Mobile Ambivalence at Standing Rock: surveillance, antagonism, and mobility at the Dakota Access Pipeline protests

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Abstract

The protests surrounding the Dakota Access Pipeline were marked by ambivalence, both in the blurring of protest spaces and in the interactions in digital spaces surrounding the protest. The Facebook check-in meme that began circulating on Halloween 2016 was a key site for the ambivalence of the protests. The meme prompted sympathizers to sign-in into standing rock through the locational Facebook check-in feature to jam police surveillance. The meme capitalized on the hybridized nature of the protests space(s) in an attempt to create safety for the physical protesters. However, the meme amplified attention paid to the protests leading to trolls wandering into the digital spaces of the protest. Protesters and trolls engaged in mutual surveillance, doxxing, and other antagonisms. I argue that the Facebook Check-in meme constitutes a useful site of digital activism that is effective through its use of the messiness of hybrid spaces and tactical engagement, and one that also exemplifies the potential of tactical media in hybrid space to oppose power structures of surveillance. With that though the discourse and actions surrounding the protest highlight the ambivalence of digital political activism coming from multiple collations. The focus on the intersections of ambivalence, hybridized space, and tactical engagement provides a fruitful lens not present in the literature of digital political protest.

Introduction

Over the course of 2016 and 2017, a continuous protest movement (#noDAPL) formed in opposition to a planned pipeline that would run through Indigenous American land. The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) has attracted controversy, and resistance from environmental

groups (Snow, 2017), Black Lives Matter (Donella, 2016), numerous social media activists, and most importantly, a coalition of Indigenous American groups (Donella, 2016). On Halloween of 2016 a meme (see figure 1, a sample of the meme from a Facebook search) began circulating on Facebook that implored people to use the Facebook check-in feature regardless of their location to throw off alleged police surveillance of activist/protester social media (Snopes, 2016). The meme called on people not physically present at the protests to check-in at Standing Rock via the 'check-in' function in an attempt to counter alleged police surveillance of activists who were using the feature to show they were there, a claim the police department denied (Ohlheiser, 2016). Fascinatingly none of the Indigenous American protest groups claimed responsibility for starting the meme, but did thank people for the solidarity and visibility it brought for the cause (Meyer and Waddell, 2016) and do credit the meme in part for the amount attention that came to the protest (Garfield, 2016). Several weeks later violent confrontations occurred between police and protesters where a woman, Sophia Wilansky, received a gruesome arm injury. The image of Sophia's injury began circulating widely on social media (Sottile and Medina, 2016). These two major moments highlight how people used social media through the affordances of digital and mobile communication technologies to communicate conditions on the ground. This emphasizes the hybridity of space in an age of proliferated digital, mobile technologies. Mobile technologies allow for the easier coordination and facilitation of political protest (Diamond, 2010; Lievrouw, 2011; Castells, 2012; Zeitzoff, 2017), while mobile/digital affordances enable activists to quickly create and disseminate information/images about the conditions they face (Castells et al, 2009; Lievrouw, 2011). However, social and digital media messages do not have neat boundaries when trying to reach intended audiences. When one makes public posts on Facebook those who are a part of the extended network or are just crafty searchers can see and engage with those public posts. It is in this dynamic where surveillance, privacy, and ambivalence collide. I utilize Phillips and Milner's conceptualization of ambivalence in digital media and culture: that content and interactions are 'simultaneously antagonistic and social, creative and disruptive, humorous and barbed…too variable across cases, to be essentialized as *this* or *that*. Nor can it be pinned to one singular

purpose' (authors emphasis, 2017, p. 10). Although the literature above have discussed the use of mobile technologies in political protests, they do not specifically investigate the blurring of boundaries so evocative in much of digital protest environments now. These blurred boundaries become potentially productive spaces for activists to engage in subversive and impactful activities or be antagonized by bad faith actors (i.e. trolls[1]). The check-in meme also is vital to understanding the hybridity of space and its subversive potential at the Standing Rock Protests, as the meme helped to relentlessly blur the digital and physical spaces of the protest. The Facebook check-in meme acts as the prime site and instigator of where ambivalence, surveillance, and spatial hybridity take place and lead to the collapse of space(s) and contexts.

To make a distinction in the argument early and clarify the use of meme in relation to the check-in, I am using 'Facebook check-in meme' in two ways: first to describe the actual memetic flow of a piece of content which made a call-to-action and was spread by Facebook users (descriptive), and secondly to more easily locate an amplified site that fostered ambivalence, surveillance, and hybridity (functional). I argue that the Facebook Check-in in this instance should be understood as a meme because internet memes can be defined as nodes of public discourse that are socially constructed; that they are products of user agency; are intertextual, and aware of other internet memes; and that they are parts participatory, humorous, and playful (Levinson, 2012; Tay, 2012; Shifman, 2014; Milne, 2013; Jenkins et al., 2013; Gaby and Caren, 2012). Under that rubric is clear that the call-to-action message propagated on Facebook was a meme. From there users of Facebook used the intended function/affordance articulated in the meme's content to engage in an interesting use of hybrid space that amplified the attention given to the protests. That amplification then led to troublesome and ambivalent interactions between allies/protesters and trolls. Here I also would like to strike a reflexive note. As a cis hetero white man with not

