's collective posted a range of personal attitudes towards the incident at hand, including reactions to the pastor's comments and behavior, the ethicality of Chelsea posting the receipt, Applebee's behavior in relation to the firing overall, the injustice of the tipping systems in the restaurant industry, the desired actions that should be taken at this point by Applebee's, and the individual's personal actions taken in response to the event and collective call to action. One consumer compiled a list of observations and reactions in his post on Applebee's, though failing to identify his own personal actions based on the collective's call to boycott:

*"I find it interesting the CEO of Applebees Mike Archer puts out a letter explaining why they fired Chelsea. The more I am reading about Applebees and their treatment of employees , the less I like. Poor Mike Archer only makes \$1, 723,844. a year !!! I wonder if he will send the Pator 10 % ? Poor Chelsea who makes peanuts becomes unemployed. Mike did you ever hear of a warning ? Why fire somebody over this. The Pastor was rude & cheap. So Applebees rewards bad behavior of its customers. I think Mike should step down as CEO and donate his money to the Truth in the World Deliverance Ministries Church. Perhaps he can take Alois out to lunch maybe the Olive Garden?" (Bruce Fritsch, February 2, 2011)*

Another consumer used the Facebook “Rehire Chelsea Welch” community forum as an opportunity to speak directly to Chelsea and offering advice to her, stating that “If Applebee’s offers her job back, honestly, I don’t think Chelsea should take it. I think a public apology from the pastor is more fitting. Chelsea shouldn’t want to work for a corporation that doesn’t stand behind an employee being treated with such hurt and disrespect. I hope you find another job Chelsea. And thank you for what you did. It opened people’s eyes about tipping and how a bad tip really can make a server take it personally” (Tiffany Vinson, February 2, 2011). Speaking more broadly about consumer behavior overall, one commenter posted that “If you cannot afford to tip 15 to 25% you should not be eating out. The servers do not make minimum wage and most do not have or can afford benefits” (Missy Kimsey, February 2, 2011). Thus, the range of comments varied greatly as individuals portrayed and communicated their individual perspectives on the issue at hand within the online platforms established for the collective campaign.

One consumer utilized the “Rehire Chelsea Welch” page to offer a counterpoint to the called for boycott. Rather than joining in to the boycott effort proposed in the collective, this family determined an alternative method for showing support to Chelsea Welch. Rather than lobbying for this strategy in the group, the poster simply stated their experience, informing other consumers about their individual rationale and actions:

*“After thinking long and hard about this. My family and I decided NOT to boycott our local Applebee’s. Although we feel that what that particular Applebee’s did to Chelsea was despicable, our local Applebee’s has always treated us very well. We have some of the most awesome servers there, and we have chosen to continue to support them by leaving 20% or more in tips and*

*writing on our receipts "We support Chelsea Welch.". The first time we did it our waitress told us that Applebee's corp gave all the employees a new copy of their privacy policy and made them sign something stating they received a copy of the policy, read it, understand what it means, and agree to abide by the policy. We told her that we were going to boycott Applebee's, but we didn't think the servers deserved to be punished for what the company did to Chelsea. These servers need their jobs and income too. She thanked us for the generous tip and for supporting Chelsea. We told her that she was an awesome waitress and deserved every penny. She told us how cool she thought it was for us to support Chelsea. As we were leaving, we noticed our waitress was showing our receipt to the other waitresses and pointing us out. They were all smiling and giving us the thumbs up. We feel this is the best way we can show our support for Chelsea." (Jodie Nemo Wright, February 6, 2011)*

The individual perspective was prominently on display within both the Applebee's Crowd and the Netflix Crowd. Within the Netflix group, many consumers likewise focused on their personal experiences with, feelings towards, and reactions to Netflix's decisions, highlighting their views on the ethicality, perceived lack of value, and overall failures in Netflix's methods of communicating about and handling the backlash from the price increase. Users often posted their views in relation to their longevity as a consumer with Netflix, using this as the rationale and basis for their upset reactions and opinions. One Twitter user posted "#dearNetflix – u should've come up with better pricing options for 5+ year subscribers – this is #notFair," (Janea Buckingham, July 14, 2011) suggesting that Netflix's new pricing structure should have taken into account the loyalty of their consumers. One commenter stated that "no,

it's not because you didn't "explain it" well enough. It's because I've been a loyal customer and this is how you treat me. 60% rate hike with no increase in value!" (Wayne Levitz, July 17, 2011) In the same conversation thread, another posted a multi-faceted reaction that highlighted not only her loyalty with the company, but how Netflix's actions seemed immoral given the current economic situation of many of their customers:

*"Guess what, Netflix? I've been a customer since 2005 and I'm quitting you just as you have "quit" countless customers like me by slapping us in the face with a ridiculous GREED-INDUCED rate increase. Shame on you. Especially during these harsh economic times when on good, relaxing thing people can rely on – watching movies at a decent price (while Netflix makes a tremendous profit) – is taken away. Your reasoning behind the decision makes absolutely NO SENSE. I guess you think we're all a bunch of DUMB putzes. Redbox, Hulu, BB and possibly others await my business." (April Ledford, July 17, 2011)*

It is therefore apparent that many consumers who congregated via these "community" specific online platforms utilized these opportunities as pedestals for broadcasting and airing their individual grievances, which in some cases would lead to actions that aligned with the call to action among the collective – though not always. Thus, there is evidence that Emergent Crowds retain and highlight the individual within the collective during campaign development and discourse.

However, in comparison to brand publics, the Emergent Crowds exhibited discussions and debates not only surrounding the issues at hand given individuals' personal perspectives, but also the tactics being proposed and advocated for by the majority of collective members and the desired outcomes for the collective's efforts. For example, in the Applebee's "Rehire Chelsea

Welch” community page, one consumer commented that an overall boycott for Applebee’s is not as effective a strategy at punishing the actual location that fired her. This poster noted that “keep mind that they are franchised. So in boycotting all of them you are actually having no effect on the location that fired her” (Dana Joyner, February 18, 2011). In response to this comment, another commenter defined what a franchise is, arguing that “if you boycott any tentacle of DineEquity you will effect them all” (Michael D Boyer, February 20, 2011), indicating that the overall boycotting method could and should still be effective as an avenue for effecting change in Applebee’s decision. Furthermore, debate surrounding the desired outcome for both collectives was discussed. In the Applebee’s forum, ideas were discussed as to whether the ideal outcome was Chelsea being rehired by Applebee’s, finding a job at a more deserving location, Applebee’s changing their firing and privacy policies, and Alois Bell – the pastor at the center of the firestorm – losing her position as a pastor. For the Netflix consumers, the most frequently mentioned desired outcome was the reversal in the price hike, though others stated they would be satisfied if their protests resulted in an increase in streaming content, a new tiered pricing plan based on loyalty, and so on.

From the various interactions and debates among consumers on the different Facebook pages, Twitter hashtag posts, and so on, it was apparent that though these consumers had little to no pre-existing connection to one another, more frequent contributors did forge - if only initial and minimally-connected - social links through communicating on the community platforms through their shared grievances and concerns. More than just simply retweeting comments or stating “I like,” these individuals actively engaged with one another and the comments being made, creating a dynamic dialogue that was specific to the group itself and the issue driving the collective. This indicates that interactions occurred within these collectives, and as a result,

generated a limited, loosely structured “group/we” mindset for some members, most often exhibited among the high contributors within the groups and those rallying to generate the coordinated, collective action.

From the “Anti-Netflix (Keep Streaming Free) Facebook group, the organizers posted comments such as “Our ‘Keep Streaming Free’ campaign is starting to pick up and gain followers who are upset with Netflix like we are! Don’t let Netflix take more from your wallet! “Like” us! We are stronger in numbers!” (Anti-Netflix, July 17, 2011) Others sought to maintain a positive group culture as new contributors and “trolls” joined in to the conversation, and by so doing, attempted to engage in community governance behaviors, as one commenter in the Netflix group demonstrates: “No, you don’t have to agree with anyone or anything. I do ask you, as a favor to the group, to dial back the rhetoric and name calling. It serves no purpose, mutes the message, and may discourage others with a legitimate message from posting. This thread, given its size, has been remarkably free of trolling and a lot of folks have worked to keep it that way. Express your message and outrage where it belongs, not at people you can’t purport to know” (Terri Lynn Coop, July 17, 2011).

Additionally, the frequent contributors attempted to establish and communicate what the community forums were aiming to accomplish and what they, as a group, were focusing their dialogue and efforts on, particularly in light of dissenters. For example, Terri Lynn Cooper, our watchdog contributor from above likewise commented to another individual, who had compared the Netflix price change to gas prices, that “there are also gazillion of threads and forums dedicated to gas prices. This thread is about Netflix. Nobody goes into a gas prices forum and says, ‘yeah, gas is high, but what about Netflix?’ Apples and oranges...” (Terri Lynn Coop, July 17, 2011). Furthering this comment thread, another contributor opined that “this thread is about a

company's business model change. It may not seem fair to you, as an open invitation to bash Netflix, BUT there are 731 some users who feel otherwise" (Mike Diaz, July 17, 2011). On the "Rehire Chelsea Welch" Facebook group, the group administrator posted the following, in an effort to further distinguish the intent of the group: "This is a SUPPORT page for the unfair dismissal of Chelsea from Applebees... If you don't support her you are in the wrong place and are complaining to the wrong people :-)." (February 7, 2011). These examples, among others, seems to indicate that, especially for frequent contributors to the collective conversation and efforts, there was the perspective that these groups established on these specific platforms were distinct from other groups, and existed for particular purposes.

In addition to discussing the nature of the groups and attempts to govern the comments therein in accordance with the perceived intents and aims of the groups, further identity work occurred in relation to establishing intended goals of the collectives, and in the case of irate Applebee's consumers, how those goals shifted over time. Initially, the "Rehire Chelsea Welch" Facebook page stated that its goal was to, not surprisingly, petition for and boycott Applebee's in order to have Applebee's rehire Ms. Welch. However, after a week passed, it was posted by the group administrator that "even though we are sure our original goal of getting Chelsea hired back is long gone -mainly because she has standards and she is worth more- we still want to make sure she gets hired by someone who will respect her and the other workers. We are also far from laying down and just accepting Applebees actions!" (February 5, 2011). Thus, it seems that establishing the goals, intents, and aims of the collective most likely further contributed to the development of the group's identity by cementing their central purpose for existing and reason for continued action.

From the data, there is therefore support for Melucci's conceptualization of a collective identity that an identity of some kind did form in the Emergent Crowds. Through the repeated interactions among the more principal contributors as they worked to define the desired outcomes, possible methods for attaining the outcome, and overall group culture, their comments lead to a somewhat defined, negotiated sense of the collective. However, in spite of the loosely formed "we" that did seem to form through continued and frequent contributions by some consumers, other markers of an active and established collective identity, such as the inclusion of rituals and community specific artifacts, were absent among the Emergent Crowds.

Further compounding the limited nature of the identity work among the collectives was the absence of a central hub or gathering space for the collective members to gather and new members to join in. With multiple petitions, Facebook groups, and Twitter hashtags used to signify allegiance to the cause overall, consumers in Emergent Crowds were dispersed among the different platforms for protesting against Applebee's and Netflix. Some community pages, such as the "Rehire Chelsea Welch" page, received more mentions and likes than others, but the sheer number of community outlets for participating in collective action against these companies likely hindered the development of a cohesive, coherent group identity. As such, I find that though these collectives did engage in some identity work, their identity building work was perhaps more limited in scope and application, thereby minimizing the impact that the group overall had on motivating consumers to join the fold, so to speak, and the adoption of the group mentality by individual consumers.

#### *Mobilized Community Identity Work*

Mobilized Communities, because they existed prior to their mobilization and campaigning efforts, exhibited significant identity work that not only established their



community bonds, culture, and identity before the campaigns began, but influenced the progression and direction of their activist efforts during and after the campaign periods. Consumers sharing the passion for the shows or product congregated prior to the campaign periods on specific forums and platforms to discuss and share their love of the show/product. Whether it was the network's forum, a website devoted to all things "Chuck," or the Flickr group discussion boards, consumers within these communities interacted with one another whether regularly or randomly as the individual case may be. However, interactions regarding the plotlines, pairings fans wanted to see, favorite lines on the show, how consumers wanted the seasons to end, the best film to use for each Polaroid camera, the ideal time period to utilize film before it started to warp abounded in these communities, generating not only frequent and heated discussions, but also began the negotiated process of identifying who the "we" is of these collectives.

Furthermore, consumers in all three Mobilized Communities transcended the online forums and platforms to meet in person, solidifying personal relationships that became the backbone of the organized campaigns of the collectives. The "Save Jericho" Rangers organized survival-esque camping retreats, in addition to congregating during fan conventions to sponsor their own table and recruit new viewers. The Polaroid Nerds held their "Nerd Outs" photography events in select cities, gathering together to simply enjoy one another's company as each used their Polaroid cameras to capture their views. The "Save Chuck" group, in conjunction with star Zachary Levi, established the Nerd Machine which hosted Nerd HQ, an ever-growing popular addition to the San Diego Comic Con experience, in which the nerds (whether or not they have tickets to the actual Comic Con) can gather, mingle, listen to panels organized by the Nerd HQ leaders, volunteer, and overall have a smashing good time one day out of the year. Campaign

leaders promoted these gathering opportunities, as seen for example on the “We Give a Chuck” website prior to the San Diego Comic Con:

*“So who’s ready to meet your fellow Chuck fans? Sure many of us talk online. We have chats across facebook or tweet back and forth, but it’s not often that we get the chance to gather in one spot and talk face to face. Many look to SDCC for the opportunity to do just that, but then there are panels to run off to or autographs to stand in line for. Where can you go to just hang out, grab a drink and toast to that fifth season we all wanted so badly? Well once again the Nerd Machine has us covered. This year they’ve agreed to host a special tweet up at the awesomeness that is Nerd HQ. The party begins at 8pm Saturday and will run until closing. Fun will be had, games will be played, an amazing time is pretty much guaranteed. So if you’re in the area, please stop by. We’d love to say hi to you! For more information on this special event, please follow [@NerdTweetUp](#). Hopefully, we’ll see you guys there!”(July 11, 2011)*

Not only did community members interact offline, and by so doing strengthen their social bonds with one another, but they created and shared both artifacts and rituals specific to and reflective of the community. For the “Save Jericho” community, it became a ritual for devoted members to jump onto the CBS forum page during and immediately after an episode aired to discuss the latest developments of the story. The Polaroid community routinely shared their favorite Polaroid shots with one another, creating a collective gallery of shots popular within the group. This gallery was codified and given even more structure and form during the “Save Polaroid” campaign, as part of the official SavePolaroid.com website was devoted to the gallery of shots submitted by the loyal community members.

When the crises hit the communities, there is significant evidence that the “we” that had been established prior to the emergent problems factored largely into the mobilization and campaigning efforts. Rather than posting one’s individual perspective, opinions, and reactions, such as was the case in the Emergent Crowds, conversations and actions shifted to a “what are we going to do” perspective, as main hubs emerged for the community to congregate. ChuckTV.net established the Renewal Headquarters section on their page, which became the center point for the “Watch Buy Share Write Win” campaign effort and the “We Give a Chuck” website for the second round of “Not a Nielsen Family” campaign, the “Jericho” forum on CBS’ message boards, and the SavePolaroid.com established early on in the Polaroid campaign served as the main hubs for the campaign activities and strategic discussions. Sharing, debating, and promoting ideas and tactics that would facilitate achieving the collective aims became the cornerstone of the communities during the campaign period. Community members drew on the identity markers that separated the communities from others in order to distinguish not only themselves, but their campaign efforts in the marketplace.

### **Leadership & Organizational Structure**

The overall organizational structure of the activist groups exhibit a similarity between the Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities in terms of the high number of contributors within the collectives. However, whereas the Emergent Crowds exhibited a decentralized, more anonymous leadership base, a finding that supports Gladwell’s (2010) contention that online collectives engaged in activist work lack the necessary leadership and strong network structure overall to be effective in their goal attainment, the Mobilized Communities developed more central, visible, and strategically-minded elite leadership groups that became gatekeepers to

campaign tactics and guardians of the group itself, generating the greatest quantity and quality of contributions within the campaign initiatives.

Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities both had significant numbers of contributors to their efforts and in the development of the collectives. This is not a surprising result, given that consumer campaigns and social movements overall, are considered to be significantly more successful when larger numbers of consumers fight for the same cause. The effort at and focus on recruitment efforts to spread the word of the campaigns to as many consumers as possible consistent among all five of the case sites. This, in combination with the use of online platforms that enable large numbers of consumers to gather together around specific causes and interests, generated responses to the calls to action from a wide range of consumers across the nation and in some cases, the world. Commenters on forums, Twitter, within campaign-specific websites, and to online petitions came out in droves to participate in the collectives and in support of the causes identified. The Netflix collective saw over 74,000 comments produced within approximately three days of the price hike announcement. A petition for rehiring Chelsea Welch through change.org led to just under 2,956 signatures, in addition to numerous additional comments included with the petition. The “Save Jericho” community was able to send over 20 *tons* of nuts to CBS within a month’s period, a monumental effort that was based on thousands of individual contributors. The “Save Chuck” campaign, in the words of Entertainment Weekly TV pundits Lynette Rice and James Hibberd, had the capability to “blow up Twitter” based on the massive response the “Not a Nielsen Family” campaign generated. The “Save Polaroid” community received hundreds of photo submissions to their gallery, and thousands of comments in the Flickr group discussion threads regarding the “Save Polaroid”

initiatives. The numbers demonstrate that the participation in these campaign efforts was quite numerous and spread among a high number of contributors.

However, though the collectives within each case site demonstrated their might in numbers, it was the Mobilized Communities who likewise exhibited a core group of elite leaders who were tasked – or rather, tasked themselves – with the campaign efforts and well-being of the collective overall. Though the rise of the leadership structure within Mobilized Communities will be discussed at length in the subsequent chapter, it is important to note that the existence of and adherence of the collective to the leadership core that arose particularly during the campaigning periods changed the direction of and impacted the development of the campaigns. The leadership groups often relied heavily on prior participation with each other via the forums and community pages, such that when the crises hit, they were able to call on one another – having established relationships, trust, and appreciation for each other’s passion and zeal towards the core product – to quickly and efficiently mobilize themselves in order to ultimately mobilize the troops under their command. Leaders were also tied to their involvement with and development of community-specific sites, such as ChuckTV.net, which existed prior to the “Save Chuck” campaign efforts. However, leaders also rose up the ranks not only from their contributions before the campaigns existed, but also from the quality and popularity of their ideas among the masses of the contributors. This was Zoe’s experience, as she rose up the community ranks to join the core leadership group of the “Save Chuck” organizers, based on her “Finale and a Footlong” idea that gained significant popularity among the fans very quickly.

The leaders within the collectives acted as gatekeepers to the group and particularly to the collective, acting as a not-so-silent force in an “official” capacity recognized in the groups, directing activities and ensuring that all initiatives fit with the collective vision and strategy. For

example, Marie posted on the ChuckTV Renewal HQ forum that though the Finale and a Footlong idea had been posted by Zoe on the forum and main site, she (Marie) “removed them both. As I told her, while the idea is creative and might have potential, it does muddy the waters. We’re focusing the campaign as already outlined to keep it simple.” It was only after Zoe simplified the idea did it get the go-ahead from Marie and her leadership cohort to be included in the “Watch Buy Share Write Win” campaign as the “Buy” component. Often within the forums for “Save Chuck,” Marie would post on behalf of her leadership team, soliciting ideas from the masses for ideas to complement the ideas “we’ve been working on for keeping up the Save Chuck momentum and drawing more viewers for the (hoped for) third season.” This further indicates that the leadership core was the driving force behind the strategic choices and direction of the campaigns themselves.

Individual contributors would also wait for the “official” campaign material to come from the leaders as distributed through the main campaign hubs, as evidenced in the “Save Polaroid” community when one commenter wanted to spread the word about the campaign via a street team, and posted that “I wasn’t sure if there was already an official flier (or something else) in the works” (KnobbyKneez, February 24, 2008). In response, a Save Polaroid group founder stated that “there will be a downloadable PDF “Action Pack” on savepolaroid.com in a few days. It will include postcard form letters to polaroid, fuji, ilford, fliers, etc” (traskblueribbon, February 24, 2008). Leaders were also consulted for their advice and/or permission by other community members in regards to strategies and activities they wanted to engage in as part of the overall collective effort. In the “Save Polaroid” group, once again, this deference to the established leaders was shown when one commenter wanted to create Save Polaroid t-shirts, but rather than just doing so, he posted that while he was trying to gauge interest, “I’ve sent an E-mail to the

Save Polaroid website to ask for permission, but I haven't gotten anything back yet” (Zac Henderson, March 16, 2008). The response from the “official” Save Polaroid leadership team came quickly: “Sorry we didn't get back to you. You just sent it yesterday and sometimes it takes us a while to respond. We actually talked about this today and we're going to do some "official" ones with the winged SX-70 logo that Trask designed” (tubes, March 16, 2008). Even so, the leader also suggested that since the design would not be trademarked, creating one’s own t-shirt would be more than fine and actually encouraged. Consequently, there is evidence that the leadership core of these Mobilized Communities played a significant role in structuring the subsequent activities taken by individuals and by the collective as a whole. Interestingly, though the number of members within the collectives appears to have risen significantly over the course of the campaigns, the power and “official” perception of the leaders does not appear to be significantly changed. Rather, the core leaders seem to have maintained their status and power over the collective, even as the numbers swelled. This may be in part because of the clear direction given to new recruits as they learned about and were indoctrinated into the collective and campaign.

Emergent Crowds, on the other hand, did not exhibit a leadership group within the collectives. Rather, their “leaders” were tied to those who created the pages or groups that facilitated the collectives gathering. These individuals did not appear to be working with or connected to other specific consumers, but were operating based on their individual convictions and zeal for the cause at hand. The identified tactics to pursue for the campaigns were primarily influenced by these initial calls to action, whether it was boycotting, petitioning, or letter-writing/tweeting/emailing, with little subsequent input or direction in terms of possible complementary or supplementary tactics. As a result, leadership was seen primarily in relation to

being an administrator or originator of the community pages/sites/petitions, but this lack of a central, strong leadership generated a void of direction that likely contributed to the wide ranging debates and discussions among many consumers regarding the preferred and most effective tactics to follow as a group that were evidenced in the Emergent Crowds, as well as the ultimate campaign efforts and behaviors exhibited.

### **Comparing Campaign Efforts & Behaviors**

After comparing the identity work and leadership structure of Emergent Crowds versus Mobilized Communities, it becomes apparent that the performance of activism differed between the two distinct collective types in systematic ways. In particular, activist performances were distinct in terms of (1) the time and effort required to be considered part of the group, as well as the overall longevity of the campaigns, (2) the recruitment efforts to the collective, (3) the innovative activities included within the campaign efforts aimed to not only capture the group identity but also reward group contributions and further motivate action, and (4) the desire to form alliances between the collective and outside entities.

#### *Time Commitment, Effort, and Overall Longevity of Campaigns*

For Emergent Crowds, where member adoption of the collective identity and motivation to join the collective overall appeared to be lower and more individually situated, the time commitments and contributions required to be considered “part” of the collective were likewise much less intensive than what was asked of the devoted Mobilized Community followers. As an extension of this difference, it appears that overall longevity of the campaigns was likewise impacted by the level of commitment that individuals exhibited to the collective itself and the campaigning efforts overall. Being part of the Emergent Crowds appears to have simply been a function of stating one’s intent to join and following a call to action of the group promoted by the



majority of the group. Because the protest tactics primarily involved boycotts, letter-writing/emailing/posting online, and signing online petitions, the individual commitment to engage in these activities was fairly minimal in terms of both time and energy required. Thus, Emergent Crowds seemed to privilege and encourage primarily actions that occurred online, rather than those that would also traverse into the offline world, with the exception of the boycotting behaviors. As such, Emergent Crowds required very little in terms of inspiring other changes in the consumer's already established behaviors in the "real world," beyond switching restaurants or video rental services. Consumers could also quickly and easily opt out of the collective, simply disappearing off the boards or after signing one's name to a petition, free to resume life as normal.

As a result, participation in the Emergent Crowds was quite transitory and fluid, dependent on the level of motivation that one individually felt in relation to the group's calls to action. Because consumers appear to have experienced minimal ties to the collective and overall responsibility to act in a sustained, engaged way, the campaigns were limited in terms of their longevity overall. The Applebee's campaign went full force with a flurry of activity for approximately two weeks, and then slowly petered out. The Netflix campaign efforts were more prolonged, given that the price hike announcement came approximately two months before the change was intended to take place. However, even though the engagement continued over the two month window, the majority of the action and discussion in the collective was limited to approximately a two to three week period of intense activity.

