

# A Framework for Analyzing Collective Action Events on Twitter

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## ABSTRACT

Recent years have witnessed multiple international protest movements which have purportedly been greatly affected by the use of Twitter, a micro-blogging platform. Social movement actors in Iran, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan and Thailand are thought to have utilized Twitter to spread information, co-ordinate protest activities, evade government censorship and, in some cases, to spread misinformation. We propose a framework for conceptualizing and analyzing Twitter data related to contentious collective action crises. Our primary research goal is to delineate a framework informed with a social movements lens and to demonstrate the framework by means of Twitter usage data related to the Thailand protests of 2010. Our proposed framework concerns itself with two aspects of protest activities and Twitter usage, namely, analyzing the content and structure of messages and our construct of Twitter protest waves.

## Keywords

Collective Action, Social Movements, Twitter, Thailand Protests

## INTRODUCTION

The most elemental definition of collective action conceptualizes it as a group of people involved in a goal directed activity. While this barebones definition includes a multitude of behaviors, we concern ourselves with a specific subset of collective action, commonly grouped under the 'social movements' label in the literature. The broader characteristics of the contentious collective action associated with social movements are the use of non-institutional channels, collective identities, clearly delineated oppositional camps and collective socio-political goals (Della Porta et al. 1999; Snow et al. 2005). Developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are often leveraged by social movement actors and can take the targets of their contentious activity, usually the State, by surprise (Ganley 1992; Garrett 2006). ICTs have been posited to have been instrumental to various movements, such as the use of faxes and video recording technologies during the Protests in China in 1989 and the use of copy machines, video cassettes and direct dialing systems in the Iranian Revolution of 1979 (Ganley 1992). The most widely cited instances of early internet-based activism by movement actors are the cases of the anti-globalization activists at the WTO Conference of 1999 and the Zapatista movement (Kahn 2004).

In recent years, Twitter, a micro-blogging service, has been widely associated with social movement activity in the popular imagination and media in diverse geo-political contexts such as Iran, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan. "Twitter Revolution" has become common parlance in the media discourse on recent social movement events. Conversely, skeptics such as Malcolm Gladwell (Gladwell 2010), have questioned the efficacy of the weak ties that are the basis of the Twitter medium in effecting actual protest events. However, despite the abundance of dialogue, there is currently a marked absence of theoretically informed frameworks which can be utilized to qualitatively evaluate the various claims attributed to the Twitter platform in the context of protest events. While disaster relief contexts have been the focus of methodological innovation, such as the in-depth analysis of the Red River Floods and Oklahoma Grassfires (Starbird et al. 2010; Vieweg et al.), currently, social movements in general, and protest activities in particular, have not been the beneficiaries of similar attention. Furthermore, recent work on the analysis of protest event related activity on online mediums such as Twitter has been restricted largely to quantitative analysis. We believe that contentious collective action events should be

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included under the purview of crisis management scholarship, as unlike conventional notions of crisis, in protest events, the cause of the crisis, as well as, the response to the crisis are constituted of collective action. Hence, any response to such crises must by necessity focus on the causes and processes of unrest.

We propose an analytical framework for qualitatively exploring Twitter data related to protest events using a social movements lens. We utilize Twitter data collected during the Thai protests of 2010 to demonstrate our framework and discuss the implications and future research avenues in terms of studying contentious collective action events via online mediums. We believe that our framework provides a hybrid model with its methods of analysis which are rooted in ‘manual curation’ (Gaffney 2010), applied to automatic collection contexts.

## BACKGROUND

### Twitter

Since our framework is based on the Twitter medium, we provide a brief introduction to the platform itself. Twitter is a micro-blogging service which allows its users to broadcast 140 character messages. Micro-blogging is differentiated from traditional blogging by two primary features. Firstly, due to inherent text length constraints microblogs take less time and cognitive effort to compose, and, secondly, users upload micro-blogs with a greater frequency (Java et al. 2007). Twitter is one of the most prominent additions to corpus of internet based services which redefine the ‘virtual public sphere’ (Langman 2005) in terms of who participates, with whom, to what end and, the form of communication itself. Twitter users have evolved their own distinct forms of participation, with #hashtags added as markers to add a message or tweet to a wider discourse or to project identity.