[1] Trolls can be defined as those who engage in malicious behaviors as a way to antagonize and aggravate other users, or simply annoy and disrupt online life; whose behavior can be as minor as making fake Amazon product reviews to doxxing and harassing other internet users (Phillips and Milner, 2017; Coles and West, 2016; Binns, 2012).

enough blood relation to Indigenous America to claim it as a part of my identity, I recognize how the markers of my identity are outright responsible for the plight of Indigenous Americans. I do not wish to speak for the tribes making a stand for their bodies and the bodies of their land. My goal in this chapter is to further theorize the space(s) around this protest and distill insight into resistance practices from it: how the tools of this digital era can help to creatively subvert asymmetrical power practices imposed upon those spaces and bodies, but also understand the sheer ambivalence that happens when amplification puts allies and harmful actors into complicated spaces and interactions.

I will begin with historically situating the construction and protest of the Dakota Access Pipeline and its aftermath. From there I will discuss the importance of amplification and digital/mobile media affordances in the environment around the protests. I then close with my analysis of the ambivalent digital life of the #noDAPL protests and what conclusions can be drawn from it. I argue that while the Facebook check meme constituted a useful site of digital activism that was effective through its use of the messiness of hybrid spaces and tactical engagement, the discourse and actions that surrounded it highlighted the ambivalence of digital political activism generally now. Zizi Papacharissi (2019) mentioned in a recent talk at North Carolina State University that protesters in Egypt during the Arab Spring would post fake meeting locations on Twitter to confuse potential police and military surveillance of the protest activities. Their goal was to occlude state surveillance and intervention in the physical spaces that protesters were meeting in. Likewise Occupy Wall Street engaged in highly mediated physical and digital interactions with US police during their assorted protests and occupations. I say this to point towards recent historical precedent to highlight that leveraging hybrid space to confound and subvert surveillance has been gestured towards by protest groups. Based on the tactics of those at Standing Rock as well as this historical precedent in the political movements of the early 2010's, I argue the focus on the intersections of ambivalence, hybridized space, and tactical engagement provides a fruitful lens not present in the literature of digital political protest. Using ambivalence as a lens into some of the activities during the protest, and leveraging notions of hybridity, digital activism, and surveillance together allows us to examine the messy

collapsing space(s) of hybridized activism while dispensing of qualitative judgments of good/bad behaviors and outcomes. Instead we can find complicated relationships between typically 'good' and 'bad' actors, and creative tactics with ambivalent outcomes. It is my claim that these intersections (ambivalence, hybridized space, and tactical engagement) potentially allow for subversion of power structures by using a sort of inversion of hybrid space.

Contextualizing the Standing Rock Protests

The protests centered around the construction of a pipeline through the Standing Rock Reservation in both North and South Dakota. These lands are considered by the Indigenous groups who inhabit these lands, prominently the Standing Rock Sioux, to be sacred and that they also contain burial sites (Miller, 2016). Outside the sacred lands at risk from the pipeline were the clean waters of the locals. The groups that gathered around these sites called themselves the Water Protectors (Elbein, 2017). The colonial projects of numerous imperial states have a long history of attempting to control and subdue the bodies of Indigenous peoples through the control of their bodies of water (Öhman, 2016). Öhman argues as bodies of water fundamentally make up the materiality of our own bodies, altering and controlling those waters does the same to our bodies (2016). The danger of oil spills into these rivers and waters in Standing Rock, not only could destroy the rivers themselves, but through that destruction the Standing Rock Sioux people likewise. But the claiming of Indigenous American land by both private and public entities through coercion is not a new story in American history, nor is the resistance that Indigenous groups have mounted against projects of questionable environmental and ethical practices (Donnella, 2016). As Whyte (2017) articulates, #NoDAPL is not 'about a breakdown in consultative relations or an isolated disagreement over safety' (p. 10), it is a testament to the United States government and corporations continual and constant violation of treaties and agreements throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, and the knowing inattention to how global climate change affects Indigenous Americans particularly. The lands that make up the trajectory of the pipeline have watched and felt numerous violent imperialistic atrocities including the mass slaughter of buffalo, the