On the other hand, being part of the Mobilized Communities' campaigning efforts required more time, energy, and effort overall from the professed members of the group. In part because the collectives had firmly established central identities, this required members to not

only self-identify with the group (Chucksters, Nerds, Rangers, etc.), but by so doing, adopt all of the tactics being propagated as the key protesting strategies for the group. This required time and effort for an individual to stay up to date on the strategies and actively engaged in the collective's efforts as they evolved, creating a heavier burden of responsibility and action for invested consumers. Mobilized Communities – most likely as a by-product of the time and overall commitment to the group and cause – were likewise seen to engage in activities that occurred both online and offline, rather than confining their protest work to what could be accomplished through online means.

One “Chuck” fan stated “I've written to Angela Bromstad and Ben Silverman at NBC, as well as Bill Schettini at Subway, the show's sponsor. I'll be buying footlong sandwiches from Subway the night of the season finale. I own the season 1 DVD and preordered the second season from amazon. I even sent Nerds candy to the NBC execs. I've emailed my girlfriends about the show and even told the women working at the post office about it as I priority mailed the letters to NBC” (tscoggins, April 22, 2009). Another posted their series of activities they engaged in over a 24 hour period: “I did my due diligence yesterday - I bought a \$5 Footlong, filled out a comment form, called friends, and watched "Chuck v. the Ring" live. After work, this afternoon, I'll do more. I'm keeping my fingers crossed for a season 3 renewal” (PurpleBeverage, April 28, 2009). Participating in a minimal fashion in these campaigns was not for the faint-hearted or those not fully invested in the community. As Mark put it in one of his posts on the ChuckTV forum: “if people thought Chuck fans were being annoying at times pushing for their show, they are going to wish we would all die if NBC cancels it. I am not kidding when I say we have to go to war for Chuck. Quit your job. Quit school. Leave your family. We are on a

mission. All that matters is Chuck” (April 22, 2009). To be part of this community and this campaign meant commitment, energy, effort, and enthusiasm on the part of the devoted.

By committing one’s self to the cause at hand and adopting the collective’s identity as part of one’s own, this seems to have also impacted the longevity of the campaigns. Collective efforts extended well beyond the renewal period window for “Chuck” and “Jericho,” as engaged community members felt the obligation to continue campaigning on behalf of their beloved show, even renewing their primary campaigning efforts once the show resumed its broadcast schedule during the new seasons. In the “Save Polaroid” camp, though insta-film was brought back by The Impossible Project, community members continued to work to raise awareness about insta-film and hold in-person photography events for fellow community members. The campaigning efforts were therefore individually and collectively sustained for a much longer period, in comparison to the Emergent Crowds’ experience, most likely due to the devotion and commitment not only to the product/show, but to the collective itself. Furthermore, the communities themselves lived on far beyond the cancellation of their products. “Save Jericho” continues to maintain its Facebook page and Comic Con attendance as a group, as does the “Save Chuck” community.

Furthermore, it is important to note and as will be seen subsequently, the commitment to the cause factor seems to not only be influenced by individual adoption and alliance with the collective identity, but also in turn has an influence in conjunction with collective identity strength on the recruitment, creative, and alliance work exhibited through the Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities campaigns. Thus, collective identity and commitment to the cause likely work in tandem to further impact the performance of activism within consumer collectives.

### *Recruitment Efforts*

The recruitment efforts seemed to vary significantly between Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Community, particularly in relation to the group's identity and commitment of its members to the collective and cause. For Emergent Crowds, recruitment efforts were limited in scope. By and large, those advocated for recruitment to the cause promoted sharing the efforts of the collective through the online platforms' specific methods, such as "liking," "re-tweeting," posting a status on one's wall, and so on. Recruitment efforts to the group were therefore limited to simply sharing the information among one's social network, rather than actively engaging in practices that would educate, persuade, and indoctrinate new consumers into the collective fold.

Conversely, Mobilized Communities incorporated active recruitment efforts aimed at not only spreading awareness of, but giving potential new consumers reasons to join in the collective's efforts. The "Save Polaroid" community promoted the "Action Pack" provided on the savepolaroid.com website, as well as spreading "the word any way you can – use Digg, blog about it, flier your school, local film lab, make a stupid chain e-mail/letter...anything" (traskblueribbon, February 24, 2008). Both the "Save Jericho" and "Save Chuck" communities promoted mentioning one's affiliation to the community and cause on the social media feeds, particularly as the showed was being watched. However, they advocated not only discussing one's own personal experiences, but also promoted the idea of linking back to the collective and the identity of the group overall as lovers of this particular show. One avid poster suggested on the ChuckTV Renewal Headquarters page, "So, in order to help Chuck getting more viewers, praise is not the only thing required. We need something catchy and that's instantly recognizable as Chuck to go viral on youtube, facebook, myspace, twitter, etc. to help out with the 'Watch season 3 campaign'" (bztang, May 17, 2009) The group needed to not only raise awareness of the

show, but its collective campaigning efforts in a way that distinguished the campaign from other collectives engaged in similar efforts.

Beyond this, however, each community encouraged their fans to actively and creatively look for opportunities to reach out and engage potential audiences with the show, collective, and campaign. For the “Save Jericho” community, this included advocating passing out official “Jericho” business cards to places one frequents, wearing a “Jericho” t-shirt to spark conversations with others, and even making a sign in your car window about “Jericho” ([Savingjericho.com](http://Savingjericho.com)).

The “Save Chuck” community took this creative recruitment mentality even further, calling for their followers to share their love of “Chuck” with their friends and family, not only by talking about it, but also buying individual seasons and episodes and gifting them to potential viewers and then directing them to the ChuckTV campaign headquarters to learn more about the campaign and collective overall. As Zoe noted in a forum post, “I want to use the networking power of Facebook to ask the group members to bring in new viewers, but I think it's best to make ChuckTV.net the hub that we relay all the FB members back to so that we're consolidating our strength.” The act of consolidating the online presence is a major distinguishing factor between Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities that will be discussed later in this findings section, however it is important to note that for the recruitment efforts, a singular presence online in order to teach about the collective and campaign, as well as to direct new communities members efforts was recognized as a necessary component to this collective’s strategy.

Furthermore, the “Save Chuck” members recognized that inherent in the difficulty of recruiting new viewers was the necessity of developing a succinct, persuasive pitch that captured

the essence of the show – and by extension, the collective itself. One commenter noted this complication, stating that “A lot of people have never heard of the show, or have no idea what it is about. Many of the posters on these forums and others, as part of the renewal campaign, told people the show was hard to describe and they needed to just try it and find out” (Lirian, May 18, 2009). The solution presented to this problem was the creation of a 2-5 minute introduction-to-Chuck video that would introduce the major characters, plot, illustrate different genre aspects of the show, demonstrate the “geeky nerd elements that we love so much,” and ultimately be entertaining to the new viewer. By so doing, it was reasoned that new viewers would be able to quickly catch on to the quality and entertainment value of the show, which would in turn facilitate their joining in the collective and campaign efforts.

One “Chuck” community member decided to utilize her knitting blog and the social connections she had formed therein to facilitate recruitment to the community by offering a contest on her blog that would require interested individuals to watch the “Chuck” premiere and answer questions about the premiere. She offered to supply prizes of both the knitting variety (to appeal to her readers) as well as a copy of “Chuck” season 1 to hopefully turn the lucky winner into a “Chuck” fan. Mobilized Community members therefore went the extra mile to activate their social networks and incentivize potential converts to give the show a try, thereby upping the potential for new viewers to join in the fight and the community overall.

In summary, it would appear that the presence of a strong central identity or lack thereof, as the case may be, may have been a contributing factor in the recruitment efforts and practices exhibited within Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities. Furthermore, the specific ideas and ways in which the recruitment efforts were carried out varied depending on the identity of the group, with the more established Mobilized Communities pushing the boundaries of expected

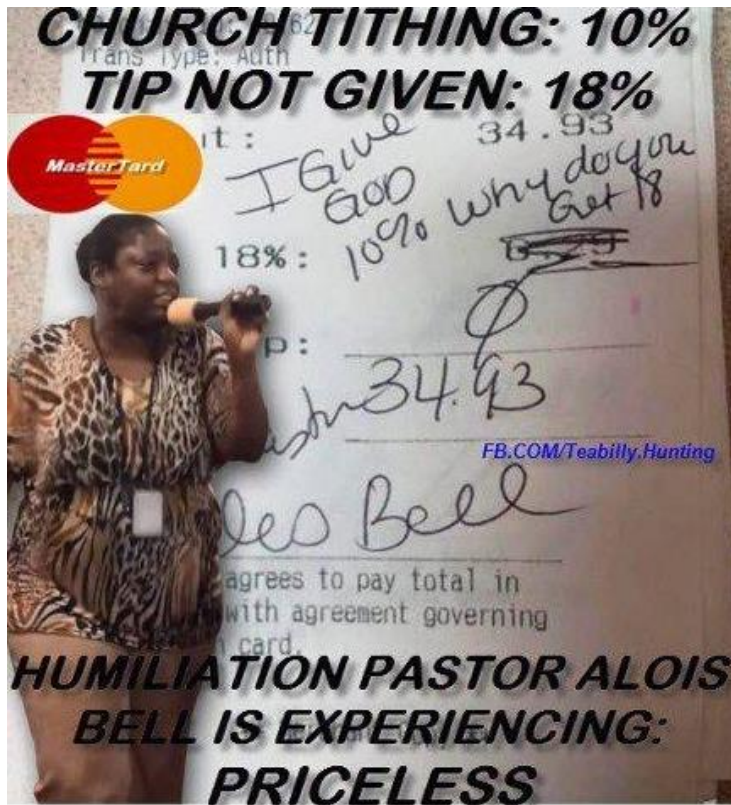
recruitment efforts to innovate these practices given the nature of the collective and focal product/show at the center of the collective.

### *Creative Work*

With respect to Emergent Crowds, because their collectives lacked a strong, cohesive central identity adopted by their group members and commitment to the cause that would encourage and foster creative efforts unique to the group and provide the motivation for spending significant time in innovative contributions, very little creativity was exhibited within the collective with respect to their central tactics and overall contributions to the campaign effort and collective itself. It would appear that the lack of identity work beyond the negotiated meanings and aims of the collectives limited the scope of creative measures taken by Emergent Crowds during the campaigning periods and failed to provide the needed motivation to expand the bounds of creative contributions by the concerned consumers. The creative work that was displayed represented work that tied directly into the cause at hand. For example, funny, topical memes were posted and shared among the collectives, such as the seen in the figure below:

**Figure 2: Emergent Crowds' Shared Memes**





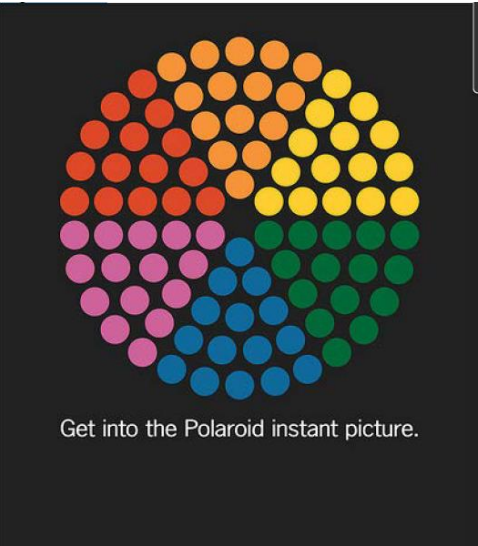


However, additional creative work beyond the creating and sharing of these memes was minimally present in Emergent Crowds. Furthermore, the creativity, as shown in the examples, did not reflect the collective as whole and the identity of the collective as a distinct, unique group. Rather, it further emphasized the individual grievances and perspectives taken on the emergent issues driving the collective efforts.

In comparison, Mobilized Communities appeared to have embraced their collective identity and used this as the driving force behind creative protest efforts and supporting activities in the campaign, and these activities were encouraged by the collective leaders to adhere to the collective identity. The inclusion of collective artifacts, rituals, and other collective identity markers seems to have created a foundation and catalyst for creative innovation not only in the recruitment efforts as demonstrated above, but in the overall level of creativity displayed in the activities and contributions within the Mobilized Communities' campaigns and during the campaigning periods. More detail will follow in the subsequent section regarding how Mobilized Communities adapted the codified protest tactics to fit with their collective and developed their own online platforms to serve the campaign initiatives, but their creative efforts extended beyond the codified protest tactics and platforms for communication. Furthermore, the collective identity served as the touchstone for ensuring that all creative work was representative of and unique to the collective as a group and the aims they were attempted to achieve. For example, the "Save Polaroid" group developed t-shirts that they sold as a way to not only fund their campaign as a collective but also to promote their group. Members were encouraged to purchase the t-shirts and to wear them during the "Polaroid Nerd-out" photography sessions that were organized by community members, tapping into the rituals already in place with the community. Designs

varied, and individuals were free to create their own, leading to a number of consumers submitting designs and ideas for their own shirts, as seen below:

**Figure 3: Consumer Created Designs for “Save Polaroid” T-Shirts**



Community members debated the designs as the best ways to encapsulate the product, campaign, and collective. With the “Get into the Polaroid instant picture” design, for example,

when the creator first posted it, other members suggested that though it was a lovely poster, “it’s something I can imagine being used as an advert for this ‘zink’ technology. It just feels very modern,” (Alex Springer, March 28, 2008) and that though they liked the image, “it’s not ‘save polaroid.’ It looks like an advert for a product that’ll be around for a while” (Warren Powell, March 28, 2008). Based on the feedback, the creator revised his creation into the design posted above. Another poster submitted her cartoon that she created and posted on her personal accounts, as part of her effort to raise awareness of the campaign:

**Figure 4: Consumer Created Comic Strip for “Save Polaroid”**



Within the “Save Chuck” community, members found creative methods that not only drew on their collective identity, but worked to reinforce it and to further motivate individuals to participate in the strategic tactics within the campaign. A key part to the original “Watch Buy Share Write Win” campaign, for example, was a giveaway through ChuckTV.net in which the lucky winners had a chance to win a “Chuck” goodie bag. To enter to win, interested individuals could post comments on the giveaway page stating they had written a letter to NBC, posted a

link to the campaign on their social media feeds, Tweeted about the contest, sharing “official” “Save Chuck” banners online, and/or indicate that they had purchased a Subway Footlong sandwich for the finale of “Chuck.” The prizes for the giveaway included not only “Chuck” season 1 on DVD, but a “Chuck” comic book, “Chuck” swag bag from the previous year’s Comic Con, and a Nerd Herd t-shirt – the Nerd Herd being the equivalent to Best Buy’s Geek Squad in “Chuck,” where Chuck the character had his day job. This creative and fun giveaway not only further promoted recruitment efforts, but also worked to inspire additional action among the collective and utilized the desired artifacts that were popular within the collective. The “Save Jericho” community also created business cards intended to be passed to local business and to other potential consumers, which were available for download through the SavingJericho.com site, and evoked the bleak, no frills mood that encapsulated the show’s apocalyptic feel:

**Figure 5: “Save Jericho” Pass Along Cards**



Thus, the creativity and innovation displayed in Emergent Crowds vs. Mobilized Communities varied greatly, thus impacting the campaigning efforts developed and enacted.

### *Alliance Formation*

Generating and adopting a cohesive, well-formed collective identity and a clear leadership structure appears to have impacted the desire to and ultimate development of alliances external to the collectives during their campaign periods. The evidence of and intentions to form

new market relationships, including alliances with other market entities in order to boost access to desirable resources or co-creative relationships, appears to be primarily a concern raised in Mobilized Communities. This is likely in part due to the Mobilized Communities' focus of how can "we" be more successful as a group in our campaigning efforts as propagated by the central collective leaders, rather than the predominant individual-orientation evidenced in the Emergent Crowds. By highlighting and working from the collective perspective, Mobilized Communities sought to expand their resource pool and establish ties outside of the collective that would further enhance the campaign. The range of opportunities relating to external alliance formation within Mobilized Communities included working with other fan communities (e.g., Whedonites or Star Trekkies), industry insiders and media sources, as well as organizations who were or could be interested in engaging in marketing efforts with the target company. These alliance formation efforts will be discussed in further depth in the next chapter, as it relates more specifically to how Mobilized Communities altered their structure in relation to the campaigning efforts. However, it is important to note the alliance-forming distinction between Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities as a factor most likely tied to the central identity of the collective.

Emergent Crowds, rather than working to actively establish and promote alliances to become part of the extended collective structure, drew on external sources as ways to educate their new commenters, legitimize their efforts, and publicize their successes. Sharing and quoting articles written in popular media news outlets, such as the Huffington Post, CNN, Business Insider, The Guardian, and AOL News, for example, proved to be method for demonstrating the might of the collective in the respective fights against Applebee's and Netflix. One Netflix user frequently posted articles and snippets of the articles in the collective forum, such as "Dear Netflix" was a top trending topic, with tweets such as, "Dear Netflix, your new prices make

going to the movies look affordable," "Dear Netflix: Are you trying to save Blockbuster?" "Goodbye red envelopes, hello red boxes," and the often retweeted, "Dear Netflix, As much as we love the 'cerebral romantic comedy documentaries' genre you suggested, paying double is insane. k thx bai" – as quoted from AOL's Small Business news. Posting these articles may have been intended to generate more collective action and momentum in the campaigning efforts. Likewise, by promoting and publicizing media articles within the collective, it may similarly act as a form of legitimization for the concerns that comprised the heart of the collective overall by indicating that the issues at the center of the fight have received a cultural and popular stamp of approval. Posting articles also provided the opportunity to educate new voices in the conversation, such as in the Applebee's group, and serve as the foundation for their own comments. However, other than posting articles within the collective's forums, little to no efforts were made to actively interface with and establish relationships with outside entities, whether media outlets or individual reporters, other organizations in the industry, or other consumer collectives. In short, Emergent Crowds campaigns were limited to actions and discussions among just their concerned consumers, rather than expanding the boundaries of the collective to include potentially well-connected, influential entities in their fight.

### **Utilization of Codified Protest Tactics**

The application of codified, institutionalized protest tactics and utilization of cumulative protest knowledge in developing the consumer campaigns appears to differ significantly between Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities. Although both types of collectives exhibited codified protest tactics in their campaigns- specifically boycotts, buycotts, petitions, and letter-writing- the level of dependence on the tactic in its traditional form versus creative liberties taken to innovate the protest tactics with relation to the collective and the market varied between the

Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities. Furthermore, Emergent Crowds appear to advocate using a mixture of protest methods with little integration or coordination among the tactics, whereas Mobilized Communities appear to actively work to integrate the tactics in creating a cohesive campaign. Emergent Crowds also demonstrate a limited application of cumulative protest knowledge, as protest-savvy consumers' individual experiences were used as a source to motivate other consumers to act and to instruct the less enlightened as to the "proper" and more effective ways to protest. Conversely, Mobilized Communities appear to have consciously and strategically drawn on their individual knowledge of previous campaigns and their overall cumulative protest knowledge from consumer culture as an impetus and catalyst for further innovation in their campaigning efforts.

#### *Emergent Crowds & Protest Tactics*

Emergent Crowds appear to rely heavily on codified protest tactics to serve as the main strategic methods for their campaigns, with little to no innovation or creative efforts taken that would make the tactics well-suited to the collective or reflect the unique situation at hand. Specifically, boycotts appear to be the main tactic of choice to start the protest efforts, with letter-writing and petitioning being further advocated among the collective as the boycotts progress.

In the Netflix crowd, consumers rallied around the call to boycott Netflix, with multiple Facebook pages popping up during the campaigning periods supporting this call to punish the company for their undesirable actions. In the description of one such group, "Boycott Netflix Price Increases," it says that "this page was started to send a message to Netflix regarding the new price structure. We are not OK with the price of our plans doubling within the past year. If we can get enough people to join and cancel their subscriptions maybe Netflix will change there

price increase.” For the Applebee’s collective, consumers likewise rallied around the idea of a boycott to demonstrate their anger at Applebee’s seemingly contradictory and unfair treatment of the fired waitress, Chelsea Welch. On the most prominent Facebook group page, “Hire Back Chelsea Welch,” the description of the community was to “show your support for the Applebee’s server that was fired for outing a cheap pastor,” with subsequent posts indicating that the primary way in which the community could do so was by boycotting the Applebee’s organization as a whole, as well as other organizations that the Applebee’s parent company also owns.

Irate consumers who joined the crowds rallied around the idea of a boycott, often stating their own individual intent to boycott, with the rationale for their decision in some cases provided. For example, one Applebee’s protester stated that it was “time to boycott Applebees. They would not let someone steal from their company but are more than happy to fire a employee who complains when a customer steals from them. Yes, not tipping is the same as stealing. It is not just cheap or ignorant, it is THEFT!!!” (Elizabeth Eden, February 8, 2011). Another concerned customer posted that “Boycotting is in order. What you're saying is that your customers have the right to flagrantly walk all over your staff. The customer is always right, until they're dead wrong. Never actually heard the woman apologize during her interview either. A write up maybe, but firing the employee is downright ridiculous” (Steven Twomey, February 7, 2011). For Netflix, angry consumers often referenced the injustice of the price hike, particularly given the lack of upgraded content and services to warrant the price hike. One commenter emphatically stated in her post on the Netflix’s home page, “WENT ALONG TIME WITH OUT CABLE OR NETFLIX, WITH THE PRICE OF NETFLIX GOING UP AND BASIC CABLE AROUND \$20 MAYBE ITS TIME TO GO BACK TO BASIC CABLE AND WITH SOME MUCH OFFER ON THE NET, I SEE PLENTY OF REASON NOT TO HAVE NETFLIX. 60%



RAISE IN RATES AND NO CUSTOMER LOYALTY JUST BLOWS. GREED WILL BE YOUR DOWN FALL. BOYCOTT NETFLIX! I COULD SEE PAYING FOR STREAMING IF THERE WAS ANYTHING THERE TO WATCH, BUT AFTER A WEEK YOU HAVE SEEN EVERYTHING YOU WOULD WANT TO WATCH, UNLESS YOU HAVE KIDS WHO WATCH CARTOONS. I AM DROPPING NETFLIX.” (Charles Johnston, July 23, 2011)

The insight into consumers’ rationale for joining in the boycotts was useful both to the collective and the target company. To the collective, identifying the rationale acted as a driving force behind subsequent recruitment efforts, as new consumers joining the crowd responded to and seconded the reasons stated for boycotting- in some cases, retweeting or copying the rhetoric on other mediums. This also served to further promote the boycott cause. Highlighting the rationale also likely served as a way to further commit the protesters to stick with the fight, by elucidating their logical or emotional reasons for joining the fight.

For the company, an analysis of the rationale provided by consumers in Emergent Crowds also could draw attention to areas or discrepancies in their actions, products, or services that may have led to the boycott gaining popular steam and acceptance, as well as highlight potential solutions for addressing the protesters’ concerns. In the case of Netflix, for example, because numerous consumers identified the fact that the price hike was most egregious and upsetting because of the lack of new content or upgraded catalogues that would make the streaming service worth the significant price jump, this information could have been used by Netflix to re-evaluate their price-service relationship in order to determine what they could do increase the perceived value for their consumer base. Applebee’s consumers often cited, as seen above, the perception that Applebee’s was not loyal to their employee in the face of a rude customer – a move that was considered unethical by many. Furthermore, observant protesters

also highlighted the fact that Applebee's rationale for the firing decision was in part because the sharing of their customers' personal information (e.g., a signature on a receipt) is in direct violation of their privacy policy. However, observant consumers noted an important discrepancy that raised significant red flags:

*"This VERY SAME Applebees location posted other receipt notes from patrons, except those were complimentary notes (although the privacy issue would be the same). These were quickly removed from the stores Facebook page when Chelsea was fired. Screen shots of these and other Applebees receipt notes have been posted here by myself and others. So, vote for privacy and fire the rest who have posted notes. I believe once you address a note or letter to someone, it's their note to do what they want with it. Notes are not given with the belief that the recipient will not share the contents with others! Restaurant notes on receipts from many different establishments are all over online. This is not an uncommon event. it's only an issue when the customer is a jerk and shows that trait to the world! Had she written "Thanks for the great service" and the note got posted that any of this would have happened? NO. So it's NOT a privacy issue, or a policy issue, because clearly the Applebees policy is "happy notes can be posted, while grumpy notes or notes from jerks and fools are privacy violations". (Tim Verthein, February 2, 2011)*

This inconsistency and discrepancy between Applebee's behaviors was problematic for a number of consumers – an insight that could have led to Applebee's reframing their discourse regarding the firing, or at least acknowledging that their company is revisiting their privacy policies in light of the controversies.