### Social Movements and New Media

Social movements have been the subject of much scholarly scrutiny over the last three decades, leading to the creation of conferences and journals dedicated to the study of movements. However, media aspects of social movements have hitherto been sidelined, particularly the so-called ‘new media’ possibilities afforded by the internet. Downing (Downing 2008) identifies five elements of movements which could be the subject of further media centered analysis: (i) social change (ii) mobilization (iii) framing (iv) social networks (v) transnational movements. For the purposes of our framework we do not include the first element and focus on the last four. Critiques of the role of Twitter with regards to movements have focused on assertions concerning themselves with the instrumentality of Twitter to movement actors. However, our intent in creating a framework is centered on highlighting the importance of Twitter to researchers, in particular, the possibilities afforded by the medium in drawing the *mise-en-scène* of collective action events. Hence, ideally, we believe that such a framework would be a useful addition to the methodological toolbox of social movement and crisis management scholarship, as opposed to the source of interesting yet isolated scholarship on internet ‘culture’. We believe that with such a methodological focus we can sidestep cyberbole common to analysis of collective action in online environs, so, for example, rather than focus on how the internet in general and Twitter in particular can be used for mobilization, our framework provides means to describe movement mobilization activities as reflected by Twitter chatter. The automatic collection of Twitter data in real time, provides rich snapshots of movement events and public opinion, reflecting upon phenomena that Urry (Urry 2000) eloquently describes as fluidities, “*the heterogenous, uneven and unpredictable mobilities of people, information, objects, money, images and risks, that move chaotically across regions in strikingly faster and unpredictable shapes*”.

The localized descriptiveness afforded by Twitter is believed to have led to the subversion of the dominant political media dissemination model, in which the mainstream media drives public discourse on crisis events. The ‘ambient journalism’ model can currently be seen in practice in most television and print media where the public discourse on online platforms such as Twitter drives the news media cycle in emergency situations such as the Mumbai Terrorist attacks of 2009 (Hughes et al. 2010). We believe that the utility of the Twitter medium is not restricted to journalism and can be a beneficial addition to scholarly discourse.

### Thai Protests

The protest activities in Thailand stem from the 2006 ousting of then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra (BBC 2010). The pro-Thaksin protestors, represented by the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), had been protesting against the government of Abhisit Vejjajiva and had banded together under the ‘red shirt’ label (BBC 2010). The anti-Thaksin protestors, represented by the Peoples’ Alliance for Democracy (PAD), supported the government of Vejjajiva and had been successful in toppling two prior pro-Thaksin governments. The People’s Alliance for Democracy represents royalists, businessmen, and the urban middle class and have

banded together under the ‘yellow shirt’ label (Reuters 2010). Thailand has been a hotbed of contentious activities in the past half-decade with recent rallies drawing tens of thousands of protestors. In addition, a recent report suggests that, contrary to the other cases of use of Twitter by social movements, in the case of Thailand the pro-government actors have dominated Twitter. In effect, Thailand could prove to be a case of a “Twitter Counter-Revolution” (Morozov 2009b) where pro-government actors use Twitter to spread disinformation or quell social unrest. Nevertheless, we believe the widespread adoption of the platform by opposing factions makes this event a suitable candidate for greater scrutiny.

