ABSTRACT

The Rhetorical Construction of Hacktivism: Analyzing the Anonymous Care Package

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This thesis uncovers the ways in which Anonymous, a non-hierarchical, decentralized online collective, maintains and alters the notion of hacktivism to recruit new participants and alter public perception. I employ a critical rhetorical lens to an Anonymous-produced and –disseminated artifact, the Anonymous Care Package, a collection of digital how-to files. After situating Anonymous within the broader narrative of hacking and activism, this thesis demonstrates how the Care Package can be used to constitute a hacktivist identity. Further, by extending hacktivism from its purely technological roots to a larger audience, the Anonymous Care Package lowers the barrier for participation and invites action on behalf of would-be members. Together, the contents of the Care Package help constitute an identity for Anonymous hacktivists who are then encouraged to take action as cyberactivists.

The Rhetorical Construction of Hacktivism: Analyzing the
Anonymous Care Package

by

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A Thesis

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

As social media changes the online landscape, the Internet is becoming a political battleground, marshaling and galvanizing ever more individuals to participate in various forms of social activism. More specifically, digital and social media websites facilitate increased engagement in politics and social movements in unique ways. Activism in the digital sphere offers new opportunities for individuals to air their grievances and push against powerful institutions. For instance, while youth are not as likely to engage in traditional forms of civic engagement as their older counterparts, these generations are politically active in the digital sphere. As young people "claim new technologies as their own," they are harnessing the revolutionary potential of the Internet.[1] Further, as web access spreads to more and more people across the globe, even digital neophytes use technology to aid protest.[2] This thesis seeks to understand the rhetoric of one online group and how it has employed the medium of the Internet to gain credibility, recruit members, and achieve goals.

Anonymous is an online group that has developed an unusual presence on the Internet. Structurally inchoate, fluid, multi-faceted, and (with good reason) misunderstood, Anonymous has fashioned a new approach to online civic engagement. As this thesis will suggest, by crafting together bits and pieces of more traditional social movement tactics and adapting them to the digital age, Anonymous has developed its prankster tactics into a formidable social movement. Whether intentional or not, in so

doing, the group has constructed an identity for itself and its members as a social movement determined to militate against "the system." Anonymous routinely describes itself as a justice-seeking organization, complete with underground radio stations, vigilante justice teams, and media or propaganda teams. Simultaneously, Anonymous strategically operates collectively by constantly developing technology and new routes to engage in protests. Despite a lack of structure and minimal funding, over the last ten years, Anonymous has demonstrated its ability to gather a variety of supporters, galvanize them, and direct action towards military, political, and corporate powerhouses.[3]

This thesis will argue that Anonymous rhetorically creates a hacktivist identity in order to constitute its audience as a collective, unified social movement. Media scholar Paul A. Taylor writes that hacktivists appropriate technology towards "more reflexive ends."[4] The term hacktivism combines the words hacker, when tech-savvy individuals break into different software and hardware systems, with activism. Borrowing some tactics from earlier hackers, hacktivists use electronic media to advance human rights such as the freedom of speech and the free circulation of information.[5] Analyzing Anonymous-issued artifacts such as the Anonymous Care Package, available from the YourAnonNews tumblr, I attend to how Anonymous crafts an identity through a rhetoric of hacktivism, despite its diverse membership and decentralized leadership. Attending to the rhetorical features of the Anonymous Care Package, this thesis analyzes the ways in which Anonymous uses the notion of hacktivism to craft its identity. For Anonymous, hacktivism is not simply for the technological elite but may be enacted by the digital neophyte. In deploying its own version of hacktivism, Anonymous has devised a strategy that enables the collective to respond flexibly to threats over the Internet, effectively

harnessing the power of the masses in digital form. Indeed, the group uses their own vision of hacktivism to persuade people to join their ranks, compel members to self-identify as hacktivists, and positively alter public perception through hacktivist performances. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to unpack hacktivism as a key term that identifies, locates, and describes the rhetorical implications of the identity-forming rhetoric of Anonymous.

In this chapter, I will offer an introductory explanation of Anonymous, a justification of my study, a discussion of my method, and an overview of the remaining chapters. I begin by locating the current conceptualization of Anonymous in a brief historical context. After a quick description of the collective's roots and major accomplishments, I describe the import of studying Anonymous, and more particularly, the Anonymous Care Package. Next, I justify the need for this study and then turn my attention to the guiding research questions and the methodology I will employ. I conclude by outlining the remaining chapters.

History of Anonymous

Anonymous produces and disseminates much of its rhetoric on the Internet. As such, its hacktivist identity is articulated through digital spaces. Its online global niches affect the way its members receive information, interact with one another, and execute missions. Indeed, the collective recognizes that the success of any given protest depends upon how well Anonymous can disseminate information. Given this, the group purposefully occupies digital public enclaves where digital media is easily shared and re-shared. To carry out its goals, Anonymous uses Internet message exchanges such as instant relay chats (IRC), a method of group communication in virtual rooms. The

collective also employs popular media sharing sites such as Twitter, a social media site wherein users post messages of 140 characters or less, and Tumblr, another social media site for users to post online and creative content. To understand the rhetorical construction of Anonymous' identity, one must first consider the spaces where collective hiveminds like Anonymous can form and flourish and the history that gave rise to these locales.

In the study of these digital public enclaves the critic is necessarily limited by available resources. Scholars have only begun to document the historical development of online protest movements. Tracing Anonymous' evolution over the years remains an incomplete task for academics. Therefore, the critic must rely, to some extent, on Internet folklore, a self-reflexive and nostalgic form of documenting Internet history. According to members, the group began in what some might consider the dregs of the Internet. In particular, Anonymous emerged on 4chan, a bulletin board where online users post comments and images. Online niches such as 4chan often provide a high degree of anonymity that encourages a vague sense of anarchy where anything goes. Because of its anonymity, image boards such as 4chan, especially its sub-section /b/ (which stands for random), became a place where individuals could express themselves without fear of repercussion.[6] In this sense, these imageboards and forums created a space of intellectual anarchy, with ideas and imagination running unbridled. Oftentimes, this freedom was not as much intellectual as it was chaotic. Many Anonymous members used the website to harass other users. These imageboard users benefitted from the anonymity of the board. It was here that the idea of Anonymous began.

Anonymous emerged from 4chan and other image boards.[7] Participants on this

image board would organize massive pranks called "raids," by suggesting an action for

the larger 4chan community. The success of such raids was dependent upon whether

other 4chan users were interested in that particular action. If those anonymous posters

were especially persuasive, the raids would grow in size and possibly in scope. If other

posters were not interested in the raid, the original post(s) would be pushed farther down

the image board until it was no longer viewable. Some early Anons, shorthand for people

who identify as Anonymous, participated in raids on 4chan.[8] Indeed, 4chan still serves as

an organizing website for Anonymous.

Today, Anonymous uses online tools to "rally the infantry" towards action.[9]

Anons produce manifestos and share them widely on social media websites. Internet

Relay Chat, a web-based instant messenger, also serves as a location for participants to

discuss future targets and debate the merits of a mission or "operation." Anthropologist

Gabriella Coleman notes that Anons plan and discuss targets through collaborative

writing software. In this sense, Anonymous functions as a "do-ocracy" where everyone

pitches in, suggests ideas, debates them, and participates as they see fit.[10] However, it is

very likely that some Anons have more influence than others by way of skill or

persuasion. These Anons may offer direction for action, if not "leadership" per se. In

this sense, the formation of Anonymous is entirely dependent on those who carry out the

mission.

Significantly, Anonymous has moved from pranking missions to overtly political

actions. Indeed, in early 2008 Anonymous transitioned from relative Internet obscurity to

a globally known phenomenon by organizing against political targets. Anons chose

targets for a variety of reasons. For example, the group railed against the Church of Scientology. Anonymous' move to more visible, political targets was not always popular with the original members from 4chan. However, it did substantially increase its notoriety. After the Church of Scientology removed a promotional video by actor and famous scientologist Tom Cruise from video hosting site YouTube, Anonymous organized a dual strike on the Church's online presence and physical locations. Anons made trouble for the Church of Scientology by faxing black pages to the Church to waste expensive ink. Scientologists also received dozens of unwanted pizzas delivered to various church locations. In addition, Anons prank-called Scientology call centers. These pranks, tactics that were often attributed to 4chan communities, were likely meant to inflict a sense of chaos. Actions in this instance may not be politically motivated but instead motivated by humor.

Other actions were more overtly political in nature. A more activist-identified section of Anonymous was particularly concerned with freedom of speech and most especially with protecting the open nature of the Internet. Those fighting for an open Internet viewed the Church's removal of the video as an act of blatant censorship. Later, another distinct set of protesters suggested that any of the Church's positive attributes were tainted by a history of misinformation, greed, and the coercion of its followers. These protesters may or may not have considered themselves Anonymous, but they participated in Anonymous-sponsored activities. Some of the Anons hacked online websites while others took to the streets, marching in protest against the Church.[11]

The collective's activities gained momentum and international attention as thousands of participants from as many as forty-two countries aided the cause by

planning and orchestrating Project Chanology online and in real life.[12] Media outlets

called Anonymous "a shadowy Internet group…of hackers"[13] while the Church of

Scientology released public statements deeming the actors as "cyber-terrorists" and

religious bigots.[14] Taking strategic advantage of the press, Anonymous released video

"calls to action" and statements in defense of its methodology and tactics. Interest grew,

and Anonymous began to realize its increasing level of collective power—a realization

that would prompt future action against *Forbes* top ten corporations and even state actors.

The Church of Scientology would serve as a catalyst for Anonymous; the actions of the

group would later be deemed hacktivism.

After Project Chanology ceased its official operations, Anonymous had the tools

and experience available to alert individuals to a specific issue, convince them of its

importance, and offer a solution. The year 2010 saw whistleblower Julian Assange come

under fire for sharing private and high-level messages of several diplomats and

government entities. Anonymous' "Operation: Payback" targeted the websites of

companies who stopped services to Assange in the midst of the controversy.[15] The

websites of Mastercard, Paypal, Visa, and others were taken offline by Distributed Denial

of Service attacks (or DDOS attacks, similar to "flooding" a website, network, or

computer with information, taking it offline and suspending its services) in conjunction

with the operation.[16] In 2011, the collective targeted those who tried to stymie (often

illegal) file sharing, supporting media-sharing sites such as Pirate Bay and Megaupload.

Anonymous activists assisted these media sharing sites by hacking the websites and

internal files of those agencies trying to stop such services, including United States

Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as well as the Recording

Industry Association of America and the Motion Picture Association. Later in the year, Anonymous supported dissenters in the Arab Spring with various operations that shut down the websites of dictators and that broadcast information about violence in the region throughout the world. Anonymous also became intimately involved in the #Occupy movement, participating in physical and online demonstrations as well as in organizing and planning efforts. In these protests, Anonymous demonstrated the tactics needed to flag the attention of powerful state and non-state actors and built experience in organizing people to lead massive online protests.

Anonymous formulates its strategies and fashions its rhetorical identity via digital counter-public enclaves. Counter-public enclaves, according to rhetorical scholar Karma Chávez, are protected spaces where "activist[s] interpret external rhetorical messages" about themselves and/or "invent rhetorical strategies to publicly challenge oppressive rhetoric or to create new imaginaries" for the collective.[17] For Anonymous, these enclaves are routinely digital spaces with varying levels of sophistication and protection. These enclaves are notable for their ease of access as well as their unique ability to widely share information at a rapid rate. Anonymous grew, quite literally out of a community of anonymity on 4chan's random image board, /b. Through these counter-public enclaves, the collective began to gain momentum and experience after carrying out missions. Project Chanology, for instance, was an operational and organizational success. With this mission complete, Anonymous could apply its force and experience with more success. Anonymous turned its collective power to increasingly political and powerful targets. Surprisingly, these formidable targets were forced to respond to Anonymous' mass power via punitive measures, securing their digital presence or

acquiescing to the collective's requests.[18] Providing a brief history of Anonymous

informs a rhetorical analysis of the collective's hacktivist rhetoric and its relationship to

identity formation.

Situating the Anonymous Care Package within a larger history of Anonymous

helps to uncover the evolution of the collective. For instance, 4chan helped to create a

loosely associated collective that evolved into Anonymous in the present day. This

image board, where anyone could post whatever he or she wanted, required an adamant

affirmation of the freedom of speech, a value that is featured prominently in the Care

Package. In addition, 4chan and other image boards encouraged a sense of community, a

location where individuals would rally around an action and then act in concert.

Anonymous' hacktivist rhetoric similarly requires the formation and then mobilization of

a community in order to locate an issue and develop a response. Despite constant change

in the collective, locating Anonymous' action in relation to its early configurations

reveals characteristics that are maintained over time.

In addition, this thesis treats the Anonymous Care Package as representative of a

snapshot in time of the larger movement. Anonymous is not a uniform collective by

almost any measure. Factions not only exist but also advance arguments about what

Anonymous is or what it ought to be. Those who think Anonymous should maintain its

prankster roots are often at odds with the hacktivist-identified section of the collective.[19]

However, there is an apparent evolution from Anonymous as simply pranksters to

activists who view the Internet as more serious business. Project Chanology served as a

pivot point, when "thousands of people who had never considered themselves

Anonymous" became those who "saw acting as Anonymous—taking up the iconography,

joining the op[eration]—as a path to empowerment."[20] Thus, a study of Anonymous'

hacktivist identity must take into account its evolution over time.

Justification and Research Questions

This thesis seeks to be a productive and useful endeavor for the field of

communication and more specifically, the study of rhetoric. Because of this project's

timely subject matter, there is unfortunately little academic scholarship on Anonymous.

Although the organization has existed for roughly a decade, the current configuration of

Anonymous is a recent phenomenon. Journalists, academics, and politicians have only

begun exploring the depths of the collective. Thus, my desire to contribute to the

rhetorical study of Anonymous is amplified by relative absence of inquiry on this

important social movement. My analysis of the Anonymous Care Package will engage

several different facets of Anonymous' tactics of identity construction, including those

aspects of identity construction that encourage participation from would be-members. I

engage the identity constituted by Anonymous by analyzing the rhetoric of the

Anonymous Care Package.

I focus on rhetorical identity construction in order to consider how online

movements congeal as a collective when members remain diffuse. While there is

exceptional rhetorical criticism done on both coalitional politics in social movements and

single-issue protest, Anonymous' targets do not easily define the collective because at

any one time, goals and actions may change based on the push and pull of members.

Therefore, instead of defining Anonymous by its mission or those it agitates against, this

thesis describes the ways the rhetoric of hacktivism promotes a collective identity while

providing cohesion in an otherwise decentralized movement. This thesis seeks to situate

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Anonymous within movement studies while simultaneously recognizing its complexity

and diverse membership—viewing this collective through any other lens may dismiss its

important actions as too inchoate to have value.

Anonymous has become a major player in domestic and international politics

rather than just a group of online jokesters. Given this substantial influence, the group

deserves scholarly attention. Parmy Olson, journalist for *Forbes* and author of the most

comprehensive book on Anonymous, argues that despite efforts to deny its capacity to

create change, "Anonymous is still one of the most prevalent, powerful and decentralized

movements out there."[21] The collective's operational resume is awe-inspiring enough to

prompt governments to respond with defensive security-based rhetoric and swift punitive

action against any member they can. Anonymous seems to wield economic power given

that private companies fortify their online presence against attacks, often times at great

financial cost. In addition, Anonymous rhetoric has become a rallying point for

thousands of people worldwide. These discursive acts create a specter of perceived

power, which is often enough to motivate the collective's targets to respond in ways

Anonymous desires even if no actual hacking is done. Anonymous has gained, at the

very least, the perception of power and the specter of legitimacy.

In addition to its increasing political influence, Anonymous has mobilized people

in new and interesting ways that deserve further investigation. I will argue that by

extending hacktivism to everyday online practices, more individuals are able to become

involved in its actions. Indeed, Anonymous has amassed a large following which ebbs

and flows from dozens of people to thousands, and its insistence on representing so many

diverse people is worth investigation. Reuters has assigned Anonymous the role of

megaphone of the Internet, speaking on behalf of and in defense of the rights of all of cyberspace.[22] Indeed, the collective claims to speak for a large cross-section of people in all parts of the world.[23] Moreover, many individual Anons operate under the banner of Anonymous, instead of their own identity.[24] Anonymous' rhetorical construction of hacktivism functions as a tool with which to aggregate disparate individuals into a cohesive, collective identity.