In some cases, other consumers extended their comments beyond their own individual commitment to and rationale in joining the boycott by encouraging one another to follow suit and to keep the boycott momentum alive, whether it was the refusal to go to Applebee's or suspend their Netflix accounts in protest. One Netflix consumer cheered on others to "pass the word to everyone you know to put their accounts on hold. post it on your facebook.G+ and everywhere," (Sharod Kelly, July 13, 2011) whereas another posed the situation as "Fact: Complaining on twitter about price bump wont make a difference. Cancelling your subscription is the only msg theyll get" (Jon Goetz, July 13, 2011). Applebee's users on Facebook likewise exhibited energetic zeal in promoting the boycott, posting comments such as "Boycott Applebees foods! Don't listen to their ads! What customers they still have enticed, we will not be silenced!" (Matthew Bunker, March 25, 2011). Posting comments and recommendations such as these within the Crowds' gathering spaces worked to spread awareness of and actual action among other, perhaps less committed or on-the-fence, consumers. These types of posts also attempted to continue the protesting zeal for the cause at hand beyond a momentary post or complaint.

Consumers in the Emergent Crowds also advocated writing letters, whether physical or electronic, and petitioning in addition to their boycott efforts. From the Facebook group "Boycott Applebee's for Chelsea Welch," the page moderator called on all the followers to email the man behind the firing decision, asking others to "please help me in flooding his email with comments," and providing his contact information. One commenter on Twitter for the Netflix crowd likewise attempted to energize others to write letters, stating "Don't let #Netflix blow off your Tweets. Call or fax them. Here are names, titles, numbers, address" (Rake Morgan, July 13, 2011) and provided the link for this information. This commenter likewise emphatically encouraged fellow consumers to "Stop whining, start acting! Contact #Netflix management,

express your feelings!” On the “Netflix Sucks” page, one consumer attempted to galvanize the troops to action: “Everyone please write AND call! We can show corporations that we won’t take accept GREED as an everyday part of commerce. Consumers the power of the wallet. Let’s make them remember that!” (Dana Adams, July 13, 2011) It would appear that these consumers felt that letter-writing in any form still carries weight during protest efforts and could be an effective way to achieve their ultimate objectives, so long as enough consumers joined in the letter-writing effort. This contingent issue is apparent, as the comments relayed above move beyond simply providing contact information to facilitate writing, but rather use rhetoric that attempts to encourage action by others. Petitioning, much like letter-writing, was a part of the Emergent Crowds’ protests, albeit in a more limited way. Multiple petitions were created through petitioning services such as change.org on behalf of both Emergent Crowds’ campaigning efforts, advocating for Netflix to drop their pricing changes and for Applebee’s to rehire Chelsea Welch. However, it would seem that support via the petitions was rather limited in scope, with most petitions failing to gather the desired number of signatures.

In analyzing the tactical choices and the subsequent enactment within the Emergent Crowds, two key insights arise. First, Emergent Crowds appear to rely on the codified protest tactics in their institutionalized forms. Little to no effort was made by the two Emergent Crowds to evolve the tactics in relation to the collective itself, the situation or target company at hand, or the market itself. Rather, Emergent Crowds seem to simply utilize tactics as they have traditionally been done, with some adjustments made based on the online arena in which they primarily occur (e.g., using change.org to facilitate petitioning or emailing rather than writing physical letters). Emergent Crowds therefore demonstrated a dependence on the protest tactics as

they have been utilized in other institutional fields and simply applied them in their traditional form to achieve their desired goals.

Second, Emergent Crowds featured little integration among their tactics that would lead their tactical choices to be considered a cohesive campaign strategy by the collective. While moderators and individual consumers commenting on the Facebook pages or on Twitter would promote petitions, letter-writing efforts, or encourage further boycotting action, it would appear that these promotions were limited to that: supporting and spreading awareness of separate calls to act that aligned with the overall effort and goals of the collective. However, no one group displayed a strategic plan or method for integrating the disparate tactics into a cohesive strategy that would give new protesters a clear and specific idea as to the varied actions they could and should take by joining in with the collective.

### *Mobilized Communities & Protest Tactics*

Mobilized Communities, much like Emergent Crowds, utilized an array of codified protest tactics in their campaigns. In the “Save Chuck” and “Save Polaroid” Mobilized Communities, letter-writing in its most basic, pure form of protest was included in the array of tactical methods utilized in the campaigns. Community members were encouraged to write to the NBC network, specifically the president of the network Ben Silverman, and Tom Petters, the owner of Polaroid, to indicate their support for the product/show and campaign efforts.

According to Mark, letter-writing was an important component of the “Save Chuck” campaign:

*“Because when someone hand writes a letter and sends it instead of emailing them, it says something to them, like, wow. This is a passionate fan base. And if they receive thousands of letters like that, it says to them, look. And actually, um, what was his name? The head of NBC programming? Ben Silverman. Ben*

*Silverman said when he announced the renewal of Chuck, he said that when it came down to picking up Medium or Chuck, no one wrote a single letter to them about saving Medium. And he didn't say no one bought a sandwich for Medium. He said no one wrote a single letter. We didn't receive a single letter from a fan. And the Chuck fans wrote letters. And that's....to them, that's personal. They see that, they read those...they might not read them themselves ,but their secretaries reads it, and they'll tell them, like, hey, look. We got hundreds of letters today from Chuck fans who don't want you to cancel their show. And so that was important."*

Though the Internet affords activists the ease and convenience of emailing their letters of protest to the target companies, Mark highlights the role that traditional letter-writing continues to play in campaigning efforts – a stark contrast to the Emergent Crowds who advocated for voicing concerns through any means possible, particularly online means. From Mark's experience, and other Mobilized Community members, it was indicated that including this institutionalized form of protest with hand-written letters could not only create a tangible and visible impact for the decision makers, but also was easily and readily adopted by the community because it was a known and popular form of protest that had seen success in previous campaigns. Greg noted that the inclusion of the letter-writing component for the "Save Chuck" campaign ultimately did come from the popular support on the fan forums: "That was part of the discussion we had, was whether the letters would still be a part. And people just...on the forums, there was enough people that said that they really wanted to write letters, so that's when we decided to incorporate that component." The "Save Polaroid" community further facilitated sending letters by not only amassing contact information for corporate executives, but also providing an easily

downloadable “Action Pack” that contained pre-written and addressed postcards that could be mailed to Polaroid, Fuji, and Ilford companies, telling them why instant film should be saved. It would appear that institutionalized tactics have infiltrated the market and embedded themselves in consumer culture such that certain tactics seem appropriate and right to do when engaged in campaigning efforts, given the successful history associated with these tactics.

With that said, Mobilized Communities exhibited innovative behaviors that lead to the communities not only adopting, but adapting institutionalized and consumption protest tactics to fit community and market characteristics. In the “Save Jericho” campaign, consumers not only sent letters to executives, but rallied around the idea of sending a physical object in addition to the letters – an object that aligned with the show itself. In the final episode of season one of “Jericho,” the main character Jake (portrayed by Skeet Ulrich), yelled “NUTS!” in face the climactic battle scene before the shot – and episode - faded to black. Recalling his experience leading up to and just after the finale, Steve had been advocating for community members to “to tell CBS you’re watching the show. Send them an email. Get on the message boards. Send them a letter. Do something to let CBS know that you are watching the show. And they said the same thing. Yes, the fans have GOT to make their voices heard for Jericho.” As he continued ruminating on what fans could do beyond the traditional letter writing or email option, “all of a sudden, I remember Skeet/Jake said NUTS! I said, hey! Why don’t we send peanuts to CBS? I meant the small little packets you get on the airplane. Like Southwest gives the little packets. Send those in to CBS. Let them know it’s for Jericho, to let them know you’re watching the show. Make them realize that people are watching the show.” The call to send more than a simple letter not only demonstrates creative thinking, but also taps into what made the show, and by extension, the community, distinct. By so doing, the community’s efforts were distinguished

from past – and future – campaigns engaged in similar efforts, as no other community would likely send nuts as a form of collective protest.

Similarly, in the “Save Chuck” community, Greg noted that the “Watch Buy Share” campaign kicked off the innovative juices of the community members by communicating the collective aims and goals for the campaign:

*“So we launched that in March, and the cool thing about it was that the fans not only picked up on the campaign, but the idea of it...in the sense that people started to get creative, but in their thinking, they were thinking of things that weren’t just the old methods of letter writings or sending something. For instance, there was the ‘We Heart Chuck’ campaign, where they gave charitable donations. Even though it didn’t directly impact the network, any time there is positive branding...it’s something they didn’t have to pay for that increases their brand...And that was really innovative, because again it was something that the network would be interested, but nobody had done before, which was what if we actually support an advertiser of the show?”*

This thinking led to the expansion of the campaign from into “Watch Buy Share Write Win”, including the boycott exhibited in the “Finale and a Footlong” initiative of buying Subway sandwiches, as Subway was a prominent company who paid for promotional placement in the show “Chuck.” The subsequent campaigning efforts within the “Save Chuck” community of “Not a Nielsen Family,” in which members tweeted support to companies who advertised both within the show and during the commercial breaks, further demonstrated the innovative thinking that distinguished this community’s efforts from a traditional boycott into a strategic boycott that



aligned with the community's identity, but also the characteristics of the market and the organizational relationships, such as product placement contracts, therein.

Furthermore, by engaging in the "Not a Nielsen Family" campaign effort, consumers also aimed to draw attention to a perceived gap in terms of the institutional system of evaluating television show success based on specific families being part of the Nielsen ratings system. As such, the organizers stated on their website that "most of us dislike this system (a lot!). We don't have Nielsen boxes, so as far as NBC and its advertisers are concerned we don't count. They can't see that we're watching Chuck faithfully every Monday night. But we have a plan to change that. We will prove to them that **we ARE watching** and better yet, we're paying attention" (April 18, 2011). In comparison to the Emergent Crowds that relied on individuals to state their reasons for joining the fight to indicate problem areas with the target corporation, Mobilized Communities seemed to accomplish this by evolving the codified tactics in strategic ways. By so doing, were able to not only demonstrate the might of the collective, but also the flaws within the system.

Mobilized Communities, in comparison to Emergent Crowds, also exhibited a greater inclusion of and integration between protest tactics utilized in the distinct campaigns. By so doing, these communities generated cohesive, multi-faceted campaigns that featured specific, directed calls to action by their members. For the "Save Polaroid" community, consumers were urged to not only write to the film companies, but to also share their stories and experiences with Polaroid on the "Save Polaroid" website, contribute their Polaroids to the website's gallery and in their letters to the company, to sign the petition promoted by the community, and to buy the insta-film products that were on the market at the time to indicate their purchasing power and consumer desire. The "Save Chuck" community, as indicated above, integrated a boycott and

letter-writing efforts as part of the “Watch Buy Write Share Win” campaign, in addition to the other tactics designed to encourage recruitment and incentivize their members to act. By clearly outlining the desired tactics members were directed to take, and by integrating the various tactics into a coherent campaign, new members could quickly get up to speed as to what actions should be taken. This also enabled a more coherent voice and concentrated actions among the community members during the campaign period, rather than leaving members to determine for themselves what actions they could or should take, and by so doing, fracturing the effectiveness of the campaign.

### **Cumulative Protest Knowledge**

Cumulative protest knowledge played a different role in Emergent Crowds versus in Mobilized Communities. For Emergent Crowds, very little protest knowledge was shared among the consumers. However, when personal experiences with and knowledge of successful protest efforts were shared, they appeared to serve as a motivational call and platform for instructing less protest-savvy consumers as to what is believed to be the most effective actions to follow within the campaigns. On the Netflix Facebook page, one commenter used her past experience protesting a Netflix change of service to maintain momentum in the campaign efforts and spur others to continue in their actions:

*“If enough people complain, I believe that YOU CAN change things. I had been a Netflix subscriber for over 10 years. In 2008 Netflix sent out an email to subscribers stating that they would be eliminating the Profiles feature on their website, allowing you to create multiple queues on one account. Although this was not an extra charge at the time, Netflix thought this would be less maintenance (i.e. less money spent) on their website. Customers spoke back and*

*with their complaints came change. Here is the exact wording from Netflix when they changed their decision back: "Dear \_\_\_\_\_, You spoke, and we listened. We are keeping Profiles. Thank you for all the calls and emails telling us how important Profiles are. We are sorry for any inconvenience we may have caused. We hope the next time you hear from us we will delight, and not disappoint, you. - Your friends at Netflix" People, don't give up... tell Netflix how upset you are and cancel your account to make your voice heard!" (Jennifer Paley Parker, July 18, 2011)*

This protester demonstrates that from her own personal experiences, complaining – particularly en masse – is effective for drawing attention to and concessions from a corporation when in a protest situation. By sharing her story and, importantly, Netflix’s official response, she attempts to validate and legitimize her recommendations. In this case, drawing on personal knowledge of protesting tactics that have worked in previous instances, this protester worked to motivate and encourage others to act.

Comparatively, an interesting insight emerged from the data in relation the role cumulative protest knowledge and personal experience with campaigns played in the development of the “Save Chuck” community campaign efforts, with particular regards to the “Save Jericho” campaign. The “Save Jericho” campaign was a visible, highly publicized, and ultimately effective campaign that successfully resurrected the show for a shortened second season this campaign, earning it accolades and the reputation in fandoms as an example of a campaign done well – except for the fact that the effort was not sustained and ultimately the show was cancelled once again after the six episode season. Referencing the “Save Jericho” campaign in discussions on their tactics direction and choices, it would appear that the leaders of

the “Save Chuck” campaign were directly impacted by the successes and failures from the “Save Jericho” campaign, taking their insights and judgments of the campaign as an impetus for more strategic and creative campaigning efforts.

Mark, a key leader in spearheading the “Chuck” campaign efforts, stated that “because I knew from what Jericho had done, you know, their failure really. I mean, they got the show back, but then it failed. And I knew from their failure that our work had just begun. That we had to do something bigger.” Mark demonstrates that by identifying the “Save Jericho” community’s failure to sustain the recruiting and overall active efforts of the community to support the show after the objective was achieved led to the subsequent failure – an insight that he viewed as important when considering the next steps for the “Save Chuck” community after the show was renewed.

Greg, elaborated on this point of learning from what the “Save Jericho” community did in order to make the “Save Chuck” campaign more effective, and did so by drawing on not only his personal knowledge of the “Save Jericho” campaign given that he was a fan of the show and member of their community, but also his knowledge of the industry given that he worked in the entertainment field:

*“It was pretty dear to my heart, because I was a big fan of the show Jericho, and so I was a spectator while that whole renewal was engineered...so I had seen that it could be effective - well, not just the letter writing, but they also sent the peanuts. But I had seen that fans could impact the network. But I also saw that if it wasn’t done right, what do you accomplish? With Jericho, it was renewed. And then cancelled after six shows. In fact, it wasn’t even renewed and cancelled after six shows. It was ONLY renewed for six shows. They said we will only*

*continue going if we get money. Like if there's something that produces money, then we're interested. If it doesn't produce money, then we're not. So I didn't want the same thing to happen to Chuck. I thought that's even more harmful. Like, let's end in a good place and just end it, if that's going to happen. But I thought that there has to be a way to take the engine of the fans and be smarter about the campaign. And so that's when I put together the Watch Buy Share. And that was basically saying, what are the things that the network is interested in? They're interested in eyes on the TV. And so we said, okay. Let's get everybody eyes on the TV, on Hulu, on NBC.com, because they care about that. And it was still at the point where they could measure things. Buy was an important thing, because we can send peanuts to the network, but the network doesn't get anything from that. And so, the idea was to buy whatever kind of merchandise we could that would actually give a kick back BACK to the network and they would see those numbers. And then share, attracting new viewers. So those are all things that the network can see, but actually means something to them."*

Zoe likewise exhibited an awareness of the "Save Jericho" campaign and referenced their idea of sending nuts, in conjunction with her knowledge of product placement, as the catalyst for developing the "Finale and a Footlong" component of the "Save Chuck" campaign:

*"Like, the folks with Jericho. I think that was a similar concept was show them that we are engaged in the show to a point where we're willing to send products and do things of that nature. This was a very similar idea, except that I wanted it to be a little more cohesive with the marketing strategy, and for the*

*show itself, because they care if we send them a bunch of nerd candy? I'm like..yeah. It's cute and it's funny. But what are they going to do with it? So instead of sending them candy and nuts, which sounds like Valentine's Day, but instead of sending them a product, if we can coordinate, and, you know, show an actual purchase to a key sponsor or advertiser, I think a happy advertiser is always going to be welcome at a network."*

Marie utilized her behind-the-scenes knowledge from organizing another TV show cancellation campaign for the show "Moonlight" to impact the tactical decisions for the "Save Chuck" campaign. "Moonlight," a show that aired on CBS about vampires, attempted to bring their show back by following the "Save Jericho" tactic of sending a physical object to the network. It was decided jointly by two of the fandom leaders and Warner Brothers production company, the organization who produced the show and reached out to the fan leaders to jumpstart a grassroots fan campaign, that they would promote the method of sending garlic to CBS – a reference to the vampire topic of the show. Marie attempted to voice her concerns and hesitations about this specific tactical choice, "And I was just like...I was trying to be tactful, but I'm thinking to myself 'This is going to be a DISASTER. This is going to be TERRIBLE.' And I was right. The fans hated the idea." Though the leaders eventually changed the idea to sending in some form or representation of garlic, Marie found that this was an "inaccessible way" of campaigning for a number of reasons, including that people didn't want to handle the pungent food, mailing it required Ziploc baggies and padded envelopes, and that fans from Canada couldn't send garlic over the border. As such, when discussing what to do for the "Save Chuck" campaign, Marie vocally stated that "we were not going to ask people to send anything in. Because Greg said something about, "Well, I guess we could have them send in...you know...we could come up

with something for them to send in.” And we were like, “NO! NO! We are NOT going to be involved with anything like that again!” More than just a personal negative response to the idea of sending in a physical product based on the garlic fiasco, Marie learned key insights for herself regarding successful campaigns: “It had to be accessible. It had to be cheap. So, that’s where the Five Dollar Footlong came in. Yeah. And it had to be something relevant...to the show.”

It appears that the leaders’ experiences with and knowledge of preceding campaigns – particularly campaigns who faced similar threats and problems (e.g., TV show cancellations) – created the foundation from which institutionalized practices of protest were evaluated and innovative campaigning tactics emerged. By analyzing what worked and – almost more importantly – what did not work within the earlier “Save Jericho” and “Moonlight” campaigns, the “Save Chuck” leaders were able to make strategic judgments regarding the tactical choices for the “Save Chuck” campaign in order to increase the likely effectiveness of the activist efforts. Thus, it would appear that cumulative protest knowledge can play a key role and impactful force in decisions relating to tactics to follow, emulate, innovate, or avoid in subsequent campaigns. The influence of a preceding campaign supports the assertions of social movement theorists (e.g., McAdam 1995) who proposed that spin-off movements are impacted by preceding, initiator movements, and also provides evidence of cumulative resistance knowledge in action when consumer collectives are developing and organizing campaign efforts.

Furthermore, by combining cumulative protest knowledge from prior campaigns with marketing knowledge, these leaders transformed institutionalized tactical choices into market-situated methods tailored to fit market characteristics and appeal to organizations operating within the market system. As Mark states, “I really do believe that you need to have a basic understanding of marketing to know, you know, how to motivate trends and how to latch onto

trends. And know when a trend is dead and not to try to continue it.” This is an important point given that institutionalized protest are rooted in the political and social fields, influenced by these fields’ logics and practices. However, their application and effectiveness in the adjacent market field with unique market logics, practices, and relationships is not assured or a guarantee – and using the same protest tactics without any innovation or adjustment to the individual field may likewise lessen the potential efficacy of the tactics used. Judging what has worked from a tactical perspective in prior campaigns within market-bound campaigns and utilizing marketing knowledge provided leaders the opportunity and ability to effectively evolve tactics from simple institutionalized tactics to market-specific tactics with a greater chance of success.

### **Utilization of Online Platforms**

As posed in Chapter 3, questions were raised regarding the use and integration of online platforms by consumer collectives as they congregate and enact their activist tactics. From the data, it was seen that Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities do in fact utilize and integrate online communication platforms in distinct ways as part of their campaign efforts. Emergent Crowds appear to have flocked to established online platforms and used them primarily to gather, converse/debate the central issue, and support the cause at hand by proclaiming support to the identified tactical methods proposed via the community forum (e.g., Boycott Netflix). There also existed minimal integration amongst the platforms, and by extension, the tactics emphasized on each platform. Mobilized Communities, on the other hand, seem to have used existing platforms in more innovative ways to not only integrate their efforts into a cohesive, multi-faceted campaign, but also generated their own online content and platforms to further emphasize their individual identity as a group and aims of the collective campaign.



Emergent Crowds appear to exclusively use established online platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, to gather, dialogue about, and commit to the collective aims and the campaign efforts overall. Supporting the insights generated by Rauschnabel et al (2016), these crowds appear to have primarily gathered on the social media pages and corporate blogs mediated and produced by the target company, and would branch out in small groups to form pages within the social media platforms dedicated to the causes at hand. Likewise, as discussed prior, a significant component of these collective conversations also featured personal opinions, reactions, and debates surrounding the issues driving the collective action. Facebook and Twitter, because of the use of community pages and hashtags that have been established by the platforms themselves, encourage and facilitate the ability of like-minded consumers to congregate and discuss their personal feelings, as well as to enact collective efforts by building the sense of the collective. Therefore, it is unsurprising that consumers, when alerted to the emergent issue, would flock to and comment on Facebook pages devoted to the offending company first, and then develop their cause-related pages or utilize trending hashtags that tied in with the issue in order to share their personal perspectives.

Additionally, consumers within these collectives also utilized the online platforms as an opportunity to share information about the effort, publicize their successes, and motivate subsequent activity. As seen on the “Rehire Chelsea Welch” Facebook group, the administrator posted “Almost of 6,500 likes and this page only 1 Day old!! Great Job everyone. Don't forget to share this link on Applebee's FB to bring in more support. They can't just issue statements and expect that to be enough and we all go on our merry way! Sorry Applebee's we will not back down that easy!!!” (February 1, 2011) The core utilization of these platforms appears to be centered around the sociality that the platforms enable and are designed to accomplish, by

bringing large(r) groups of consumers together and creating a concentrated voice of popular assent to the cause. Emergent Crowds therefore primarily appear to have used these platforms in alignment with what the platforms are well-suited to doing in terms of developing connections among like-minded consumers and sharing information among a wider consumer base.

Furthermore, as evidenced in the quote above, reliance on the platforms themselves and the functionality provided therein was quite high among Emergent Crowds. Rather than referencing the number of consumers boycotting, for example, the administrator noted the number of “likes” as an indication of support. Likewise, in the Netflix crowd, the fact that the #dearNetflix hashtag was trending and the number of comments posted on the Netflix Facebook page was a popularly quoted indicator among the collective of its individual might and devotion to the cause. Therefore, success of the Emergent Crowds’ efforts may have in part been directly linked to and intricately tied with the online platforms themselves that were used for collective organization.

Similarly, Emergent Crowds utilized websites specifically designed for individual protest tactics, such as change.org, a petitioning website, to organize and facilitate easy participation with the distinct tactics promoted through these individual platforms. However, an interesting insight emerged from the data in relation to the diversity of platforms used for the campaign cause at hand. While individuals promoted the tactics from other platforms within the larger collective gathering spaces, such as the specific Facebook groups devoted to the campaigns and causes, there appears to be little integration beyond these efforts at promoting and raising awareness to the other tactics. For example, the “Rehire Chelsea Welch” page frequently highlighted a specific petition for rehiring Chelsea Welch that had been started on change.org, but it was simply that: posting the link and stating that there was a petition that could be signed.

It appears that though these efforts were promoted within the collective, there was little incentive, reason, or encouragement given for individuals to do so. As a result, the overall campaigning efforts seemed to be more disjointed within the groups. Compounding this issue was most likely the multiple number of collective platforms utilized for and oriented towards the specific causes that sprung up as these causes gained awareness and support. As discussed previously, there were multiple Facebook groups, petitions, and overall gathering spaces exhibited within each of the Emergent Crowds. Therefore, integration among the different online platforms and between the varied groups – though their intents and aims were the same – did not occur amongst these crowds, likely hindering the ultimate effectiveness of and cohesion exhibited in the groups.