### Repertoires of Contention

Charles Tilly has defined repertoires of contention as the, ‘*distinctive constellations of tactics and strategies developed over time and used by protest groups to act collectively in order to make claims on individuals and groups*’ (Tilly 2006a). Tarrow (Tarrow 1998) distinguishes modular repertoires as “*bundles of performances easily transferred from one locality, population, issue, or organization to another*” (Tilly 2006b). We believe that the progression of Twitter based collective action provides a strong case for modularity of repertoires. The movements that have co-opted the Twitter medium in their collective action efforts have also co-opted the strategies of the color revolutions of Europe. Hence, the revolutions in Georgia in 2003 (velvet), Ukraine in 2004 (orange), Kyrgyzstan in 2005 (pink) had a direct effect on the strategies of the Iranian Protests of 2009 (green) and Thailand in 2010 (red, yellow and green). Interestingly, the dynamics of contention in these latter revolutions involve the interplay between the earlier co-opted modular repertoires and the new medium of Twitter. Hence, the protestors in Twitter brand their messages with #redshirts to make their tweets part of the larger stream of messages. In this way, users can tap into this real time stream or add to it. Twitter was envisioned as a medium to emphasize the individual, but as like other media such as news, greater volume accounts for relevance in discourse. Hence, to have a #hashtag that trends in the larger streams of Twitter provides a larger exposure to protest activities than was possible as individuals i.e. collective action co-opting a medium designed for individuals for its own collective purposes. In addition #hashtags amplify streams, which makes them easier to find, use and helps create a ‘project identity’. The use of distinctive hashtags for a movement began with Iran (#freeiran, #iranelections) and was carried on to Moldova (#pman) and Thailand (#redshirts, #yellowshirts). The phenomenon of movement actors identifying themselves with specific #hashtags has significant consequences for our data collection and analysis strategy sections.

### Twitter: claims and challenges

Various claims and challenges have been attributed to Twitter in the context of social movements both by the popular media and the research discourse. First, Twitter has been portrayed as an agent of consensus mobilization. Consensus mobilization has been defined as the movements efforts to popularize and legitimize its viewpoint (Klandermans 1984), i.e. an effective ‘publicity tool’ for social movements (Morozov 2009c). Second, Twitters’ perceived expediency in delivering on-the-ground accounts in crisis situations has been acknowledged by co-optation by major news networks like CNN (Hughes et al. 2010). Another interesting claim in this regard is that protest factions are posited as possibly trying to dominate Twitter streams and hence the global coverage of events (Morozov 2009b). Third, social movements are increasingly being conceptualized as trans-national and location-independent, these new mobilities have inspired a new set of challenges to the research community. Lastly, Twitter has been touted as a great tool for organizing protestors in repressive political climes (Morozov 2009a; Mungiu-Pippidi et al. 2009) with the Moldovan protests of 2009 cited frequently as a successful example of Twitter based mobilization.

In terms of our proposed framework, we believe that both consensus mobilization efforts on Twitter and the co-optation of the medium by the mainstream media, lend credence to the richness of available Twitter data. In addition, we believe that our comprehensive and real-time data collection methodology has the potential to shed light on the threefold complexities resulting from contemporary notions of place, space and networks of social movements (Nicholls 2009). Lastly, with regards to Twitter as an organizational tool, while our framework does not aim to establish the effect of Twitter on movement events, we do however account for the intentionality of Twitter users at various points in the Twitter protest wave.

In the next section, we outline our framework and demonstrate its use by means of data collected during the protests in Thailand from March to May 2010.