damming and colonization of native waters, and the violent imposition through military removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands (Estes, 2017). The use of treaty and legality/legal doctrine has long been one strategy used by colonial powers over Indigenous peoples, Indigenous Americans especially (Churchill, 2002). This is evident in the case of the Dakota Access Pipeline, where Energy Transfer Partners LP and the various levels of US government have appealed to legal recourse to build the pipeline in spite of objections and protest of the peoples who inhabit those lands and know them to be sacred. This is a constant strategy by those who colonize to subvert and dissolve Indigenous sovereignty (Chruchill, 2002). However in these numerous struggles against American colonialism, as Estes (2017) argues, an important lesson was gained: that through the various different tribes coming together, resistance could occur. In the 1960's and 1970, occurring along the counterculture movements, radical Indigenous Americans formed the American Indian Movement (AIM) to fight for their sovereign rights (Estes, 2019). In the following decades numerous other pan-Native organizations and coalitions formed and took actions such as occupying lands and organizing protests such as when AIM occupied Wounded Knee in 1973 (Estes, 2019). In the vein of pan coalitions, Lane highlights how the Standing Rock protests also provided Indigenous women ground to be 'warriors of wellness in the face of violence', especially the Water Protectors, in a space of non-stop encroachment of colonial violence upon Indigenous lands and bodies (2017, p. 197). It is this backdrop of colonialization through violence, colonizer appeal to their own legal sovereignty, the will to control the waters/lands bodies of Indigenous peoples, and those Indigenous peoples' every vigilant and persistent resistance that set the stage for the #NoDAPL protests at Standing Rock.

The beginning of the Dakota Access Pipeline and the protests/opposition trace back to September 2014 when Standing Rock was given no say in a potential reroute in the pipeline as the Army Corps of Engineers claimed they had sole sovereignty in deciding the matter (Estes, 2017). In early April 2016, members of the various Indigenous groups rode out to the site to protest the project (Miller, 2016). Over the next several months Energy Transfer Partners LP (the group behind the pipeline), government entities, and protesters begin to battle both

in and outside the courtroom to forward/block the construction of the pipeline resulting in an October 9 decision by a federal court denying the Indigenous group's injunction to have the construction on private land stopped (Miller, 2016). However, during this struggle President Obama had been receptive to protester concerns and attempted to stall the pipeline by having Army Corp of Engineers examine the issue (Hersher, 2016). Following the ironic Columbus Day federal court ruling, protesters and police confrontation began escalating resulting in several instances of mass arrests as police attempted to forcefully vacate the protesters off privately held land (Thorbecke, 2016). Then on October 31 the viral Facebook check-in call to action meme began circulating, and quickly amassed more than 1 million shares (Kennedy, 2016). On November 20-21, protesters and police violently clashed with reports of bean-bag launchers, tear gas, rubber bullets, and water cannons used on protesters which resulted in the viral image of the gruesome injury suffered by protester Sophia Wilansky (Domonoske, 2016). This violent clash represented the apex of the protests at Standing Rock. Beginning in late December 2016, coupled with the incoming change from Obama to Trump administrations, progress made to prevent the pipeline began to dissipate. President Trump shortly thereafter signed an executive order to resume pipeline progress on January 24; on February 23 remaining protest camps were cleared out by authorities, and on March 18 a US Court of Appeals refused to grant an order halting constructing effectively clearing the way for Energy Transfer Partners LP to complete the pipeline (Associated Press, 2017). Oil began flowing through the pipeline in early June of 2017 (Meyer, 2017). Since then there have been numerous leaks and impacts on the landscape that the pipeline tears across (Knowles, 2019). Likewise, the Indigenous peoples fighting to protect their bodies and the land's body have not ceased protesting and fighting. Energy Transfer Partners LP are beginning to make plans to expand the pipeline as the writing of this chapter, and the Standing Rock Sioux are once more taking this potentiality to affect their waters to court (MacPherson, 2019). The Standing Rock Sioux and their allies have kept the pressure on to keep intervening in the ongoing abuse of their lands, as well as supporting other protest movements of Indigenous Americans (Associated Press, 2019). There are also protesters who are still in jail

or facing charges for their involvement and actions during the protests (Brown, 2019). Even if the amplified moment of the protests in 2016 has passed, the issue is ongoing and is a reminder that the efforts of colonial/neocolonialism do not cease once eyes are no longer focused on them, they usually intensify; same with the energies of Indigenous populations in their resistance of those colonial machinations. With that though we must examine what happens in those moments of amplification in this era of digitality.

Standing Rock and Amplification: Send in the trolls!

To examine the ambivalence that was present on the digital, online side of the Standing Rock protests, several important occurrences need to be discussed. The Facebook check-in meme constitutes the key catalyst for this article as it created a massive amount amplification which in turn led to Facebook users engaging with each other in complicated ways. The meme drew millions of eyes to the protest and the issues it looked to intervene in. However, this amplification acted as a double-edged blade. The million plus people who signed in at Standing Rock created an impetus for mainstream news outlets like ABC and NPR to cover the story more in depth (Ohlheiser, 2016). Likewise, the meme diffused through the various distributed friend networks of those who posted it. However, with increased visibility came trolls. As Phillips and Milner (2016) argue, amplification of stories by the media and the spreading of those stories in our networks increases the chances of harm for the subjects of the stories, as well as for those who share stories themselves as trolls look for new targets to harass and 'play' with. Trolls thrive on the inscrutability and ambivalence of digital culture and communication especially thanks to Poe's Law[2] and context collapse. One's inability to decipher the true intent of other users allows trolls to capitalize, causing harm or sowing confusion. It becomes exceptionally difficult to make clear conclusions while engaged in digital culture and communication