Mobilized Communities, on the other hand, utilized existing online platforms not only to congregate and promote their campaign efforts – thereby taking advantage of the social media platforms’ strengths, but also did their activist work via these platforms in fun and innovative ways that tied into their more creative tactical methods of campaigning.

Facebook and Twitter were used as a resource for potential recruitment by promoting the campaign efforts through one’s personal accounts, and for spaces primarily intended to serve as gateways to the communities’ central hubs of activity for new converts. Recalling Zoe’s comment that she intended to use her Facebook group as a resource for raising awareness of the “Save Chuck” efforts, she also noted that she would use that platform as a path directly back to ChuckTV’s Renewal Headquarters. By so doing, Zoe was tapping in to the potential opportunities that Facebook offers by linking like-minded, interested consumers with one another – but not at the expense of the overall group effort. The Save Jericho Facebook group, likewise equally promoted and drove consumers to the SavingJericho.com website, to learn more

information about the campaign efforts and the group overall through posts about the website, their profile picture specifically stating the website, and in their Group Information page, stating that the website was SavingJericho.com. Furthermore, the Save Jericho Facebook group stated in this personal information page about the group that “IF YOU ARE AN AVID FAN OF JERICHO OR HAVE JUST CAUGHT A GLIMPSE OF THE SHOW WHILE FLIPPING THE CHANNELS THEN BECOME A FAN AND HELP BRING JERICHO BACK!” Specific calls to new or potential converts to join in the collective efforts and to learn more by navigating to the collective hub were utilized as a way to strengthen the collective overall. There is therefore evidence that these popular online platforms for generating social connections and forming collectives were used by Mobilized Communities to do just that – finding and developing social bonds between consumers with similar interests.

In contrast to Emergent Crowds, Mobilized Community members were cognizant of and worked to develop synergy between the different online platforms utilized to create unified, cohesive, and multi-faceted campaign initiatives designed to increase the likelihood of reaching a broader audience base. Rather than fracturing the community according to the platform, significant work and effort went into integrating the distinct platforms to create a unified voice and effort overall within the community. As part of the “Not a Nielsen Family” campaign for “Save Chuck,” community members were encouraged to not only tweet at advertisers who bought advertisement air during the show or engaged in product placement, but also to take a picture of themselves buying products from these companies as a way to say thank you. Further instructions suggested including these pictures not only in the tweet to the advertisers, but also sending the photos to the campaign organizers, who would then post the photographs on their

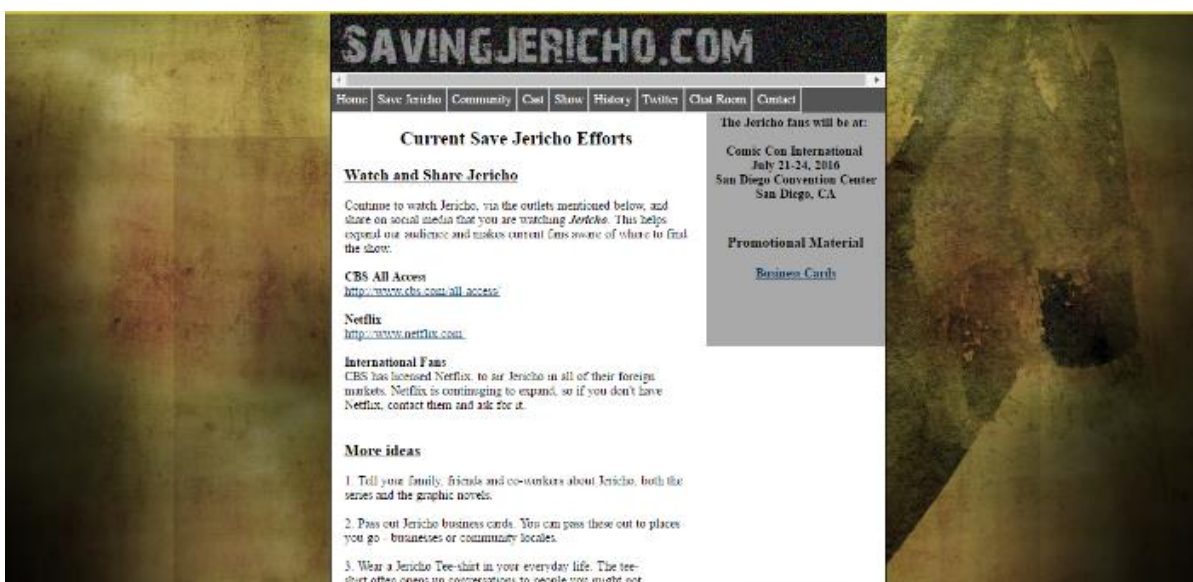
Facebook page. By so doing, the “Not a Nielsen Family” initiative transcended individual platforms and created an integrated campaign across the platforms utilized.

Furthermore, these existing social platforms were evaluated in terms of their individual advantages and functions, and applied to the campaigning efforts in innovative ways that took advantage of these benefits. For example, in the “Save Chuck” community, Twitter was considered to be a method for quickly spreading timely information, facilitating communications with organizations, and overall raising awareness of campaign initiatives if consumers could get the topic trending. By measuring what Twitter did well, particularly in comparison to Facebook, the “We Give a Chuck” leaders determined that Twitter would be an excellent medium for live tweeting during the shows to thank the organizations who advertised during or in “Chuck” and show support for these organizations if their products were subsequently purchased. This strategic choice for utilizing Twitter helped to raise awareness of the boycott efforts. While a boycott is traditionally an individually enacted form of activist resistance that occurs in conjunction with a collective call to action in which the effect is generally only visible to the organization, utilizing Twitter as a way to advertise consumers’ boycott efforts led to this method being more public in its enactment – an outcome which in turn could lead to increased recruitment opportunities and to greater response from the organizations benefitting, as well as potentially impacting the target organization.

Likewise, as has been intimated, Mobilized Communities generated their own gathering spaces and online venues for organizing and enacting their campaigns in addition to utilizing existing online platforms for their strategic endeavors. The “Save Jericho” community created the SavingJericho.com site, which detailed not only information about the show, but also provided the synopsis of the campaign and tactics that comprised the campaign efforts, linked to

Twitter, and featured a chat function that could connect a visitor to other “Jericho” fans. This website therefore enabled integration among platforms, provided a quick tutorial on all things “Jericho” and further facilitated the development of the collective itself.

**Figure 6: “Saving Jericho” Website Homepage**



Much like the “Save Jericho” community, the “Save Polaroid” group developed their own website, SavePolaroid.com, as a central part of their tactical efforts to fight for instant film. Community members shared this website with new recruits, and it provided not only a forum for informing others as to the actions that were being taken by the collective and to learn about the cause overall, but also served as an opportunity for individuals to share their personal experiences with and stories about instant film. Thus, not only did this website serve the group’s goals of reviving instant film by heightening awareness of and facilitating individual action through the strategic methods that made up the campaign, but it also served as a method for solidifying the bonds between individuals and the brand/product itself. This also could be viewed as a corollary method for strengthening the central identity of the group, as well.

Figure 7: “Save Polaroid” Website Homepage



The “Save Chuck” community relied primarily on the ChuckTV.net website during the first campaign efforts of the “Watch Buy Share Write Win” campaign – a natural choice given that it existed prior to the campaign efforts occurring as a main gathering space for fans to discuss and learn about the show. Within this website, however, they did create the space for the campaign specifically, once it came into being, thereby drawing attention to and enabling new consumers to quickly learn about the campaign methods being taken by the collective. Furthermore, the second campaign effort of the “Save Chuck” community featuring the “Not a Nielsen Family” campaign idea, led to the creation of the “We Give a Chuck” website, Twitter handle, and Facebook group – once again illustrating the thought given to and work surrounding integration among online platforms within Mobilized Communities. The “We Give a Chuck” website, much like the “Save Jericho” and “Save Polaroid” websites, presented information regarding the campaign initiatives and rationale for these initiatives, but also provided regular

updates on the weekly efforts, tips for recruiting new viewers and ways to spread the “nerd,” as well as highlighting other events in the community, such as charitable cause events.

**Figure 8: “We Give a Chuck” Website Homepage**



Across all three Mobilized Community, a premium therefore seemed to be placed on generating unique spaces online in addition to existing platforms. These spaces represented the nature of the group, the causes being fought for, and facilitated the strategic initiatives associated with the campaigns. By generating these individualized sites, the Mobilized Communities could share more information about their causes than they otherwise could likely do through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, and were able to present a united, cohesive vision of the collective and the campaign. Furthermore, because these sites provided opportunities for, but were not based on conversation and dialogue, the websites also likely minimized the opportunity for dissenting voices and online trolls to hijack the initiatives. Establishing the websites also presents a more professional – and by extension – legitimized overview of the collectives, which may unintentionally impact the ability of these collectives to form alliances with and appeal to external organizations as part of their campaigning efforts. Overall, the development of and



creativity exhibited within these unique sites devoted to the collectives and their efforts seems to generate positive results within the collective themselves and as part of the campaigning efforts overall.

## **CHAPTER 8: TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPACT OF ACTIVISM ON MOBILIZED COMMUNITIES**

From each of the Mobilized Community case sites, shifts in the community relationships emerged that illustrate the complex nature of consumers' market relationships in relation to organization and enactment of consumer campaigns. As the established communities faced potentially community-threatening discontinuation of core community products, campaign leaders introduced and advocated specific, campaign-oriented goals that changed the goal orientation of the communities and as a result, created a catalyst for dynamic relationship transformations within the group. Further, the goal-inflected direction of the campaigns created the impetus for seeking and establishing connections with external marketers that had hitherto been excluded from community activities. The reciprocal engagement of companies with consumer communities, however, varied considerably in terms of the extent and type of involvement.

Finally, campaigning appears to have impacted the consumer-product and consumer-consumer relationships after the conclusion of the campaigns by increasing feelings of responsibility to the community and stewardship over the product, which over time created challenges to longevity of the consumer-product relationship. In sum, there appears to be evidence that suggests consumer relationships fluidly change in terms of dynamics and structure as communities become more active in the marketplace, both forming and transforming relationships in ways that lead to strategic advantages for the communities and have a longer lasting effect on individual consumption behaviors and the communities overall.

## **The Mobilization Effect: Shifting Towards Goal-Oriented Action**

Prior to the campaigning periods, each of the Mobilized Community sites appears to have been primarily Communo-ludic oriented in their goals and activities. Members congregated to share their passion for the product and to augment their consumption experience beyond individual consumption. Thus, members had passionate relationships with their products to the point where they sought out consumers of similar persuasions. For Zoe, a “Save Chuck” leader, “the second season, when it [“Chuck”] came back, was when it really hooked me. I started to read articles about it, and I started going to forum boards, and just kind of seeing who else was chatting about it.” Mark’s experience in entering the “Chuck” community began as a desire to fill in the consumption gap when the show was on hiatus, in spite of his original attitude towards the fandom: *“From that point on I was pretty much in a full force love affair with this show but never really imagined that I would become part of the fandom or anything like that. And that didn’t really happen until the six week hiatus between episodes eleven and twelve...and during that time because it was a six week break, I thought, I really want to talk about this show and because I love it so much.”*

Relationships between consumers centered on the consumption of the community’s central product and did not display an organized hierarchy of prestige. Members gathered to share consumption stories, opinions, knowledge, photos, critiques, and innovations with one another on specific hubs for each of the communities. Activities, such as the Polaroid Nerd-Outs (day gatherings of Polaroid users in a chosen city to take Polaroids of their excursion), and online discussions highlight the groups’ loosely defined orientation towards sharing and celebrating with one another.

For example, the most common and popular “Jericho” and “Chuck” communities’ forum board threads centered on debating storyline developments, dissecting plot twists, and judging episode quality as their respective shows progressed (see Appendix A, Exhibit 3), attracted members together often directly after episodes aired to discuss about their reactions to what they just consumed and to engage in a dialogue with each other over the course of the season. Further, the communities did not have specific leadership structures in place. Website administrators and forum moderators aimed to ensure that the members interacted in non-offensive ways with one another and that spam was limited on the forums. Consumer-consumer relationships therefore appeared to be loosely structured as members engaged with one another at their leisure.

However, rumors or official announcements of product discontinuation rocked the proverbial boat of day-to-day functioning of the communities. The threat and/or reality of discontinuation endangered the core consumer-product relationship upon which the communities had congregated and thus also acted as a threat to the community itself. Further, the discontinuation decisions brought to the surface negative tensions between both consumers and the producers/distributors of their products, and consumers and the market in which their products were offered and consumed. Steve, for example, had experienced the continuing disappointment of networks cancelling his favorite shows, to the point where he felt ready to fight: “I think over the years, just some shows came and went, and I got, God. I got more and more aggravated...there’s just so many TV shows that I liked that just never lasted on the networks. I mean, it was terrible. And then [there was] just nothing to do [as fans].” Marie (“Save Chuck”), similarly noted problems in the entertainment market system that needed to and could be addressed in the campaigns, as “we honestly believe that the Nielsen’s are completely

outdated and the ratings, of course, advertisers use the Nielsen ratings to decide who they're going to advertise with. That's how their rates are set. But we wanted NBC to know, through our letters, **this** is your demographic. This is who is watching the show. And whether or not Nielsen is reporting that, these are real people.”

The discontinuation decisions served as catalysts for mobilizing and reorienting the communities towards coordinated, organized action. Each community had a select group of campaign leaders who, based on market data, knowledge of the consumer base, and feelings felt at the prospect of losing their product, decided to collectively and proactively fight the decisions by campaigning. For the “Save Polaroid” group, the decision to collectively mobilize was based on two strategic factors that motivated their campaign development:

*“We were seeing an upswing in Polaroid. Not like a full backlash against digital, but definitely a sort of...resurgence of analog film in general. After years and years of everyone saying it was dead, and also, specifically around Polaroid, we saw the numbers in the Polaroid groups rising. ...And we also figured that a company like Fuji and a company like Ilford had a strong focus on analog film might be interested in buying some of the film from Polaroid and really moving forward, adding one more product to their list of products and sort of shoring up their analog base. So we felt like we had everything in our favor in order to start this site and get some people on a grassroots level to rally and organized, basically just putting our voice out there, and saying, ‘Hey! We still want Polaroid film. Will somebody out there make it?’” (Dean, “Save Polaroid”)*

Each campaign therefore was organized for the purpose of challenging the discontinuation and founded on specific goals that community members aimed to achieve

through their campaigns, convinced that there was hope, reason, and merit backing their campaigns. Succinctly stated by Cameron (“Save Jericho”), “Here’s the goal. The goal is to get the show back.” For the “Save Polaroid” group, the goal was slightly different in that “the original idea wasn’t that Polaroid was going to start making it again. We knew that Petters [CEO of Polaroid] had no interest. But that somebody else, a competitor, would see a viable market...So that was the original hope with “Save Polaroid.” It wasn’t about saving the company. It was about saving instant film.” (Dean, “Save Polaroid”) By clearly outlining the purpose and intent of the campaigns, leaders created a rallying cry that gathered members who desired to respond to the pressing threat. Additional campaign goals, such as increasing community membership, generating media attention, educating companies as to their consumers, and creating initiatives that would both simultaneously inspire members to participate and would distinguish the campaign in the marketplace, likewise contributed to bringing members together and unifying them in their collective efforts.

Thus, campaign leaders introduced and identified goals that not only served to gather members into groups of organized action, but also facilitated a shift that influenced the overall orientation and activities of the consumer communities. Steve described the shift that occurred in the “Jericho” community, noting that “some pockets were still talking about the episodes, which was fine. Most of the rest of us were busy caught up in saving the show. During the show, everybody was great in talking about the episodes. During the campaign, obviously people were fighting to save the show. Everybody was together and everything else to save it.” The focus in the communities was no longer confined to celebrating consumption experiences of the central product. Rather, members were encouraged by the activist subgroup to join with the campaigners and engage in the community’s campaign.

The movement of the communities from their original orientations and introduction of specific, desirable goals to achieve within the communities seems to have laid the groundwork for relationship changes. Altered relationships emerged as the campaigners attempted to achieve their goals and work together in ways that had previously been not done within the communities. Consequently, new relationships and transformed relationships appear to be both tools and unintended outcomes for achieving change in the marketplace as communities negotiated the campaigns.

### **Relationship Fluidity: Internal Dynamics and External Forms**

The relatively short time frame for coordinated action, as well as the specific and singularly focused goals of the campaigns, positioned community members to fluidly engage in or dissolve relationships both externally and internally. I define the construct of relationship fluidity as the mobility of individuals or organizations to form/reform relationship constellations or characterizations. Capitalizing on the changeable nature of relationships opened the door for campaigning consumers to adequately coordinate action of high impact among their members and incorporate desirable allies into their folds – companies who could provide resources such as bargaining power with the networks, distribution and communication channels, and so on. Relationship fluidity also created an opportunity for communities to adjust course and manage emergent issues throughout the campaigns when faced with external opposition or change. Consequently, relationship fluidity played a key role in the management and negotiation of emergent campaign goals and issues.

### *Consumer – Consumer: Leadership Organization & Governance*

Community leaders sought to revolutionize member overall focused on “rallying the troops,” (Mark, “Save Chuck”) sending out calls to arms to transform lurkers into active

members, recruit new members, and motivate members into action. “The activities we designed were really to get people out of their seats, away from their computers, and into the real world to take action” (Dean, “Save Polaroid”). Change, according to the leaders, could not be wrought by passiveness, but rather from concentrated, tangible action in the marketplace. Given the previous Communo-ludic orientation of the communities, designing activities to guide members to specific action was a necessary part of achieving the goals at hand. However, not all possible actions could be explored during the campaigns without direction or discretion, as that would have resulted in communal chaos and ineffective campaigning. As such, community leadership structures emerged and transformed during the campaign periods to guide the organization and enactment efforts.

In order to coordinate and direct widespread action, leadership groups were formed within the larger community in order to act as gatekeepers, motivators, and strategists for the campaigns:

*“But we had a very tight-knit group of maybe 20 people. These are all people we had all communicated with each other on the boards. We knew each other at least in cyberspace. And Sarah [main leader] basically pulled everybody together, and, you know, we held meetings on Skype. Kind of strategy meetings, saying, okay, what are we going to do this next week, and how are we going to do it, and what’s the most effective thing to do.” (Cameron)*

New leaders also rose up in the ranks of the community by their active campaigning, innovative ideas for campaign initiatives, visibility through frequent communications, or by the expertise offered from prior campaign activities. Thus, the combination of the influx of new participants and the restructuring of the community leadership contributed to the redistribution of



contributors from a small nucleus of contributors to a more diverse set of active participants, with distinctive leadership groups propelling the campaign forward within the communities.

With new goals and a leadership group focused on promoting and achieving said goals, there also appeared to be an increased amount of governance and censorship in the communities among the members. Community members were not only encouraged to align themselves with the intents and goals of the campaigns, but also chastised when their actions appeared to contradict the campaign. Marie, as a leader of the “Chuck” campaign and community, recognized that before the campaign it was okay for members to discuss their opinions whether positive or negative about the show, its storylines, and so on. However, with the campaign in full swing and the need to maintain a positive image to potential members who may have investigated the show being a salient concern, Marie began to censor community members when their comments could potentially harm the campaign, and likewise sought to educate the offending members as to the campaign goals:

*“There’s been a couple of other people that I’ve emailed and I’ve said, “Look. I’m sure you don’t realize how your comments are coming across, but to an outsider reading this, it looks like you hate this show. And you know. You really need to tone it down. **You need to think about the fact that we are trying to attract new viewers, and if they come here to the site and they are reading these comments, do you think they’re going to want to watch the show that people are complaining about? No.”**”*

The campaign goals and power of leaders within the communities therefore seems to have led to an increase of community governance and a dynamic of leader-follower that had been unpronounced prior to the campaigns. During the campaign periods, members who

adhered to the pre-campaign dynamics and rules of the communities were singled out and reprimanded for said behaviors. As a result, the dynamics between consumers while campaigning were shifted to reinforce the goals, new leadership hierarchies, and desired uniformity of the members in the community ranks.

*Consumer – Focal Marketer: Learning and Playing the Market Game*

Mobilized Communities also shifted their focus from primarily enjoying the products to seeking out information about and acting on market logics to effectively approach the focal marketers. As a result, the consumer-focal marketer relationship became more market-oriented. Campaign leaders and members alike educated themselves to the behind-the-scene business structures and discourses that contributed to the production of the products, key decisions makers and criteria, and ways of “speaking” to the companies in ways that would be impactful. Although it seems as though historically, consumers have campaigned on the basis of emotional pleas, when organizing the Finale and a Footlong initiative for the “Save Chuck” campaign, Zoe recognized the importance of creating initiatives that would be the most effective for the network as a business organization, thus altering the community discourse and campaign initiatives from emotion-based reactions to strategically-oriented actions:

*“I mean, we basically looked at it and said, okay. It sucks that it’s not based on...that the renewal is not based on how awesome the show is. It’s not. It’s based upon ratings and whether or not it’s going to be profitable. Because at the end of the day, NBC, Warner Brothers, and other advertisers like Subway are businesses. They need to sell a product and make a profit.”*

Marie, a fellow “Save Chuck” leader, was aware of market trends resulting from her consumption of trade magazines, which influenced her responses to proposed campaign

initiatives. “They were talking about the decline in people actually watching ads and how product placement is a really hot topic, and has been for a while, but they’re trying to be more and more creative with it. So there’s less ‘in your face’ and it’s more organic to the storyline.” As a result of her market knowledge and desire to apply market discourses, when Zoe proposed the Finale and Footlong concept, Marie felt that it was a perfect fit for the campaign in that it melded market discourses with community goals by simultaneously targeting a sponsor and creating a relatively easy avenue for coordinated action.

Moving beyond buzz-worthy gimmicks, such as sending large quantities of products that represent the show, “Save Chuck” leaders leveraged experiences from previous consumer campaigns and knowledge of the television market system to elevate their campaign to fight using the logic that would appeal to the network as a business. “It’s based upon ratings and whether or not it’s going to be profitable. Because at the end of the day, NBC, Warner Brothers, and other advertisers like Subway are businesses. They need to sell a product and make a profit. And you know, by doing this, we were playing the game.” (Marie) The leaders used their understanding of the market system for their particular as a way to strategically tailor their initiatives to have the greatest impact on a business level.

“Save Polaroid” members also considered the competitive landscape and product line alignment of potential producers in a bid to find an appropriate producer-product fit for instant film, “that a company like Fuji and a company like Ilford who had a strong focus on analog film might be interested in buying some of the film from Polaroid and really moving forward, adding one more product to their list of products and sort of shoring up their analog base.” (Dean) Campaigning consumers did not campaign simply based on the platform of passionate fan support, as had been touted in prior campaigns. Rather, the informants entered into the market

dialogue by employing research, market analyses, and business knowledge as tools for strategy development and campaign initiatives. Thus, the act of campaigning appears to create a catalyst for members to adopt a more market-oriented sensibility that incorporated business knowledge within the community and moved away from simply emotionally venting frustrations to becoming market savvy participants. Individual leaders led the way for the community, strengthening and leveraging market-oriented relationships based on the adoption and application of market logics.

### *Consumer – External Marketers: Creating Strategic Relationships*

The campaigns studied were not isolated incidents between the consumers groups and the focal marketers. Rather, campaigners worked to expand the established relationship structures to include persons/organization from the marketplace in the campaign initiatives. The rationale behind attracting and working additional players into the campaigns appears to be based on leaders' assertions that specific external parties, though not initially engaged with the community or the campaign, would have contacts in, knowledge of, power over, or existing relationships with the focal company that when utilized in concert with campaign initiatives would tip the scale in favor of the campaigners. Further, it was posited that the formation of external alliances would generate resources for the enactment of novel consumer initiatives.

Potential market allies were targeted by community members as those market entities whose sentiments and sympathies aligned with the product or community, or those who would benefit from participating in the campaign. Alliances were explored both with previously affiliated market players and third-party companies, including advertisers associated with the television shows, other camera/film companies, media mavens, and companies who sold supplies central to the campaign initiatives (e.g., nuts, as was the case for “Save Jericho”), as well as other

fan groups that might sympathize with or support the community's campaigns based on their previous experiences. In order to motivate businesses to participate on behalf of the campaigners, campaigners sought to incite and invite involvement through formal means such as written requests and monetary support in the form of boycott-like purchases.

