Lay person summary

Advances in information and communication technology have changed the way social movements interact with individuals in society. Social Movement Organizations such as the ACLU, Greenpeace, or the Electronic Frontiers Foundation are now better able to recruit, organize, and motivate individuals through interaction online. Understanding how social movements engage with the public online will broaden our understanding of the ways in which social movements shape social life and public policy.

Social scientists studying collective action have developed a concept referred to as frame alignment to describe the ways in which social movement organizations bring the beliefs of individuals into concordance with the beliefs of social movements. It is possible to examine the impact of frame alignment activates on online networks by using computer programs which can determine the attitude a network participant has towards the goals of a social movement.

Online communities which are dedicated to the discussion of political and social issues, such as those found on tumblr, blogspot, and reddit, represent an ideal area for research on social movements. The discussion which occurs on these public networks can be examined automatically, in very high volumes and analyzed with the aid of computer programs. Using computer aided research techniques will allow us to apply research to larger populations which will increase our understanding of the way social movement interact with the public.