[2] Poe's Law is the internet law that essentially says without some sort of signifying element such as a wink face emoticon or emoji, it is nearly impossible to discern the different between honest belief and satire/parodic belief (Ellis, 2017). Also as Ellis points out this non-clarity helps folk to evade responsibility for harmful and ignorant interactions.

because play, antagonism, indifference, and flippantness all may or may not be present within the content of any given message or interaction. Inability to understand an original poster's intentions which could possess an 'all of the above' or a 'none of the above' sentiment makes it even more difficult to understand how to react. This contextual confusion can lead to intense arguments, which fuel trolls who enjoy sowing discord for their own personal entertainment and the lolz of other onlookers (Bishop, 2014). Lol is short for "laugh out loud", a common abbreviation in text. Lolz or lulz is lol taken to a more cynical and antagonistic level by trolls to 'celebrate the anguish of the laughed at victim… [to take] amusement from other people's distress' (Phillips, 27, 2015). Phillips (2015) goes on to say that there is a limit to a traditional definition of the term as it is deployed by trolls in numerous different contexts including punishment against/rewards for other trolls, or on individuals wider, and as the ultimate disavowal of personal responsibility: I did for the lulz. Poe's law is further exaggerated and taken to an extreme by context collapse. Context collapse being a flattened state where multiple distinct networks and audiences who may share different contexts receive a person's communicative messages (Marwick and boyd, 2011; Vitak, 2012). Those trolls are able to search their extended networks for public Facebook pages to antagonize, harass, and disrupt other's digital messages of support, or mourning, etc. Users become enmeshed in networks and interactions of ambivalence finding it difficult to decipher intentions or to keep their messages contained to their desired/intended audiences.

The discourse around Sophia Wilansky's arm injury during the violent November confrontation highlights how amplification can allow for the potential of trolls to act antagonistically. A quick scroll through the Facebook search function using the term 'Sophia Wilansky' yields results of support, conspiracy, and trolling. Figure 1 (though there were/are many more in the search) highlights one instance of a random troll posting to a pro-Protest Facebook group to antagonize and harass supporters of both the pipeline protests and Sophia Wilansky herself. Is the poster doing this simply to harass or because they find it funny, or because they seek to stimulate an alternative conversation within a group that unflinchingly supports Sophia? This is the ambivalent nature of amplification. This amplification and public disclosure invites

different varieties of surveillance from trolls, random onlookers, and the counter-surveillance practices that individuals who posted content then engage in. To make the point simpler and more outright: it is through the ambivalent tendencies of digital culture that antagonism is provided greater affordance to occur. Ambivalence, fostered by Poe's law and context collapse, certainly had a role to play in the digital protests surrounding Standing Rock and Dakota Access Pipeline and was fostered by the affordances of digital and mobile media.

Affordances of Mobile and Digital Media

Key to understanding online activism and digital ambivalence are the affordances that digital and mobile media offer users. Affordances are relational: they are what is allowable and unallowable by a certain object, platform or media (Gibson, 1985; Schrock, 2015). Mobile communication technology and digital media especially allow users to press against and play with various social, spatial, temporal, and physical boundaries (Schrock, 2015). dana boyd (2011) argues affordances allow:

> Amplifying, recording, and spreading information and social acts. These affordances can shape publics and how people negotiate them. While such affordances do not determine social practice, they can destabilize core assumptions people make when engaging social life (p. 45-46)

Power is a key aspect in the discussion of affordances. Affordances set the boundaries of how different actors can exercise power and the ways in which those actors can express power relations in a particular medium. Manuel Castells (2009) defines power as:

> The relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favor the empowered actor's will, interest, and values…is exercised by means of coercion (or the possibility of it) and/or by the construction of meaning on the basis of the discourse through which social actors guide their action. (p. 10)

Power is infused in how actors engage with the affordances of mobile and digital media, and power structures determine what affordances a particular media can have. While boyd argued that affordances do not

absolutely determine social practice (2011) and Bar, Pisani and Weber (2016) reinforce that idea through their case study of technology appropriation in the global south, there are limits to what one can do with the features embedded in any particular device or media. Phillips and Milner (2017) argue that the key affordances of digital media are modularity, modifiability, archivability, and accessibility (2017, 45), while as stated above boyd posits persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability. Lievrouw highlights the interactivity of digital media (2011, 13), while Shifman, in their discussion of memes argues that remix and intertextuality are key features of digital media (2014, 2). What is concurrent in these conceptions of digital media affordances is the ability for communications through digital media to morph and move quickly through different networks, while also having a certain stability at their core. Castells' (2009) argument regarding the affordances of mobile communications technologies ability to disseminate information quickly via text messages, that can act as a catalyst for political participation, broadly mirrors the digital media affordances listed above. These media also share some of same material infrastructures (servers, cell towers, etc.) and logics of networked communication. The ability to quickly communicate, modify messages based on particular audiences and networks, and the high degree of interactivity enables users to potentially engage in discourses and activities of power relations more easily than at any time in history. We saw this in how quickly the Check-in meme moved through Facebook and other social media platforms. Different versions of the call to action had different text, but the force of the message was similar: for users to check-in at Standing Rock to disrupt police surveillance. The potential affordances of digital and mobile communication led to tech-utopians and techno-evangelists of web 2.0 to proclaim now was a time of great democratic potential and revolution especially in wake of the Arab Spring and Occupy. However, the affordances of mobile and digital media have been criticized as enabling of less than ideal modes of activism also.