For the "Save Chuck" camp, campaign leaders used an external relationship as a means to achieve their end goals. Previous campaigns by fan groups, "Save Jericho" included in the examples drawn on by "Chuck" campaigners, had focused on primarily raising awareness and communicating to the networks consumer reactions through individual letters or petitions and sending novel products related to the shows in order to attempt reversals. However, the "Save Chuck" camp wanted to do something different, as discussed in the previous chapter, noting that the petitions and letter writing campaigns had "lost their impact" by being "done to death." (Marie, "Save Chuck"). Instead of just raising their voices, the "Chuck" leaders pursued an indirect, strategic method of impact by targeting and showing advertisers the financial profitability and positive consumer PR generated from promoting on "Chuck." Zoe, in planning the Finale and a Footlong initiative, had "wanted it to be a little more cohesive with the marketing strategy [of NBC], and for the show itself, because [do] they care if we send them a bunch of nerd candy? No...instead of sending them a product, if we can coordinate, and, you know, show an actual purchase to a key sponsor or advertiser, a happy advertiser is always going to be welcome at a network."

Specifically with the first "Save Chuck" campaign, Subway was identified as a third party organization that could strategically contribute to the campaign. "I was hoping that Subway would see it and they might want to be further involved" and that through a potential spike in their sales from the "Chuck" finale purchases, "they would see actual interest and that

might pick up some interest from some other advertisers, or at least get NBC's attention." (Zoe)

The plan worked not only by increasing the campaign awareness in the media by its catchy and innovative idea, but also by attracting Subway through the often elusive consumer purchase. Based on the spike in sales and immensely positive public relations, Subway entered the conflict as an ally to the consumers. By so doing, Subway was able to provide the communities with vicarious bargaining power in negotiations with the network, offering themselves as a more visible and involved sponsor in the show, and providing an added monetary incentive for NBC to renew "Chuck."

From the consumers' perspective, "at the time of the campaign, it was not known the exact amount Subway saw in their sales the Monday the "Chuck" season finale aired. However, after the Finale and Footlong night, "we heard that the VP of marketing at Subway had called Ben Silverman, who was the head of NBC at the time, and talked to him about Chuck. And that's all the info we got at that point. And then we heard more and more from our sources that NBC was talking with Subway and that actually, Subway had initiated the conversation because of the fan campaign." (Marie) After the campaign concluded, Zoe was told by Subway marketing officials that "it was their best sales day of the week, which is very atypical for a Monday, outside of Monday night football. I later found out from somebody...that was their best sales day of the year so far, was the day of the finale."

The spike in sales, coupled with the increase positive press about both the campaign initiative and Subway's response, has led Subway to becoming a revered quasi-member in the community. "They're poster child of what fan campaigns can do. They love this show because it's incredible PR for them. Like they're...in terms of a sponsor, they're the guys who saved the show." (Marie) Continuing the relationship fostered after the campaign period, Subway became a

sponsor of the community's annual charitable gathering, the "Chuckfest." Thus, external organizations were successfully attracted and integrated into the communities through strategic efforts on the part of the campaigners to extend their relationship boundaries.

Relationships were also attempted with third-party companies that provided market capabilities and resources unavailable to the individual consumer or community. During the "Save Jericho" campaign, campaign leaders suggested using an online nut company as a way to revolutionize the campaign: "Most campaigns, people send their individual purchase in. This vendor agreed to pool funds. So you could put in however much you could afford, and at the end of the day, he would tally it and he shipped every couple of days." (Gina) The formation and utilization of an external, third-party collaborator in this case therefore served a strategic purpose in providing additional pools of resources previously unneeded and unattainable by the community. Once the need was fulfilled, however, the intensity of the relationship and frequency of interactions lessened, leaving behind good memories and a ton of nuts at CBS' studios. Thus, in this case, forming third-party relationships represented a fluid resource that was rooted in the transitory nature of the campaign and the goals needing to be achieved at that point in time.

Communities benefitted from attempting to and establishing market relationships with external companies by reaping the advantages of the additional press, resources, and power that came from the companies' involvement. Companies who engaged in the campaigns likewise experienced positive market outcomes, in that they in some cases increased their profits, received positive public relations stories, and cultivated loyalty in consumers.

*Consumer – External Marketer: Company Engagement Spectrum*

Although consumers worked to expand their communities beyond traditional relationships by including external organizations in their campaigning activities, the engagement of the companies with the consumers varied considerably. Company responses (or the lack thereof) to the consumers' proverbial olive branch seem to have determined the extent of company integration into the communities and characterization of the external organizations as useful in the campaigns. The spectrum of company involvement with the consumer communities showed a range of company engagement, particularly over online means of communication such as Twitter (see Appendix C, Table 4).

Moving from non-responders to collaborative partners on the spectrum showed an increase in the number of interactions between the consumers and the companies at each stage, indicating the development of market relations between the two entities. Further, the interactions moved away from being targeted to individual consumers to companies engaging with the community, its initiatives, goals, and discussions. Companies also shifted from simply responding to consumer entreaties and instead exhibited times when they initiated contact and proactively worked with the communities as the campaigners worked to achieve their goals. By so doing, companies who embraced the opportunities offered to them from consumers to get involved positioned themselves ultimately as allies and part of the consumer campaigns. The outcomes resulting from company engagement with the campaigners were likewise variable depending on the type of engagement and extended beyond the campaign initiatives. The following discussion presents the five company engagement types in greater depth, identifying and exemplifying the defining characteristics and the outcomes of the interactions.



## Non-Responders

Non-responders were characterized by one-sided communication from consumers to the intended allies and the lack of any relationship development over the course of the campaigns. Rather, non-response companies received overtures from campaigners to establish ties, and yet did not acknowledge the interaction through any means. No relationships were established between the consumer communities and non-responding companies, and communication attempts were abandoned when it became apparent that there was no interest on the part of the companies to engage with the communities.

As it became evident that Polaroid was no longer going to be producing instant film, community members sought alternative avenues for production so that they could achieve their goal of saving instant film. Fuji film was targeted by leaders for community appeals because of their position in the market as a producer of instant film, though the products would not work directly with Polaroid cameras. Although petitions and letters were sent to the company, the members were disappointed in the non-realization of their potential ally. “We never really got any response from anyone at Fuji. And it’s only through like third hand that [we learned] they were not interested... we were sad that they kind of ignored us and our request that they make something that looked like Polaroids and could work with Polaroid cameras.” (Dean) The possibility of forming an alliance with Fuji was diffused by the lack of interest and communication on the part of the company. No relationship was therefore formed and the Polaroid community moved on to identifying other possible allies in the market and extending their efforts to encourage a reciprocated relationship with another possible collaborator.

Consequently, non-response companies had little impact on the course of the campaigns beyond giving members momentary hope and an opportunity for doing a proactive activity on

behalf of the campaign. Campaigners did identify feelings of frustration and disappointment with the apparent lack of consideration on the part of the companies to respond to their efforts. However, because the interaction with the companies had been momentary and one-sided, the negative perceptions of non-respondents appear to be tempered and of little lasting consequence for the consumers.

### Surface Contacts

Surface contact companies were distinguished by engaging with campaigners individually on a one-time basis. Interactions between the consumers and surface contacts were single exchanges when consumers contacted the companies and in return, the companies replied with generally polite, impersonal, and formal responses to the individual consumers. The interactions did not exhibit any mention or acknowledgment on the company's behalf of the community or campaign to which the consumers belonged, and did not engage with the consumers beyond the initial communication. For example, the "We Give a Chuck" initiative by "Save Chuck" campaigners attempted to initiate conversations and relationships with advertisers who both had commercials and product placement during "Chuck" airings. One method of contact that was promoted as part of the initiative was to tweet the advertisers responses to the ads and the company in general and express gratitude for supporting "Chuck" as an advertiser. One campaigner tweeted "Keeping my @DirecTV that I've had for a year. Super satisfied customer especially cuz it supports @NBC's #Chuck. Thanks! #NotaNielsenFamily" (@aidenlevi1) In response to the tweet, a company representative responded by tweeting to the campaigner: "Thanks for being with us. Glad to hear you are enjoying our services." The communication was directed to the individual consumer, did not express awareness of the community or campaign initiative, and was a one-time occurrence.

Thus, surface contact interactions were limited and did not exhibit long-term engagement with the community. As a result of engaging on a surface level with individual campaigners, companies were able to build individual, momentary good will by at least responding. However, the consumers did not appear to count surface contacts as among their allies or part of the communities in any way.

### Mutual Admirers

Mutual admirers exhibited a shift in the companies' engagement with the communities. Rather than focusing solely in the individual campaigner, mutual admirers began to acknowledge the communities with which the campaigners were affiliated. Interactions primarily began with consumer-initiated contact and were fairly limited in the number subsequent interactions. Further, mutual admirers responded in ways that displayed their appreciation to the consumers and their communities for their words and actions aimed to include the companies within the community and the campaigns. The relationships between communities and the mutual admirers were temporary, lasting only for momentary periods during the campaigns.

In comparison to Fuji's non-response to the "Save Polaroid" entreaties, "Ilford was the most transparent. They basically said, hey - we're looking into buying the film equipment to make. And they were...while the news was ultimately discouraging, they were actually fantastic throughout the process. They were very open with us and very responsive." Interestingly, though the ultimate end was not achieved for the Polaroid campaigners by converting Ilford into the needed ally, campaigners nonetheless recognized and appreciated the positive way in which Ilford responded to their requests and how the company interacted with the consumers during the campaign. As a result, though a temporary relationship was built between the company and Polaroid community, it was nevertheless a market interaction that generated positive good will

and support for the company on the part of the consumers. Likewise, in response to a “We Give a Chuck” tweet that stated that the consumer “just had a turkey sub and awesome cookie for dinner since you support my fav tv show @NBC's #chuck!!! #NotaNielsenFamily,” (@jmsheehan) Subway tweeted “That's awesome! Thanks for your support! We love #Chuck fans!” Subway did not limit the communication to the individual consumer, but also indicated their appreciation of the community by tweeting appreciation to the “Chuck” fans in general.

Mutual admirers, as was shown in the Polaroid example, were considered to be friendly relations in the marketplace, but like surface contacts did not contribute significantly strategically to the campaigns. However, engaging with mutual admirers served to increase awareness of the campaigns in the market as the companies likewise drew attention to the community. For the companies, acting as mutual admirers served as an opportunity to build a positive company image with consumers.

### Strategic Friends

Certain companies took advantage of the campaign relationships as an opportunity to strategically benefit both parties as they engaged with the communities. The distinguishing element that set strategic friends’ engagement apart from other types of involvement was that the companies used the budding relationships as an opportunity to promote their company and products in conjunction with promoting the communities. PF Chang’s Chinese Bistro utilized the “Chuck” community relationship that had been initiated and started during the “We Give a Chuck” Twitter initiative to promote both the community initiative and their own product; “#Chuck fans, thanks for the shout outs. Look for our PF Chang's Home Menu TV ad to run during Monday's season finale. #NotaNielsenFamily!” Drawing themselves into the community by including the hashtags central to the Twitter campaign (#Chuck fans and

#NotaNielsenFamily), PF Chang's used the community's initiatives on their own behalf to increase awareness of their advertisement. Given that advertisements on television shows are currently being called into question regarding their effectiveness in the digital recording era, the "Chuck" community relationship provided PF Chang's a unique opportunity to draw consumer attention to their advertisement, which would hopefully in turn stimulate not only feedback, but also sales. By taking advantage of the new found relationship, PF Chang's was able to simultaneously build awareness of the campaign and of their company products/advertisements. Interestingly, after the conclusion of the campaigns, PF Chang's rewarded the campaigners for their efforts that as a result benefitted their company by providing a select number of gift certificates to be distributed among the community, signaling a continued awareness of promotional opportunities generated by their relationship with the community.

Strategic friends therefore engaged in a type of novel promotional advertising by capitalizing on with consumers who had proactively sought to build relationships with the companies. These strategic friends had multiple interactions with consumers and the community over the campaign. Communications were generally targeted to the communities and initiated by the companies, generally drawing attention to the community, but also having a specific promotional component to the interactions. The outcomes for strategic friends' engagement appeared to be incredibly positive, as the communities were encouraged by the responses to continue building the relationships, and companies were able to leverage the relationships for their own strategic aims. Strategic friends therefore developed stronger relationships with the communities, often leading to the evolution of the engagement into collaborative partnerships.

## Collaborative Partners

Like strategic friends, collaborative partnerships were mutually beneficial for both the communities and the third-party companies. Multiple interactions between the two parties deepened the relationships beyond surface contact and mutual admirer interactions. However, in comparison to strategic friendships, collaborative partners engaged with the communities in ways that did not focus on obvious promoting the company/products. Rather, collaborative partners developed relationships to the point where the companies initiated dialogue and interactions that centered on the communities and their activities. Collaborative partners did more than interact with just the communities. As partners, these collaborative companies provided resources and acted in ways that helped the communities achieve their ultimate goals.

“Save Jericho” leaders, in an effort to facilitate sending nuts to CBS for the campaigners, identified a nut distributor that operated close to the New York City offices of CBS. In contacting the owner of the company, the leaders informed him that they were hoping to promote his company to their members. At first, the owner was skeptical of the community’s intent: “He really didn’t take me seriously. Oh, okay. Some whack job from Las Vegas calling me about peanuts. But then, all of a sudden...he started to get some orders. He called me up and went, ‘Steve – you’re for real.’” (Steve, “Save Jericho”) According to Cameron, after recognizing the opportunity at hand to make a profit by working with the campaigners, “Jeff [owner] made an offer to pull the nuts and send them all together, and that became...suddenly they were getting 100 pounds of nuts a day at CBS.” The company, Nuts Online, not only reciprocated the consumer-initiated relationship, but as was stated previously, went above and beyond to be a collaborator in the effort to send nuts to CBS. As the campaign progressed, the company set up as part of their online store a webpage devoted to the Jericho campaign (see Appendix A, Exhibit

4). On their webpage, they provided easy links for purchasing nuts for the initiative and even a “Jericho” nuts gift assortment. Further, the company produced a daily count and running total of the pounds of nuts sent, a live blog that kept members up to date on the company’s efforts in concert with the community, and videos produced by the company that showed campaigners actual nut drops at CBS. Upon a shift in the initiative to send nuts not only to the CBS office in New York, but also Los Angeles, Jeff used his contacts to arrange for a nut retailer that would coordinate efforts on the west coast. Thus, the relationship between the “Jericho” community and Nuts Online was collaborative in nature, with the focus of the company’s interactions remaining primarily on achieving the campaign goals.

Collaborative partnerships seemed to have the most positive and long-lasting results for both the companies and consumers. First, the companies’ actions in the campaigns generated buzz among community members to the point where community members expressed loyalty to the companies after the conclusion of the campaigns. One “Chuck” fan religiously purchased a Subway foot long sandwich on Monday evenings as a show of loyalty for the company that she credited to as being instrumental in the fight to save the show. Increased loyalty seems to influence consumers by creating positive associations with the company, which in turn increased the likelihood of making purchases from collaborative partners in future consumption settings. Also, collaborative partnerships seem to have exhibited more market staying power than other external marketer engagements. Many of the collaborative partnerships continued to interact with the communities after the conclusion of the campaigns, though in more infrequent ways. Nuts Online, for example, provided resources and activities for the “Jericho” community even after the campaigns, creating an online Jericho nuts game which could earn an actual nuts prize, and so on. It therefore appears that entering consumer communities through campaign outreach

efforts can create market opportunities that engender loyalty, sales, positive buzz, and continued interactions among communities and previously unaffiliated marketers.

### Alliance Fluidity

Company engagement, like other relationships during the campaigns, was not uniformly static. In some instances consumer-external marketer relationships displayed movement along the spectrum, moving from limited interactions towards increased involvement as the campaigns progressed. Particularly evident in the “Save Chuck” campaign in 2011, Samsung displayed considerable fluidity in their engagement with the “Chuck” community. At the start of the Twitter “We Give a Chuck” initiative, Samsung appeared to be mutual admirers, showing appreciation for the efforts individual consumers and the community took to engage with the company. For example, in response to a campaigner tweeting “A friend asked me if I had any suggestion for his first Smartphone and I said Samsung Galaxy! Thank you for supporting Chuck!” (@drawanz), the company representative responded with “Thank you for the recommendation and feedback. #chuck + #samsung fans = #wow.”

Then, fairly quickly within the tweeting campaign, Samsung moved towards being a strategic friend, using the tweeting campaigners as opportunities to further promote their products. One campaigner tweeted to Samsung that they were in the market for a new TV and promised that their business would go to a “Chuck” supporter. In response, Samsung replied, “Thanks. New Chuck tonight! How about a Samsung 40” Class 600 Series 1080p LED TV? [Http://smsn.us/6016RBaK](http://smsn.us/6016RBaK).” By the end of the campaign, Samsung had increased their interactions to the point where they were identifying with and encouraging the communities for further action: “OK #Chuck fans, it's time to tweet more than ever before! #RenewChuckSeason5 #NotaNielsenFamily.” Upon receiving news of the renewal, Samsung



gleefully tweeted to the community: “Woohoo!!! @WeDidIt #Chuck got its much deserved 5th and final season! #NotaNielsenFamily!!!” Thus, as the campaign progressed, it appears that Samsung changed the nature of their relationship with the “Chuck” community to the point where they were aligning themselves with the campaigners and supporting the campaign efforts as their own.

### **Activism Aftermath: Consumer-Product and Consumer-Consumer Conflicts**

The respective battles fought during the campaigns continued to affect consumer-brand/product and consumer-consumer relationships within the communities. Some informants were unable to go back to the “good ‘ole days,” continuing to act in a mobilized state as a result of feeling an increased and vested interest in the community-brand relationship. These stalwart campaigners continued to discuss new ways to promote the product, garner new community members, and so on, long after the immediate threats had been resolved. “I knew from what Jericho had done, you know, their failure really. I mean, they got the show back, but then it failed. And I knew from their failure that our work had just begun. That we had to do something bigger. We had to motivate the fan base even more” (Mark). Engaged members in the community acknowledged that they felt an increased burden of responsibility for the success of their products in later incarnations, and that they would be held accountable for both failures and successes by both other members and producers. The relationship between some community members and the product was strengthened through this increased responsibility for continued action and residual sense that the consumers were partly responsible for their successful campaigns in bringing back the desired products.

Experiencing this strengthened bond between the consumer, collective, and the brand led in some cases to consumers assuming responsibility over and continuation of the product (if only

in narrative form) and the collective itself. For Gina, after participating actively in the effort to save “Jericho,” she felt the impetus to continue holding offline events for the collective, tabling at fan conventions, and working with Devil’s Due Publishing to facilitate and promote the release of the “Jericho” comic books. Kate and Jessie, the masterminds behind the “We Give a Chuck” campaign, not only continued interacting with the collective Chuck consumers via their website and social media, but also instituted and promoted additional activities and events, such as fundraising campaigns for St. Jude’s Hospital, stating on their call to action post “when we all band together, we can do incredible things. And that is what this fandom is all about! Our show may be over, but we were gifted with a fantastic community that still lives on, and we’re paying our good fortune forward.” Consequently, these mobilized consumers were invested in not only the product living on, but also in providing means and methods through which the collective could continue engaging with one another via specific rituals and activities.

However, relationships within the communities between individual consumers, as well as between consumers and the core product after the campaigns were tested and in some cases, dissolved. It appears that without the guiding and unifying goal to save the product, conversations descended into bickering and argumentation as individuals fought over the direction of the community, leading to some consumers exiting the main community and forming exclusive segments. Gina, who assumed a new role in the overall “Jericho” community as an emissary and middleman, mentioned that “there’s some people that still won’t talk to each other. And there’s probably some people in my other group that I don’t talk to. There’s not too many people in the Jericho group I don’t talk to, because it just seems so silly.” Acting as a go-between, Gina had to forge new connections between the divergent groups in order to continue sharing information in the overall group. The vacuum of post-campaign directive goals and

attitudes appears to have contributed to the destabilization of previously strengthened relationships, and altered the structure of community networks. Campaigning thus appears to have exerted more than a momentary transformative power on internal relationships. Organizing and fighting to save a product seems to have shifted communities in ways that made it difficult for some to return to previous states of communal interaction.

It also appears that the constant effort exerted primarily by the leaders was difficult to sustain over time. Mark, a particularly vocal and active leader in the “Chuck” community, struggled with his relationship to the core product over time, as he became weary of the constant need for action even after the official campaigns had concluded, problems with maintaining the fandom, and so on: *“The process in between [Season 2 and Season 3] when I became so involved...it started to suck the life out of me. The love and life of the show for me. I even said it on my podcast, is that I’m starting to get the feeling that I don’t love this show anymore, and that’s because I had put in too much effort.”* The constant demands of being mobilized towards achieving goals over a long(er) period of time and managing the conflicts between emerging sects within the fandoms created tension and challenges for previously motivated and engaged consumers in their own communities, to the point where their relationships with the central product were called into question or even negatively impacted, as Mark experienced.

Dealing with the “burnout” feelings that accompanied prolonged action led some leaders to turn the reins over to new individuals who had come up from the ranks of the community leadership hierarchy. Relinquishing the leadership or moving towards more supportive roles in the communities appears to have been a method for coping with the fatigue and negative feelings towards the community and/or product. For Mark, prolonged and intense involvement at the nexus of organized community activity *“becomes work and you’re not getting paid for it, and so*

*you always have fresh blood coming in. You have to. No one can - maybe a few people - if you are smart and you start any fandom like this, you have to come in not being too passionate, but of course you're not going to do that, because you go into it because you're passionate! So eventually everyone, you know, either needs someone else to take over for them or you know....no one can keep going forever at that same speed."* Further, the act of introducing new leaders in the long run may have a positive effect for the communities, by providing a source of new ideas, renewed energy, and desire to achieve emergent goals for the group.

Mobilized Communities, in summary, appear to exhibit a movement between orientations towards states of increased organization and coordinated action when faced with pressing, community-wide threats. The shift towards achieving specific goals drives changes in relationship structures and dynamics within the communities as consumers attempted to work in concert with another to achieve their desired goals. Relationships changed both within and external to the communities, creating opportunities to form a variety of relationship types in the marketplace and co-creative collaborations between communities and companies. The ability to form and transform relationships according to communal goals and intent therefore appears to create a market opportunity for companies for further co-creative engagements, while creating a resource and tool for communities to encourage change in the marketplace.

## **CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION**

Resistance, it would seem, is not futile – a fact that would send the Borg collective from the series “Star Trek” into an ideological black hole, so to speak. As seen throughout the findings of this dissertation, consumer activism when enacted within collective, whether an Emergent Crowd or a Mobilized Community, has value in the marketplace whether it be individually for the consumer, the collective and its evolution, the target organization and their response, or for third party allies willing to join in the fray. In the following discussion, I will summarize and discuss the key insights from my research to extend these theoretical findings into implications for marketing practitioners. By so doing, I intend to not only contribute to the existing theoretical understanding on collective consumer activism, but also broaden the scope of recommendations for organizations when encountering collective consumer campaigns.

### **Emergent Crowds Discussion**

Emergent Crowds represent collectives of loosely-connected consumers who are motivated to act based on individual responses to market developments and events. By congregating in online spaces produced or mediated by the target company and/or dedicated pages created for gathering and enacting initiatives within commonly used social media platforms, these individually-minded consumers nevertheless are brought together in segregated pockets of collective action because of their similar concerns and goals, and through the process of participating in the emergent collective segments, they are able to negotiate not only their individual actions, but also contribute to collective effort overall. Consequently, Emergent Crowds appear to align with the network structure as discussed by Diani (2003) of a decentralized, segmented network, as efforts to address the market wrong were separated via online platforms and through different collective segments.

One insight from the data with regards to the catalysts for Emergent Crowds to develop is that Emergent Crowds can arise in situations when their personal consumption behaviors are impacted by the emergent event/decision, such as was the case with the Netflix pricing change protests. However, Emergent Crowds also appear when consumers are upset or enraged from a marketer decision from a moral standpoint, even when their personal consumption is not at stake or influenced, as was shown with the Applebee's firing protests. The impetus for Emergent Crowds is therefore not dependent on individual consumption choices or existing behaviors, but rather expands to include any potential instance in which consumers disagree or take issue with emergent market-centered concerns. Thus, it is highly possible that Emergent Crowds may occur in increasing numbers in the marketplace in the coming months and years, as corporate information is becoming increasingly transparent and negative or inflammatory stories spread quickly through social media networks and news sharing sites – a supposition supported by Rauschnabel, Kammerlander, and Ivens (2016) work on collaborative brand attacks in social media. A further compounding factor will likely be the rising number of consumers, particularly of older demographic age groups, who are adopting and utilizing social media platforms and thereby expanding the potential pool of Emergent Crowd participants. Recognizing that Emergent Crowds are not unilaterally related to one's direct consumption raises not only the likelihood of this type of consumer protest group arising for corporations, but also the importance of companies in understanding the likely protest trajectory and longevity, behavioral manifestations, and opportunities for response to guide corporate responses.