Of particular interest to rhetorical scholars is how Anonymous rallies diverse members from around the globe. Each mission typically includes thousands of individuals working in sync for one common goal. Still, Anonymous claims to be too complex to have any one agenda. Nevertheless, the group often positions itself and its members as revolutionaries by using rhetoric that suggests its hacking missions are politically charged. In this way, the collective rhetorically harnesses the power of the digital masses by bringing them under an umbrella of a hacktivist identity. After calling together various participants, Anonymous then can mobilize them under the banner of protest despite lacking any formal charter or static mission. The ways in which Anonymous fights against injustice or even how they define injustice are a secondary concern to creating a large, expansive collective of similar-minded social actors. Anonymous, for its part, ensures that its rhetoric reflects its collective principles: it claims to speak "with one voice."[25] For the purpose of this thesis, it is important not only to listen to that voice, but to consider the ways Anonymous rhetorically extends that voice to a larger group of people.

Anonymous' tactical moves help to shape the very identity which, in turn, affects the choices participants and governments make in response to real or perceived threats.

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In this way, the rhetorical choices that Anonymous makes to represent the group simultaneously fashions the group's identity. In much the same way as rhetorical scholar Maurice Charland wrote of the *Peuple Québécois*, Anonymous uses rhetoric to constitute a people.[26] Indeed, Anonymous' attempt to recruit people to their movement necessitates those individuals then act to sustain the movement and the collective's own ideology. Anonymous often attempts to motivate individuals to adopt its principles in its recruitment tactics. Anonymous does so by labeling simple, technologically uncomplicated tasks as hacktivism in the recruitment documents of the Anonymous Care Package. Therefore, much of its recruitment rhetoric promises potential members a place in an online revolution against oppressive institutions. As Anonymous rhetorically situates its own identity, it simultaneously fashions a political and ideological agenda for its missions and membership. This rhetorical positioning implies action not only on behalf of the collective, but also for the individuals who Anonymous seeks to bring into the fold.

My main research questions, then, dig deep into the rhetorical underpinnings of Anonymous' hacktivist identity. I plan to study Anonymous through the Anonymous Care Package, a digital grouping of files meant to attract new members and coach them through digital activism. As I engage these texts, I ask several questions. What digital and textual rhetorical tactics does Anonymous use to constitute its identity? What is the identity sold to potential members via the Care Package? What force does that identity have upon different audiences, most notably, new members? How is the notion of hacktivism constructed through Anonymous' rhetorical justifications in the Care Package? Further, if Anonymous is a protest movement, what is its cause (or causes)

espoused in the Care Package and how does this shape its identity? Similarly, if Anonymous' diffusion of information is intended for multiple and diverse audiences, how do shared spaces on the Internet change the way its rhetoric operates? Finally, I am interested in uncovering how the intended audience modifies the identity-forming rhetoric of Anonymous. Is there a mutual reflexivity between Anonymous and its audience?

Method

This thesis seeks to analyze the rhetorical functions of Anonymous' hacktivism in order to understand how it creates an identity for its audiences. In doing so, I call upon social movement theory to inform my scholarship. In particular, I aim to answer James R. Andrews and David Zarefsky's call to place any rhetorical study of a movement within a larger historical context rather than applying a monolithic theory of rhetorical movement to an object of inquiry. As such, chapter three provides analysis on how Anonymous maintains and adjusts understandings of hacktivism to recruit members and foster a positive public image. To complete this task, I situate the Anonymous Care Package within the historical and lexical development of hacking and hacktivism. Contextualizing Anonymous within a larger historical discussion on the acceptability of hacktivism provides a deeper level of nuance than if I simply applied a singular communicative theory.

To better understand Anonymous' protest rhetoric, I will describe the ways in which Anonymous discursively constructs—and then legitimizes—its own organization for the purpose of gaining power. In particular, I will attend to the Anonymous Care Package in the analysis chapter. I do so because this text is illuminative of identity-

construction because its contents identify oppositional forces, offer locations for hacktivist action, and then mark a cohesive yet malleable hacktivist identity for possible participants. I attend to the following tactics of hacktivism present in this Care Package: branding and recirculation of icons, keeping oneself and others safe in the digital sphere, and organizing movements and responding to threats. Then, I illustrate how these tactics collectively form a notion of hacktivism where the everyday citizen can participate, thus extending the notion of hacktivism from a purely technological enterprise to a more wide-reaching phenomenon.

The Anonymous Care Package presents a variety of rhetorical artifacts for study. There are written texts, aural artifacts, and visual media. Thus, I plan on employing a multiplicity of rhetorical criticism methods to tackle the diverse texts produced by Anonymous. For the purposes of criticism, I divide the Anonymous Care Package into three sections: branding tools, tools for digital dissent, and materials to aid in physical protest. Branding tools are a series of Anonymous-produced artwork referencing icons associated with the collective. In addition to the Guy Fawkes mask that has become synonymous with Anonymous, other visual images include depictions of a headless man in a business suit. Tools for digital dissent provide a series of manuals and Internet applications to keep users safe online. These guidelines are meant for the technological lay person and are clearly written for the non-hacker in both language and format. In addition, as a primer for a new audience, the Care Package includes the "Declaration of the Independence of Cyber Space," a manifesto that "on behalf of the future" rejects the cultural organizing principles of the "Governments of the Industrial World." Next, the taking it to the street section of the Care Package offers a set of practical tools for

organizing protest and responding to repression online. Guides are available for setting up an action team in the digital sphere as well as how to treat injuries in the field. The Anonymous Care Package's diverse contents serve to constitute a hacktivist identity for potential members and external, oppositional forces.

Of course, my method of analysis is informed by those scholars who illustrate how movements construct identity through rhetorical discourse and actions. While a more complete treatment of such scholarship appears in chapter two, a brief discussion is warranted here. First, any analysis of identity is indebted to Richard B. Gregg's foundational work on the "ego-function" of protest.[27] His argument that protest rhetoric functions beyond mere message transmission and instead as discourse to establish a sense of self serves as the basis for my analysis on Anonymous. The Anonymous Care Package could simply be read as a set of texts thrown together to transmit messages to an audience. However, they also construct meaning, especially in relationship to community and identity.

Second, Michael Calvin McGee's essay "In Search of 'The People:' A Rhetorical Alternative," reconceptualizes movements as a phenomenon that occurs when people put their "collective faith in a rhetorical vision."[28] For McGee, the audience was not a given static conception, but rather constructed by rhetors. Thus, movement scholars ought to consider the ways "the people" are formed and sustained by rhetoric. Given McGee's insights, I hope to describe the ways in which hacktivism functions as a collective rhetorical vision for Anonymous. Anonymous is an online movement inasmuch as the Anonymous Care Package prompts would-be members to put their "collective faith" in the hacktivist rhetorical vision. Therefore, I follow McGee's prompt by striving to

understand how participants are constructed through the lens of hacktivism in the Care Package.

Finally, Maurice Charland's essay on the *Peuple Québécois* is of great import to this scholarship. I apply his theory of constitutive rhetoric to the Anonymous Care Package. I suggest that the Care Package invites the audience to identify as members of the collective who adopt its vision of hacktivism. Indeed, drawing on the scholarship of Kenneth Burke, Charland's essay is exemplary in its description of the ideological implications of constitutive rhetoric, namely that it compels both identification and action. As Charland notes, "persuasive discourse requires a subject-as-audience who is already constituted with an identity and within an ideology." My analysis employs this premise to suggest that the Care Package helps to constitute a hacktivist identity and then invites would-be hacktivists to act against perceived repression.

Anonymous' rhetorical attempts at inclusivity make this counter-public enclave an ideal location to employ the methodology of constitutive rhetoric. Anonymous attempts to persuade various actors—the state, potential members, and the public. Thus, this study must seek to understand the ways in which Anonymous creates an identity through hacktivism and then situates that identity with and against these various audiences. Here, I put my work in direct communication with those scholars who call upon rhetoricians to remember the productive nature of discourse itself. Indeed, it is through McGee and Charland that I anticipate theorizing the constitution of Anonymous' audiences as a "people" constructed, mediated, and negotiated through the rhetoric of hacktivism.

However, hacktivism is not a monolithic entity, nor is it uniformly created across all levels of discourse. My analysis of Anonymous is complicated by its vast diversity in membership and mission. Anonymous is unlike other social movements because it is not guided by a singular ideology. Despite arguing that hacktivism is a unifying factor, there is considerable diversity of opinion amongst the collective's many participants. Instead of attempting to define all of Anonymous characteristically, I focus on the ways that the collective offers social cohesion of an otherwise disparate movement through negotiation of the term hacktivism. Media and communication scholar Peter Dahlgren argues that in the age of the Internet, traditional notions of ideology give way to "shared normative perspectives on particular issues."[29] Anonymous' diverse membership means there is tension between supporting diverse perspectives and upholding a sense of togetherness in social movements. However, as Charland writes, "the ideological 'trick' of identity rhetoric is that it presents that which is most rhetorical, the existence of a *peuple*, or of a subject, as extrarhetorical."[30] Thus, interrogating the relationship between Anonymous rhetoric and its construction of group identity is inherently an ideological task, one that requires my work to view Anonymous from multiple critical perspectives. Instead of "merely explaining that [organizations] exist," I hope to unlock the communicative power of Anonymous' messages by "conceptualizing communication as the production (vs. merely the expression) of meaning," using a diverse critical rhetorical toolbox to understand the ideological underpinnings of hacktivism.[31]

The methodological approach to Anonymous' social protest rhetoric is complicated by the fluidity of members and mission as well as the incredibly complex relationships within the collective. Although it has led well-organized missions as an

aggregate, Anonymous eschews the organizational labels that a traditional social movement strives to create and publicize. A letter penned from Anonymous in response to a mother whose Anonymous-member son was arrested states, "We're not a group. Stop thinking of us as such."[32] This thesis will use the terms "group" and "collective" to describe Anonymous for clarity purposes. However, Anon members suggest that we conceptualize the collective like a flock of birds.[33] It are collective inasmuch as members move together toward a common goal (say, flying South for the winter or attacking Syrian websites), but members are individuals in that, at any time, they could disassociate themselves from the group. The birds move together for many reasons, one of which is because there is safety in numbers. The formation of the birds is variable, but always recognizable to spectators on the ground. And at any time, birds may leave, return, or join. The flock continues on, made up of many individual birds conceptually recognizable in concert by the design and formation of their activity. Yet this analogy does not provide a complete picture of Anonymous. Although the group is made up of many activists (and non-activists) with many political views, a clear group-identity is constructed through rhetoric that binds Anonymous together, influencing its "strategies, tactics and organizational forms" in a social movement for justice.[34]

In sum, the Anonymous Care Package is a discrete text containing multiple artifacts. Because of the diverse nature of the texts (both visual and written discourse), my approach will require criticism at the visual and textual level. Using Gregg, McGee, and especially Charland as guides, I will seek out the ways in which Anonymous simultaneously constructs and calls upon audiences. Then, I will attempt to describe the

ways in which the circulation of this Care Package recruits new members, encourages action, and legitimates missions. What follows is a brief outline of my thesis chapters.

Outline of Chapters

My thesis will continue with three additional chapters: a literature review, an analysis chapter, and a conclusion. Chapter two will provide an overview of relevant literature in communication, digital activism and protest, and texts specifically about Anonymous. Because scholars in our field have yet to engage in specific critical analyses of Anonymous, the literature review as it relates to the discipline of communication will focus on social movements and protest rhetoric generally. It is my hope that I can use the field's diverse theories and methodologies on the subject of movement and protest rhetoric to inform my understanding of Anonymous' rhetoric. As such, chapter two will first place communication scholars in conversation with each other to outline and describe some basic characteristics of social protest and movements. Second, I provide a historical discussion of the theoretical advances in social movement scholarship within the rhetorical tradition. Next, I turn my attention toward communication scholarship as it relates to the Internet, with a particular focus on digital protest and dissent. Finally, I put the evolution of hacktivism into consideration before turning to burgeoning work on Anonymous.

The third chapter will engage in a rhetorical criticism of the Anonymous Care Package. I will analyze the Care Package for how it constructs the identity of Anonymous and the identity of would-be members. The Anonymous Care Package consists of an online set of articles and images that simultaneously function as membership recruitment tools and how-to guides. By dividing the Care Package into

three main sections, I attempt to describe the ways in which Anonymous extends the notion of hacktivism from an enterprise for only the most adroit technophiles to something any individual can achieve. In doing so, I uncover the rhetorical tactics through which Anonymous' fashions a collective identity to attract new members, encourage action, and modify its public image.

Finally, my concluding chapter will summarize my findings and offer suggestions for future studies. The final chapter will describe the limitations of my research, including the scope and scale of my analysis. Indeed, because I have chosen one particular artifact, my critical analysis will not attempt to speak on behalf of all of Anonymous' organizing activities. By its very nature Anonymous is a constantly moving and fluctuating creature. Despite my belief that the Care Package represents an accurate snapshot of Anonymous at the time of its circulation, the nature of the Internet (and social movements organized through it) means that information can change very rapidly. The Anonymous Care Package is just one of many potentially fruitful objects of inquiry for rhetorical scholars. As scholarship on Anonymous develops, I suspect my analysis will be read against others to determine accurate patterns of Anonymous' identity construction rhetoric. This thesis is less interested in understanding how audiences respond to Anonymous' rhetoric. Other studies on Anonymous may be more attuned to legal ramifications of Anonymous actions; how the collective functions online versus offline; or weighing the benefits and disadvantages of Anon's various protest tactics. These explorations, only tangentially related to this thesis, represent only a few areas for future research. Thus, this thesis is an early attempt to analyze the rhetoric of Anonymous in the hopes to provide a catalyst for future research.

NOTES

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We do not forget." (Emphasis mine.) Anonymous, "Anonymous Update and Message on #OpBlackOut," Your Anon News Tumblr, December 21, 2011, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://youranonnews.tumblr.com/post/14561417793/anonymous-update-and-message-on-opblackout*.

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CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

"The exciting, and frustrating, characteristic of a movement is that it moves, and what makes it move, in large measure, is the way language is manipulated to control or interpret events. In this sense, rhetoric makes moving possible…"
                                                                                -James R. Andrews

Although there is no communication scholarship specifically discussing the rhetoric of Anonymous, the extant scholarship on identity construction, social movements, and activism provides a solid platform on which to begin analyzing the collective's identity construction. As such, this chapter supplies an overview of scholarly literature relevant to Anonymous' rhetoric of hacktivism. This chapter begins by uncovering the important contributions already available in the field of communication. First, cornerstone theoretical work on constitutive rhetoric by Michael Calvin McGee, John Lyne, and Maurice Charland provides a springboard for unpacking the collective myths around which Anonymous can form and regroup. Next, I consider scholars who apply theories about identity and ego-function to social movements. Third, I put the aforementioned authors in conversation with a larger consortium of communication scholars who study the way the Internet as a medium affects social protest. Finally, I conclude by summarizing scholarly and popular understandings of hacktivism in order to set the stage for chapter three, which analyzes how Anonymous maintains and alters the definition of hacktivism.

Characteristics of a Social Movement: A Sociological and Rhetorical Perspective

Anonymous exhibits several characteristics of a social movement even though it is not necessarily a traditional social movement. Therefore, a brief discussion of the characteristics of social movements is warranted. The following paragraphs will describe a set of attributes of social movements. These features, derived from sociologists and rhetorical critics, are meant to identify a general set of descriptors that help to characterize the unique phenomenon of social movements. First, social movements demonstrate collective action by a substantial number of people. Second, social movements work towards an end, either to change the status quo, or, in some instances to resist change. Third, social movements are guided by ideology, or a set of beliefs, which direct action and unify members. Finally, social movements must articulate that ideology through discourse or action in order to recruit and empower members and effect change. Therefore, this thesis seeks not to create a monolithic theory regarding Anonymous as a social movement or even about hacktivism as a totalizing construct. Instead, it attempts to uncover and study the way Anonymous rhetorically alters conceptions of hacktivism to create a collective identity and demonstrate the ways that audiences are invited to act as a result.

Movements require multiple people acting in concert toward some political, economic, or social end.[1] Depending on their needs and scope, social movements can feature great or few numbers of participants.[2] Some movements are fashioned by thousands or even millions of people working internationally. Others are represented by a smaller group of people. As sociologist Wm. Bruce Cameron notes, "because the

individual can rarely produce the changes he desires solely by his own efforts," social

movements draw people together toward action.[3] Collective action is a distinguishing

characteristic for social movements.

Second, and related, social movements are motivated to change the status quo.