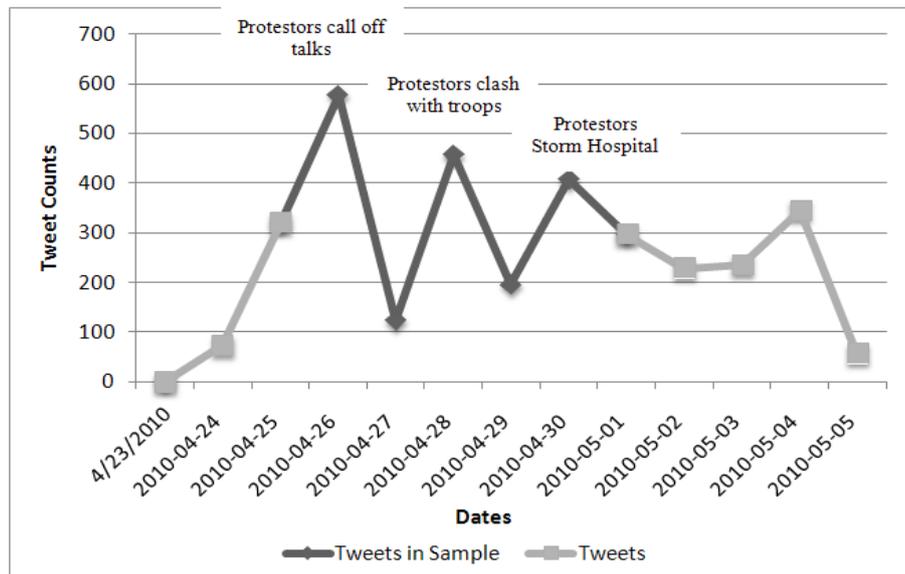
**Framework**

**Twitter Data Collection**

Our primary data collection task involved assembling tweets relevant to certain topics, i.e. the Thailand Protests, and archiving these tweets in a format that is conducive for analysis. To achieve these goals we wrote a distributed Twitter crawler integrated with a postGRES database for storage. Our crawler utilizes the Twitter API that returns relevant tweets for a seven day period based on user-input keywords (“#redshirt”, “Bangkok” etc.). The newly created storage file is parsed and each tweet is then written to a database such that each tweet having the same ID (as returned by Twitter) appears only once. In addition, since twitter assigns each new re-tweet (i.e. a forwarded tweet) with a different ID these are stored as unique database entries provided re-tweets are returned when querying for a specific keyword.

**Sample construction**

Data based on a set of keywords specific to the Thai protests was collected over a six month period from April to September 2010. For the purposes of this study we illustrate our framework via a subset of tweets which were published over a one week period, from 25<sup>th</sup> April to 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010, as illustrated in the figure below. The subset under scrutiny was retrieved based on a single keyword (“redshirt”) search of our archived Twitter data and resulted in 2452 tweets in the final sample.



**Figure 1. Tweet volume per day, from 04-24-2010 to 05-05-2010**

The choice for a smaller sample size of a week was driven by the exploratory and proof-of-concept nature of this study. The week which forms the sample for this study was chosen due to two rationales. First, although considerably larger maxima were observed in our dataset, we wanted to restrict our scope to smaller scale movement events which we believe have greater significance in terms of grassroots collective action. Second, the week under scrutiny provided three local maxima, which are illustrated along with the associated movement event in figure 1, which we believe provided variety in terms of phenomena and a basis for comparability. Our structural coding categories were adapted from the categorization schema developed by Earl (Earl, 2006) for the purposes of categorizing protest websites. The first seven categories were coded as binary measures. In addition, we added a content coding category (number viii) to provide some measures of both the “nature” of the tweet, as well as, the “subject” of the tweet. The adapted categorization schema utilized to code the tweets is provided in Table 1.

i.	Is the tweet relevant?
ii.	Is the tweet providing information about the protests?
	a. Is the tweet providing localized (generative) information?

iii.	Is the tweet appealing for action?
iv.	Is there a link provided in the tweet? a. Does the link point to unique author resource?  b. Does the link point to a non-unique author resource (discussion forums etc.)?
vi.	Is the tweet expressing an opinion?
vii.	Is the tweet asking a question?
viii.	What is the subject of the tweet?

Table 1. Coding Schema

Content code		Description
I	Mobilization	Messages which describe assembling, marshalling or coordination of a group of people. E.g. " <i>Much more soldiers on suriwong road tonight! #redshirts http://twitpic.com/1jm786</i> "
II	Tactics	Messages which describe the tactics employed by movement and government actors. E.g., " <i>More sounds of gunfire at #redshirts battle :( This shit's ridiculous.</i> "
III	Leadership	Messages which describe/reflect upon the leadership of protestors and government. E.g. " <i>#Redshirts leaderless? Has to be the worst situation possible!</i> "
IV	Disruption	Disruptions to civic life due to the protest events on commerce, transportation and housing. E.g. " <i>just checked and our #redshirts roadblock is still there. O neat.</i> "
V	Clashes	Messages describing engagement between movement actors and government actors. E.g. " <i>Army's got some heavy weapons there. Looks like machine guns to me. #redshirts</i> "
VI	Information Seeking	Information seeking in terms of asking for local information, clarifications of emerging situations and translation activities. E.g. " <i>Can anyone confirm the explosion at Central? #redshirts</i> "
VII	Reflexive	Messages which contain reflections on identity and the medium (Twitter) itself. E.g. " <i>Retweets not my usual more reliable sources on #redshirts so dont take as gospel</i> "
VIII	Reportage	Photos, videos and eye witness accounts of happenings at the ground level. E.g. " <i>Police line outside mrt silom. #redshirts http://twitpic.com/1jmbc7</i> "
IX	Media	Tweets which describe popular opinion w.r.t actors (movement and government) or reflect/describe mainstream media coverage. E.g. " <i>King on tv now #redshirts</i> "
X	Pop-Culture	Messages relating movements events to popular culture and parodying movement elements. E.g. " <i>So the #protestors in #Thailand call themselves #Redshirts... DIDN'T THEY EVER WATCH STAR TREK?!!</i> "