Emergent Crowds seem to align with the “flash” mentality that seems to proliferate the far-reaching corners of consumer activity in the online arena. Arising quickly when market problems gained public awareness and likewise dying down relatively quickly after short bursts

of intensive activity, Emergent Crowds rely on fast, easy, and popular methods of protest and campaigning. By so doing, these campaign efforts as generated by Emergent Crowds both encourage and facilitate a higher number of participants to join in the efforts and rely on existing online platforms to expedite the mobilization and enactment of protest behaviors. In combination with the ease of participation through online methods of organization and implementation, activism – and the opportunity to take an active role in market dynamics – seems to be opening up to the mass population. In other eras of protest and activism, as well as other protest arenas (e.g., politics), activism often takes a more intensive effort and commitment from an individual. Furthermore, committing to a potentially divisive issue can potentially create negative personal ramifications for an individual, their reputation, and relationships with others who disagree with their ideological position and protest efforts. This personal and social stigma associated with aligning one’s self with and actively participating in protest efforts may have created a perceived barrier to the mass population who otherwise might take a more active role in the system.

Emergent Crowds seem to be challenging this perspective and characterization of activism opportunities and activists themselves. The time required to participate in these organized protest efforts is minimal for an individual, particularly given that these efforts are promoted and enacted via online platforms that consumers regularly utilize and are familiar with using, and that the protest tactics utilized are codified and known protest tactics. Consumers are used to interacting with one another on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter in their everyday lives and likely visit these platforms regularly. As such, the time it takes to find and participate with these collectives is much lower than other potential activist opportunities. Also, little effort is required to explain, educate, and discuss the “how to’s” of the protest efforts, as Emergent Crowds rely on codified protest tactics with little innovation or adaptation to the specific crowd

and effort at hand. Consumers generally have a working knowledge of boycotts, petitions, and letter-writing, which thereby enables fast mobilization and efficient individual participation within the crowd. This also minimizes the time spent in creative efforts overall within the collective, whether it is in their actual campaign methods or development of their own online spaces. Creativity does not seem to be highly valued or encouraged, thus likely fostering a cyclical reliance on codified protest efforts in Emergent Crowds overall.

Furthermore, individual effort within Emergent Crowds is likewise less intensive than within traditional protest movements and Mobilized Communities with regards to the personal commitment to and action required to be part of the collective. It appears that commenting within the group discussion to engage and further the collective discourse, while also individually committing to the call to action whether it be a boycott, signing an online petition, or sending an email/letter/Tweet/post to the target organization, is sufficient to be considered “part” of the collective, particularly since identity work within and individual allegiance to the collective is minimal. Recruitment efforts are similarly minimalistic, as these crowds rely on spreading awareness through their existing social media platforms via re-tweets, posting on one’s status, and simply commenting within the group to gain awareness. While high contributors spend more time within the collective and in driving the overall protest and campaigning efforts, the overall effort and time for a “regular” participant is quite minimal within Emergent Crowds. This effect is likely further amplified by the primary focus of Emergent Crowds’ tactics being confined to actions through online platforms and mediums. Little evidence was shown of these crowds’ offline tactical efforts beyond individualized boycotting towards the target companies. Thus, the online realm provided not only the context for gathering, but also the primary means by which Emergent Crowds enacted their activist agendas.



Additionally, the decentralized leadership structure of the collective and relative anonymity fostered by online distance and the confinement of activities to the online sphere seems to mitigate potential roadblocks to participation and individual repercussions for engagement. Also, when a protest campaign gains popular approval, such as when it garners over thousands of “likes” or when it is discussed in popular news outlets, participating within these Emergent Crowd initiatives likely seems less costly from a social perspective.

A significant factor, given these insights, is the role technology plays within Emergent Crowds and their activist performances. In comparison to Mobilized Communities, Emergent Crowds utilized social media platforms and other online gathering spaces primarily as intended – to gather, discuss, and communicate overall. Little creative work in the usage of online platforms was exhibited, beyond the development of meme’s that were posted within forums. Furthermore, Emergent Crowds’ efforts seemed to minimize integrative work between online platforms, with the exception of certain contributors encouraging others to re-tweet or post on other social media platform forums, or to sign a corollary petition on a petition site. Consequently, the activist campaigns from Emergent Crowds were rather one-dimensional and disjointed as they occurred, potentially impacting the effectiveness of these campaigns in raising public awareness and support to their cause, as well as entreating desirable company responses, which is a question for future research. Finally, given that Emergent Crowds failed to generate their own online gathering and campaigning spaces beyond the social media platforms used, their efforts and collective work were likewise constricted to adhere to the standards, norms, and structure of the platforms. More creative efforts to represent and distinguish the cause from other campaigns, as well as to communicate this cause to those who may join were likely hindered.

With that said, Emergent Crowds are opening up the world of activism to the mass population of consumers, further propagating and solidifying the adoption of protest methods within the marketplace as a means for addressing market inequalities and consumer concerns for regular, everyday consumers who otherwise would not identify with the “activist” characterization, and by doing so through mediums and platforms that are consistent with “regular” consumption behaviors. Activism within the social media age, particularly in light of this dissertation’s analysis of Emergent Crowds’ nature and manifestations of protest, facilitates participation from consumers across the nation and world, thereby leading to activism opportunities that anybody can – and does - do. By providing a more commonly and socially accepted opportunity for protest that engages and elicits a wider participation base of consumers, consumers are not only becoming more active through market-sanctioned means, such as co-creation, but are exerting their might and will through activist campaigns.

Emergent Crowds are also excellent sites for drawing attention to problematic marketing decisions for organizations and act as a source for insight into the undercurrent of dissatisfied customers. Because Emergent Crowds only arise in response to a marketing faux pas or corporate stumble, given that a key part of Emergent Crowds is their individual comments on and negotiation of the cause at hand, examining the discourse within these Emergent Crowds can act as a form of invaluable feedback for an organization. If analyzed carefully, the common threads within the collectives can provide suggestions for ways to not only handle the specific issue at hand, but also indicate value-related problems to address in the future. As seen in the Netflix protests, for example, a common theme was the disconnect between the higher price and lack of additional value provided in the streaming catalogue options. Consumers might have been less resistive to the higher price point if the service value matched the price charged. This

insight could be used by Netflix to not only work to realign their prices with their existing catalogue, but also could be useful when developing future pricing and product strategies. Further, the Applebee's protest indicated not only consumer outrage at the incident from a moral perspective, but also identified discrepancies between the company's stated policies and actions, as well as perceived problems with the tipping/service industry overall. Once again, this discursive thread among the Emergent Crowd participants is valuable insight to Applebee's regarding their organizational policies and perhaps could be used in developing different policies for the tipping/wage structure of their organization. Thus, Emergent Crowds create value for organizations by highlighting and providing insight into perceived problematic events or decisions for organizations, thereby providing marketers the opportunities to address and potentially redress the issue in a more socially, culturally, and market-sanctioned way.

This leads to the question for marketers as to how to handle Emergent Crowd protest campaigns in the event that they arise in the market. Given that the longevity of these protest efforts appears to be short, as the campaigns seem to be oriented around micro-bursts of intensive effort by a high number of consumers, sometimes it may be in the marketers' best interest to simply let the Emergent Crowd run its course. Acknowledging the complaints and protests publicly, without making any concessions, may simply add more fuel to the fire, perhaps prolonging the campaign efforts. However, since Emergent Crowds also provide valuable insight into the consumers' perspective on the problems at hand, if the feedback is legitimate with specific concerns that can – and ultimately should – be faced by the organization moving forward, I recommend that organizations proactively address the concerns in public, utilizing media outlets via press releases or press conferences, to publish the information and ways in which the organization is addressing their operations or re-evaluating the decision based on the

protesters' comments, and as Rauschnabel et al (2016) recommend, to do so quickly. Commenting individually within social media platforms will likely only encourage further inflammatory comments and action within the collectives, as they exist and operate within these platforms, and this is likely not a time for engaging consumers one on one or encouraging further individual comment. However, a response through reputable means that acknowledges and addresses the concerns by stating the company actions to be taken may work to quell the concerns of the Emergent Crowd. As Rauschnabel et al's (2016) research likewise proposes, the strategies most likely to be effective at handling CBAs enacted by Emergent Crowds will be those that appease the consumers' reactions (e.g., apologies), communicate with the consumers, and those that reflect the desired change in behavior. A key component appears to be for the target company to listen, understand, and synthesize what the Emergent Crowds are arguing via their campaigns and pay due diligence to the insights generated therein through their corporate and public responses.

Emergent Crowds provide an interesting arena for consumer protest, theoretical development of consumer activism within marketing literature, and marketplace evolution overall. However, the insights from Emergent Crowds are not the whole story of contemporary consumer activism as enacted through the online screen, as I have worked to show through my comparison of Emergent Crowds with Mobilized Communities, in particular the impact that mobilization has on the activated communities.

### **Mobilized Communities Discussion**

Mobilized Communities signify consumer groups who have history, relationships practices, and an overall identity established as a group prior to enacting activist efforts. Mobilized Communities, in comparison to the Emergent Crowds, are structured more like

centralized, non-segmented networks (Diani 2003), particularly during campaigning times as they come together with a singular purpose in mind. When facing market challenges, Mobilized Communities rise to the occasion, and do so strategically, creatively, and with a marketing lens combined with knowledge of protest tactics to focus their efforts. Based on the transformations of communities to new goal orientations and the call within the collective to act in strategic, specific ways that broadened the scope of the consumer experience to become a hybrid consumer-activist, Mobilized Communities and the relationships therein are fundamentally and in some cases, seemingly irreversibly, changed by the activist experience. The fluid and dynamic nature of consumer communities enabled the development of new leadership structures and relationships that in turn provided access to needed skills and resources. This represents a method for dealing with the ever-changing external environment and potential threats to individual and collective consumption, and ultimately influenced the community – and consumer- both during and after the campaign period. Furthermore, Mobilized Communities seem to bring interesting opportunities for consumer-producer collaborations and value co-creation, whether with the target organization or targeted allies, as the effects of mobilization turn at least a subsection of the mobilized community members into more market-oriented and savvy participants, who likewise hold themselves accountable for the success or failure of their efforts not only within the collective but in relation to the producer, as well.

In comparison to Emergent Crowds, Mobilized Communities are more strategically and market-minded entities, who are willing and able to push the boundaries of activism in the marketplace. Utilizing codified protest tactics as merely the basis for their campaigns and tactics deployed, these collectives take their efforts beyond the traditional and institutionalized forms of the protest methods by adapting and innovating tactics to fit both the collective and the market

system in order to achieve the most advantageous outcomes possible. Furthermore, by drawing on their knowledge from past campaigning efforts within consumer culture and other arenas of protest, these groups of market and protest-savvy consumers are able to further distinguish their efforts from previous campaigns and evolve their plans to be even more strategically oriented, embracing and exploring opportunities for the creative expression of the collective's campaigns. This also means that protest ideas are vetted through the newly solidified leadership organizational structure and evaluated in terms of the potential success, originality in relation to cumulative protest knowledge, and potential contribution value of the idea to the campaign at hand.

These communities also exhibit more creative, diversified, and discriminative usage of existing online platforms to achieve their goals, in comparison to Emergent Crowds. Expanding beyond the boundaries of the intended purposes of the platforms of interaction, Mobilized Communities appear to use social media sites for not only gathering and disseminating information, but also to further their collective alliance formation efforts and relationship development with market entities. Mobilized Communities also demonstrated more cognizance of and strategic deployment of online platforms by analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of the specific platforms, but also in their integration of the different platforms as part of the larger campaign efforts. Mobilized Communities further demonstrated their internet savviness and distinguished their efforts from Emergent Crowds and other collective campaigns by developing their own online spaces specific to their communities and causes. As a result, the campaigning efforts of Mobilized Communities overall are more targeted, creative, cohesive, and in alignment with the situational context of the protest than what is seen in Emergent Crowd campaigns.

It is also important to also recognize that Mobilized Communities traversed the online/offline divide more so than Emergent Crowds in their activist efforts. It would seem that Mobilized Communities seemed to be aware of the advantages that offline action, in conjunction with online commentary and action, can afford when engaging in activist efforts. The tangibility and “in-your-face” aspect of physical manifestations of certain activist tactics, such as letter-writing, were desirable in the eyes of Mobilized Community leaders, and as such, were likewise promoted within the collective campaigns in tandem with actions enacted and facilitated through online mediums. The commitment shown to the collective and relationship strength therein may have also contributed to the motivation of individual consumers to engage in both online and offline behaviors, a supposition that supports Brunsting and Postmes’ (2012) contentions that affective ties are more motivational for offline forms of action within collectives. These findings suggest overall that the online arena provides the platform for these communities to meet and strategize, as well as an avenue for some of the collective – *but not all* – of their tactical implementation. The hybridization of online and offline tactics may lead to Mobilized Communities’ activist efforts to in fact be more disruptive to the target organizations, thereby impacting the potential success of these campaigns – a question that will remain for future research to investigate.

Furthermore, because Mobilized Communities have a pre-existing history and established relationships, when they experience the mobilization shift they exhibit higher levels of commitment in both time and effort from individual members – particularly those who are in leadership roles - and from the activated collective as a whole. As seen in the data, activities and discourse in the communities shift when engaged in active campaigning periods to focus around the campaign initiatives. Even when the goals had been achieved, or all hope for the desired goal

was lost, the work was never finished. In the case of “Jericho,” the narrative continued through comic books, which reinvigorated the “Jericho” community overall. For the “Chuck” community, the campaign periods spanned years, with intensive efforts ramping up during the TV renewal season. Even after the show was definitively cancelled, the collective – and what they stood for – continues on. The commitment to the campaigns by individuals far exceeded that seen in the Emergent Crowds, most likely due to the strong personal relationships built with one another, and the core product, which prompted and motivated prolonged action and extensive efforts by individuals. However, this extended period of action is not without its consequences, as was seen in the data. Burnout and separation from the collective and the product itself were sometimes experienced as a result of the intensive and prolonged campaigning efforts, particularly by community leaders.

The mobilization and activism effects experienced by Mobilized Communities when faced with a community-threatening issue also restructure the communities in both their leadership organization and goal orientation, leading towards a reorientation towards and emphasis on the campaign and its associated initiatives. This shift in the structure and orientation of the community seems to open the doors of opportunity for new relationship development within and external to the collective, and by extension, organizational and market-value creation opportunities, as was seen with the inclusion of and focus on ally relationship development in the marketplace.

By examining these issues together, when encountering Mobilized Communities fighting for their goals/causes, organizations have equal opportunities to feel both excited and concerned – excited because of the value-creation opportunities for afforded and the opportunities to take advantage of the increased responsibility that members with Mobilized Communities exhibit



post-campaigns towards the collective and brand/product in question, and concerned because of the challenge they face from a distraught, strategically-minded, and motivated collective. Not only can unaffiliated companies develop alternative streams of revenue when collaborating with consumer communities during campaign periods, but targeted companies can also improve consumer relations by actively working with communities to facilitate the mobilization and reorientation of consumer groups into viable promotion and production collaborators. Mobilized Communities, as a means to achieving their goals, actively work to recruit members through word-of-mouth marketing, testimonials, promotions, and so on. As emissaries and ambassadors of the products, companies can benefit from the mobilization and involvement of activists in the marketplace, and could develop value in working to engage these consumers to co-manage the brands/products. Further, because consumers utilize the campaigns as opportunities to learn more about and engage with the market on a business level, utilizing market logics, practices, and principles, companies have the chance to cultivate co-creative and co-managerial relationships with market savvy individuals after campaign periods in which these activated consumers can take on more responsibilities in relation to the collective and the brand from an “official,” marketer-sanctioned stance. Consequently, companies and brand managers can utilize consumer campaigns from Mobilized Communities as an avenue for taking an active role within a community and further manage consumer-company relationships, impressions, and activities.

Thus, when encountering a campaign from a Mobilized Community, organizations should be prepared for an integrated attack utilizing multiple protest methods across a variety of platforms both online and offline that have the aim to persuade some sort of change from the company. In contrast to Emergent Crowds, simply waiting out the protest is not ideal for Mobilized Communities, nor is it recommended. Because these are groups of highly invested and

motivated consumers who are actively working to achieve their aims – and as seen in the data, these collectives were actively working to promote the product as part of their recruitment and campaigning efforts – staying silent during such shows of devotion or action is likely not going to be well received by these consumers. Rather, acknowledging their protests publicly – and preferably, individually – will at least show these vested consumers that they are heard and their interests are cared about. This is an important recommendation, given that one of the relationships that make up a brand community is the relationship with the focal marketer. Failure to receive even simple acknowledgement from the marketer about important concerns would perhaps work against the organization during times of conflict. More so, I recommend that companies proactively reach out to community leaders to when contentious times arise, to not only include these leaders on the marketing rationale for the decisions, but also to discuss the potential strategic future of the collective and/or product/narrative. In essence, marketers could transform the already mobilized and market-oriented collective leaders to become their own allies and co-manage the collective itself with them. In the very least, providing insight and perhaps supportive materials for the community would once again facilitate communication and perhaps good will between the target organization and the collective, in the event that changes to the decision/practices could not be made.

Likewise, I highly recommend that companies continually examine their public relations stance, readying themselves to respond to viable consumer communities as third-party allies when contacted, whether via social media or other forms of communication, such that they can maximize the benefit of becoming collaborative partners, rather than simply non-responders or surface contacts. Value can be created and positive consumer good will generated when companies take the leap to become strategic friends or collaborative partners with Mobilized

Communities. Failure to do so simply minimizes the potential positive outcomes that such parties can realize.

## CHAPTER 10: THE EPILOGUE

Activism has a rich and storied history within marketplace conflicts and continues to play an integral part in market evolution, particularly as methods for fighting perceived market problems evolve in response to the dynamically changing market environment. Waging ideological, practical, or personal battles against seemingly more powerful market entities, consumers are creatively engaging in activist behaviors through online platforms that broaden the spectrum of consumer response and collective organization. Contemporary activism as enacted through the online arena is shifting the proverbial tide and providing increased opportunities for consumer engagement, network development and transformation, value creation, and ultimately, market development.

As this dissertation has shown, simmering beneath the surface of consumer activism lies complex consumer interactions and networks that have arisen or been transformed as consumers act in response to undesirable market decisions. By examining two distinct types of consumer collectives and their subsequent campaigning efforts, this dissertation research contributes to existing consumer literature on consumer activism and collectives in four areas. First, I have drawn on and utilized existing theoretical explanations of social movements (new social movement, resource mobilization, and political opportunity theories) in conjunction with cyberactivism research and consumer collective/relationships literature as the basis for investigating the differences of activism behaviors in the marketplace through the lens of the collective and its distinctive nature. From the data, I have demonstrated and supported my contentions that consumer collectives who congregate online differ in systematic and strategic ways that thereby impact their activist efforts. Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities are fundamentally distinct given their originating purpose, particularly their identity work -

which in turn influences the time and effort commitment by consumers, the longevity of the campaigns overall, recruitment efforts, creative work, and alliance formation developments as the campaigns unfold – and leadership and organizational structure. Further, Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities differentially use codified protest tactics and cumulative resistance knowledge, as well as online technology and spaces, which results in distinct campaigning behaviors.

Second, I show theoretically and in application that activism is more fluid and multidimensional in terms of the social structures and actors involved in consumer-generated campaigns than previous works have discussed, such as Giesler's (2008) linear, dramatic model of consumer resistance. Not only do some collectives arise in response to emergent marketing problems, these collectives perform activism differently than Mobilized Communities. Furthermore, relationship fluidity appears to be a necessary and useful construct when discussing consumer activism, specifically the strategic use of and characterizations of external partnerships. Although relationships are acknowledged to change in the marketplace, this research presents a more in-depth description of consumer relationship formations, network development, and social dynamics overall as they arise or evolve in consumer collectives. I further highlight the value of relationship fluidity as a resource for achieving collective consumer goals of marketplace change.

Third, I extend beyond Muñiz and Schau's (2005; 2007) findings to suggest that by active engagement in the marketplace via campaigning, consumers are motivated to engage with market discourses and practices to become strategically minded consumer organizations who are further integrated into the market system. Thus, this dissertation contributes to the growing stream of research that investigates active consumers in the marketplace (e.g., consumer co-

creation, word-of-mouth, and so on) by showing consumer activism as an opportunity for consumers to become more market-savvy participants. This in turn creates opportunities for marketers to engage with knowledgeable consumers in future interactions. Similarly, by engaging in activist campaigns, collectives also further the work of appropriating and codifying protest tactics with other institutional fields into the market system, leading to an enhanced cumulative protest knowledge within consumer culture that should influence subsequent generations of consumer activists.

Fourth and finally, I address longitudinal community transformations, a hitherto neglected area of consumer research, and by so doing, answer the call by Russell and Schau (2014) to address the evolution of collective action over time and the social components therein over time. Mobilized Communities are affected by and evolve in relation to their activist campaigns at the outset of, during, and after the campaigning periods in significant, value-creating, and relationship-affecting ways. The transformations resulting from consumer activism subsequently creates both short-term adjustments, and long-term shifts in community goals, relationships, and activities, in addition to impacting individual relationships with the community and product.

### **Emergent Questions For Future Research**

Additional questions have emerged as a result of this dissertation which may be addressed by further delving into relevant bodies of literature and data collection. First, this research primarily takes place from the perspective of the consumers, as they attempt to reach their individual and collective goals via campaigns. However, a significant component of the story lies with the role and behaviors of the companies that interact with the communities during the campaigning process, including both the focal company that produces the products and third-

party companies which participate on behalf of the consumers. It is unclear which factors contribute to or influence company engagement with consumer campaigns. Are there characteristics among companies that establish relationships, especially collaborative partnerships, with consumer communities? What motivates these companies to move from polite responses (surface contacts) to proactively becoming part of the community, discourses, and activities during activist performances? How do companies contacted by the consumers perceive the campaigns and communities who are engaging in practices seemingly contrary to the market?

Second, the consumer informants also have commented on their perspective of the focal marketer during the campaigns. However, it is unknown beyond the official decisions and press releases how the focal marketers reacted to and if/how they were influenced by the actions of both the consumers and the collaborative third party companies who participated in the campaigns. Though King (2008) identified contributing causes that influenced company concessions to boycotts, what, if any, campaign actions were most persuasive in the decision making process from the focal company's perspective, particularly given the wide variety of protest tactics utilized within both the Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Community efforts? How did the campaigns influence perceptions about the consumer community in question, and were there lessons about community management learned from the campaigns that have influenced subsequent interactions between the company and its community group(s)?

Further, I have examined different types of consumer collectives, in terms of Emergent Crowds and Mobilized Communities that included brand and fan communities in this study to broaden the generalizability of the themes and address critiques that the findings may only be present in a given market or type of community, such as fan communities. In searching for

additional brand communities to include in this study, it has been difficult to identify other brand communities that have engaged in goal-driven campaigns similar to the campaigns undertaken by the communities already included, when the issue at stake was not the core community product being threatened. While posing some problems for data collection, it may be of interest to investigate the reasons behind a seeming lack of active campaigns occurring in brand communities overall and for a variety of purposes/goals. Are some types of communities more likely/prone to actively engage in the marketplace through goal-driven campaigns? A possible theory may be that the historical precedent established by past fan community campaigns reduces the ideological barriers of consumer powerlessness and increase the potential hope of success from using campaigns as a method for achieving market change, and thereby encourage consumers to follow that course of action. Brand communities, in contrast, are relatively new in the market in terms of their ability to communicate with one another to establish ties as a community in the marketplace, and there does not seem to be historical precedent for brand communities to draw on when faced with possible discontinuation of their products. Thus, historical narratives and stories of success may be a contributing factor towards motivating consumer communities to engage in campaigning behaviors. However, as this is an emergent question resulting from the data collection for this study, the question of the motivations for and contributing factors of communities engaging in campaigns can be addressed in subsequent inquiry.