Or, in some instances, movements may form to resist a potential change. These

movements, often labeled as conservative, "seek to maintain the status quo."[4] In this

way, social movement organizations differ from other organizations or collectives

because "they have goals aimed at changing the society and its members; they wish to

restructure society or individuals, not to provide it or them with a regular service."[5]

Social movements may have immediate goals as well as long term, structural goals. For

example, Anonymous may use its Care Package for cyber-dissidents to achieve short-

term mission goals as well as long-term goals that hope to change the standard, negative

conceptions of hacktivism. Or, consider the March on Washington Movement as a part

of the civil rights movement. This particular movement advocated in favor of

desegregation of public accommodations, the education system, and the United States

military.[6] More broadly, however, this action fit inside of the larger civil rights

movement that agitated against many political and socio-economic manifestations of

racism and inequality. Each of these movements attempted to alter its social and political

surroundings via short-term and long-term plans.

Traditionally, social movements have been conceived of as groups of repressed or

disaffected people coming together to protest "the system," although this may not be a

complete view of all social movements.[7] It is true that some social movements are

confrontational and question fundamental structures of power. Both of the examples

above speak from the margin and attempt to push against establishments of power. In the rhetorical tradition, these types of movements are well documented in the literature. Scholars such as Parke G. Burgess, James R. Andrews, and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell have studied the rhetorical tactics of confrontational movements.[8] But, as Zarefsky reminds us, not all movements are made up of "insurgent forces."[9] Indeed, movements can happen within the establishment, and can even be sponsored by groups in power.[10]

Movements also tend to feature a worldview or belief system that orients its actions and rhetoric. These belief systems can be changed over time. A movement's ideology can help constitute purpose and influences how members act. For instance, Carl Burgchardt demonstrates how the pamphlets distributed by pro-communist agitators were heavily influenced by highly theoretical Marxist ideology, which ultimately contributed to their failure.[11] The contents of the Anonymous Care Package appear to be heavily influenced by Anonymous' anti-corporatist, pro-community view of the Internet. Therefore, the current literature on movements suggests that in order to understand a movement, you must study its ideology. However, ideology within social movements is not static. Rhetorical critic Charles Conrad reminds us that over time "ideologies are proffered, defended, modified, and abandoned,"[12] along with the strategies movements employ and the goals they espouse. Thus, studying how a movement's ideology shifts over time can provide important context for rhetorical scholars.

Finally, social movements rely on the articulation of ideology to recruit and maintain members as well as to persuade external audiences such as the public or institutional leaders. Oftentimes, the ability to transmit social meaning becomes crucial in the successful operation of a social movement. Burgchardt's study of Third Period

communist pamphlets demonstrates the devastating implications of being unable to transmit your movement's message to a larger audience.[13] In the case of communists in the United States, audiences negatively responded to the messages within the pamphlets (or were simply unable to receive them) and as a result maintained a dislike and skepticism of communism. Poor articulation of ideology can hamper recruitment and negatively impact public opinion. In addition, internal division over worldview can also hurt social movements themselves, leading to a lack of unity and social cohesion, as was the case when factions formed in the "Old Feminist" movement.[14]

In sum, many social movements can be categorized by the aforementioned characteristics. Most social movements are comprised of groups of people who function as a collective. Second, many social movements are oriented towards change. Some social movements attempt to effect change; other movements agitate against change. Third, social movement organizations often act in accordance with the movement's belief system or ideology. Ideology tends to structure goals and strategies and create unity within groups. Finally, social movements transmit their ideology through various messages (speeches, pamphlets, digital care packages) in an attempt to recruit and empower members and sway external opinion. As I engage in my rhetorical analysis of Anonymous, I rely upon this literature to understand how the group acts as a social movement. Specifically, the concept of hacktivism becomes a vehicle through which to translate the group's ideology to members. Describing or constructing hacktivism positively (and, as I argue in chapter three, extending it to the masses) functions both as a recruitment effort as well as a way to speak to skeptical external audiences. The following paragraphs expand on the aforementioned literature base to describe how the

rhetorical tradition historically has perceived the relationship between rhetoric and social movement.

The Rhetoric of Social Movements

The field of rhetoric provides a unique perspective on social movements insofar as scholars in this tradition use a variety of methods and theoretical lenses. The following section provides a historical overview of the theoretical contributions to social movement scholarship produced by rhetorical scholars. Employing a semi-chronological format, the following paragraphs seek to emphasize key controversies that developed in the last fifty years of rhetorical treatment of movement studies. My purpose is to identify the contours of studying the rhetoric of social movements and how my own study can add to this discussion. In particular, I suggest that my own analysis studies an online movement that adds to our field's understanding of the rhetoric of social movements generally. The next few paragraphs aid in this goal by introducing the diverse perspectives of social movement theory produced by rhetorical critics.

Analyzing protest or social movements from a rhetorical perspective yields rich insight into the myriad ways language and persuasion is implicated in social protest and dissent. One attractive feature of this literature base is that critics employ diverse methods and study many different objects of inquiry. For example, Karma Chávez' piece on coalitional politics amongst queer and migrant groups in Arizona features an ethnographic essay on the coalitional subjectivities of activists who joined together despite differences. Burgchardt studies pamphlets produced by "communist propagandists" in the early half of the twentieth century. These two quite different essays employ a rhetorical lens to approach dissent or agitation. Each contributes, in different

ways, to extend knowledge on their chosen objects of inquiry as well as the study of social protest writ large. Rhetorical scholars respond to the complexity of social protest and dissent by testing many theories to uncover new and useful information about protest and movements. Diverse communication perspectives, and diverse rhetorical criticism in particular, are especially crucial to the study of social movements because, as Stephen E. Lucas notes, "neither a movement nor its discourse are static."[15]

Early work on the rhetoric of social movements began with Leland Griffin in 1952.[16] However, between the period of 1965 and 1980, our field turned its attention to dissent in larger number, producing some two hundred essays on social movements.[17] Spurred by the social uprisings of the 1960s, several rhetorical critics investigated the rhetorical implications of protest strategies and tactics and, in the process, broadened the field's view of what constitutes rhetoric and who can be an orator. As this wave of literature was published, the field witnessed spirited debate on how critics should treat the rhetoric of social movements. Some questions included: Are there a certain set of rhetorical characteristics that apply to all movements? Do rhetorical movements experience unique rhetorical problems that require discernable rhetorical strategies? Are movements themselves rhetorical, or ought we perceive them as historical events or phenomena that use persuasive techniques?

These theoretical questions were discussed in the 1970s and 1980s by David Zarefsky, Stephen E. Lucas, Charles Stewart, Michael Calvin McGee, and others. Essays at the time responded to those seeking to crystallize research on social protest to a theory of the "rhetorical movement." Zarefsky and Lucas expressed doubt that such a concept even existed. In a foundational 1980s piece, "A Skeptical View of Movement Studies,"

Zarefsky wrote that the "extant theory of the 'rhetoric of social movements' fails to establish satisfactorily that there is such a thing."[18] Protest movements, he argued, were not inherently bound by a clearly defined set of rhetorical situations or strategies, but by history and context. In the same issue of the *Central States Speech Journal*, Lucas suggested rhetorical scholars consider the rhetorical aspects of social movement theories rather than create a monolithic theory describing the "rhetoric of social movements." Instead of making a broad-based claim that a collective movement is a "rhetorical movement," rhetoricians should instead let the text speak through analysis of "protest movements." For Lucas, it was of great importance that these phenomenon should be studied as both "social movements" and "rhetorical movements" instead of presuming they were one or the other. Thus, while identifying recurring theoretical patterns in social protest may sometimes be a useful goal, it was neither necessary, nor sufficient to create a theory or "rhetorical movement." Authors at this time responded to "large generalizations" about the rhetorical forms and functions of social movement. Malcolm Sillars suggested we "cast the widest net" when deciding the relationship between movements and rhetoric.[19]

Thus, if we follow the advice of these scholars, rhetorical critics should not apply an overly limiting theory to all social movements, but should instead situate their criticism within a broader (historical) context.[20] Zarefsky and Andrews proposed that scholars view social movements historically and investigate the phenomena's rhetorical attributes rather than viewing movements as "characterized by rhetorical patterns not found in other instances of persuasion."[21] Andrews suggests that a rhetorical movement theory may be useful to scholars because it can prompt lines of analysis and demonstrate

patterns within social movements.[22] However, theory can also be too paradigmatically limiting and must instead be grounded (and supplemented) by analysis done in "temporal" and "spatial terms."[23] In sum, perhaps the most useful positioning of a rhetorical scholar is as a historian who may use theory as a heuristic tool for analysis while maintaining openness to new rhetorical patterns.

 With the aforementioned conversation in mind, this thesis seeks not to create an overarching theory of Anonymous as a social movement, but rather to collect and understand the rhetorical functions of Anonymous' protest. My research adds to the study of social movements by studying an online social movement. While others have engaged cyber-movements,[24] my study focuses on the rhetorical tactics of Anonymous. I indicate how Anonymous uses hacktivism as a tool for recruitment and as a symbol that communicates its ideology. As such, my thesis contributes to the literature on social movements by adding to the study of the rhetorical strategies used by social movements and by studying a type of movement that deserves scholarly attention. In the next section, I attend to the literature on digital dissent and hacktivism. I illustrate how cyber-activism came to be defined in scholarly and popular discourses in order to set the stage for my own argument on hacktivism. Put simply, I add to the existing literature on digital dissent by suggesting how hacktivism can be used as a rhetorical tactic for social movements.

Rhetorical Criticism, Dissent, and the Identity Turn

 Rhetorical studies of social movements inform my analysis of Anonymous and hacktivism. More specifically, I employ the theoretical notion of constitutive identity to grasp how Anonymous acts as a hacktivist social movement. In the paragraphs that

follow, I provide a semi-chronological discussion of the rhetorical scholars who analyze the role of identity and identity-construction in social movement and protest and conclude by describing the ways my study of Anonymous might contribute to this literature base. I begin by attending to constitutive rhetoric and social movements. I then describe the scholarship in communication focused on digital dissent and turn to literature describing the debates over the parameters of hacking and hacktivism. Finally, I review recent literature published on Anonymous from both scholars and the popular press.

Of particular utility is the scholarship in the rhetorical tradition that analyzes the intersection between identity, rhetoric, and social protest movements. For scholars interested in identity construction within social movements, Richard B. Gregg's piece on ego-function serves as a cornerstone text in rhetorical scholarship and social protest. In "The Ego-Function of Rhetoric and Protest," Gregg argues that social protest movements have individual identity as the motivating factor. He provides examples of three movements whose purpose is motivated by the suppression of ego: feminist dissent, black power, and student protests on campus. He outlines the ways in which identity is central to the rhetorical concept of protest. For instance, in Gregg's view, women were distraught at being treated like children, black Americans were not treated equally, and college protesters expressed concern that their voice was not recognized. The assault on individual identity motivated the protests of the 1960s and 1970s. Although potentially reductionist in its view, this essay offers a theoretical foundation for scholarship that is interested in identity construction as a rhetorical implication of a protest movement. However, Gregg was interested in locating particular movements in their motivations, rather than in a larger structural apparatus. As such, he rejected the notion that there was

a "system" to be railed against. Instead, for him, social protest rhetors are people who simply want to be heard.

In order to better understand Anonymous' protest rhetoric, I seek to document the ways in which Anonymous discursively constructs—and then legitimizes—collective identity. My analysis is informed by Michael Calvin McGee's investigation of the construction of "the people" as a rhetorical vision. In the October 1975 issue of the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, McGee published a ground-breaking article that revolutionized the rhetorical treatment of what he deemed "movement studies." Noting a considerable absence of rhetorical explanations of social theory (including movement studies), McGee set out to use a philosophically-backed rhetorical approach to explain how movements of ideas form and are sustained. According to McGee, the field of rhetoric had until that point carried over Aristotle's deep interest in the audience as listeners instead of understanding how the audience was first and foremost constructed by rhetors. McGee reasoned that the notion of the "people" was paramount to any study attempting to document or explain social movements. However, for McGee, rhetoricians had abused the concept of the audience until the term was too indeterminate to be useful. Instead, he argued that a "people" could not be traditionally defined by their behavior "but by their collective faith in a rhetorical vision."[25] He sought to trace the ways the people adopted collective rhetorical visions and how the transition between various identities constituted "movements of ideas."[26]

Using a markedly critical and historical approach not present in Gregg's 1971 seminal piece, McGee described the ways in which populations (especially those involved in what he called "movements of ideas") were compelled to accept identity

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myths suggested to them by movement leaders.[27] Borrowing Marx's theory of 'false consciousness,' McGee's essay described the ways an advocate, or a "*Leader*," could propose a theory of consciousness to various persons. If the *Leader* adapted her or his notion of consciousness to "his vision of what a 'people,' when created, wanted to hear," those people would begin their transformation to "the people."[28] Once they had begun that metamorphosis, people would respond to and legitimate their own collective consciousness. Their struggle between this myth and what McGee called "objective reality" would eventually prompt action on behalf of the "people" that was necessarily rhetorical and could be studied.[29] Each new transfer of collective vision—or shift in identity—constituted a new movement in ideas. Later, both John Lyne and Maurice Charland would take up this notion of constitutive identity, creating a solid foundation for analysis of Anonymous' identity related rhetoric.

This thesis is informed by Charland's theory of constitutitive rhetoric in that it attempts to demonstrate how hacktivism as a rhetorical tactic is constitutive, and how it might foster identification in potential members. In his 1980 essay "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois,"* Charland applies a theory of constitutive rhetoric to the *Québécois* independence movement in order to tease out the "narrative ideological effects" of movement rhetoric. Instead of taking rhetoric to mean "persuasion," Charland calls on Kenneth Burke and Louis Althusser to demonstrate the constitutive or generative nature of rhetoric. For Charland, the identity of a collective is a rhetorical effect manufactured through discourse. This rhetorical effect is also ideological given that identification can compel cooperation and action. In the case of the *peuple Québécois*, "there existed a struggle over the constitution of political

subjects."[30] Charland argues that The White Paper, a policy document, contained narratives and myths of sovereignty that helped constitute the *peuple Québécois*. Charland's essay was widely influential for its contribution to rhetoric and its push to reveal the ideology inherent to any rhetorical discourse. I apply this conception to Anonymous' hacktivist rhetoric in chapter three in order to uncover some of the ideological underpinnings of the Anonymous Care Package's transmission of hacktivist identity.

In a 2011 essay, Karma R. Chávez applies McGee's concept of the people to the coalition between a queer organization and migrant's rights organization.[31] This piece is one of the most important studies on how identity rhetorically functions in social protest movements. The essay's focus goes beyond Gregg's essay on "Ego-Function" to describe the self-reflexive relationship of identity construction in social movements. In her essay Chávez attends to the ways groups articulate and rearticulate identity in private spaces she names "counter-public enclaves." My own study confirms the utility of Chavez's argument. In particular, I maintain that Anonymous is not only constituted by hacktivist texts but also responds to external rhetoric about the collective in digital counter-public enclaves such as Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr. More generally, Chávez explores how social movements operate in enclaves in order to create an identity and respond to external views of themselves, adding to the theory of constitutive rhetoric. Perhaps the key contribution of this work is focusing a critic's analytical lens on the way diffuse movements can congeal into one community despite disparate opinions and ideologies. As Chávez points out, much of our scholarship is focused on single-issue movements, and, therefore, any analysis on identity is predicated on one repressed social group. This

is especially important, because, as I argue in chapter three Anonymous' hacktivist rhetoric does not quite fit this model.

In summary, identity is of central concern to the rhetorical study of social movements. The rhetorical facets of social movements reveal how the movement constructs notions of the collective self in order to recruit new members and communicate desires for social change. Such collective identities divulge the ideology of the movement and its tactics. In this way, the field of rhetorical criticism is rich in useful material regarding theories of collective identity in protest and social movements. As a result, excellent recovery and analytical work on the women's rights movement by scholars such as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Susan Zaeske, and Bonnie J. Dow (among others) contributes to the richness and scope of the rhetorical field.[32] Robert E. Terrill's treatment of black nationalist Malcolm X's rhetorical corpus contributed to the field's understanding of orators of color as it demonstrated rhetoric's centrality in social movements.[33] Similarly, good scholarship continues to emerge describing the rhetorical effects of other protest groups, including environmental preservationists and LGBTQ individuals and organizations. My own scholarship is indebted to these scholars and the background they provide on social movements. Such essays demonstrate the myriad ways agitators employ rhetoric to advance their ideas, push against oppositional forces, and alter conceptions of reality through discourse.