Ambivalent Digital Activism at Standing Rock

One level of ambivalence that the Facebook check-in meme fostered was in digital activism. More specifically those activities that could be

deemed as slacktivism. Slacktivism represents a continued ambivalence with modes of digital activism, due to the messy and continuing negotiations on how useful online activism is to political engagement and outcomes. The specter of slacktivism was cast on the Standing Rock Facebook check-in meme (Kauffman, 2016) with some going as far as calling the meme a hoax (Griffin, 2016). Slacktivism has long been a pejorative term to characterize digital/online activism as lazy, harmful, or inauthentic (Morozov, 2012; Knibbs; 2013). The anxiety and distrust of online political engagement can be traced back to Putnam's (2000) landmark study that argued American civic engagement was in the deep throes of decline as interest and participation in classic civic institutions waned. The negative conception of digital activism can also arguably be dialectically related to the techo-utopians of web 2.0 heralding social media and digital activism as democratizing and emancipating due the affordances it provides only to see that democratization falter in the wake of some outcomes of the protest movements in the 2010's such the Arab Spring and Occupy (Shirky, 2009; Shirky, 2010; Castells 2012; Raddaoui, 2012; Jenkins et al, 2013). McCafferty (2011) and Christensen (2011) push back against both of these extremes taking more moderate approaches to slacktivism and online activism generally. This conception of slacktivism as neither an ill nor an overtly democratizing force, but an activity that requires nuance and discretion when evaluating a specific instance of online activism has continued in the later literature (Kristofferson et al, 2013; Glenn, 2015; Leyva, 2016; Kolowich, 2016; Cabrera et al, 2017).

This argument of what constitutes 'good' political engagement have generally revolved around arguments of authenticity or outcomes in democratic processes. Gordon and Baldwin-Philippi (2014) conceptualize engagement in political processes in a thick v thin distinction. Thin engagement can be when a citizen feels very strongly about the act of engagement (such as signing an online petition), but lacks a more interactive component, while thick engagement is more interactive and connects citizens to the institutions of government (Gordon and Baldwin-Philippi, 2014). This distinction helps rehabilitate online activism, not as lazy slacktivism, but better constituted as a potential activity of thin engagement. Gordon and Baldwin-Philippi's thin/thick

engagement builds on Garcia and Lovink's (1997), as well as Lievrouw's (2011), argument that certain media practices are tactical, with smaller interventions that look to disrupt dominant practices. This idea of thin-tactical engagement has a historical genealogy from de Certeau's notion of tactics. de Certeau (2008) argues that tactics are engaged with peoples not in power, 'It {the other} operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage of "opportunities" and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids' (p. 37). Thin tactical media practices, while not being Putnam-esc political engagement in classic civic institutions, serves useful momentary ends. Evaluating online activism under the thin v thick distinction, while observing that practices of activism have different scopes, we are given the tools to not merely dismiss online modes of activism. This reconceptualization also does not exclude more institutional-based action of political engagement. It simply pairs with it, and disrupts the more binary logic in Putnam and Morozov's arguments. Seen this way: the Facebook check-in meme is a thin, tactical moment of political engagement, that was paired with classic institutional modes of political engagement of the physical protest camps at Standing Rock as well as the legal battle to halt the pipeline. With this consideration in mind, the Facebook check-ins during the #noDAPL protests cannot not be dismissed as the pejorative slacktivism, but examined as a use of thin, tactical media. What enabled the Facebook check-in meme's potential to be a tactical form of activism was the way it complicated distinctions between and within digital and physical space(s). The Facebook Check-in meme helped foster the contextual collapse of various different digital spaces on Facebook. Likewise, the meme facilitated the blurring of the physical protest space along the pipeline and the digital space of Facebook. However, this tactical use of the Facebook check-in meme is complicated by surveillance that it sought to disrupt, resulting from the ambivalent and antagonistic interactions between users who were surveilling each other.