Additionally, the scope of this work has been limited to investigating the performances of activism and how the consumer collective influences this performance, and vice versa, specifically relating to a singular market target/entity. I have not included in this investigation sites of consumer activism where the consumers have taken on more numerous targets or



ideological opponents. Thus, future work could further the insights produced in this dissertation by studying and comparing findings from collectives engaged in broader activist work, rather than the more targeted work undertaken in the collectives studied. Likewise, the scope of this research was focused on examining the performances of activism as it relates to the collective, with detail, but not analysis, on the outcomes of the collective activism as to whether the central goal(s) were in fact achieved, and the likely factors contributing to this success. While the goal achievement outcomes were not under investigation, it would be interesting to continue this line of inquiry by extending the findings from this study to develop theoretical propositions and insights as to the collective factors that influence successful attainment of the central goal(s) of the collective's activist efforts, especially with regards to the hybridization of online and offline tactics exhibited in Mobilized Communities, in comparison to the online boundaries of action observed in Emergent Crowd work.

In conclusion, the story of consumer activism and its enactment in consumer collectives behind the online screen, as it has been explored as part of this project, appears to be intrinsically important and of interest to organizations as they confront the increasing likelihood of consumer campaigning efforts and protest tactics. Likewise, studying sites of consumer activism appears to be theoretically significant for not only furthering understanding of activism as it is enacted in the marketplace, but also informing consumer collectives research. Though the work is never fully finished, as the findings from the Mobilized Communities seem to suggest, we end our story here, with an optimistic and inquisitive eye towards the future of activism as it is performed through collectives.

## REFERENCES

- Aaker, Jennifer (1997), "Dimensions of Brand Personality," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34 (August), 347-357.
- Algesheimer, Rene, Utpal M. Dholakia, and Andreas Herrmann (2005), "The Social Influence of Brand Community: Evidence from European Car Clubs," *Journal of Marketing*, 69 (2), 19-34.
- Allnutt, Luke (2010), "Why Malcolm Gladwell is Wrong About Digital Activism." [http://www.rferl.org/content/Why\\_Malcolm\\_Gladwell\\_Is\\_Wrong\\_About\\_Digital\\_Activism/2171985.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Why_Malcolm_Gladwell_Is_Wrong_About_Digital_Activism/2171985.html)
- Amenta, Edwin, Neal Caren, and Sheera Joy Olasky, "Age for Leisure? Political Mediation and the Impact of the Pension Movement on US old-age Policy," *American Sociological Review*, 70(3), 516-538.
- Amenta, Edwin, Bruce G. Carruthers, and Yvonne Zylan (1992), "A Hero for the Aged? The Townsend Movement, the Political Mediation Model, and US old-age Policy, 1934-1950," *American Journal of Sociology*, 308-339.
- Amenta, Edwin, Kathleen Dunleavy, and Mary Bernstein (1994), "Stolen Thunder? Huey Long's "Share Our Wealth", Political Mediation, and the Second New Deal," *American Sociological Review*, 678-702.
- Arvidsson, Adam and Alessandro Caliandro (2016) "Brand Public," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 42(5), 727-748.
- Ayers, Michael D. (2003), "Comparing Collective Identity in Online and Offline Feminist Activities," in *Cyberactivism: From Theory to Practice*, eds. Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers, 145-164. New York: Routledge.
- Bagozzi, Richard (1974), "Marketing as an Organized Behavioral System of Exchange," *Journal of Marketing*, 38 (October), 77-81.
- Bakker, Tom P. and Claes H. de Vreese (2011), "Good News for the Future? Young People, Internet Use, and Political Participation," *Communication Research*, 38(4), 451-470.
- Baudrillard, Jean (1970) [1998] *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Belk, Russell W. (1988), "Possessions and the Extended Self," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15 (September), 139-168.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2010), "Sharing," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36(5), 715-734.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2014), "You Are What You Can Access: Sharing and Collaborative Consumption Online," *Journal of Business Research*, 67(8), 1595-1600.
- Belk, Russell W. and Janeen Costa (1998), "The Mountain Man Myth: A Contemporary Consuming Fantasy," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25 (December), 218-240.
- Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckman (1967), *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, New York: Irvington Publishers.

- Berscheid, Ellen and Letitia Anne Peplau (1983), "The Emerging Science of Relationships," in *Close Relationships*, ed. Harold H. Kelley et al., New York: W.G. Freeman, 1-19.
- Bimber, Bruce (2003), *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Bimber, Bruce, Andrew J. Flanagin, and Cynthia Stohl (2005), "Reconceptualizing Collective Action in the Contemporary Media Environment," *Communication Theory*, 15(4), 365-388.
- Braunsberger, Karin and Brian Buckler (2011), "What Motivates Consumers to Participate in Boycotts: Lessons from the Ongoing Canadian Seafood Boycott," *Journal of Business Research*, 61, 96-102.
- Briscoe, Forrest and Sean Safford (2008), "The Nixon-in-China Effect: Activism, Imitation, and the Institutionalization of Contentious Practices," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 53(3), 460-491.
- Bristor, Julia M. and Eileen Fischer (1988), "Feminist Thought: Implications for Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19 (March), 518-536.
- Brough, Melissa M. and Sangita Shresthova (2012), "Fandom Meets Activism: Rethinking Civic and Political Participation," in *Transformative Works and Fan Activism*, eds. Henry Jenkins and Sangita Shresthova, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 10.
- Brower, Sue (1992), "Fans as Tastemakers: Viewers for Quality Television," in *The Adoring Audience*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis, 163-184. London: Routledge.
- Brunsting, Suzanne and Tom Postmes (2002), "Social Movement Participation in the Digital Age: Predicting Offline and Online Collective Action," *Small Group Research*, 33(5), 525-554.
- Buechler, Steven M. (1993), "Beyond Resource Mobilization? Emerging Trends in Social Movement Theory," *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34(2), 217-235.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1995), "New Social Movement Theories," *Sociological Quarterly*, 36(3), 441-464.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2000), *Social Movements in Advanced Capitalism: The Political Economy and Cultural Construction of Social Activism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Carr, Austin (2011, September 19), "Netflix Splits DVD-Streaming Business, Rebrands with Qwikster, Adds Video games," Retrieved from <http://www.fastcompany.com/1781145/netflix-splits-dvd-streaming-business-rebrands-qwikster-adds-video-games>.
- Carroll, William K. and Robert A. Hackett (2006), "Democratic Media Activism Through the Lens of Social Movement Theory," *Media, Culture, & Society*, 28(1), 83-104.
- Castells, Manuel (2015), *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Malden: Polity Press.
- Chung, Seungwha, Harbir Singh, and Kyungmook Lee (2000), "Complementarity, Status Similarity, and Social Capital as Drivers of Alliance Formation," *Strategic Management Journal*, 21 (1), 1-22.
- Couldry, Nick (2010), *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism*. London:

Sage.

Costanza-Chock, Sasha (2003), "Mapping the Repertoire of Electronic Contention," in *Representing Resistance: Media, Civil, Disobedience and the Global Justice Movement*, eds. Andrew Opel and Donnalyn Pompper. Greenwood, NJ: Praeger.

Cova, Bernard, Robert V. Kozinets, and Avi Shankar (2007), *Consumer Tribes*. Burlington, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Cress, Daniel and David A. Snow (2000), "The Outcomes of Homeless Mobilization: The Influence of Organization, Disruption, Political Mediation, and Framing," *American Journal of Sociology*, 105(4), 1063-1104.

Das, T.K. and Bing-Sheng Teng (1998), "Between Trust and Control: Developing Confidence in Partner Cooperation in Alliances," *Academy of Management Review*, 23, 491-512.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2000), "A Resource-Based Theory of Strategic Alliances," *Journal of Management*, 26 (1), 31-61.

Davis, Gerald F. and Tracy A. Thompson (1994), "A Social Movement Perspective on Corporate Control," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 39(1), 141-173.

Dean, Jodi (2010), "The Real Internet," *International Journal of Zizek Studies*, 4(1), 1-19. Available at <http://zizekstudies.org/index.php/ijzs/article/view/242/322>.

Den Hond, Frank and Frank G.A. De Bakker (2007), "Ideologically Motivated Activism: How Activist Groups Influence Corporate Social Change Activities," *Academy of Management Review*, 32(3), 901-924.

Denegri-Knott, Janice, Detlev Swick, and Jonathan E. Schroeder (2006), "Mapping Consumer Power: An Integrative Framework for Marketing and Consumer Research," *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(9/10), 950-971.

Diani, Mario (1992), "The Concept of Social Movement," *The Sociological Review*, 40(1), 1-25.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2000), "Social Movement Networks Virtual and Real," *Information, Communication & Society*, 3(2), 386-401.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2003), Networks and Social Movements: A Research Program, in *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, eds. Mario Diani and Doug McAdam. New York: Oxford University Press, 299-319.

Diamond, Nina, John F. Sherry, Albert M. Muniz, Mary Ann McGrath, Robert V. Kozinets, and Stefania Borghini (2009), "American Girl and the Brand Gestalt: Closing the Loop on Sociocultural Branding Research," *Journal of Marketing*, 73(May), 118-34.

Dobscha, Susan (1998), "The Lived Experience of Consumer Rebellion Against Marketing," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 25, eds. Joseph W. Alba and J. Wesley Hutchinson, Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 91-97.

Earl, Jennifer and Katrina Kimport (2009), "Movement Societies and Digital Protest: Fan Activism and Other Nonpolitical Protest Online," *Sociological Theory*, 27(September), 220-243.

Edwards, Bob and Patrick F. Gillham (2013), "Resource Mobilization Theory," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*, eds. David A. Snow, Donatella della Porta, Bert Klandermans, and Doug McAdam. Blackwell Publishing LTD.

Eisenhardt, Kathleen M. and Claudia Bird Schoonhoven (1996), "Resource-based View of Strategic Alliance Formation: Strategic and Social Effects in Entrepreneurial Firms," *Organization Science*, 7 (2), 136-150.

Eisinger, Peter (1973), "The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American Cities," *American Political Science Review*, 67(1), 11-28.

Eltantawy, Nahed and Julie B. Wiest (2011), "Social Media in the Egyptian Revolution: Reconsidering Resource Mobilization Theory," *International Journal of Communication*, 5, 1207-1224.

Ewen, Stuart (1976), *Captains of Consciousness*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Firat, A. Fuat and Alladi Venkatesh (1995), "Liberatory Postmodernism and the Reenchantment of Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(December), 239-267.

Firat, A. Fuat, Nikilesh Dholakia, and Alladi Venkatesh (1995), "Marketing in a Postmodern World," *European Journal of Marketing*, 29(1), 40-56.

Fominaya, Cristina Flesher (2010), "Collective Identity in Social Movements: Central Concepts and Debates," *Sociology Compass*, 4(6), 393-404.

Fournier, Susan (1998), "Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (4), 343-373.

Fournier, Susan and Lara Lee (2009), "Getting Brand Communities Right," *Harvard Business Review*, April, 105-111.

Freeman, Jo (1975), *The Politics of Women's Liberation*. New York: David McKay.

Friedman, Mondroe (1985), "Consumer Boycotts in the United States, 1970-1980: Contemporary Events in Historical Perspective," *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 19 (Summer), 98-117.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1991), "Consumer boycotts: A conceptual framework and research agenda," *Journal of Social Issues*, 47, 149-168.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1996), "A Positive Approach to Organized Consumer Action: The 'Buycott' as an Alternative to Boycott," *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 19, 439-451.

Friedman, Debra and Doug McAdam (1992), "Collective Identity and Activism: Networks, Choices, and the Life of a Social Movement," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, eds. A.D. Morris and C.M. Mueller. New Haven: Yale University Press, 273-297.

Füller, Johann, Gregor Jawecki, and Hans Mühlbacher (2007), "Innovation Creation by Online Basketball Communities," *Journal of Business Research*, 60, 60-71.

Füller, Johann, Kurt Matzler, and Melanie Hoppe (2008), "Brand Community Members as a Source of Innovation," *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 25, 608-619.

- Gamson, William (1990), *The Strategy of Social Protest*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1992), "Social Psychology of Collective Action," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, eds. A.D. Morris and C.M. Mueller. New Haven: Yale University Press, 53-76.
- Garrett, Dennis E. (1987), "The Effectiveness of Marketing Policy Boycotts: Environmental Opposition to Marketing," *Journal of Marketing*, 51(April), 46-57.
- Giesler, Markus (2008), "Conflict and Compromise: Drama in Marketplace Evolution," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (April), 739-753.
- Gladwell, Malcom (2010), "Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted," *The New Yorker*. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/10/04/small-change-malcolm-gladwell>
- Goodman, John A. and Alan R. Malech (1985), "Using Complaints for Quality Assurance Decisions," Washington, DC: TARP (Technical Assistance Research Programs) Institute Working Paper.
- Goulding, Christina, Avi Shankar, Richard Elliott, and Robin Canniford (2009), "The Marketplace Management of Illicit Pleasure," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (February), 759-771.
- Granovetter, Mark S. (1973), "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380.
- Gurak, Laura J. and John Logie, "Internet Protests: From Text to Web," in *Cyberactivism: From Theory to Practice*, eds. Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers, 25-46. New York: Routledge.
- Hamel, Gary, Yves L. Doz, and C.K. Prahalad (1989), "Collaborate with Your Competitors – and Win," *Harvard Business Review*, 67 (January/February), 133-139.
- Harlow, Summer and Dustin Harp (2012), "Collective Action on the Web: A Cross-Cultural Study of Social Networking Sites and Online and Offline activism in the United States and Latin Amerca," *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(2), 196-216.
- Hargrave, Timothy J. and Andrew H. Van de Ven (2006), "A Collective Action Model of Institutional Innovation," *Academy of Management Review*, 31(4), 864-888.
- Hendrix, Philip E. (2014), "How Digital Technologies are Enabling Consumers and Transforming the Practice of Marketing," *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 22(2), 149-150.
- Henning-Thurau, Thorsten, Edward C. Malthouse, Christian Friege, Sonja Gensler, Lara Lobschat, Arvind Rangaswamy, and Bernd Skiera (2010), "The Impact of New Media on Customer Relationships," *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 311-330.
- Hinde, Robert (1995), "A Suggested Structure for a Science of Relationships," *Personal Relationships*, 2 (March), 1-15.
- Hirschman, Albert O. (1970), *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hoffman, Stefan and Stefan Müller (2009), "Consumer Boycotts Due to Factory Relocation," *Journal of Business Research*, 62(2), 239-247.

Holt, Douglas B. (1997), "Poststructuralist Lifestyle Analysis: Conceptualizing the Social Patterning of Consumption in Postmodernity," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 23 (March), 236-350.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2002), "Why Do Brands Cause Trouble: A Dialectical Theory of Consumer Culture and Branding," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29 (June), 70-90.

Hollenbeck, Candice R. and George M. Zinkhan (2006), "Consumer Activism on the Internet: the Role of Anti-Brand Communities," in NA-Advances in Consumer Research, Volume 33, eds. Connie Pechmann and Linda Price, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, 479-485.

Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno (1944), *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, New York, Continuum.

Hudson, Laurel Anderson and Julie L. Ozanne (1988), "Alternative Ways of Seeking Knowledge in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14 (4), 508-521.

Humphreys, Ashlee and Kent Grayson (2008), "The Intersecting Roles of Consumer and Producer: A Critical Perspective on Co-Production, Co-Creation, and Prosumption," *Sociology Compass*, 2, 1-18.

Hunt, H. Keith (1991), "Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction, and Complaining Behavior," *Journal of Social Issues*, 47 (1), 107-117.

Izberk-Bilgin, Elif (2010), "An Interdisciplinary Review of Resistance to Consumption, Some Marketing Interpretations, and Future Research Suggestions," *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, 13(September), 299-323.

Jenkins, Henry (1992), *Textual Poachers*, New York: Routledge.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2006), *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2012a), "'Cultural Acupuncture': Fan Activism and the Harry Potter Alliance," in Transformative Works and Fan Activism, eds. Henry Jenkins and Sangita Shresthova, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 10.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2012b), "Superpowered Fans: The Many Worlds of San Diego's Comic-Con," *Boom: A Journal of California*, Summer, 22-36.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2016), "Youth Voice, Media, and Political Engagement," in *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism*, p. 1-60. New York: New York University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_, Sangita Shresthova, Liana Gamber-Thompson, Neta Kligler-Vilenchik and Arely M. Zimmerman (2016), *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism*. New York: New York University Press.

Jenkins, J. Craig (1983), "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 9, 527-553.

John, Andrew and Jill Klein (2003), "The Boycott Puzzle: Consumer Motivations for Purchase Sacrifice," *Management Science*, 49(9), 1196-1209

Kapferer, Jean-Noël (2008), *The New Strategic Brand Management: Creating and Sustaining Brand Equity*, Philadelphia, PA: Kogan-Page.

Kaplan, Andreas M. and Michael Haenlein, "Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media," *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.

King, Brayden (2008), "A Political Mediation Model of Corporate Response to Social Movement Activism," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 53 (3), 395-421.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2011), "The Tactical Disruptiveness of Social Movements: Sources of Market and Mediated Disruption in Corporate Boycotts," *Social Problems*, 58(4), 491-517.

Kim, Yunhwan, Silvia Russo, and Erik Aménå (2016), "The Longitudinal Relation Between Online and Offline Political Participation Among Youth at Two Different Developmental Stages," *New Media & Society*, 1-19.

Klandermans, Bert (1984), "Mobilization and Participation: Social-Psychological Expansions of Resource Mobilization Theory," *American Sociological Review*, 49(5), 583-600.

Klein, Jill Gabrielle, N. Craig Smith, and Andrew John (2004), "Why We Boycott: Consumer Motivations for Boycott Participation," *Journal of Marketing*, 68(3), 92-109.

Kligler-Vilenchik, Neta (2016) "Decreasing World Suck: Harnessing Popular Culture for Fan Activism," in *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism*, p. 102-148. New York: New York University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_, Joshua McVeigh-Schultz, Christine Weitbrecht, and Chris Tokuhama (2012), "Experiencing Fan Activism: Understanding the Power of Fan Activist Organizations through Members' Narratives," in *Transformative Works and Fan Activism*, eds. Henry Jenkins and Sangita Shresthova, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 10.

Kogut, Bruce (1991), "Joint Ventures and the Option to Expand and Acquire," *Management Science*, 37, 19-33.

Kozinets, Robert V. (1999), "E-Tribalized Marketing? The Strategic Implications of Virtual Communities of Consumption," *European Management Journal*, 17 (3), 252-264.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2001), "Utopian Enterprise: Articulating the Meanings of Star Trek's Culture of Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28 (June), 67-88.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2002a), "Can Consumers Escape the Market?: Emancipatory Illuminations from Burning Man," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29 (June), 20-38.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2002b), "The Field behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39 (February), 61-72.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2010), *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.



\_\_\_\_\_ (2015), *Netnography: Redefined*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Kozinets, Robert V. and Jay Handelman (1998), "Ensouling Consumption: A Netnographic Exploration of the Meaning of Boycotting Behavior," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 25, eds. Joseph W. Alba & J. Wesley Hutchinson, Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 475-480.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2004) "Adversaries of Consumption: Consumer Movements, Activism and Ideology," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(December), 691-704.

Kozinets, Robert V., Andrea Hemestberger, and Hope Jensen Schau (2008), "The Wisdom of Consumer Crowds: Collective Innovation in the Age of Networked Marketing," *Journal of Macromarketing*, 28, 339-354.

Kozinets, Robert V., Kristine De Valck, Andrea C. Wojnicki, and Sarah J.S. Wilner (2010), "Networked Narratives: Understanding Word-of-Mouth Marketing in Online Communities," *Journal of Marketing*, 74 (March), 71-89.

Kozinets, Robert V., John F. Sherry, Jr., Diana Storm, Adam Duhachek, Krittinee Nuttavuthisit, Benét DeBerry-Spence (2004), "Ludic Agency and Retail Spectacle," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (December), 658-672.

Labrecque, Lauren I., Jonas vor dem Esche, Charla MATHwick, Thomas P. Novak, and Charles F. Hofacker (2013), "Consumer Power: Evolution in the Digital Age," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27, 257-269.

Lambe, C.J. and R.E. Spekman (1997), "The Bases of Alliance-derived Sustainable Advantage: Relationship and Resources," *American Marketing Association Winter Conference Proceedings*, 119-125.

Lebert, Joanne (2003), "Wiring Human Rights Activism: Amnesty International and the Challenges of Information and Communication Technologies," in *Cyberactivism: From Theory to Practice*, eds. Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers, 209-232. New York: Routledge.

Luders, Joseph (2006), "The Economics of Movement Success: Business Responses to Civil Rights Mobilization," *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(4), 963-998.

Luedicke, Marius K., Craig J. Thompson, and Markus Giesler (2010), "Consumer Identity Work as Moral Protagonism: How Myth and Ideology Animate a Brand-Mediated Moral Conflict," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (6), 1016-1032.

Mack, Eric (2011, July 12), 'Dear Netflix': Price Hike Ignites Social-Media Fire. Retrieved from CNET: [http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023\\_3-20078960-93/dear-netflix-price-hike-ignites-social-media-fire/](http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-20078960-93/dear-netflix-price-hike-ignites-social-media-fire/)

Maclaran, Pauline and Stephen Brown (2005), "The Center Cannot Hold: Consuming the Utopian Marketplace," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (September), 311-323.

Madrigal, Alexis (2010), "Gladwell on Social Media and Activism," *The Atlantic*. <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2010/09/gladwell-on-social-media-and-activism/63623/>

- Maireder, Axel and Christian Schwarzenegger (2012), "A Movement of Connected Individuals," *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(2), 171-195.
- Marx, Karl (1867)[1976]. *Capital*. London: Penguin.
- McAdam, Doug (1982) *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1988), *Freedom Summer*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1995), "'Initiator' and 'Spin-Off' Movements: Diffusion Processes in Protest Cycles," in *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action*, ed. M. Traugott. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 217-239.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly (2001), *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- McAlexander, James H., John W. Schouten and Harold F. Koenig (2002), "Building Brand Community," *Journal of Marketing*, 66 (1), 38-54.
- McCarthy, John D. and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *The American Journal of Sociology*, 82(6), 1212-1241.
- McCaughey, Martha and Michael D. Ayers (2003). *Cyberactivism*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- McCracken, Grant (1988), *The Long Interview*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- McGraw, A. Peter, Caleb Warren, and Christina Kan (2015), "Humorous Complaining," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41 (5), 1153-1171.
- Mehra, Ajay, Andrea L. Dixon, Daniel J. Brass, and Bruce Robertson (2006), "The Social Network Ties of Group Leaders: Implications for Group Performance and Leader Reputation," *Organization Science*, 17 (1), 64-79.
- Melucci, Alberto (1989), *Nomads of the Present*, London: Macmillan.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1995), "The Process of Collective Identity," in *Social Movements and Culture*, eds. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 41-63.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1996), *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*. Cambridge University Press.
- Meyer, David S. (2004), "Protest and Political Opportunities," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30, 125-145.
- Meyer, David S. and Sidney Tarrow (1998), *The Social Movement Society*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Miles, Matthew B. and A. M. Huberman (1994), *Qualitative data analysis*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Morgan, Robert M. and Shelby D. Hunt (1994), "The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing," *Journal of Marketing*, 58 (July), 20-38.

- Morrill, Calvin, Mayer N. Zald, and Hayagreeva Rao (2003), "Covert Political Conflict in Organizations: Challenges from Below," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29, 391-415.
- Mueller, Carol McClurg (1992), "Building Social Movement Theory," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, eds. A.D. Morris and C.M. Mueller. New Haven: Yale University Press, 3-25.
- Muñiz, Albert M. Jr., and Thomas C. O'Guinn (2001), "Brand Community," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27 (March), 412-32.
- Muñiz, Albert M. Jr. and Hope Jensen Schau (2005), "Religiosity in the Abandoned Apple Newton Brand," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (4), 737-747.
- Muñiz, Albert M. Jr. and Hope Jensen Schau (2007), "Vigilante Marketing and Consumer-Created Communications," *Journal of Advertising*, 36 (3), 187-202.
- Murray, Jeff B. and Julie L. Ozanne (1991), "The Critical Imagination: Emancipatory Interests in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 18(September), 129-144.
- Nah, Seungahn, Aaron S. Veenstra, and Dhavan V. Shah (2006), "The Internet and Anti-War Activism: A Case Study of Information, Expression, and Action," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(1), 230-247.
- Neilson, Lisa A. (2010), "Boycott or Buycott? Understanding Political Consumerism," *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 9(3), 214-227.
- O'Mahony, Sibhan and Fabrizio Ferraro (2007), "The Emergence of Governance in an Open Source Community," *Academy of Management Journal*, 50 (5), 1079-1106.
- O'Mahony, Sibhan and Beth A. Bechky (2008), "Boundary Organizations: Enabling Collaboration among Unexpected Allies," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 53(3), 422-459
- Ohmae, Kenichi (1989), "The Global Logic of Strategic Alliances," *Harvard Business Review*, 67 (March/April), 145-154.
- PBS Newshour (2011), "*Must-Read List: Understanding the Netflix Split.*"  
<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/must-read-list-understanding-the-netflix-split/>
- Palmatier, Robert W., Rajiv P. Dant, Dhruv Grewal, and Kenneth R. Evans (2006), "Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Relationship Marketing: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Marketing*, 70 (October), 136-153.
- Peñaloza, Lisa and Linda L. Price (1993), "Consumer Resistance: A Conceptual Overview," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 20, eds. Leigh McAlister and Michael L. Rothschild, Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 123-128.
- Pfeffer, Jeffrey and Gerald Salancik (1978), *The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Piven, Frances Fox and Richard A. Cloward (1977), *Poor People's Movements: Why they Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1991), "Collective Protest: A Critique of Resource Mobilization Theory," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 4(4), 435-458.