The Communicative Characteristics of Digital Dissent

In the last decade, the field of communication has published a good deal of literature studying the Internet. Some of these essays apply traditional rhetorical theory to online objects of inquiry such as company and church websites.[34] Others employ a

rhetorical lens to analyze digital controversy.[35] Quite a few have focused on dissent in

the digital sphere. Scholars such as Barbara Warnick contribute to theory building by

describing the ways in which the Internet may alter previously articulated notions of

discourse and persuasion.[36] In addition, scholars who use a communicative lens to

analyze social movements productively tease out the ways the Internet serves to facilitate

and inhibit social protest. The following paragraphs provide a thematic overview

regarding the benefits and disadvantages of the Internet for recruiting and maintaining

members and responding to ever changing threats. It is my hope that this discussion will

add depth and nuance to the analysis in chapter three by serving as a springboard for

viewing Anonymous as foundational of a hacktivist movement.

The Internet facilitates social protest and dissent through its open, decentralized

nature. Given that discourse can rapidly flow through this medium, protest discourse can

easily gain momentum. In an essay about the discursive implications of hacktivism,

political scientist Nofia Fitri notes that the "Internet is not only a welcoming of global

communication forum for the free exchange of views, but it has its own class of warriors

dedicated to protecting free speech online."[37] By promoting free speech and the free

exchange of information, barriers to participation are lowered. Indeed, would-be

participants may become activists simply by sharing their opinions online. The

participatory nature of the Internet can also bolster the voices of social movements,

allowing "political periphery easier access to the political core."[38] New media

communication scholar Theresa Lynn Petray argues that the unfiltered qualities of the

Internet allow marginalized voices to be considered in the public sphere given that

content creation and dissemination are not solely left to experts.[39] In sum, the Internet provides a space that may help include more diverse perspectives.

Partially as a result of its decentralized structure, the Internet can facilitate protest by acting as a vehicle through which networks of people are formed and reformed as collective entities. Social media websites in particular may aggregate individuals or groups of people by identity, interests, or other characteristics. In "Using the Master's Tools: Women's Movements and Social Media," Wendy Harcourt demonstrates how activists working to end violence against women are able to connect with supporters and engage in consciousness raising online. As a result, participation in the movement is increased and promotes a greater awareness of violence against women. Thus, networks can increase both in number and strength on the web, and potentially increase the closeness of those inside the networks.[40]

The Internet may also assist protest movements in fostering collective identity amongst members. Petray notes that the lower barrier to online participation coupled with the Web's unique ability to bring people together can help to construct a collective notion of self.[41] She maintains that social media websites, built to aggregate multiple aspects of one's online identity, allow participants to enjoin their political selves with their social selves to form an activist identity.[42] More generally, the Internet is what Palczewski calls a "many-to-many medium" enabling large groups of people to communicate and connect with other large groups of people.[43] For Petray, it is crucial that social movements attend to collective identity, as it is a "vital factor in the participation and retention of movement members."[44] Further, the ability for collectives

to self-identity helps establish an alternative to oppressive identity narratives.[45] A strong sense of collective identity may develop into formidable counter-cultures.[46]

Communication scholars also describe the fluid, rapidly developing nature of the Internet as a key strength for social movements that communicate online.[47] The quickness of digital exchange as well as the ease of participation allows activists within social movements to respond to perceived acts of oppression quickly and more efficiently than organizing a physical response. Therefore, because political events may occur over a very short period of time, it may be argued that the Internet is uniquely situated as a venue for activists to respond to threats. Furthermore, the unpredictability of the Internet may be harnessed as a positive attribute for movements. As Petray writes, because social movements can adapt strategies and tactics quickly via the Web, "the state cannot develop responses as quickly and efficiently as they can with predictable activist repertoires."[48]

The Internet may also inhibit social protest. First, although scholars may be optimistic regarding the revolutionary potential of the Internet, we as a discipline must be cautious not to overstate its power to exist outside current power structures. Harcourt, Palczewski, and Huang all argue that the Internet is not a neutral space but instead heavily influenced by the same economic and socio-political climate as the physical world. Free social networking sites, Wendy Harcourt usefully notes, make money off of tracking members' actions online.[49] Shaorong Huang's analysis of Google's exit from China also demonstrates another instance where offline political realities affect the digital sphere.[50] Governments still can control access to the Internet,[51] a fact that is made clear

by examining protesters' lack of Internet access during the Arab Spring and Occupy movements.

In fact, though the open nature of the Internet lowers requirement for active participation, it also "lowers the cost of government monitoring."[52] Corporations and political institutions can easily track members online, especially through websites that offer services for free. Such tracking may prohibit activists from carrying out direct action against governments.[53] Being cognizant of tracking and surveillance online is especially present in the debate over hacktivism, where certain acts of digital dissent are illegal. Anonymous, for instance, works to uncover and prevent tracking and surveillance in the Anonymous Care Package.

Both Palczewski and Harcourt are quick to remind scholars that freedom of speech can also breed terrorism and sustain hate groups. In mild cases, free speech can lead to "opinion overload" where audiences are constantly inundated with "noise" such that important messages are not transmitted correctly. Political fragmentation of social movements may be one negative result.[54] In more severe circumstances, a dedication to the freedom of speech may prohibit activists from creating a safe space online. After all, the same principles that allow for rapid information dissemination and digital democracies also host the ideology and rhetoric of the Ku Klux Klan and the Westboro Baptist Church's "God Hates Fags" message.

Communication scholars also call into question the identity-construction feature of the Internet. For some authors, anonymity, a key feature of the Internet, prevents the strategic application of essentialized identity and may work to undo trust in a community.[55] Palczewski argues that the Internet's massive user base may silence

marginalized groups rather than carve out alternative spaces for them to speak. After all, if everyone has the right to speak, what prevents the tyranny of the majority? Social cohesion may suffer when identity gives way to anonymity.

In conclusion, scholars use communication theories and methodologies to analyze the relationship between the Internet and social protest movements. The previous paragraphs put many of these scholars into a larger conversation about the Internet's potential to bolster social protest movements. It is imperative to consider both the positive and negative implications of the Internet's freely moving, decentralized networks when analyzing social protests carried out partially or entirely online. In this sense, my study confirms and extends the ideas outlined in this literature. I am studying a decentralized network, but engaging the rhetorical means through which its identity is constrained. The section that follows contextualizes hacktivism within its burgeoning literature base. It sets the stage for a more robust discussion of hacktivism, one type of digital protest that attempts to harness the positive features of the Internet to change the status quo.

The Rise of Hacktivism

This thesis argues that Anonymous rhetorically alters the conception of hacktivism to recruit a larger audience. In order to substantiate this claim, I will summarize the current understanding of "hacktivism" in both scholarly and popular literature. Reviewing the available literature on hacktivism sets the stage for my analysis of Anonymous' use of the term and idea in chapter three. Specifically, given that hacktivism is a term in dispute, a detailed analysis of its rhetorical deployment is crucial for understanding online social movements. In what follows, I first provide a basic

definition of hacktivism and describe its contested nature. Second, I identify the ways in which hacktivism has been articulated as an extension of traditional forms of protest. Finally, I demonstrate the ways that opponents of hacktivism have shifted meaning away from protest towards criminality.

Generally, hacktivism is a term coined to describe the intersection between hacking computers and other machines and activism. Hacktivism is therefore a contested term—a concept that is debated by infosecurity agents, governments, corporations, and hackers. It is rhetorically constructed by those who participate in hacktivities and self-identify or are identified with hacktivism. Simultaneously, through cultural circulation, hacktivism is constructed by non-hacktivists in discourse about hacking and activism. Thus, this concept, like others describing digital action, is malleable. It is this open atmosphere that allows rhetorical tactics to modify the term's meaning and function. Anonymous fits inside of a storied history of hacktivism, carrying on some characteristics of early hackers and hacktivists while pushing the term beyond a purely technical definition. What follows is a summary of scholarly and popular articulations of hacktivism in order to situate how my analysis will add to rhetorical scholarship.

While hacktivism is a relatively new concept, hacking has been around for decades. Hackers predate the Internet as we know it; the birth of hacking is routinely attributed to groups of men at universities such as MIT in the 1960s and 1970s.[56] These individuals were interested in learning the ins and outs of developing technology and creatively repurposing machines to function in ways not originally intended.[57] Anthropologist Gabriella Coleman, who lived amongst hackers, points out that hackers and the hacking community have developed and evolved as technology becomes more

sophisticated.[58] These *waves* of hackers were also required to respond to the socio-political climate surrounding technology. Hacktivists, as media scholar Paul A. Taylor writes, "apply technology to a more reflexive ends."[59]

Hacktivism extends beyond mere action—it is an identity and a lifestyle. Hacktivists use the tools of hacking to advance a political argument or participate in a counter-culture. Those who identify as hacktivist are compelled by certain principles or methodologies even as they differ in ideology or goals. While hacktivism is a debatable concept, hacktivists have historically espoused a desire to keep the Internet as open as possible for the free exchange of information. Palczewski writes that hacktivists "try to expand access to information, rather than limit it, as a means of empowerment."[60] This vision also lends itself to a "radical commitment to free speech."[61] Finally, hacktivists forward "radical democratic messages" about the liberatory nature of the Internet and technology as a tool to maintain the open exchange of information.[62]

At times, hacktivists appropriate existing protest tactics and apply them to the digital sphere.[63] Sharing many of the same characteristics as "mass-action hacktivism," Anonymous "aims for a political intervention whose legitimacy is based on the numbers of people who participate….just as in street demonstrations or in sit-in civil disobedience."[64] One of Anonymous' hacking tactics of choice is the distributed denial of service or DDoS attack, where users direct traffic to a single target which often overwhelms and disrupts service for a set of users.[65] The primary tactic of this type of hacking is to flood the targeted machine or site with requests for data, overwhelming the system's capacity and causing it to fail. Jay Liederman, an attorney who has represented alleged Anons in court, says that these types of actions "are the equivalent of occupying

the Woolworth's lunch counter during the civil rights movement."[66] This action is rhetorical: juxtaposing the image of protestors physically clogging a city street with the digital "clogging" of DDoS attacks, supporters of Anonymous argue that a "DDoS attack that takes a site offline…[is] like a digital sit-in, NOT a hack."[67] Hacktivists, then, often redeploy traditional concepts of dissent using technological means.

Proponents of hacktivism argue that it can enable participation in democracy and can unite like-minded individuals to confront challenges. The Internet has helped form networks of activists unhindered by distance or other participatory blocks.[68] Indeed, activists can use the net to communicate and disseminate information faster than ever before. Taylor is optimistic about hacktivism. Hacktivism, he writes, "marks the beginning of a significant new chapter in radical technological politics."[69] Indeed, hacktivism might allow individuals to construct "newer forms of citizen identities" that manifest in social agency.[70] Taylor's point is especially salient to a communication scholar interested in the ways hacktivism implicates digital dissent. As he writes, because "much of the writing about the democratic potential of the Internet focuses on its ability to access the political sphere…and disregard(s) the potential of cyber-activism to generate counterpublics," studying the ways in which hacktivism rhetorically functions to construct identity may offer new explanations of dissent and community.[71]

Opponents of hacktivist strategies are less likely to refer to those strategies or the groups that carry them out as "hacktivist." Instead, popular press, governments, and corporations tend to refer to these communities with negative terminology. Communication and technology scholar David J. Gunkel writes that as soon as hacking's utility to society became known, hacking "came to be employed to name various forms of

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computer crime, network intrusion and even cyber terrorism."[72] Indeed, the Obama

administration named hacking one of the primary threats to America's political and

economic wellbeing.[73] Identifying hackers as part of "cyberwarfare," the United States

government established the right for its military to pre-emptively attack a suspected

enemy country.[74] In 2012, U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta urged the passing of the

Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act (or CISPA), an expansive and

controversial cybersecurity bill, in order to combat what might be a "Cyber-Pearl

Harbor."[75] These securitizing statements, typical to opponents of hacktivism, represent

only a small amount of anti-hacktivist rhetoric. In sum, hacktivism is considered by

government and infosecurity agents to be a criminal act and/or security threat. Framing

political hackers as a terrorist enemy or economic threat alters the discussion from

justifiable activism to criminal activity. Chapter three takes these narratives into account

to describe the oppositional, external rhetoric to which Anonymous must respond.

This thesis attempts to place Anonymous' rhetorical moves within the historical

context of hacking and hacktivism. With the exception of Palczewski, rhetorical scholars

have not taken up the notion of hacktivism as a persuasive construct. Even Palczewski's

analysis of hacktivism, though useful, is brief and limited to its definition as a counter-

public community. As has been made clear in this section, the meaning of the term

"hacktivism" is under contention amongst both the hacktivist community and external

forces such as government agencies and corporations. Given that the term is under

dispute, its rhetorical deployment in the popular press and academy is important. In this

way, my discussion of the Anonymous Care Package (and hacktivism more broadly) is

necessary.

The Beginnings of Anonymous Scholarship

Most of the literature about Anonymous referenced in this chapter comes from popular magazine and newspaper outlets. However, in-depth publications on Anonymous continue to grow. I anticipate many new books (including one written by members/spokespeople of Anonymous) to be published in the near future. Still, current book-length scholarship is sparse and mostly attentive to two facets of these hacktivists: describing the creation of Anonymous or describing specific operations. In addition, security companies, commissioned by targets or potential targets, have begun to study and then circulate reports about specific instances of Anonymous hacking. These reports are descriptive and instructional in how to defend websites, suggesting specific activities of Anonymous in order to expose flaws and prompt increased security measures on behalf of would-be targets.[76] However, much of the available literature on Anonymous comes from news-outlets or its own information dissemination websites. In this section, I will briefly describe the current work on Anonymous.

Journalist Parmy Olson's *We are Anonymous*, is arguably the most complete and detailed text written about the group.[77] Olson focuses on providing a human face to Anonymous, using detailed interviews with several Anonymous members as case studies for the larger movement. Her ultimate goal is to whip up a story of intrigue at how an Anonymous member turned FBI-informant and betrayed the group. Although the betrayal is an important event in the development of Anonymous, it is not the single most important action related to its identity.

Anthropologist Gabriella Coleman is an academic who has turned an affiliation with hacker and nerd culture towards an investigation of Anonymous. Her most recent

book, *Coding Freedom, the Ethics and Aesthetics of Hacking*, is not specifically geared toward Anonymous but provides an extensive foundation for analysis of Anonymous within a hacker culture.[78] Coleman has also published shorter, essay-length treatments that feature Anonymous as a subject for analysis. "Hacker Politics and Publics," for instance, pits whistleblowing website Wikileaks against Anonymous to compare and contrast the way hacker politics manifest.[79] Coleman is also routinely cited as an Anonymous expert in popular press and news articles.[80]

Anonymous' meteoric rise coupled with its desire for secrecy will likely pique interest in making the collective a scholarly focus. As of now, however, academic literature about the group is scarce. Book-length treatments of Anonymous, such as Olson's *We are Anonymous* are useful in that they unearth new information about Anonymous by publishing some of Anonymous' most internal, protected dialogue. However, such books tend to focus on one particular subsection of Anonymous (in Olson's case, Anonymous' offshoot LulzSec). These texts, like other popular press pursuits regarding Anonymous, tend to focus on unmasking Anonymous, in order to make statements about how the collective and its members rhetorically identify as hacktivist.

Future research on the collective is necessary, especially in the field of communication. First, the lack of scholarly research on Anonymous magnifies the import of academic treatments of the collective. Second, communication studies is an ideal location from which to study Anonymous because the it enables me to study how discourse creates and legitimizes the collective. Rhetorical scholars studying social movements have set the stage for an in-depth analysis of how Anonymous rhetorically

constructs a people through the notion of hacktivism. However, beyond Palczewski, our

field has not yet turned to the ways hacktivism can rhetorically constitute a useable

identity for organizing dissent and protest. Further, as Chávez notes, literature on social

movements and identity is primarily directed toward studying single-issue movements,

which Anonymous is decidedly not.[81] Thus, this thesis can contribute to both social

movement literature as well as the rhetorical scholarship regarding constitutive identity

and the Internet.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to draw together extant scholarship on identity

construction, social movements, and activism to set the stage for analysis of Anonymous'

hacktivist identity in chapter three. The first section analyzed literature about social

movements in order to tease out a set of characteristics or attributes that may help define

the unique phenomena of collective dissent. I argued that social movements are

constituted by groups of people who act in concert towards an end goal. These

movements tend to espouse an ideology or a worldview that helps dictate action and

unify members. In addition, a particularly rhetorical characteristic of social movements

is demonstrated in their articulation of ideology in order to positively influence their

public image.