The most ambivalent portion of the digital life of the #noDAPL protest was the ways in which users dealt with privacy, mutual interaction, and how they surveilled each other. Dourish and Bell (2011) and de Souza e Silva and Frith (2012) argue that privacy is a socially contingent

and contextual term. Facebook users played with the contextual and contingent nature of privacy when they spoofed their locations to seem as if they were present at Standing Rock in an effort to jam police surveillance by blurring who actually was present at the protest and over burdening the system of surveillance. This is an interesting misuse of one of Facebook's basic interface tools, and creates an ambivalence for observers who are trying to actively discern where other users actually might be in the physical world. The digital protesters then were willing to reveal their support for the protests to their network, a public act in a privately mediated setting. But tensions were created in this show of solidarity as Facebook is a searchable network. This searchability facilitates context collapse. In a similar vein, this also highlights how I went to gather data for analysis. I searched 'Dakota access pipeline protest group' in the Facebook search bar, found the group Standing Rock Dakota Access Pipeline Opposition, and could readily go through old pictures and posts observing interactions in the comment sections. With individuals signaling affiliation with the #noDAPL protests through publicly checking-in to the protests, trolls likewise are also able to search, read, and comment on public statuses. Troll comments included wanting cannons to protect police from protesters punctuated with a lol, and reinforcing how safe police are (see Figure 2, a posting from the group Standing Rock Dakota Access Pipeline Opposition). These moments create uncertainty in individuals. As Phillips and Milner argue individuals are unable to comfortably curate their messages as they 'are not able to know exactly who is engaging with content posted online…{and} can't always know whether their audience is expecting their "public" and "professional" self or their "private" and "informal" self" (2017, p. 83). Digital sympathizers expressing their concerns and solidarity with the protesters at Standing Rock may then have to reconfigure their messages in light of potential troll provocation. However, an interesting moment of ambivalence happened in these instances of trolling. Other commenters associated with the #noDAPL protests shared one of the trolls Facebook profile and called for him to be fired.

Rights to privacy are further made ambivalent when rhetorically positioned 'good guys' or 'allies' engage in doxxing. Doxxing is the act of purposefully releasing and revealing sensitive information such as

name, personal address, phone number, etc. to wider audiences with malicious intent and to harass the individual being doxed (Phillips, 2015). Doxxing, while originally used mostly by hackers and other online vigilantes, as a practice has become a more mainstream method of enforcing social norms and values especially following the violence in Charlottesville and the resurgence of white supremacy (Bowles, 2017). The dissemination of private information of antagonistic individuals to enforce individual notions of justice exemplifies Deleuze's (1992) societies of control where surveillance is diffused throughout distributed networks. Using Doxxing as a method of retaliation and control for antagonistic acts in murky private-public space further muddies privacy, and demonstrates the ambivalence of privacy in digital spaces. The one troll who had his Facebook publicly shared is indicative of the ambivalent negotiation of privacy and surveillance typified in these protest spaces. While he purposefully antagonistically engaged protesters, a public act, he opened himself up to counteractions his audience may look to use. Further complicating this narrative and fueling the ambivalent nature of digital interactions and digital activism is Poe's Law. Deciphering if those trolls truly meant their antagonism in their messages was and is extremely difficult. They may be doing it for the lolz, just wanting to stir the pot, or engaging in some sort of identity play. While those unclear intentions do not excuse the harm they may have inflicted (Phillips and Milner, 2017, p. 87), it does complicate how we understand, react, and respond to individuals who may be engaging in 'playful' antagonism.

The messy ways that privacy, surveillance, and digital interaction intersect highlight how ambivalent digital spaces are and complicate our notions of who can be considered 'good' and 'bad' actors online. Both sides of the protest engaged in less than civil ways of engaging with each other. Face-value pro-police trolls antagonizing protest sympathizers, those same sympathizers wanting to doxx the antagonizers, and both sides engaging in surveillance practices to police social norms and 'appropriate' political positions. All of this enabled by the affordances of digital media, especially searchability and accessibility. Those affordances though did allow for the hybrid sense of space in the protests, especially facilitated by the mobile technologies present in the protests. Mobile technologies are the fundamental infrastructure necessary for the subversion of

surveillance in these spaces as they are the implied given. People must be present in these space, must be broadcasting their location, and therefore traceable. That happens through the locative functions of mobile devices now. Mobile technology becomes the way to surveil and the way to subvert said surveillance. They are the underlying logical lynchpin for both actives to occur.

Ambivalent Hybrid Resistance at Standing Rock

The Standing Rock protest bring the intersection of hybridity and mobilities to forefront. The physical protesting was augmented by digital calls to activism to join in, as well as the Facebook sign-in meme and its subsequent activity. The distinction between physical and digital space further collapsed due to the motivations of the various parties involved in the meme. What emerged then from the Standing Rock protests was an interesting collapse of space(s). The affordances and ubiquity of Wi-Fi/data enabled mobile devices, coupled with the prevalence of individuals connected to the internet lead to the creation of hybrid spaces. As de Souza e Silva (2006) argues hybrid spaces are the blurring of digital spaces and culture with physical, social spaces through the use of mobile technologies. The proliferation of mobile technologies has helped make much of materiality a potential hybrid space. Interestingly this notion of hybrid space bears some similarity with Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of la mezcla, the blurring distinctions between spaces that are American and Mexican, and the growing invisibility of these borders to those who grow up in that blurred space (1987). The hybrid spaces we inhabit today, and their growing normalcy has become normalized and invisible in their proliferation. The question then to ask, especially with the blurring of digital and physical protest spaces, is how does hybridity enable individuals to move or not move in particular spaces. Anzaldúa's text is also a reminder to the ways that nonhegemonic identities have more difficulty moving through space(s). This question of movement and mooring is central to the new mobilities paradigm (Adey, 2006; Sheller and Urry, 2006). As Cresswell (2010) notes, movement is inherently political, and we must think through an individual's or group's ability (or inability) to move through a space. de Souza e Silva and Sheller (2015) and Sheller and Urry (2016) highlight the rising interest in interdisciplinary