Table 2. Content Coding Schema

For the content coding category, which is illustrated in Table 2 with examples, an initial set of codes was decided based on the dual emphasis specified by Jackie Smith (Smith 2001) in her analysis of the WTO protests, i.e. how movement actors are *mobilized* and how these members *act* in specific socio-political contexts. In addition, content codes were generated in an inductive fashion through a first iteration of open coding (on English language tweets), which was conducted by two graduate students. Subsequently, the two lists of generated content coding categories were compared and a final list of coding categories was agreed upon. The final coding schema hoped to provide the maximum coverage while ensuring a logical cohesiveness. The newly constructed coding schema was then used in a definitive coding iteration to generate the final coded document. For the definitive coding iteration, tweets in the Thai language were coded by a colleague from Thailand.

The content coding schema involves ten content coding categories. The first three categories, mobilization, tactics and leadership, are fairly straightforward in that they are dominant aspects of most social movements. The clashes and disruption categories overlap to a degree, however, the clashes category concerns itself primarily with the engagement of protestors with government actors such as the police and militia, whereas the disruption category reflects on the effect of protest activities on civic life, including but not limited to clashes. The Information Seeking, Reportage and Reflexive categories are particular to the new media format. The Pop-Culture category covers both attempts at relating movement events with popular culture references, and a variety of humor related content, which is again particular to the Twitter medium. Lastly, the Media category

covers reflections on mainstream media coverage, such as the speech by the King appealing for peace, and also opinion based messages. We believe that our coding categories encompass conventional movement aspects such as mobilization and tactics, as well as, aspects of new media, such as on the ground reportage and popular culture, providing aspects which may prove useful in constructing vivid narratives of collective action.

## ANALYSIS

Our analysis is divided into two sections, while the first section aims to describe the tweets themselves, the second section focuses on the specific content of the tweets i.e. describing what the tweets describe.

### Structural analysis

Our dataset displayed a high degree of relevance, with 85% of tweets being relevant to protest events. However, this may be an artifice of our coding categorization (for example, we code parody and pop culture references as being relevant due to our aim of capturing descriptive data), the specific keyword chosen and the time period which forms the basis of our sample. Nevertheless, we believe that the high degree of relevance conveys the situated nature of noise in Twitter data, where smaller protest waves may exhibit greater relevance. In addition, 22% of tweets contained links, which is slightly higher as compared to the 13% projected by Java et al. (Java et al. 2007). Approximately 11% of the tweets were in Thai, which may also be a consequence of our choice of English language keyword. Predominantly, tweets were informational in nature, with 66% of the sample conveying information about protest events. While the informational tweets primarily linked to and reflected upon mainstream media coverage, we saw a surprisingly large instantiation (26% of the sample) of generative, localized information being conveyed through the Twitter medium, such as eyewitness accounts and amateur media. User generated reportage, videos and pictures were not only widely re-tweeted but were interestingly generated by a subset of dedicated users, which is also consistent with Java et al.'s (Java et al. 2007) conception of interest sharing groups on Twitter.