Section two built on this literature base by reviewing the extant literature on

rhetoric and dissent. I provided a semi-chronological historical overview of key

developments in rhetorical criticism, focusing especially on debates over whether a

"rhetorical movement" actually exists. After charting the development of social

movement studies in our discipline, I turned to a specific subsection of this literature:

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scholarship on identity production and constitutive rhetoric. These essays will frame my analysis of the Anonymous Care Package's construction of a hacktivist identity.

The third section focused on essays that apply a communicative lens to social movements in the digital sphere. In this section, I paid specific attention to an internal dialogue occurring within our field regarding the Internet's potential to facilitate or inhibit social protest. Rather than affirming a binary where the Internet either is or is not an acceptable vehicle for social protest, I argued that analysis of digital social dissent must be attuned to the complexities of the digital sphere. With this in mind, my analysis of Anonymous seeks to move beyond the binary of good and bad to explain the ways Internet may facilitate new articulations of hacktivism as collective identity.

Two final sections refined the focus of this literature review. Through an analysis of how hacktivism came to be, this chapter demonstrated how scholarly and popular articulations of hacktivism exist in tension with one another. Further, such contestations provide a larger context that sets the stage to unpack the rhetorical underpinnings of hacktivism in chapter three. The final section reviewed extant literature on Anonymous, featuring Parmy Olson's *We are Anonymous* and Gabriella Coleman's corpus on hacking and Anonymous.

In sum, this thesis aims to contribute to scholarship on social movements and identity. Building on a solid platform of rhetorical analysis of dissent and protest, this thesis expands the definition of a movement beyond the field's traditional single-issue focus by describing a non-hierarchical, decentralized movement that is constantly in flux. Second, the field of communication has just begun to consider the ways that the Internet alters our conceptions of rhetoric. By describing how Anonymous uses features unique

to the Internet to disseminate its message, this thesis can positively augment the burgeoning work on persuasion and invention the digital sphere. Finally, because the definition of hacktivism is still under debate, my analysis on how Anonymous expands hacktivism to digital neophytes provides a unique vantage point to view the evolution of the concept. Collectively, this thesis draws together multiple strands of scholarship in order to describe Anonymous' attempt to recruit members, compel action, and alter public perception of the collective.

NOTES

[1] Mayer N. Zald and Roberta Ash, "Social Movement Organizations: Growth, Decay and Change," *Social Forces* 44 (1996): 329.

[2] Wm. Bruce Cameron, *Modern Social Movements: A Sociological Outline* (New York: H. Wolff Book Manufacturing Company, 1966), 13-17.

[3] Cameron, *Modern Social Movements*, 8.

[4] Cameron, *Modern Social Movements*, 22.

[5] Zald and Ash, "Social Movement Organizations," 329.

[6] Daniel W. Aldridge III, *Becoming American, The African American Quest for Civil Rights 1861-1976* (Illinois: Harlan Davison, Incorporated, 2011), 158.

[7] Zarefsky notes that movements themselves can be fostered by or within the "establishment." See David Zarefsky, "President Johnson's War on Poverty: The Rhetoric of Three 'Establishment' Movements," *Communication Monographs* 44 (1977): 352-73.

[8] James R. Andrews, "Confrontation at Columbia: A Case Study in Coercive Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 55 (1969): 9-16; Parke G. Burgess, "The Rhetoric of Black Power: A Moral Demand?," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* (1968): 122-33; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59 (1973): 74-86.

[9] Zarefsky, "President Johnson's War on Poverty," 352.

[10] Zarefsky in particular attends to the *pro* and *anti* movements within President Johnson's War on Poverty.

[11] Carl R. Burgchardt, "Two Faces of American Communism: Pamphlet Rhetoric of the Third Period and the Popular Front," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980): 375-91.

[12] Charles Conrad, "The Transformation of The 'Old Feminist' Movement," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 67 (1981): 284.

[13] Burgchardt, "Two Faces of American Communism."

[14] Conrad demonstrates how disagreements over the core concept of feminism divided the movement, changing "old feminism" into "women's suffrage."

[15] Stephen E. Lucas, "Coming to Terms with Movement Studies," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 262.

[16] Leland M. Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38 (1952): 184-88.

[17] Lucas, "Coming to Terms with Movement Studies," 255.

[18] David Zarefsky, "A Skeptical View of Movement Studies," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 252.

[19] Malcolm O. Sillars, "Defining Movements Rhetorically: Casting the Widest Net." *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 46 (1980): 18-32.

[20] Lucas, "Coming to Terms with Movement Studies," 265-66.

[21] Zarefsky,"A Skeptical View of Movement Studies," 246.

[22] James R. Andrews, "History and Theory in the Study of the Rhetoric of Social Movements," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 274-81.

[23] Lucas, "Coming to Terms with Movement Studies."

[24] Catherine Helen Palczewski, "Cyber-movements, New Social Movements, and Counter-publics," in *Counterpublics and the State*, eds. Daniel Brouwer and Robert Asen (New York: SUNY Press, 2001), 161-186; Shaorong Huang, "To Stay or Not to Stay, That's Politics: Chinese Netizens' Rhetorical Vision on Google Vision on Google's Leaving China," *China Media Research* 8 (2012): 40-48; Theresa Lynn Petray, "Protest 2.0: Online Interactions and Aboriginal Activists," *Media, Culture & Society* 33 (2011): 923-940.

[25] Michael C. McGee, "In Search of 'The People:' A Rhetorical Alternative," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 246.

[26] McGee, "In Search of 'The People,'" 235.

[27] McGee, "In Search of 'The People.'"

[28] McGee, "In Search of 'The People," 241.

[29] McGee, "In Search of 'The People,'" 240-42.

[30] Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 133.

[31] Karma R. Chávez, "Counter-Public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building," *Communication Quarterly* 59 (2011): 1-18.

[32] Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation;" Bonnie J. Dow, "Feminism, Miss America, and Media Mythology," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6 (2013): 127-149; Susan Zaeske, "Signatures of Citizenship: The Rhetoric of Women's Antislavery Petitions," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 147-168.

[33] Robert E. Terrill, "Protest, Prophecy, and Prudence in the Rhetoric of Malcolm X," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 4 (2001): 25-53. See also Robert E. Terrill, *Malcolm X: Inventing Racial Judgment* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004).

[34] For instance, see Lynne M. Baab, "Portraits of the Future Church: A Rhetorical Analysis of Congregational Websites," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 31 (2008); Jun Young and Kirsten Foot "Corporate E-Cruiting: The Construction of Work in Fortune 500 Recruiting Web Sites," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11 (2006): 44-71.

[35] Huang, "To Stay or Not to Stay, That's Politics."

[36] Barbara Warnick, "Rhetorical Criticism in New Media Environments," *Rhetoric Review* 20 (2001): 60-65; Barbara Warnick, *Rhetoric Online: Persuasion and Politics on the World Wide Web (*New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 1-160.

[37] Nofia Fitri, "Democracy Discourses through the Internet Communication: Understanding the Hacktivism for the Global Changing," *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies* 1 (2011): 1-20.

[38] Petray, "Protest 2.0."

[39] Petray, "Protest 2.0," 924.

[40] Joshua D. Atkinson and Laura Cooley, "Narrative Capacity, Resistance Performance, and the 'Shape' of New Social Movement Networks," *Communication Studies* 61, no. 3 (2010): 337.

[41] Petray, "Protest 2.0," 934.

[42] Petray, "Protest 2.0."

[43] Palczewski notes that this is one of the characteristics that makes the Internet a potential site for increased democratic discourse. Palczewski, "Cyber-movements."

[44] Petray, "Protest 2.0," 935.

[45] Palczewski, "Cyber-movements," 165-68.

[46] Wendy Harcourt, "Using the Master's Tools: Women's Movements and Social Media," *Media Development* 58 (2011): 22.

[47] Palczewski, for instance argues that "the Internet necessarily creates space for oppositional discourse and identity formation as it challenges our very understanding of space." See Palzcewski, "Cyber-movements," 173. Harcourt describes the benefits of rapid-information and constantly evolving technology, namely that they have allowed activists opposing Violence Against Women to connect and perform consciousness raising in new ways.

[48] Petray, "Protest 2.0, " 925.

[49] Harcourt, "Using the Master's Tools," 18.

[50] Shaoron Huang, "To Stay or Not to Stay."

[51] Ivan Sigal, "Going Local," *Index on Censorship* 40 (2011): 96.

[52] Petray, "Protest 2.0."

[53] Palczewski, "Cyber-movements," 172-77.

[54] Petray, "Protest 2.0," 925.

[55] Palczewski, "Cyber-movements," 175.

[56] Richard Stallman, "On Hacking," *Richard Stallman's Personal Site (blog),* accessed February 23, 2013. *http://stallman.org/articles/on-hacking.html*.

[57] David J. Gunkel, "Editorial: Introduction to Hacking and Hacktivism," *New Media & Society* 7 (2005): 595-97.

[58] Gabriella Coleman, *Coding Freedom: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Hacking* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), 23-24.

[59] Paul A. Taylor, "From Hackers to Hacktivists: Speed Bumps on the Global Superhighway," *New Media & Society* 7 (2005): 626.

[60] Palczewski, "Cyber-movements," 179.

[61] Tim Jordan, "Online Direct Action: Hacktivism and Radical Democracy," in *Radical Democracy and the Internet: Interrogating Theory and Practice,* ed. Lincoln Dahlberg and Eugenia Siapera (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 81.

[62] Jordan, "Online Direct Action," 86.

[63] Taylor, "From Hackers to Hacktivists." See also Douglas Thomas, "Hacking the Body: Code, Performance and Corporeality," *New Media Society* 7 (2005): 647-62.

[64] Jordan, "Online Direct Action," 75.

[65] Anonymous has actually submitted a petition to the White House to alter the legal definition of DDoS "attacks" to forms of protest or complaint. Refer to Brendan Greeley, "A Distributed Denial of Service Attack Isn't an Act of Civil Disobedience," *Business Week*, January 11, 2013, *http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-01-11/a-distributed-denial-of-service-attack-isnt-an-act-of-civil-disobedience*.

[66] Luke Allnutt, "Hacktivist's Advocate: Meet the Lawyer Who Defends Anonymous," *The Atlantic*, October 3, 2012, accessed February 23, 2013. *http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/10/hacktivists-advocate-meet-the-lawyer-who-defends-anonymous/263202/*.

[67] Anonymous, Twitter Post, March 6 2012, 9:30 a.m. http://twitter.com/youranonnews.

[68] Peter Dahlgren, "Civic Identity and Net Activism: The Frame of Radical Democracy," in *Radical Democracy and the Internet: Interrogating Theory and Practice,* ed. Lincoln Dahlberg and Eugenia Siapera (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 65.

[69] Taylor, "From Hackers to Hacktivists," 627.

[70] Dahlgren, "Civic Identity and Net Activism," 87.

[71] Palczewski, "Cyber-movements."

[72] Gunkel, "Introduction to Hacking and Hacktivism," 595.

[73] Barack Obama's February 12, 2013 State of the Union Address states "America must also face the rapidly growing threat from cyber-attacks. We know hackers steal people's identities and infiltrate private e-mail. We know foreign countries and companies swipe our corporate secrets. Now our enemies are also seeking the ability to sabotage our power grid, our financial institutions, and our air traffic control systems. We cannot look back years from now and wonder why we did nothing in the face of real

threats to our security and our economy." See Michael S. Schmidt, "New Interest in Hacking as Threat to Security," *New York Times,* March 13, 2012, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/14/us/new-interest-in-hacking-as-threat-to-us-security.html?_r=0.*

[74] David E. Sanger and Thom Shanker, "Broad Powers Seen For Obama in Cyberstrikes," *New York Times,* February 3, 2012, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/04/us/broad-powers-seen-for-obama-in-cyberstrikes.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.*

[75] Leon E. Panetta, "Remarks by Secretary Panetta on Cybersecurity to the Business Executives for National Security, New York City," *Defense.gov*, October 11, 2012, accessed February 23, 2013, Transcript held online at *http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5136.*

[76] Imperva, "The Anatomy of an Anonymous Attack," 2012. *http://blog.imperva.com/2012/02/anonymous-attack-graphic.html.*

[77] Parmy Olson, *We Are Anonymous: Inside the Hacker World of LulzSec, Anonymous, and the Global Cyber Insurgency* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005).

[78] Gabriella Coleman, *Coding Freedom.*

[79] Gabriella Coleman, "Hacker Politics and Publics," *Public Culture* 23 (2011): 511-16.

[80] Kate Allen, "Digital Evangelists Versus the Predigital Thinkers," *The Toronto Star,* January 19, 2013, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://www.thestar.com/news/world/ 2013/01/19/digital_evangelists_versus_the_predigital_thinkers.html;* Carole Cadwalladr, "Anonymous: Behind the Masks of The Cyber Insurgents," *The Guardian*, September 8, 2012, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://www.guardian.co.uk/ technology/2012/sep/8/anonymous-behind-masks-cyber-insurgents.*

[81] Karma R. Chávez, "Counter-Public Enclaves."

CHAPTER THREE

Analysis

Introduction

Forbes journalist and author of *We are Anonymous,* Parmy Olson, writes that

online hacking collective Anonymous is "one of the most prevalent, powerful and

decentralized movements out there…(t)hough largely misunderstood."[1] Indeed, in recent

years, Anonymous has attracted the attention of multiple audiences: governments, media

outlets, academics, and perhaps most prominently, users of the Internet. In the past few

years, popular press on the collective increased exponentially and with good reason—

high-profile, mysterious vigilantes illegally hacking and trashing the websites of

governmental entities and private corporations makes for a tantalizing news story. At the

crux of this notoriety was a deep concern with Anonymous' identity.

As Anonymous' infamy increased, the attention of the popular press turned from

reporting Anonymous' actions to unmasking the leaderless, decentralized collective.

Other actors, such as the United States government (amongst other international

organizations) were similarly interested in unmasking group members to charge them

with felony conspiracy and computer hacking charges.[2] At the same time, corporations

hired expensive infosecurity experts to learn Anonymous' tactics and increase company

defenses.[3] Yet, for journalists, security forces and governmental entities, satisfactorily

unmasking Anonymous remains an elusive goal. Journalists openly acknowledge that

any media coverage about Anonymous represents a best guess based on all available

information. The FBI and Interpol may have apprehended a few suspects, but to little

real effect: incarcerating members of Anonymous has, if anything, galvanized

Anonymous.[4] As an Anonymous adage elucidates, "you can't arrest an idea."[5]

Instead of attempting to unmask Anonymous, this chapter instead analyzes the

ways in which Anonymous rhetorically alters the notion of hacktivism to recruit a wider

set of would-be participants, and in so doing, attempts to reconfigure its public image.

Using an Anonymous-produced and –distributed artifact, the Anonymous Care Package

(also referred to as the Care Package), I attempt to demonstrate the way its contents offer

an alternative definition for hacktivism, and as a result, create a culture and community of

digital agitators who can then identify with and join the collective. This chapter will

proceed in four steps. First, I will provide a brief overview on the history of hacktivism

as a concept. Second, I describe the Care Package and the sociopolitical context in which

it was constructed and disseminated. Third, I identify and analyze three subsections of

the Anonymous Care Package—branding, digital tools for dissent, and taking it to the

streets—to analyze the ways in which Anonymous constructs threats and invites

audiences to respond to them. Finally, I offer some concluding thoughts about how the

Anonymous Care Package has broadened hacktivism to the everyday practices of Internet

users.

Hacktivism as A Fluid Concept

Anonymous is routinely referred to as a hacktivist organization. Other than

generic discontent at any static labeling, significant portions of self-identified Anons

appear to have cozied up to this title. Yet, not all of their actions (not even all of their

most popular actions) can be considered hacking in the strictest sense. Sending all-black

faxes to corporations in order to waste ink is not technically "hacking."[6] Nor is creating

anarchic video media, or organizing and promoting street protests.[7] Nevertheless, a

sizeable portion of Anonymous functions as a hacktivist organization, within a hacktivist

culture. What that means is up for discussion, and is a crucial issue in understanding how

Anonymous reconfigures hacktivism for its own purposes.

In order to understand how Anonymous' notion of hacktivism differs from other

versions, the reader must first understand how hacktivism was and is defined by others.

Thus, a short discussion on the history of hacktivism is warranted. The Anonymous Care

Package serves both an instructional and generative role for potential hacktivists. In the

Care Package, Anonymous constructs a community of hacktivists who participate as a

decentralized, non-hierarchical group of vigilantes. However, in order to truly

appropriate the term hacktivism to include a wide variety of people, Anonymous must

also respond to negative articulations of hacktivism. When defined by the state,

corporations, and infosecurity agencies, hacktivism is a term that is synonymous with

cyber-terrorism.[8] Altering the meaning of the term hacktivism is rhetorical not only

because it is a controversy over language but also because in redefining that concept,

Anonymous rhetorically constitutes an inclusive and engaging community of hacktivists

in order to recruit members.