literature for examining how mobile devices affect individuals' ability to navigate and negotiate space. One's ability to safely move through space, the speed which one moves from space to space, and under what pretense that movement (or lack) occurs matters greatly as well (Cresswell, 2010; Frith, 2012; Hannam, Sheller, and Urry, 2006; Mbembé, and Meintjes, 2003; Sheller, 2016).

Police were using social media (digital) to monitor conditions on the ground (physical). The explicit purposes of the meme by those who utilized it was to blur, confuse, and jam the ability of police to know who was physically present at the protest and to overburden the system with a multitude of new profiles to surveille. So, using the digital to undermine the physical monitoring of the digital movement of individuals in a physical place. This back-forth connection and blurring of digital-physical highlights how hybridized the space at Standing Rock was at the height of the protests. The protesters operated in a space that was made to not be their turf, and were the other, and utilized available tactics to them based on the capabilities they were afforded (de Certeau, 2008). This othered position allowed them to subversively utilize social media memes and hybrid space as a way to jam the strategies of police and state power. This then ties back to the use of mobile and digital media to engage in activism. The protesters were engaging in tactical media use (re: the thin tactical media uses envisioned in de Certeau, Gordon and Baldwin-Philippi, Garcia and Lovink, and Lievrouw) to disrupt asymmetrical power structures.

How protesters were able to move through the space at Standing Rock was mediated by state control and surveillance of activities. This mediation effectively allowed state agents to move more safely in comparison as well as become agents that controlled the protesters ability to live and move, reminding us once again that control over space means control over bodies. There essentially were different classes of citizens based around the movement of bodies within the space. The police and state agents had freer movements with no worry of restriction, while protesters and members of the various tribes were othered and restricted. This, though, opened-up the opportunity to subvert the control of space through tactically inverting notions of hybrid space and mobility. The Standing Rock Protest that formed thereafter falls nicely into the

theoretical and practical considerations of hybrid space, mobility, and locality. The Facebook check-in meme was based on the locative function of Facebook and its app, and sought to confuse who was actually in person at the event to throw police surveillance ideally making the physical protesters safer.

What is distinctly unclear, and where ambivalence once again emerges, is if the memetic check-in actually enabled protesters to navigate and experience the physical protest location in a safer way. As stated earlier, the Indigenous American activist groups and protesters who were present (specifically the Sacred Stone Camp, and Kandi Mossett a leading Ingenious Peoples activist present at the protest, respectively) were thankful for the solidarity that the mass sign of support showed, but said that it did not make the material conditions safer or successfully jam the efforts of the police to monitor the protests (Meyer and Waddell, 2016; Garfield, 2016). Law enforcement can engage in other means of monitoring social media through software such as Geofeedia, which was mentioned on the North Dakota state's website as a social media tool at the time of the protests (Meyer and Waddell, 2016). If the effectiveness of the Facebook check-in was truly to deter/confuse police surveillance is in question, can the meme be said to have aided the mobility of physical protesters or that the meme lived up to its tactical framing? This is another moment of ambivalence. A safer mobility was not necessarily achieved, yet meaningful attention was created. Representatives of the Indigenous American groups expressed gratefulness for the solidarity, that it raised their spirits, and emboldened them. Yet we saw weeks later even with the amplified attention brought on by the virality of the meme, police still used violence when clashing with protesters evident in the gruesome injury that protester Sophia Wilansky received during those violent clashes.

A pressing question that emerges from this research, and one I gestured towards earlier in this discussion, is can this messy and potentially productive use of hybrid spaces be used to legitimately subvert and contest the surveillance from state and harmful actors? This question is the subject of the dissertation project that I am beginning. While I feel the scope of such a question has the potential to be lengthy, requiring more research and theorization, I believe we can begin to see its potentiality from

this analysis. The dissemination of hybrid spaces has hyper accelerated in the last half decade with the diffusion of smart and locative devices worldwide. No more is it just small art collectives intervening into the blurring of space through mobile games (Farman, 2013), or the creation of art (Hjorth, 2015), but also in fully commodified applications through augmented reality apps such as Pokémon Go! and social networks (de Souza e Silva, 2017; Hjorth, and Richardson, 2017). Hybrid space has become somewhat of a common-place mode of interacting with both the physical and digital world around.