Compared to the informational tweets, we saw lesser instantiation of appellate tweets, we believe this is consistent with both the particulars of the Twitter medium as well as appropriate to our emphasis on the descriptive power of Twitter data as opposed to the popular conception of Twitter as a mobilizing tool. We also observed considerable opinion based data, which was in relation to both mainstream media coverage as well as generative content produced on Twitter. While predominantly, links were to unique author content, a large proportion of tweets were to pages which can be construed as being single author yet with a comments section. The ubiquity of commentary sections and forums on content pages provided a classification complication, and with the benefit of hindsight, we coded pages with comment activity, as opposed to just possessing an inactive comment feature, as being non-unique author. While not substantial, we also saw users question the hive about on the ground events, offer clarifications, actively translate Thai tweets for the benefit of English speakers and coordinate amongst themselves to allocate 'reporters' to areas which witnessed contentious collective action.

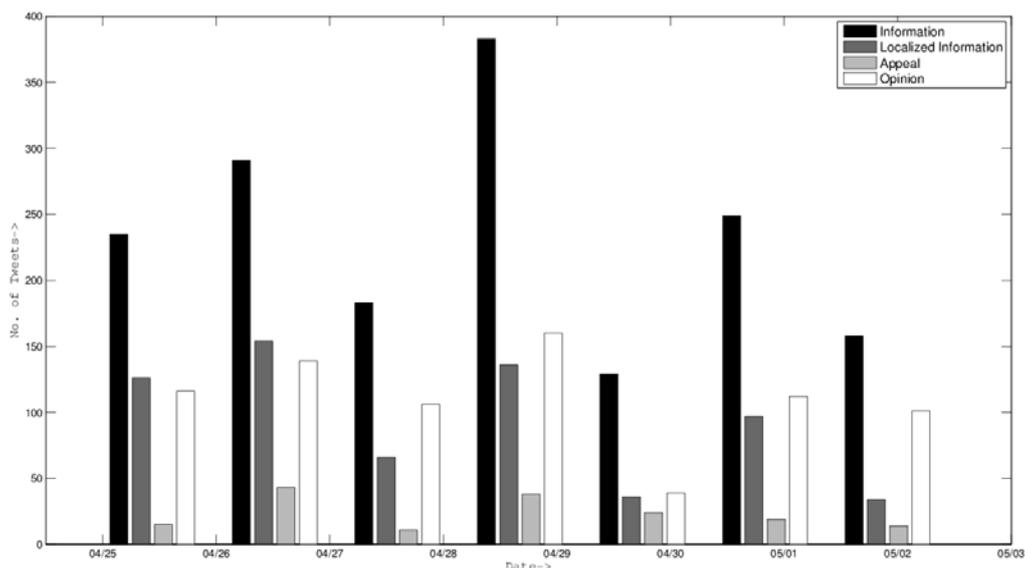


Figure 2. Structural aspects of Twitter data from 04-25-2010 to 05-01-2010

To sum up, in terms of the intentionality of users, the primary emphasis was on spreading information, including a rich array of localized media and information. Our dataset did not show strong instantiation of calls or appeals to action. Unsurprisingly, there was also large amount of opinion data which reflected both on situations, before during and after their occurrence, as illustrated in Figure 2, a prominent example being the outpouring of condemnation in the aftermath of the storming of Chulalongkorn University Hospital. We believe that the availability and classification of the spread of movement related information along with the opinions they elicited at the time of their occurrence, captured in real time, provides a rich repository for collective action scholarship.

### Content analysis

We divide our description of the content of tweets in our sample into two sections. In the first section we illustrate a few of our prominent content codes and their distributions, and subsequently, we use this schema to outline our conception of Twitter ‘protest waves’.

#### Content Code Distributions

For illustration purposes, we provide a description of the content of one code categories grouping, namely, the social movements related content codes. The week which constitutes our sample marks a period where the offer for a ceasefire by the Red Shirts was declined by the Government. The end of ceasefire negotiations was followed by an upswing in violent clashes between protestors and government troops, culminating in the storming of Chulalongkorn Hospital in Bangkok city.