Activists have long recognized the revolutionary characteristics of the Internet,

but may not be especially able to harness its powers efficiently.[9] Enter hackers,

thoroughly acquainted with knowledge regarding the abilities and limitations of

technology, digital systems, and hardware.[10] Activists and hackers share an opponent:

those who seek to limit access to the free exchange of ideas by surveillance, punitive

measures, or blatant censorship. For hackers, that "techno-political" enemy is bigger than one law, one government, or one corporation.[11] Despite authoritarian efforts to restrict or surveil access to software, data, or the Internet in general, the "emergence of techno-politics has emboldened each community and provides a conduit for electronic activism."[12]

Hackers and activists also share a community feature where identity is constantly negotiated and renegotiated. Hackers have their own language, etiquette, and through internal deliberation, produce digital manifestos to structure and advance both the hacking community and the Internet community. Early hackers were engaged in an internal debate over the very foundational characteristics of hacking.[13] Although the hacktivist label may not have been used at the time, at least a vocal minority viewed hacking as an ethical, if not political, endeavor.[14] Further, for some, hacking was not simply an action—it was a lifestyle of applying creative solutions to problems beyond the technological sphere. However, in the beginning hackers playfully or inadvertently toyed around with machines and technology as well as corporate economic power and government regulations right along with it. The term hacktivism was coined in an attempt to describe hacking that was more overtly political.

There are disputes over when the term hacktivism was first used. The first use of hacktivism is attributed to Cult of the Dead Cow (cDc), a group which describes itself as an "innovative force in the computer underground."[15] cDc member Oxblood Ruffin, who also co-wrote the *Hacktivismo Manifesto,* claims that the term hacktivism was first used in a group email in 1998.[16] Journalist Michelle Delio of *WIRED* magazine contends that the concept of hacktivism, if not used by name, was first implied in John Perry Barlow's

"Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace" in 1996—a document that is included in the Anonymous Care Package.[17] Media scholar Paul A. Taylor suggests that in the mid 1990s, the seventh generation of hackers evolved into what we now consider hacktivists.[18] However it started, hacktivism is a concept that remains in use today.

Modern day hacktivists are cyber activists who often proclaim that the Internet (and technology, more generally) serves as a mechanism through which resistance may occur. Cate Palczewski writes that hacktivists "try to expand access to information, rather than limit it, as a means of empowerment."[19] Hacktivists may operate legally or illegally by writing and distributing software, defacing target websites, organizing virtual or digital sit-ins, disseminating information, and instructing others on how to use technology to resist repression.[20] Like hacking, hacktivism not only represents a broad variety of actions but also describes a community currently under construction, where meaning and collective identity is constituted through action as well as discourse. So while hacktivism is typically seen as applying technological hacking tactics for political purposes, the meaning of hacktivism is currently being reconfigured through the performances of hacktivists. One such rearticulation of hacktivism occurs within the Anonymous Care Package.

To summarize plainly, hacktivism is rhetorical because it is performative, creative, and constructive.[21] Hacktivism is an open and inclusive concept. It not only represents a broad variety of actions, but also describes a system of creating shared meaning and identity. As Gabriella Coleman suggests, hacker and hacktivist politics:

> far exceed traditional liberal articulations, such as those of freedom of speech. Their politics convey other messages and are fundamentally grounded in acting through building: writing and releasing free software, building technical infrastructure for secure communication for use in leaking documents without fear

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of discovery, coding the software through which they communicate, configuring servers so as to erase logs, and, as Anonymous has brought dramatically to bear, even expressing dissent technologically.[22]

Hacktivism is thus a malleable concept and community, and tracing its history marks multiple articulations and rearticulations of the term—from pure hacking to building a community both online and offline. Anonymous' rearticulation of hacktivist identity expands the definition of hacktivism beyond the digital sphere. Further, the Care Package responds to negative rhetoric about the collective to alter its public image, a move that also bolsters recruitment efforts.

First, because of the constructionist and creative nature of Internet culture and the constant evolution of technology, hacktivism is a term open for negotiation. Through the Anonymous Care Package, Anonymous resignifies hacktivism to expand beyond an esoteric world where activism is potentially confined to technical actions traditionally associated with hacking. Instead of restricting hacking to software writing or building digital infrastructure, Anonymous constructs a more inclusive definition that extends hacktivism to more participants. The Care Package weaves a vaguely anti-corporatist, pro-populist narrative that also invites audience identification and participation. Because Anonymous' renegotiation of hacktivism tends to offer more activist roles for more individuals, the Care Package serves as a way to recruit new members.

Second, the Anonymous Care Package affirms a positive understanding of hacktivism against negative definitions. Security experts and governments refer to hacktivism negatively, describing digital activists as "cyber criminal groups that keep IT executives up at night."[23] Constructing terrifying, violent, fear-inducing images of hacktivists is in a security corporation's best interest: it turns the public against activists

and secures them business defending against threats.[24] Rhetorically creating hacktivists

as the monster under your bed or as criminals waging a cyber-war triggers a defense

mechanism where a government may have public support in defeating so-called cyber-

terrorists. This narrative is much more operationally useful for security forces because

"prosecutors…are more apt to pursue cases where public discourse supports their

action."[25] By constructing a positive hacktivist identity and then encouraging its

performance, Anonymous rhetoric in the Care Package may positively rearticulate

hacktivism in the public sphere as justifiable and necessary dissent rather than "cyber-

terrorism."[26]

In conclusion, hacktivism is rhetorical because it is caught in what philosophy

professor Peter Ludlow calls "lexical warfare."[27] However, for Anonymous hacktivism is

rhetorical in the way the organization's texts use the concept to constitute audiences and

compel action. It is important to understand how hacktivism is being defined because its

use can dictate the goals and methods of potential members. More pointedly, hacktivism

can be renegotiated through performances. The Anonymous Care Package encourages

future members to participate and perform a hacktivist identity. As such, the Anonymous

Care Package is an ideal location to transmit meaning, demonstrate collective value, and

recruit future members. The following sections suggest ways in which the contents of the

Care Package shape the meaning of hacktivism.

The Anonymous Care Package as a Generative and Instructional Text

The Anonymous Care Package was released in June 2011. A set of digital

artifacts, the Care Package is hosted primarily on YourAnonNews' Tumblr (a blogging

and social network website) and Pirate Bay (a website that facilitates file sharing)

accounts. The YourAnonNews Tumblr features a section labeled "Get Involved;" the Care Package is the first listed entry, available for immediate download in a .zip format. The Care Package includes digital image files, tools and manuals to maintain anonymity while surfing the Internet, and guides to protect oneself and others in the event of a public riot or an oppressive crackdown.

It is difficult to know exactly who constructed the Anonymous Care Package. Members are instructed to hide any trace of their identity when operating under the Anonymous banner. Authorship is credited to Anonymous as a whole. However, we can make some educated guesses about the individuals who constructed the Care Package. First, the Care Package includes a group of documents, images, and texts from multiple authors. Only a handful of the documents are claimed by Anonymous. Thus, the Anons who created the Care Package surveyed a range of documents and had some authority in deciding which made it into the Care Package. Further, an Anon or set of Anons familiar with the political and technical exigencies of that era likely chose the Care Package's contents. Judging by the contents, the authors were interested in providing a basic manual for relative novices. Those who served Anonymous from a public-relations standpoint (rather than in a technical hacking role) may then have created the Care Package for dissemination. Finally, we know the context of the Care Package, which may have shaped the constructors' choice of materials. A discussion of the socio-political exigency follows in the paragraphs below.

The years 2010 and 2011 were tumultuous and transformative for global politics, and by extension, Anonymous. This is true partially because Anonymous' actions were responsive to the socio-political climate at the time. In the year 2010, the 99% movement

that would eventually evolve into Occupy began to take root, and organizers used social media and other digital technology to raise awareness and publicize the movement.[28] In January 2011, Tunisians ousted President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali after a series of organized protests—but not before the Tunisian government cracked down and jailed cyber-dissidents filtering information about violence in the country. Tunisia was the first of many countries in the Middle East and North Africa to unseat its leader in what scholars and journalists have dubbed the Arab Spring. After Tunisia's uprising, Egyptians occupied Tahrir Square in a moment that seemed to crystallize the importance of protest and organized action in the twenty-first century. Within a few months, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak stepped down.

It was in this climate that the Anonymous Care Package was released for multiple audiences participating in the above movements and protests. By the time of these events, Anonymous had increased in notoriety and number.[29] The collective began to function as vigilantes, enacting swift (if not vicious) justice against targets. Anonymous released a care package for many of these events responding to specific threats for dissidents. For instance, the care package produced for Operation Tunisia responded to the crackdown of dissidents and included information on how to remain anonymous online.[30] Operation Egypt's care package offered suggestions on how to organize and safely clash with riot police.[31] The hivemind, as chaotic as it was, had demonstrated proficiency in planning, organizing, and carrying out attacks. A singular Anonymous playbook did not exist, but there are certainly identifiable trends in tactics during late 2010 through 2011. Despite some Anons' disgust at the moral or ethical turn in the

collective, Anonymous had placed itself solidly in the realm of political hacktivism. The Anonymous Care Package will be read in this light.

The Anonymous Care Package is a .zip file of documents and applications produced with no real instructions. For purposes of discussion, I have grouped the documents into three thematic categories. The first category is branding material—mostly visual elements that I believe represent the most overt attempt at eliciting audience identification. The second category represents the largest set of materials—digital tools for dissent and protection. Finally, a category that may be called "taking it to the streets" provides how-to guides and manuals for activists when repression manifests in the physical public sphere. Collectively, these pieces function as an instructive and generative text about how to become a hacktivist and identify as an Anon.

Branding and Aesthetics: Anonymous is You!

Anonymous receives much of its social and political pull from its reputation.[32] For all of its operations over the years, Anonymous has always been more bark than bite. Technology journalist James Ball argues that even "at its peak it was far from the most dangerous" hacking group, even if the collective was wildly influential.[33] In the Care Package, its branding and aesthetics help to create and maintain that reputation. First, the Care Package features a printable, cut and paste assemblage of an Anonymous-identified mask. Originally featured in the dystopian movie *V for Vendetta*, the Guy Fawkes mask began circulation amongst Anons in 2006.[34] Second, Anonymous-made artwork featuring Anonymous logos and symbols are included. Together, these images present an iconography that demonstrates group values through symbols and prompts audiences to identify with them. In addition, these particular images invite audience participation and

foster a rebellious sensibility that can bolster recruitment. Finally, these digital artifacts

transmit symbolic meanings that help constitute Anonymous' vision of hacktivism.

The Mask

The inclusion of a printable, cut and paste Guy Fawkes mask is a powerful

indication that Anonymous is interested in rhetorically reconfiguring hacktivism and

inviting new members to participate in and identify with the collective. Indeed, the Guy

Fawkes mask functions as a symbolic tool for building solidarity and meaning within the

collective. The symbolic properties of the mask also help to create an emotionally-

charged experience for would-be participants; providing a cut and paste image file

instead of a picture of the mask suggests would-be members actively participate instead

of simply passively interacting with the image. Inviting the audience to become involved

in the collective fosters the opportunity for low-risk expression of a hacktivist identity.

In addition, by expanding the amount and type of people who may participate, the Care

Package expands and defends hacktivism, a key recruitment technique.

Before Anonymous used the Guy Fawkes mask to represent the collective, it

appeared in the 2006 film *V for Vendetta*.[35] In the film, a vigilante character named "V"

dons the Guy Fawkes mask as he enacts a reign of terror against futuristic dystopian

England. The overture of his actions is the bombing of a criminal court building in

London in order to "awaken the local citizenry from their political stupor."[36] "V"

functions as a sort of celebrated anti-hero, a dissident who uses the tools of a fascist

government—fear, intimidation, violence—against itself. It was a box office hit, and

quickly became a cultural metaphor about the reversibility of terror in the aftermath of

9/11.[37]

1/2 (row1 col1)   2/2 (row1 col2)

Figure 1 The Guy Fawkes Mask

Using the main character's popularity, Anonymous appropriated the mask,

allegedly prompted by "the need to remain anonymous at live protests."[38] Gregg Housh,

one of the only public Anonymous spokespeople, denied that the mask was chosen for its

connection to *V for Vendetta* or Guy Fawkes, reporting that the mask was chosen instead

for its cheapness and wide availability.[39] However, by the time that Anonymous had

begun using it as a symbol for the collective, the mask carried symbolic connotations.

The film helped circulate a counter-factual narrative about Guy Fawkes and anarchy. For

many audiences, the mask came to signify dissent, rebellion, and depending on whom

you asked, terrorism or justice.[40]

Anonymous could benefit from the increased circulation of the Guy Fawkes

mask as a cultural artifact and icon because it helped direct audience identification. The

figure of the mask was a symbolic touchstone for many audiences because it was "stark,

simple, and vaguely ominous in a way that's compelling."[41] Adopting an icon that is at

once simple and vague offers utility to a collective that champions multiple different

causes. Rebellion and dissent are malleable ideas open to interpretation and

reinterpretation—a key task that Anonymous faces in pushing against hacktivism defined

as cyber-terrorism. Due to *V for Vendetta's* popularity and the subsequent circulation of

Guy Fawkes as an icon, audiences may already have revolutionary sensibilities about the

mask. As Brian L. Ott suggests, *V for Vendetta* issued a call to action, "mobilizing

viewers at a visceral level to reject political apathy and to enact a democratic politics of

resistance and revolt against any state that would seek to silence dissent."[42] This inertia is

harnessed in the Care Package, in the form of the Anonymous mask. One anon describes

the mask as a "symbol for what Anonymous stands for, of fighting evil governments."[43]

Cultural uptake helped the mask enact a call for resistance, even if it need not clarify

how, why, or when.

Studying the distribution of the mask reveals and confirms a number of

character traits for this elusive collective. Anonymous had repeatedly rejected copyright

and anti-piracy law.[44] In an interesting twist, Time Warner owned copyright of the mask

adopted by the collective. As a result, the mask produced a great deal of money for Time

Warner.[45] Anonymous refused to recognize Time Warner's copyright, freely using the

image whenever it deemed appropriate. This symbolic gesture, however, did not reverse

the fact that an aggressive supporter of online anti-piracy legislation was profiting wildly

off of the Anonymous mask.[46] One elegant but illegal solution was to offer a do-it-

yourself version of the mask for free in the Care Package. This rhetorical gesture against

Time Warner also supplied audiences a chance to join in a symbolic rejection of copyright law and anti-piracy measures by bypassing the usual purchasing channels. In sum, both the form and the content of the mask reject copyright and anti-piracy law and function as symbolic affirmations of the freedom of information in the digital and physical sphere.

The mask also initiates a discussion of one of the core concepts of the collective and its brand: anonymity. The mask can be read as an affirmation of anonymity as a collectively-shared and celebrated value. It is true that the Guy Fawkes mask bears culturally constructed meaning.[47] However, in its most basic sense, the mask is meant to obscure identity. Indeed, inherent in every mask is a sense of anonymity, placing the self under a temporary disguise. The inclusion of a mask in the Anonymous Care Package symbolically encourages potential Anons to subvert or suppress their personal identities when interfacing with the public sphere. More generally, most of the files in the Anonymous Care Package provide advice to keep one safe. Anons hold that safety online begins with anonymity.[48] It would be an error of judgment not to read the dispersal of the mask in this light. Regardless of Anonymous' original intent, Anons may use the mask to obscure their identity from the public while still engaging and interacting with it. Thus, in protests and digitally disseminated videos, Anons can use the mask as a way of defining their allegiances while simultaneously guarding themselves.

There is historical and legal precedent for protecting the collective identity of dissenting groups. In 1958, the Supreme Court held that protecting the right to free speech and assembly also required the right to keeping one's identity secret.[49] When disclosing identities of group members would adversely affect membership or activities

of the group, the right to anonymity is protected. Revealing the identities of members of

Anonymous would hold negative consequence for the collective and its individual actors.

Anonymity is required in a world where hacktivism is seen as crime rather than protest.

The United States government has a poor track record of protecting the rights of

whistleblowers and vocal cyber-dissidents.[50] Anonymous has experienced these punitive

measures first hand as a handful of Anons have been charged with felony hacking

charges.[51] Thus, anonymity and the masking of one's face is a practical matter. I read

the inclusion of the mask in the Care Package as a symbolic and pragmatic tool for

maintaining anonymity and by extension, protecting dissent.