This common-placeness, coupled with the creative potentialities it entails and the ways that protesters must be creative to combat state power and oppression a la de Certeau (2008), could lead to productive methods of resistance for protesters and oppressed peoples. Technology and technologically mediated spaces have bugs and exploits (Galloway and Thacker, 2013), jamming surveillance through confusing GPS and location tracking software through properly leveraging hybrid space could be one of the exploits of those types of technological arrangements and technological spaces. This does not just have to be soley on Facebook. Platforms which utilize GPS and locational aware smart sensors can also be sites of engaging in this kind of subversive practice. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat all have location tracking/revealing features embedded either as a function of the platform for users or through types of data analysis (Twitter and location hashtags as well as their locational features) and are spaces that surveilling occurs. Attempting to spoof locations or attempting to overwhelm both manual surveillance and data scraping could be effectively utilized by oppositional groups and individuals. This is perhaps one of the potential resistance practices others could adopt in the ever-shifting dialectic of surveillance and countersurveillance resistance practices (Marx, 2003). The proliferations of location aware media and interfaces along with hybrid space(s) could serve as an exploit to the digital surveilling technologies and systems due to the incongruity that arises between digital spaces and physical, social spaces.

Important to note though, arriving at the ambivalence of the situation once more, is that state powers and economic interests (Google, other technology firms, etc.) are constantly devising alternatives and ways

around these types of bugs and exploits, as well as being the entities that control/own the various platforms that protesters use. Protest groups must be savvy of the types of technologies and software that state institutions are using to properly attempt to jam surveillance. Likewise, the goals that such tactics might have must be put in alignment with said knowledge and the context of the perceived surveillance. As previously mentioned, even the results in this case are somewhat unclear and ambivalent. For protesters to make good use of the subversive potential of inverting and playing with hybrid space, the tactics they engage in must be defined and have relationally situated goals.

Conclusion

The need to engage in tactics of resistance in ever diffusing hybrid spaces becomes the main takeaway from this article for use in resistance studies and those on the ground engaging in the praxis of resistance. As stated earlier I believe this needs further theorization, and I intend to do so in my dissertation and further research. We must examine and think through a particular space of resistance in terms of the arrangements of social practices, discursive elements, and the material construction/make-up of that space. How the digital is mapped unto the physical and then understood and deployed by both humans and non-humans (algorithms, databases, etc.) offers a potential exploit for resisters to take advantage of. Both humans and non-humans tire, they degrade, they are imperfect, they break, they are fragile. Likewise, the digital does not map perfectly unto the physical; there is the potential for incongruities. Using numbers to overwhelm and burden systems, as was attempted by the protesters and allies at Standing Rock, may cause momentary breakdowns in the physical infrastructures of surveillance and control (human eyes, servers, etc.). It is my belief that protesters, scholars of resistance studies and digital media broadly, can look for these incongruities and potential breakdowns in given protest spaces as a road into how surveillance might be countered and subverted in those blow-by-blow moments de Certeau described. That the potential fragility of surveillance elements coupled with technical knowledge, means of subversion (technology, plans, people, etc.), and knowledge of how the protest space is arranged can lead to gains in the ever-persistent dialectic of surveillance and countersurveillance

resistance practices. This case shows that those breakdowns and fragilities are possible and available but remain still quite an ambivalent opening.

Ambivalence defined the actions and interactions during the #noDAPL protests. Russian trolls supporting the protesters by creating pro-Indigenous American memes to destabilize democracy (Timmberg and Room, 2018), #noDAPL activists attempting to doxx pipeline supporters, a young girl who was injured during clashes with police being portrayed both as martyr and saboteur, the line between digital and physical space blurring, and the general coverage by the mainstream news that failed to draw conclusions due the confusion and volume of narrative/counter narrative in the social media sphere. All of these different actions and occurrences express the 'both, on both sides' definition of ambivalence that Phillips and Milner use. While legitimate and meaningful political activism was fostered by the Facebook check-in meme, it did not successfully live up to its purpose of jamming police surveillance of the physical protest sites. Nor did it completely facilitate the creation of a safer physical space in which protesters could move. While it amplified the attention for the protests more broadly, that amplification lead to the ambivalent effects of antagonistic interactions between sympathizers and trolls who engaged in problematic surveillance of each other. All the while Russian trolling efforts that had been used to help Donald Trump get elected were creating social media memes in support of the protests which could undermine Trump's economic connection to the pipeline. All to harm democracy. As Milner and Phillips (2016) say 'Ambivalence all the way down. ¯_(ツ)_/¯'[3] (p. 211). While this ambivalence does not eliminate the ability to engage in meaningful mobile and digital activism nor does it obscure the potential that leveraging hybrid space for political protest and resistance it offers, it certainly makes everything a bit trickier, much messier, and deeply complicated. Discerning intentions, navigating a maze of trolls whose goals may range from lolz to undermining American democratic institutions, activists surveilling and doxxing people as they try to fight surveillance; all of this complicates the matter. What I can say is the Facebook check-in meme was used in a meaningful activistic way in an

[3] This is the 'shruggie' emoticon, generally conferring the meaning of who knows, or who cares.

attempt increase the safety of protesters mobilizing on the ground and raise awareness. Was it truly successful? Well, both on both sides.

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