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of mobilization, tactics and leadership content codes over time. The movement of protestors after the cancellation of talks between the Red Shirts and the Government, led to spikes in mobilization related content on April 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. Violent clashes on the 28<sup>th</sup> and the storming of Chulalongkorn University Hospital caused an abundance of content describing the tactics used by the opposing factions. At all points there was instantiation of content reflecting on the Leadership of both camps, with a spike at the time of clashes between the protestors and the government. Lastly, the disruption category peaked heavily during the clashes, however, a much more sustained peak was observed in the aftermath of the incidents at Chulalongkorn Hospital.

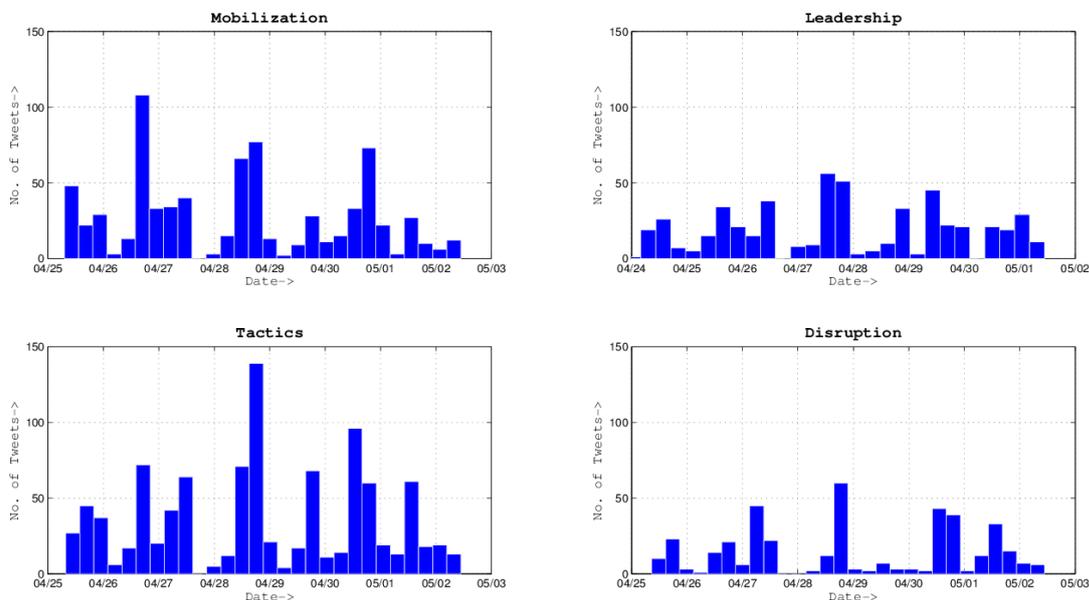


Figure 3. Content codes for Twitter data from 04-25-2010 to 05-01-2010

### Twitter Protest Waves

We propose the analytical construct of Twitter protest waves which draws from Koopmans original formulation (Koopmans 1993) of protest waves. As stressed before, we do not focus on Twitter based activism as would be characterized by any number of neologisms like cyberactivism, cyberprotest and hacktivism, rather our emphasis is on analyzing discourse generated on the medium with regards to the movement under scrutiny. We use an example to draw out our conceptual frame. Table 3 chronologically lists tweets relating to the arrest and escape of protest leader Kwanchai Praiphana, an event that got negligible coverage in the international English language press. The sequence of events involved Kwanchai being present at a movement rally, apparently being apprehended by the police and reportedly eventually making an escape via a local McDonalds. In the Twitter chatter, the event of the arrest was first referred to in reference to live television coverage, and was widely re-tweeted. Subsequently, the official Facebook page of the protestors' party (UDD) published a counter claim refuting the news of the arrest, a rebuttal which was also re-tweeted extensively. Following the sequence of claims and counter claims, an appeal was circulated on Twitter with the license plate information of the car purported to be the vehicle in which Kwanchai had made his escape. The cycle of messages terminated with parodic messages referencing the supposed foray into McDonalds and the Montenegrin citizenship of the leader of the Red Shirts, Thaksin Shinawatra.