Still, Anonymous' inclusion of the mask remains only a symbolic gesture of

safety for those individuals "in the streets." This gesture may not even keep its members

safe. In the very same Care Package as the mask, the Anonymous Security Starter

Handbook advises against identifying yourself as Anonymous-affiliated in real life.

Since cultural uptake of the mask in 2006, the mask represents Anonymous as a

collective. Thus, wearing it in public may be ill advised. Connecting the identity you use

to live and interact in the world with your online digital persona removes an important

barrier against punitive measures. Anonymity is a much easier pursuit online, and

jeopardizing your secret and often illegal lifestyle by wearing or otherwise advertising an

Anonymous mask may not be especially desired. Further, if a member truly printed out,

cut and pasted, and wore this mask, it would only marginally protect her identity. This is

especially true if we take for granted the rough political climate Anonymous constructs

elsewhere in the Care Package. Thus, although safety is admittedly a paramount concern

for this cyber-dissident group, the inclusion of a mask functions to create a symbolic

experience for the would-be hacktivist, not a material protection.

If the mask cannot truly guarantee anonymity or safety for members, it *can*

potentially assemble Anons together in a uniform expression of solidarity and identity.

Generally, Anonymous traffics in the rhetoric of subverting the self for the good of the

greater collective.[52] Anonymous members are encouraged to give credit to Anonymous

for any operations they execute, or claim no credit at all.[53] Thus, individual identity gives

way to that of the collective. Prioritizing group identity over self serves two main

purposes. The first is to rhetorically create the image of Anonymous as a large, looming,

unified front against threats.[54] Second, it rhetorically expresses decentralization and a

lack of hierarchy. If every Anon member wears the same mask and there is easy access

to the mask, Anonymous can be anywhere and anyone. Similarly, since individual

identity is subverted, the mask equalizes members. For new recruits intimidated by

"hacking" proper, symbolic unity and sameness is a powerful recruiting argument. In

sum, the mask can function as synecdoche—the image of one Anonymous mask conjures

up the collective. Alternatively, it can rhetorically structure the collective as open, equal,

and inviting. Either of these phenomena might powerfully attract potential recruits to the

collective.

The inclusion of a mask—the Guy Fawkes mask in particular—may seem like an

odd choice for the Anon(s) constructing the Care Package. After all, the rest of the Care

Package consists of tools and technical manuals. However, the Anonymous mask has

become a shining beacon, a rallying point for Anons.[55] Read this way, the mask serves as

a rearticulation of hacktivism for two reasons. First, the inclusion of the Guy Fawkes

mask invites cultural revisionism from audiences who may implicitly identify the icon with rebellion or even terrorism. One of the most important rhetorical exigencies facing Anonymous is the ability to push against negative definitions of hacktivism by rearticulating it positively. Allowing average persons to wear and thus change the narrative of Anonymous is an interesting way to position individual performances that speak for the collective. Second, the mask, especially the do-it-yourself aspect of the file, seems to indicate that Anons imagine a critical role for hacktivists in interacting with others online and in real-life. The mask is a contingency plan for maintaining anonymity in public, even if it is not the most protective. Finally, because the mask is presented as a do-it-yourself project appropriating a copyrighted image, the very act of having or wearing the mask is an Anonymous action. The mask is a simple, low-risk tool that allows users to identify with the group.

Partly as a result of the mask's invitation to identify with the group, the mask serves as a recruitment tool. Although it is clearly difficult to demonstrate, there is a playful, engaging experience to owning or having a mask. Being a part (even symbolically) of something rebellious in and of itself may inspire individuals to join. The cut and paste form of the image also invites a particularly active experience, bringing the digital symbolism to the public sphere. Second, the symbolic uniformity mask may entice members to identify with Anonymous through the specter of equality. The organization is known for its lack of hierarchy. The mask symbolizes this value and alongside its rebellious connotation, potential Anons see the mask as that which allows them to define the Anonymous experience for themselves. When Anonymous can stand for almost anything, almost anyone can be Anonymous. Finally, the uniform use of the

mask, suggested by this Care Package, enacts an environment of community and belonging. Uniformity also encourages coherence and unity in an otherwise decentralized unit.

Artwork

Beyond the Guy Fawkes mask, the Anonymous Care Package includes other visual images. These images are included in a separate digital folder Anonymous dubbed Artwork. Symbolically, these images share a great deal in common with the Guy Fawkes mask. First, they reference iconography that Anonymous has used widely. Anonymous employs the stylized image of a headless man in a business suit often in social network settings, Anonymous produced videos, and in other group communication. In addition, the media has taken up these symbols to refer to Anonymous in popular press pieces.[56] These images provide a malleable, yet still coherent set of icons for audience identification. They invite participation from the audience and symbolically represent some Anonymous values. However, unlike the Guy Fawkes mask, these images are unique to Anonymous and may not have the same widespread cultural circulation. Still, the icons contained in the digital image files have come to stand in for the collective, and are relatively long-established symbols in Anonymous media.[57]

The inclusion of these images continues the branding and identification experience for audiences. In particular, such branding attracts potential members who are interested in participating with Anonymous but may not possess hacking skills. Scholars and reporters have suggested that part of Anonymous' strength is in creating and wildly disseminating a brand.[58] Journalist Parmy Olson maintains that such a powerful brand comes from Anonymous' decentralized but still unified culture. She writes that

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"Anonymous uses its collectively-created imagery and name to project its power and attract new followers," especially those who may not be technically skilled in hacking.[59] These images inspire identification, encourage loyalty, and compel action.

There are several symbols in Anonymous' arsenal. Most of them are a version of one particular icon. The Anon brand begins with the figure of a man in a dark business suit and tie, with hands crossed either in front of his body or behind his back. The image is cut at the waist. Where a head might be, the image presents either a large question mark or nothing at all. In the Care Package, these images are presented in a high-quality, complete format, unlike the cut and paste style of the mask. Three of the digital files are labeled "ANONYMOUS;" one image only features the Anonymous logo. Because Anons "follow and play with established patterns," there are multiple variations of these icons in the Care Package.[60] There are two major variations of these images. The first is the image of the man in a business suit, this time made up of smaller men in business suits joined together (see Figure 2). The other major variation is the Anonymous man in a business suit, placed in a circle, transposed on top of a globe flanked by the stylized branches of an olive tree (see Figure 3). This image recalls the logo used by the United Nations. Together, these images represent the iconography contained in the Anonymous Care Package.

In order to tease out how Anonymous rhetorically reconfigures hacktivism to recruit members and alter its public image, we must first consider the basic logo in a bit more depth. Anonymous plays with the image of a man in a business suit. The figure of the business suit can be read from both a classed and gendered perspective. Again, the basic image is of a man in a neat suit and tie combination. This figure features

prominent, broad shoulders and suggests a male figure. Hackers have a reputation of being a male-dominant group, although there are more female hackers now than ever before.[61] Still, both the Guy Fawkes mask and this image present the male form as the only node of identification. If this image is meant to be unifying and representative, this particular image may not be inclusive of all who act under the Anonymous banner. This representation of Anonymous constitutes the audience as male by only offering masculine icons. Indeed, the image plays on the archetype of a powerful corporate businessman.

Consider also the prominence of the business suit as authoritative in class division. The business suit culturally signifies authority and wealth as evidenced by the labels "blue collar" and "white collar" to mean working class and those of a higher occupational status, respectively. Culturally, our most powerful public icons (such as lawmakers and business people) tend to wear suits as a uniform identity marker. Thus, the image reenacts the authority society typically engenders to middle or upper class men. Audiences may perceive this image as a classed symbol: representative of power, of action, and of choice. Even if Anonymous' intent was to be subversive, this image may recreate the archetype of the wealthy, white man taking action. Further, the uniformity of the suit reinforces a collective vision of the world. Rhetorically, this image expresses notions of power and control that audiences may want to emulate, even if in real life they identify as the opposite. Like the mask of Guy Fawkes, Anonymous appropriates popular symbols in order to articulate collective visions of the organization. The images themselves highlight uniformity as a key feature of the group's identity. In part, that identity emerges in relationship to the simplicity of identifying with Anonymous insofar

Figure 2 Business Man Assemblage

as using these files is quite easy. Given that Anonymous depicts hacktivism as a shared

identity that emerges when one adopts the vision of the group, downloading these files

might, in small ways, affirm the collective's understanding of digital activism. In

particular, taking up these icons is as simple as having a copy on your desktop or cutting

and pasting an Anonymous mask. Audiences inaugurate the possibility of becoming

hacktivists through accessing these simple, but powerful images. Yet, while Anonymous

already has called upon a traditional conception of authority in their icons, in many ways

the images refuse an overarching, authoritative identity. The most prominent alteration is

Figure 3 Anonymous Globe/Map Logo

the images' lack of a head or a head replaced with a question mark. This rhetorically

references the notion of identity or a lack thereof. Indeed, the business suit itself

represents uniformity, of fitting into a classed and gendered narrative. However,

Anonymous robs the viewer of a face that could distinguish the figure in the suit, and in

doing so, marks anonymity in a visual form. Furthermore, the absence of a head and the

image of the diffuse business suits simultaneously symbolize decentralization and a lack

of hierarchy in the collective. The mask supplants the individual identity of the person

acting, making him or her virtually indistinguishable from anyone else. Leaders become

visually identical to followers. In this way, the mask can be seen as a rhetorical gesture

that enacts a level of equality (or, a specter of equality) because everyone is perceived as

the same and thus, ranks the same. Finally, the result of the image is slightly ominous—

because the reader cannot know who Anonymous is, Anons can be everyone and

everywhere. Replacing an individual's identity with that of Anonymous as a whole not

only yields symbolic power to the collective, but prevents external audiences from

knowing who, for sure, is under the mask. Anyone could be Anonymous, including

friends, family members, coworkers, and acquaintances. Anons' use of these symbols

help construct group notions of self as a diffuse assemblage acting together to carry out

the will of the collective.

Anonymous also subverts the traditional cultural understanding of the business

suit icon in its alterations to the logo itself. One of the images, the Business Man

Assemblage referenced in Figure 2, is clearly making an argument to the audience

regarding the decentralized, fluid nature of the collective. The icons combine to form a

larger suited man. Others are spread across the page, still referenced as Anonymous but

not currently constitutive of the collective. The argument here appears to be twofold.

First, those who constitute Anonymous shape its experience. The collective is

representative of those who participate. Second, it may express to audiences that the

collective is fluid, and participants move in and outside of its boundaries as they see fit.

Put another way, members choose to join or depart based on their own intentions and

goals. Those who cooperate, then, control Anonymous' hacktivist identity and shape the

direction of the collective.

The Anonymous globe/map logo also helps to constitute a hacktivist identity that

empowers individuals to create change. The Anonymous globe/map logo is clearly a

play on the logo used by the United Nations. That Anonymous would use (and alter) an

image produced by an international organization suggests to audiences that Anonymous

is global rather than confined to the Western world. Anons' appropriation of the UN logo

may also be read as a tongue-in cheek critique of state-based authority. The countries

that exist on the original logo are replaced with the headless figure, perhaps meant to

represent to potential members that the government is no longer about physical

territories, but is instead about assemblages and collectives of people. Governments are

then depicted as nearly obsolete, and authority for decision making placed instead in the

hands of the mysterious business suit man. The figure is used to represent Anonymous.

Because Anonymous could be anyone and everyone, this articulation of the logo invites

the audience to imagine a world that is truly governed by the people and for the people.

In so doing, this image rhetorically extends hacktivism to the people. Hacktivists need

not be elite hackers or politicians to make change. Through the juxtaposition of the

image, audiences are invited and encouraged to question the authority of institutions that

speak for them.

Thus far I have suggested different ways audiences may read and identify with the

images contained in the Care Package. A majority of the images in the Care Package are

labeled as computer desktop wallpapers for personal use of Anonymous supporters.

However read in the context of a movement, these images may be likened to protest signs

or flyers for participants to carry or disseminate. These images represent Anonymous

values of anonymity, decentralization, and appropriation. They espouse a generic

critique of the government. They also offer a location for establishing community, as the

multiple articulations of the icons still harken back to Anonymous. And although

computer wallpapers are not necessarily public articulations of values or identity as are

protest signs, these images traffic in an ethos of rebellion. The wallpapers do so in several ways. First, they appropriate common icons pertaining to power, inviting audiences to question the status quo. Next, they provide audiences a chance to participate in rebellion by simply using or disseminating one of these images. Finally, they contribute to the overall ethos of Anonymous by supporting a rebellious hacktivist identity, one that is marked by decentralization powered by mass-action. In sum, these images signify meanings that are coherent yet malleable, inviting audience identification with Anonymous' goals and strategies.

The ability to identify with these images also serves as a recruitment measure. By symbolizing values through images that are vague and can be resignified by users, audiences may be prompted to take up those same values and redefine them for themselves. Additionally, these appropriations of traditional images demarcate an enemy (authority, governance, control) while offering an alternative (participation in Anonymous). Given the rhetorical altering of the UN logo, we can ascertain that Anonymous would demonize other governmental institutions that speak on behalf of the Care Package's audience. Further, Anon's appropriation of traditional authoritative figures and icons such as men in business suits suggests that Anonymous rejects conceptions of power based on status. The Guy Fawkes mask symbolically equalizes leaders with followers, affirming a decentralized, non-hierarchical worldview. As such, it appears the enemy outlined by Anonymous is twofold: centralized authoritarian governments who do not listen to the people they represent; and a hierarchical system that allows some individuals to dominate or exert power over others. After naming the enemy, hacktivists are then more focused in agitating against them.

Finally, these images encourage readers to identify with and participate in Anonymous. First, the images define key characteristics of hacktivism. Namely, participants should be willing to question institutions and individuals who have power over their lives. Hacktivism, as suggested by these images, is a decentralized, uniform, populist movement where the masses reclaim the power wielded by a few. Anonymity becomes a branding tool, and audiences are invited to rail against the system by identifying with and circulating these icons. These images are meant to function synecdochally, as is each individual Anon: they are representative of the whole. Second, by lowering the recruitment standard to simply using desktop wallpaper, anyone can be a hacktivist by merely downloading or distributing these images. Audiences enact a hacktivist identity through the sheer experience of making these icons knowable. Finally, these icons also symbolically affirm equality and unity for potential recruits given that the collective upholds a uniform identity while simultaneously emphasizing individuality.

Tools for Digital Dissent.

If there is one thing a majority of Anons can agree on, it is that the Internet should remain an open and unrestricted space for the exchange of information and ideas.[62] Many Anons mobilize in response to limited access to the Internet. Through the Anonymous Care Package, Anonymous constructs two distinct but interrelated threats to the reader's autonomy and safety in the digital sphere. After demonstrating these threats as real and legitimate, these documents and tools offer activist roles for audience members to adopt. In so doing, the Anonymous Care Package provides a variety of ways for the reader to participate in Anonymous. These roles engage individuals at nearly all skill levels and as

such, rhetorically alter the concept of hacktivism from being only attainable by the technological elite to also include novices.

In order to analyze the rhetorical moves Anonymous makes, I will first describe this subsection of the Care Package. In this folder are mostly Microsoft Word documents describing how to stay safe online. A manifesto borrowed from Electronic Frontier Foundation co-founder John Perry Barlow dubbed the "Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace" frames Anonymous' call to reject censorship and control of the Internet. The Anonymous Security Starter Handbook is the only Anonymous-identified text in this subsection. It provides advice on Internet safety and how to perform basic group functions such as using Internet Relay Chat. Also included are several guides for bypassing censorship. These guides establish the importance of freedom of speech and an unrestricted access to the Internet. Finally, several safety and security extensions for the Firefox Internet Web browser remind the reader that control of the Internet impacts the personal wellbeing of the lay user.

The digital dissent section of the Anonymous Care Package describes two main threats in the digital sphere. The first, as evidenced by the several manuals on the topic, is censorship of information. Censorship can manifest in many ways, but functionally means control or restriction on the Internet. Such restriction dampens the utility of the Internet for the free-exchange of information, which Anonymous has routinely defended. Anonymous identifies surveillance as a second threat to the audience. According to the Care Package, everyone must be concerned with governments and other corporations watching their online moves. As the manual maintains, online tracking systems do not need your permission to record your online activities—and they routinely do.[63] Anons

and other dissidents who participate in illegal actions online may be especially fearful of tracking or surveillance. Thus, the need for anonymity and constant vigilance is outlined in almost all of the documents describing the digital sphere.