- Pichardo, Nelson A. (1997), "New Social Movements: A Critical Review," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23, 411-430.
- Polletta, Francesca and James Jasper (2001), "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27(1), 283-305.
- Poster, Mark (1992), "The Question of Agency: De Certeau and the History of Consumption," *Diacritics*, 22 (Summer), 94-107.
- Postmes, Tom and Suzanne Brusting (2002), "Collective Action in the Age of the Internet: Mass Communication and Online Mobilization," *Social Science Computer Review*, 20(3), 290-301.
- Prahalad, C.K. and Venkat Ramaswamy (2004), *The Future of Competition: Co-Creating Unique Value with Customers*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Putnam, Todd and Timothy Muck (1991), "Wielding the Boycott Weapon for Social Change," *Business and Society Review*, 78 (2), 5-8.
- Rao, Hayagreeva, Calvin Morrill and Mayer N. Zald (2000), "Power Plays: How Social Movements and Collective Action Create New Organizational Forms," *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 22(December), 237-281.
- Rauschnabel, Phiipp A., Nadine Kammerlander, and Björn S. Ivens (2016), "Collaborative Brand Attacks in Social Media: Exploring the Antecedents, Characteristics, and Consequences of a New Form of Brand Crises," *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 23(4), 381-410.
- Ritson, Mark and Susan Dobscha (1999), "Marketing Heretics: Resistance is/is not Futile," in *Advances of Consumer Research*, 26, eds. Eric J. Arnould and Linda M. Scott, Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 159.
- Ritson, Mark and Richard Elliott (1999), "The Social Uses of Advertising: An Ethnographic Study of Adolescent Advertising Audiences," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26 (December), 260-278.
- Rojas, Fabio (2006), "Social Movement Tactics, Organizational Change and the Spread of African-American Studies," *Social Forces*, 84(4), 2147-2166.
- Ross, Sharon Marie (2008) *Beyond the Box: Television and the Internet*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Roux, Dominique (2008), "Consumer Resistance: Proposal for an Integrative Framework," *Recherche et Applications en Marketing* (English edition), 22(4), 59-79.
- Russell, Cristel Antonia and Hope Jensen Schau (2014), "When Narrative Brands End: The Impact of Narrative Closure and Consumption Sociality on Loss Accommodations," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40 (April), 1039-1062.
- Sabal, Robert (1992), "Television Executives Speak about Fan Letters to the Networks," in *The Adoring Audience*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis, 185-190. London: Routledge.
- Sandoval-Almazan, Rodrigo and J. Ramon Gil-Garcia (2014), "Towards Cyberactivism 2.0? Understanding the Use of Social Media and Other Information Technologies for Political Activism and Social Movements," *Government Information Quarterly*, 31, 365-378.

- Scaraboto, Daiane, Leah Carter-Schneider, and Richard Kedzior (2013), "At World's End: Exploring consumer-Marketer Tensions in the Closure of Adverworlds," *Journal of Marketing Management*, 29 (13-14), 1518-1541.
- Scaraboto, Daiane and Eileen Fischer (2013), "Frustrated Fatshionistas: An Institutional Theory Perspective on Consumer Quests for Greater Choice in Mainstream Markets," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39 (April), 1234-1257.
- Scardaville, Melissa C. (2005), "Accidental Activists: Fan Activism in the Soap Opera Community." *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48, 881–901.
- Schau, Hope Jensen, Albert M. Muñoz Jr., and Eric J. Arnould (2009), "How Brand Community Practices Create Value," *Journal of Marketing*, 73 (3), 30-51.
- Schouten, John W. and James McAlexander (1995), "Subculture of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (March), 43-51.
- Sen, Sankar, Zeynep Gurhan-Canli and Vicki Morwitz (2001), "Withholding Consumption: A Social Dilemma Perspective on Consumer Boycotts," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(3), 399-417.
- Shah, Reshma H. and Vanitha Swaminathan (2008), "Factors Influencing Partner Selection in Strategic Alliances: The Moderating Role of Alliance Context," *Strategic Management Journal*, 29, 471-494.
- Sherry, John F., Jr., Robert V. Kozinets, Diana Storm, Adam Duhachek, Krittinee Nuttavuthisit, and Benét DeBerry-Spence (2001), "Being in the Zone: Staging Retail Theater at ESPN Zone Chicago," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 30 (August), 465-510.
- Shocker, Allan D., Rajendra K. Srivastava, and Robert W. Ruekert (1994), "Challenges and Opportunities Facing Brand Management: An Introduction to the Special Issue," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31 (May), 149-158.
- Soon, Carol and Hichang Cho (2014), "OMGs! Offline-based Movement Organizations, Online-based Movement Organizations and Network Mobilization: A Case Study of Political Bloggers in Singapore," *Information, Communication and Society*, 17(5), 537-559.
- Spiggle, Susan (1994), "Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (December), 491-503.
- Srivastava, Lina (n.d.), "About" and "Basic Framework," *Transmedia Activism*.  
<http://transmedia-activism.com>
- Staggenborg, Suzanne (1998), "Social Movement Communities and Cycles of Protest: The Emergence and Maintenance of a Local Women's Movement," *Social Problems*, 45(2), 180-204.
- Strauss, Anselm L. and Juliet M. Corbin (1990), *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1998), "Selective Coding," *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tsukayama, Haley (2011, July 13), "Netflix Faces Backlash Over Price Changes," Retrieved from *Washington Post*. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/faster-forward/post/netflix-faces-backlash-over-price-changes/2011/07/13/gIQAs8QHCI\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/faster-forward/post/netflix-faces-backlash-over-price-changes/2011/07/13/gIQAs8QHCI_blog.html)

Tarrow, Sidney (1998), *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, Verta and Nancy Whittier (1992), "Collective Identity in Social Movement Communities: Lesbian Feminist Mobilization," in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, eds. C.M. Mueller and A.D. Morris. New Haven: Yale University Press, 104-129.

Theocharis, Yannis (2013), "The Wealth of (Occupation Networks? Communication Patterns and Information Distribution in a Twitter Protest Network," *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 10(1), 35-56.

Thomas, Tandy Chalmers, Linda L. Price and Hope Jensen Schau (2013), "When Differences Unite: Resource Dependence in Heterogeneous Consumption Communities," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(5), 1010-1033.

Thompson, Craig J. (1997), "Interpreting Consumers: A Hermeneutical Framework for Deriving Marketing Insights from the Texts of Consumers' Consumption Stories," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34 (November), 438-455.

Thompson, Craig J. and Zeynep Arsel (2004), "The Starbucks Brandscape and Consumers' (Anticorporate) Experience of Glocalization," *Journal of Marketing*, 31(3), 631-642.

Thompson, Craig J. and Gokcen Coskuner-Balli (2007), "Countervailing Market Responses to Corporate Co-optation and the Ideological Recruitment of Consumption Communities," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (February), 595-612.

Thompson, Craig J. and Diana Haytko (1997), "Speaking of Fashion: Consumers' Uses of Fashion Discourses and the Appropriation of Countervailing Cultural Meanings," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (June), 15-42.

Thompson, Craig J., Aric Rindfleisch, and Zeynep Arsel (2006), "Emotional Branding and the Value of the Doppelganger Brand Image," *Journal of Marketing*, 70 (January), 50-64.

Thompson, James D. (1967), *Organizations in Action*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Thompson, Scott A. and Rajiv K. Sinha (2008), "Brand Communities and New Product Adoption: The Influence and Limits of Oppositional Loyalty," *Journal of Marketing*, 72 (4), 65-80.

Tilly, Charles (1978), *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Touraine, Alain (1981), *The Voice and the Eye*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1985), "An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements," *Social Research*, 52(4), 749-787.

Trentmann, Frank (2001), "Bread, Milk, and Democracy: Consumption and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Britain," in *The Politics of Consumption*, ed. Martin Daunt and Matthew Hilton, New York: Berg, 129-164.

- Tulloch, John and Henry Jenkins (1995), *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching Doctor Who and Star Trek*. New York: Routledge.
- Van Laer, Jeroen and Peter Van Aelst (2010), "Internet and Social Movement Action Repertoires," *Information, Communication & Society*, 13(8), 1146-1171.
- Van Zoonen, Liesbet (2004), "Imagining the Fan Democracy," *European Journal of Communication*, 19(1), 39-52.
- Vargo, Stephen L. and Robert F. Lusch (2004), "Evolving Toward a New Dominant Logic for Marketing," *Journal of Marketing*, 68 (January), 1-17.
- Velasquez, Alcides and Robert LaRose (2014), "Youth Collective Activism through Social Media: The Role of Collective Efficacy," *New Media & Society*, 17(6), 899-918.
- Von Hippel, Eric (1988), "Lead Users: A Source of Novel Product Concepts," *Management Science*, 32, 791-805.
- Yuksel, Ulku and Victoria Mryteza (2009), "An Evaluation of Strategic Responses to Consumer Boycotts," *Journal of Business Research*, 62, 248-259.
- Zack, Jeffrey (1991), "The Hullabaloo over Boycott Ballyhoo," *Business and Society Review*, 78, 9-15.
- Žižek, Slavoj (1996) *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters*. London: Verso.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1997), *The Plague of Fantasies*. London: Verso.
- Zwick, Detlev and Alan Bradshaw, "Biopolitical Marketing and Social Media Brand Communities," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 33(5\_ 91-115.
- Zwick, Detlev, Samuel K. Bonsu, and Aron Darmody (2008), "Putting Consumers to Work: 'Co-creation' and the New Marketing Govern-mentality," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 8(2), 163-196.

## **APPENDIX A: DATA EXHIBITS**

### **Exhibit 1: CBS Letter to Jericho Community**

June 6, 2007

To the Fans of Jericho:

Wow!

Over the past few weeks you have put forth an impressive and probably unprecedented display of passion in support of a prime time television series. You got our attention; your emails and collective voice have been heard.

As a result, CBS has ordered seven episodes of "Jericho" for mid-season next year. In success, there is the potential for more. But, for there to be more "Jericho," we will need more viewers.

A loyal and passionate community has clearly formed around the show. But that community needs to grow. It needs to grow on the CBS Television Network, as well as on the many digital platforms where we make the show available.

We will count on you to rally around the show, to recruit new viewers with the same grass-roots energy, intensity and volume you have displayed in recent weeks.

At this time, I cannot tell you the specific date or time period that "Jericho" will return to our schedule. However, in the interim, we are working on several initiatives to help introduce the show to new audiences. This includes re-broadcasting "Jericho" on CBS this summer, streaming episodes and clips from these episodes across the CBS Audience Network (online), releasing the first season DVD on September 25 and continuing the story of Jericho in the digital world until the new episodes return. We will let you know specifics when we have them so you can pass them on.

On behalf of everyone at CBS, thank you for expressing your support of "Jericho" in such an extraordinary manner. Your protest was creative, sustained and very thoughtful and respectful in tone. You made a difference.

Sincerely,

Nina Tassler  
President, CBS Entertainment

P.S. Please stop sending us nuts :-)



## **Exhibit 2: Finale and a Footlong Call to Action**

### Strategic Plan to Save Chuck!

Hi everyone!

As I'm sure you're aware Chuck is struggling to find an audience amidst a very competitive Monday 8pm line-up and is in danger of not being picked up for a 3rd season. I've done my duty and written my letters to the network, but given the economy and the Jay Leno effect, I'm not confident that will be enough. I wanted to request your help to promote a 'Save Chuck' strategy that goes beyond the standard fare of sending letters or bobbleheads to the networks. What I'm proposing is a consumer driven campaign that will lend a voice to all the loyal Chuck fans that are not represented by Nielson ratings.

With the changing media landscape, the key demographic that most advertisers are seeking is also the segment most likely to be viewing TV programming in non-traditional ways (online, DVR, iTunes, etc.). Nielson ratings are not as strong an indicator of advertising value as they once were, but they remain the industry standard because there are precious few ways to demonstrate and really capture the success of product promotion in this digital age.

As a non-Nielson viewer, I feel the most effective means of making an impact is to wield my consumer power in a way that NBC and their sponsors will be able to measure. I've noticed that Subway has worked with Chuck/NBC to incorporate product placement within the show. To demonstrate my gratitude to that franchise for their support of Chuck, I'm pitching a 'Finale & FOOTLONG™' campaign to all the Chuck forums and boards. I'm also sending this idea out to key TV critics who've been supportive of Chuck, asking them to write articles and raise awareness for this effort. Included below is a list of the boards, forums, and critics to whom I've sent this concept.

The 'Finale & FOOTLONG™' campaign will call on fans to show their dedication by pledging to purchase a \$5 FOOTLONG™ from Subway on the evening of the Chuck season finale (which hopefully isn't the series finale). If enough Chuck fans ban together to do this and Subway sees a rise in sales Monday April 27th as a result, it would give NBC/Universal an actual metric to gauge the fan dedication in relation to the return on investment of a key sponsor.

At the end of the day, the television industry is still a business and I hope other fans will recognize that fact and organize with me to show their support in a tangible way. I've sent in my 'Save Chuck' letters to Ben Silverman (NBC) and Angela Bromstad (Universal) including this idea, but I really need the help of other Chuck fans to drive this program and make it happen. To that end, I've also sent a letter to the Chief Marketing Officer at Subway (Mr. Bill Schettini) outlining the effort I'm putting forth to galvanize the show's loyal fan base to reward their sponsorship of our beloved Chuck.

Chuck is in one of the toughest timeslots on television and continues to hold its own against fierce competition on every major network. The cast is fantastic, the story is compelling, and I

truly believe the show deserves another season (hopefully on Wednesday's at 8pm). The best way to save Chuck is to give NBC/Universal a legitimate business justification for keeping their quality programming on the air. It's more likely that the network and sponsors will hear our pleas for a Chuck renewal if we speak their language...\$\$\$\$. So fans, please write your letters, mention the campaign, and buy a \$5 FOOTLONG™ from Subway on April 27th (bonus points for those that drop off a comment card saying they're buying their sandwich in support of Chuck.)

Put a reminder on your calendar, alarm on your phone, whatever it takes to remember...personally I'll be buying my sandwich from Newark International Airport after an 8hr flight on the 27th, but I'm going to do it! If the mods for this board or forum would be so kind as to post a reminder on April 27th as well, that would be phenomenal! Thanks for listening and I hope I can count on your support.

### Exhibit 3: "Chuck" Community Discussion Threads Pre-Campaign

How should Chuck end? Started by Arathorn « 1 2 »
Chuck vs seduction song Started by iswan6
Can't wait for February? Started by yuri « 1 2 3 ... 8 »
Why is it so hard for Chuck to trust Sarah? Started by yuri
"How do I love thee?" Let us count the ways Started by DarthRazorback
Sarah and Chuck moving in together Started by rickfromIllinois « 1 2 »
Enjoy shooting Chuck! Started by Moe
Who should make the first move, Chuck or Sarah? Started by yuri « 1 2 »
Converts? Started by siskj
FYI: "The Wookie" Started by FrankieRider2

## Exhibit 4: Nuts Online Jericho Page

Try all 2676 yummy snacks. We're more than just nuts!

**BY THE POUND** [2347 kinds!](#)

[Nuts](#) [297](#)

[Dried Fruit](#) [285](#)

[Chocolates & Sweets](#) [851](#)

[Snacks](#) [299](#)

[Coffees & Teas](#) [235](#)

[Cooking & Baking](#) [551](#)

**WEDDINGS & EVENTS**

[GIFTS](#) [129](#)

**JUST SHOW ME...**

[new products](#) [284](#)

[dark chocolate](#) [115](#)

[kosher](#) [1084](#)

[natural](#) [412](#)

[organic](#) [276](#)

[raw](#) [255](#)

[sugar free](#) [47](#)

[salt free](#) [148](#)

[gluten-free](#) [715](#)


[wholesale](#) [1924](#)

[top sellers](#)

[recipes](#)

[health nuts](#)

Live Blog From CBS "Why I Love Jericho" Tell a Friend! Photos & Video Save Greensburg Press Links For the Media



**THE SUCCESSFUL NUTS FOR JERICHO CAMPAIGN**

4,781 orders  
\$54,968  
40,377 lbs

Over 20 TONS of Peanuts to CBS!! (that's about 8 million peanuts!!)

Jericho 1 day record: 10,000 pounds hit CBS NY on 5/29!!!

[list of contributions](#)

Jericho's back! Tuesdays at 10 PM EST/PST on CBS.

Get fired up and help defend Jericho with this **Jericho Peanut Assault Game**. Win cool prizes too!

[More great cast photos here](#)

**About these pages**

Welcome to the NutsOnline **NUTS for Jericho** home page, where fans from all over the world pooled their resources and their passion to send thousands of pounds of peanuts to CBS and SAVE Jericho.


During this historic campaign, fans sent in letters, photos, and crazy, great ideas! We've worked hard to preserve all these ideas and post them for posterity. Plus, we've made a permanent place for Jericho fans to talk about how NUTS they are for Jericho!

**About Our Products**

We got involved in this campaign by accident. We're nut guys! We ship nuts wherever they are needed – for Father's Day celebrations, Monday Night Football parties or office snacks. We noticed that people were using our site to send peanuts to CBS, so we got involved, and made it easy for you to send FORTY THOUSAND POUNDS!

We want you to know two things:

1. Who we are: read about our family on the [About Us page](#)
2. Like our motto says... we're more than just nuts! Here are some of the most popular products that our company sells - all of them top quality, fresh and delivered FAST!



## APPENDIX B: CONSTRUCT DEVELOPMENT

**Table 1: Emergent Crowds vs. Mobilized Communities Construct Comparison**

	<b>Emergent Crowds</b>	<b>Mobilized Communities</b>
<b>Purpose for Gathering</b>	In reaction to market grievance, problem, issue, practices, change	Shared consumption interest
<b>Initial Goal Orientation</b>	Telo-specific: Aim to achieve specific, activist-oriented goals within the marketplace to address specific market grievance	Communo-Ludic: Celebrate and share consumption passion, experience, stories regarding central product
<b>Consumer Interactions &amp; Collective Identity Work Prior to Campaigning</b>	Non-existent to limited	Moderate to Extensive
<b>Reason for Activist Performances</b>	Same as purpose for gathering	To address emergent market grievance, problem, issue, issue, practices, change

## APPENDIX C: FINDINGS SUMMARIES

**Table 1: Campaign Efforts & Behaviors Comparison**

	<b>Emergent Crowds</b>	<b>Mobilized Communities</b>
<b>Identity Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual perspective &amp; opinion dominant in discourse (“I”)</li> <li>• Limited “We” Identity               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate opinions, ideas for campaign efforts, particularly between frequent contributors</li> <li>• Governance of comments</li> <li>• Specific goals stated of “group”</li> <li>• Lack of central gathering hub</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-existing community work lead to communal (“We”) during campaigns</li> <li>• Utilized established community gathering spaces in initial stages of campaigns</li> <li>• Share ideas of what “we” should do became more dominant in discourse rather than personal opinions/interests</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership &amp; Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decentralized, Anonymous Leadership</li> <li>• Group administrators originated group pages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central, visible, strategically minded leaders</li> <li>• Pre-established or distinguished by campaign ideas</li> <li>• Gatekeepers &amp; Guardians</li> </ul>
Time, Commitment & Longevity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited</li> <li>• Microbursts of activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended to Extensive</li> <li>• Longer-lasting</li> </ul>
Recruitment Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouragement to “Like,” “Share,” “Re-tweet”</li> <li>• Recruitment via social networks by raising visibility of the cause</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both online and offline recruitment Persuasion &amp; engagement focused efforts               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gifting, Sharing personal stories, Elevator pitch</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Central hub for recruitment info</li> </ul>
Creative Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cause-focused</li> <li>• Online through social networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive both online and offline</li> <li>• Reflecting community identity &amp; cause</li> </ul>
Alliance Formation Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used external sources to educate, legitimize efforts, and publicize successes</li> <li>• Minimal alliance efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer groups, media sources, organizations viewed as potential allies</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Resource & Tactical Usage Comparison**

	<b>Emergent Crowds</b>	<b>Mobilized Communities</b>
<b>Codified Protest Tactics Usage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on codified tactics with little innovation               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boycotts, letter-writing, comments online, petitioning online</li> <li>• Individual rationale for engaging in codified tactic often shared</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Strength in #'s</li> <li>• Minimal tactical integration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Codified protest tactics starting point for innovative tactical development               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter-writing online and offline, Boycotts</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Strength in #'s and strategy</li> <li>• Integration of tactics central to campaign development</li> </ul>
<b>Cumulative Resistance Knowledge Usage &amp; Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual past experiences with activism used as the “how to” recommendations to the group</li> <li>• Rationale &amp; motivation to the tactics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual past experiences and knowledge of previous consumer collective campaign successes became impetus and catalyst for protest tactics analyzed, used &amp; developed</li> <li>• Tactics became more market-focused, strategically-minded and reflected community identity</li> </ul>
<b>Online Platform/Space Usage &amp; Creativity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliance on established social media networks, company pages/blog, websites developed for protesting (e.g., petition.org)</li> <li>• Create Facebook groups</li> <li>• Little creative platform usage; comments &amp; sharing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicated through established social media networks to facilitate recruitment to central hub</li> <li>• Strategic evaluation &amp; usage of social media platforms</li> <li>• Generated community and campaign-focused gathering spaces</li> </ul>

**Table 3: Impact of Activism on Mobilized Communities**

<b>Area of Change</b>	<b>Characteristics of Relationship Interactions</b>
<b>Community Transformation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal orientation shift to much more direct, specific goals to achieve as a collective with the campaigns</li> </ul>
<b>Relationship Transformations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer-Consumer Shifts               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leadership Collaboration leading to strategic interactions between small group of dedicated consumers to develop, direct, and enact campaigns</li> <li>○ Community governance to focus collective discourse and action on the campaign and to maintain standards and image of the collective during the campaign period</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Consumer-Focal Marketer Shift: Learning and utilizing market discourses and logics by consumers to become more strategically minded and to be persuasive with focal marketer</li> </ul>
<b>Relationship Formations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer-External Entity alliances sought and formed (see Table 4)</li> </ul>
<b>Activism Aftermath</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer-Product and Consumer-Collective Shifts:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assuming responsibility for the product and continuation of the collective</li> <li>○ Goals/desires to continue specific actions within the marketplace</li> <li>○ Burnout with product, collective, and campaigning efforts</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



**Table 4: Company-Consumer Engagement within Mobilized Community Alliances**

<b>Type of Relationship</b>	<b>Characteristics of Relationship Interactions</b>
<b>Non Responders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer-initiated communication</li> <li>• No response to consumers</li> </ul>
<b>Surface Contacts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One time interactions</li> <li>• Responses to consumer-initiated communication</li> <li>• Targeted to individual consumer; does not reference community</li> <li>• Polite acknowledgement of consumer communication</li> </ul>
<b>Mutual Admirers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited number (1-2) of interactions</li> <li>• Responses to consumer-initiated communication</li> <li>• Targeted primarily to individual consumer, but may reference community</li> <li>• Expresses gratitude to consumers and/or community</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Friends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple interactions over time</li> <li>• Initiated by company or as response to consumer-initiated communication</li> <li>• Targeted primarily to the community, but may reference individual consumer</li> <li>• Promotes additional products/information/purchase</li> </ul>
<b>Collaborative Partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple interactions over time</li> <li>• Initiated primarily by company</li> <li>• Targeted to the community</li> <li>• Engages with and promotes community discussions and activities</li> </ul>