Kwanchai is speaking to Nation Chanel: he is hiding under a truck or something!!! #thailand #redshirts #bangkok	Informational
From the Nation Kwanchai a #redshirts leader arrested near Don Muang	Informational
UDD FB "News! Kwanchai is back at the Rajprasong Tent! the Nation Newspaper report of his arrest is untrue" #redshirts	Counter-Informational
Kwanchai, red-shirt leader, is now escaping in the van. The license plate number: N [REDACTED] 3 [REDACTED] U [REDACTED]. #redshirts	Appeal
Waiting for further confirmation of Kwanchai, a red shirt leader, arrested. Hope it's true.... #RedShirts	Opinion
ASTV says Kwanchai fled, leaving #redshirts to fend for themselves.>>there's always Montenegro w/ someone of similar character	Informational / Parody
McDonalds could well use Kwanchai as a presenter. "You're always safe at McDonalds." #RedShirts	Parody

**Table 3. Twitter Protest Wave Example (Personally Identifying Information has been blacked out)**

such Twitter protest wave. Another prominent wave that was instantiated in our dataset was the, "leadership communication, opinion, parody" protest wave, which, as the ordering suggests, involved prominent leadership communiqués (or even interview or speech excerpts), eliciting opinion and parodic interpretations in response. We believe that the availability of rich descriptive detail regarding such local movement events, makes a persuasive case for including Twitter chatter in establishing the mise-en-scène of a collective action event.

## DISCUSSION

This paper hopes to serve two goals, firstly, establishing the importance of Twitter data to the scholarship on contentious collective action crises, and secondly, providing a theoretically informed framework for conceptualizing and analyzing these datasets. Our analysis suggests that Twitter in the context of collective action is primarily a consensus mobilization medium (Klandermans 1984). The limited instantiation of action mobilization and the scale of new media datasets suggest that perhaps the challenge for scholars wishing to observe and analyze action oriented messages is to devise means to ascertain pockets of interest, in terms of users and message activity, a task which is easier said than done. However, in terms of observing movement identity and rhetoric, meaning negotiation, and aspects of the culture of protest in online spaces, dialogical new media datasets provide opportunities which were unavailable with conventional data sources such as news banks. Lastly, we hope that our conception of Twitter protest waves is part of a narrative turn in the analysis of protest in new mediums.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

In terms of furthering the conceptual basis of frameworks dealing with collective action online, we refer to Raymond Williams (Williams 1977) notions of the dominant, emergent and residual. We believe that while computational models of analysis of Twitter data can be useful in gauging the dominant and, to some extent, the emergent, nuanced qualitative analyses are required to draw out the residual aspects of collective action events.

The residual category encompasses the imprint of past events and cultures on the present and has significant relevance in terms of establishing the discourse of the movement under study and their distinct repertoires of contention. While our framework lays the groundwork for the curation and preliminary analyses of Twitter datasets, we believe that the inclusion of media studies theory would be a necessary first step towards establishing a productive framework which can adequately capture and describe the distinctive cultures of collective action groups.

On a more pragmatic note, we believe that norms must be established for research with Twitter datasets, which take into consideration the security and privacy of users who may be resident in relatively repressive climes and hence may be put at risk due to their association with contentious collective action events. In the process of writing this paper, due to the absence of established norms, we were forced to make a series of judgments calls with regards to the suitability of including actual messages and the forms of their representation. We hope to provoke discussion on new-media based research and the concordant dualities of the politics of representation and the representation of politics in these emergent mediums.

## CONCLUSION

Crises involving contentious collective action have linked with social media in the popular imagination as well as the research literature, however, currently there is a need for conceptual work tying the rich canon of social movement research with the large amounts of data available on new media platforms such as Twitter. We provide a framework for conceptualizing and analyzing Twitter data related to contentious collective action events and demonstrate its usage with data related to the protests in Thailand. We hope to draw attention to both the descriptive detail possible with the inclusion of new media analysis in the mainstream social movements discourse as well as highlight the problem space to the interdisciplinary community of crisis management professionals and researchers.

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