The "Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace" touches on both the issue of censorship and surveillance. Read as a sort of manifesto, this document provides an interesting frame for the rest of the documents for digital dissent. This document argues that cyberspace is a separate entity from the physical world, and that it is unbound by physical materialities. As a result, cyberspace need not recognize the legitimacy of previously existing governments, or their laws, because they do not apply to the digital world. Barlow, a longtime digital activist, writes that the Internet is a progressive utopia where collective knowledge can exist and be shared. For him, collective wisdom is perhaps the highest pursuit of the digital realm. However, Barlow continues, cyberspace is impeded in achieving those goals by attacks from "Governments of the Industrial World," who attempt to regulate or restrict access to the cybersphere.[64] The most "hostile and colonial measures" a government could apply to the digital sphere are silencing communication or forcing Internet citizens to comply with arbitrary laws.

Anonymous, too, maintains that the Internet is under attack. In *Bypassing Censorship*, readers are led to surmise that censorship occurs now and for seemingly innocuous reasons. The introduction to this manual summarizes that,

> [t]he kinds of people and institutions who try to restrict the Internet use of specific people are as varied as their goals. They include parents, schools, commercial companies, operators of Internet café's or Internet Service Providers, and governments at different levels.…Even countries with generally strong protections for free speech sometimes try to limit or monitor Internet use in connection with suppressing pornography, so-called "hate speech", terrorism and other criminal activities, or the infringement of copyright laws.[65]

Through such rhetoric, hacktivists are called to agitate against any person or system that prevents access to information even for seemingly innocuous reasons.

Anonymous may have been compelled to inform an audience on authoritative suspension of communications by the socio-economic climate at the time of the Care Package's release. Recall that the Anonymous Care Package was produced and distributed around the time of the Arab Spring and Occupy movements. Anonymous participated in the Arab Spring movements by assisting citizens whose Internet access was restricted by leaders. The collective also organized a flash mob after Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) suspended cellphone service in the middle of a protest.[66] Given this background, the Care Package insists that censorship is a legitimate, ongoing threat. It calls hacktivists to act against any and all encroachments on the Internet.

Second, the Anonymous Care Package represents censorship as a free speech issue. According to the Care Package, both the right to research and the right to share information or dissenting viewpoints are inhibited by censorship. The *Handbook for Bloggers and Cyber-Dissidents* outlines the ways in which government, corporations, and media can control both access to the Internet as well as the transmission ideas digitally. The ability to research and express opinions online are contextualized as free speech issues. In "Bypassing Censorship," the free exchange of ideas is referenced as akin to a right enumerated in the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, as that which ought to be guaranteed to all citizens of the world.[67] Describing censorship as a free speech issue expands Anonymous' potential audience because it is a human right, not just a digital concern. Therefore, the purview of Anonymous is not only responding to threats in the technical sphere but to agitate against any act of repression wherever it

may manifest. Anonymous' rhetorical move here has two implications. First, hacktivism is extended from the digital sphere to the physical sphere, and it operates within both to respond to threats. Second, hacktivism is posed as a justified response to those who would deny humanity their rights and as such responds to critics that demonize hacktivism as mere cyber-terrorism.

Third, Anonymous marks surveillance as an imminent threat that requires community protection. Everyday, Internet users are subject to online tracking. According to NPR News, "nearly all of the most commonly visited websites gather information in real time about the behavior of online users" which is then sold to advertisers.[68] "The Anonymous Security Starter Handbook" advises the reader to "hide their traces" online, noting "the question is not whether you are paranoid, but whether you are paranoid enough?"[69] According to Anonymous, dissidents must be especially concerned about surveillance. Of course, hacktivists who incorporate illegal tactics require anonymity to be protected from punitive measures. However, as the *Handbook for Cyber-dissidents* notes, generic expression of dissent can lead to surveillance.[70] In addition, they note that use of circumvention technology—technology to get around digital barriers—is also illegal in some areas. Thus, surveillance is a concern for hackers, activists, and everyday users. The Anonymous Care Package repeatedly cites anonymity as the most reliable measure to keep members safe online. Such action maintains that Anonymous' understanding of hacktivism requires community members who support one another. When potential audiences decide how to react to surveillance, Anonymous has offered not only suggestions for how to be safe, but a community where members watch out for each other.

The Anonymous Care Package constructs a somewhat passive aspect to the role of hacktivist. For instance, the Care Package suggests that being a knowledgeable member is a key characteristic of a hacktivist. Yet, audiences are asked to fight censorship and surveillance by simply learning how different organizations control and manipulate the Internet. Out of all of the activist roles offered by the Care Package, perhaps this is the most low-key and passive option. Having a basic understanding of how the Internet functions means that an individual can also recognize when his or her access is being restricted in some way. Later, the individual may be more likely to respond to digital repression if they are aware of it. Thus, Anonymous' vision of hacktivism is a kind of consciousness-raising. Once again, the Care Package creates a role for audiences to enact a hacktivist identity without much personal burden or skill needed.

Additionally, the rhetoric of the Care Package suggests that activism need not require special planning but can be part of users' everyday Internet habits. Enacting a hacktivist identity may be as simple as safely browsing the web. The Care Package includes several browser add-ons to aid in this construction of hacktivist action. Add-ons enable users to more safely browse the web. They "let you add new features and change the way your browser or application works," in order to customize your Internet experience.[71] In the context of the Anonymous Care Package, Anonymous provides a basic set of add-ons that prevent various entities from tracking online moves. Some of the tools disable malicious webpage content, others prevent software access to computer information. Use of these add-ons is a low risk, low effort way to maintain some anonymity and privacy online. The inclusion of these browser add-ons reinforces a

narrative where individuals carrying out simple acts may identify as hacktivists—

activism is not a separate event, but instead becomes part of a person's everyday actions.

The Care Package's construction of hacktivism as routine action is also

demonstrated by its inclusion of a Tor tutorial. Frequently referenced in the Anonymous

Care Package, Tor is free software that makes it difficult for outsiders to track your

online communications back to your computer. Tor provides anonymity and is discussed

as a protective measure in the Anonymous Security Handbook as well as *Bypassing*

Censorship and *A Handbook for Bloggers and Cyber-dissidents*. However, setting up

and using Tor is a bit more complicated than simply adding an extension to your browser.

Perhaps because of this, Anonymous also includes a video-guide on how to install and

use Tor on your computer in the Care Package. For its extra effort, though, Tor provides

a much greater level of protection and anonymity online. According to the Anonymous

Care Package, anonymity is a key characteristic of a successful hacktivist. The inclusion

of Tor software and a how-to video further demonstrates that hacktivism can be a routine

event in the lives of participants. Rebellion and dissent are not separate events for which

participants must plan. Tools such as Tor and browser add-ons reclaim activism as

habitual and perhaps even ordinary actions in an individual's daily routine.

According to the Care Package, audiences may also become hacktivists by

disseminating information when others cannot. Passing along information is a strategy

routinely used by Anonymous in digital counter-public enclaves such as Twitter and

Facebook. Again, the Care Package incorporates ordinary events as hacktivism. For the

nearly billion active users of Facebook,[72] sharing information or pictures may be habitual.

Thus, participation in Anonymous may be as easy as clicking a share button on a social

media website or as active as setting up a whistleblowing website.

Audiences who may not be hackers but who wish to push hacktivism beyond everyday events are invited to start a blog. The inclusion of *The Handbook for Bloggers and Cyber-dissidents* suggests that blogging is a key hacktivist role in Anonymous' campaign to maintain freely flowing information. *The Handbook* offers individual instruction in starting, maintaining, and promoting a blog to participate in grassroots journalism. Individuals who choose to take up this action "raise sensitive issues which the media…do not dare cover."[73] The Anonymous Care Package demonstrates the risks that come along with such a mission. However, choosing this action may put one at risk of potential punitive measures. Acting as a civilian journalist thus requires a higher level of technological skill and perhaps software to maintain anonymity. The Care Package offers assistance: in addition to the suggestions in *The Handbook* members may also use Tor.[74] By providing several documents that laud such actions, Anonymous promotes users who keep information freely flowing on the Internet.

Anonymous outlines one final way of pushing back against censorship and surveillance online. Audience members are invited to participate in Anonymous organizing and culture in any way they are able. In so doing, the Care Package creates a narrative where activism and rebellion are located in the usual, habitual actions of individuals. While the Care Package does offer suggestions for organizing a separate event, it also recoils against the notion that hacktivism is action distinct from the audience's everyday actions. For instance, the Anonymous Security Starter provides a reference on everything from general browsing safety to instant messaging in Anonymous chat rooms as Anonymous activities. Thus, acting in concert with

Anonymous is as simple as installing modifications to your web browser or reading up on the ways governments might restrict Internet access. The narrative in the digital dissent section of the Care Package broadens the conceptual boundaries on what a hacktivist is and does.

In summary, readers may participate in hacktivism in myriad ways. Hacktivism need no longer be a pursuit of elites. Through the Care Package, Anonymous has described the ways in which those without high tech skills can participate in Anonymous as hacktivists. Audiences need not know how to produce software, steal Internet passwords, or deface a website. Hacktivism functions in the everyday practices of passing along important information or surfing the Internet in a modified fashion. The Care Package spreads the actions of hacktivism to a greater amount of people. Individuals may then respond through varied levels of resistance. Rearticulating hacktivism in such a way opens up recruitment possibilities. The Care Package rhetorically urges audiences to act against the violation of key human rights such as the right to free speech and the free exchange of information. In so doing, the Care Package reimagines hacktivism as a community of people who are well informed about digital and physical threats. These individuals are then encouraged to respond by disseminating information, using browser add-ons, or acting as a civilian journalist. Hacktivism, as interpreted in the Care Package, includes the actions of people of all skill levels and abilities. In sum, hacktivism's definition has been expanded through the Care Package; anyone can be Anonymous.

Taking It To the Streets

While most of the documents of the Care Package attend to online activities, a subset of these files provides advice to potential Anons on maintaining safety and health in public protests. Given that a number of the care packages distributed online were provided to protestors in the various uprisings of the Arab Spring and the numerous events of the Occupy movement, the documents related to public protests in the Care Package shed light on the ways in which Anonymous attempts to engender a more public identity for its hacktivist members.

This section describes three specific documents in this vein from the Anonymous Care Package. Specifically, the "Anonymous Riot Guide" has suggestions on how to stage a demonstration and how to survive potentially harmful situations during the demonstration. However, the guide offers limited assistance during any violent conflict. The final two text documents are the *First Aid Military Manual*, a document publicly released by United States Armed Forces in 2002, and *First-Aid Made Easy* by Nigel Barraclough.

The taking it to the street set of documents in the Care Package rhetorically constructs a state of emergency whereby governments are repeatedly attempting to rob citizens of their rights to free speech and free organization. After the Care Package has identified and labeled repressive acts or institutions primarily through the Anonymous Riot Guide, the audience is invited to respond by first preparing for crisis and then potentially acting. This section of material constructs the state as a repressive institution and rhetorically urges defensive hacktivist action against a constantly encroaching state. These guidebooks also more generally serve to expand hacktivism to the non-digital sphere.

Anonymous previously responded to the uprisings of the Middle East and North Africa by producing digital care packages.[75] These care packages were released as part of various operations, and their contents usually corresponded to the particular needs of its audience. For instance, internal dialogue shows that Anons were keenly aware of the protests in the Arab Spring. The Tunisian government, originally under Anonymous fire for restricting the whistleblowing website WikiLeaks, enraged Anons worldwide when it began to regulate Internet access and implement tracking software on cyber-dissidents and activists in the region. Several of those tracked were jailed, including some self-identified Anons.[76] In Egypt, Mubarak also "shut off" the Internet (and telephone communication) to citizens of his country at the peak of anti-government demonstrations.[77]

Anonymous first responded to calls from Tunisian cyber-dissidents to assist in communication.[78] Tunisians needed help in the dissemination of information, including alerting media to the events occurring during the uprisings. #OPTunisia (or Operation Tunisia) included efforts at regaining Internet connectivity and bypassing tracking software in the country. Anonymous released a digital care package and a "guide to Safety for Tunisians," translated into English, Arabic, and French.[79] After Ben Ali fell, Anons began working on #OPEgypt, discussing strategies and tactics in Internet Relay Chats (a method of exchanging real time messages) and social media. These actions eventually came to be known as FreedomOps, operations that would later structure Anonymous' hacktivist activity.

In Tunisia, Anonymous' actions demonstrated a deep dislike of governments and corporations. These institutions were demonized for having the ability to control the

Internet. That value is similarly represented in the Anonymous Care Package. "The Anonymous Security Starter" names law enforcement agencies or, more generally, anyone who can adversely affect your anonymity and privacy online, as an oppositional force. The *Handbook for Bloggers and Dissidents* and *Bypassing Censorship*, outlines the ways in which restrictive legislation on the Internet can halt innovation, silence dissent, and disconnect an otherwise connected community. Previous Anonymous care packages attempted to maintain connectedness in times of dissent. As *WIRED* magazine reports, "[Anonymous] grew up to become a sort of self-appointed immune system for the Internet, striking back at anyone the hive mind perceived as an enemy of freedom, online *or* offline."[80] This section of the Anonymous Care Package describes Anonymous' construction of enemy threats in the offline, physical world.

Anonymous' "Riot Guide," rhetorically constructs a crisis state where citizens are at odds with the rulers of their countries. The "Riot Guide" states: "Due to the fact that there are countries starting to face their governments/regimes, a 'Riot Guide' is needed as a how-to guide to demonstrations. So this guide exists to rectify that situation." In all likelihood, this passage refers to the Arab Spring and the burgeoning Occupy movements. As such, Anonymous is directly attempting to reach these audiences. As the "Riot Guide" argues, countries are just beginning to respond to repressive regimes, and Anonymous can assist in responding to repression during physical demonstrations.

The "Riot Guide" constructs a reality whereby audiences are under threat of physical violence and must be prepared to respond. The Anonymous Care Package names the state and other police forces as an enemy by describing what potential protesters might face. Instructions on how to react to tear gas appear no less than three

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times and include a personal narrative about how to help yourself and help others. The Anonymous Care Package also describes other threats: being chased and beaten by law enforcement agencies, being subject to violent police dogs, and in extreme cases, the use of chemical warfare. Its content instructs would-be activists in traditional forms of protest such as dividing up protesters into media, action, and mapping teams that work together to form a protest presence. Yet, the document also encourages readers to employ technological innovations such as social media to disseminate information on the protest. In all of this discussion, the state is situated as an oppressive enemy on the offensive. In this way, Anonymous justifies the guide as a necessary defensive lesson.

The Care Package is a group of documents, images, and texts from a variety of sources. Anonymous only claims authorship on a few of these, and the "Anonymous Riot Guide" is listed as a draft version that will be updated. Indeed, this text appears hastily written in English and Arabic with grammatical errors and a lack of clear organization throughout. There is rhetorical import to submitting an unfinished draft in the context of the Arab Spring and burgeoning Occupy movements. Audiences may be encouraged to believe that the situation the Care Package responds to is so dire that it required an immediate release, even if the product is not a final one. Or, read a different way, the admission of the Riot Guide draft may prompt readers to assume that conflict is ongoing, and that Anonymous will provide updates as necessary. Through either lens, Anonymous constructs a hacktivist identity for would-be members that encourages vigilance against repressive institutions.

An important function of the Anonymous Care Package is to change the definition of hacktivism from a purely digital pursuit to one that applies to the non-digital sphere.

Anonymous' call for hacktivists to respond to repression online is documented

elsewhere.[81] However, Anonymous also locates hacktivism within the non-digital realm

in a number of documents found in the Care Package. In particular, the contents seem to

create numerous positions of action for would be activists by providing suggestions on

participating in a public protest. According to the Care Package, hacktivists can

contribute to Anonymous' mission by organizing a protest, reporting on a protest,

shuttling information between groups of people, or by being a medic. Indeed, it is

interesting that Anonymous provides two separate handbooks for assisting when someone

is injured.

The inclusion of two first-aid manuals rhetorically constructs a state of crisis for

the audience. Two of the first-aid guidebooks presume that the reader will need to

respond to an injury at the scene of a protest. Read alongside the "Riot Guide,"

Anonymous activates a narrative where injury is likely to be at the hands of the state

(e.g., via chemical warfare, the use of dogs, etc.). Protesters may then be fully justified in

any response to these violent authorities. Thus, readers are called to act as righteous

hacktivists, responding to repression and possible violence. Moreover, these acts can be

considered defensive, as articulated by a set of documents that repeatedly demonstrate the

ways the state has robbed members of their rights.

The first aid section thus constructs readers as citizens who must act against their

own leaders. After highlighting a dangerous socio-political climate, the audience may

then be primed for action. This section of the Anonymous Care Package tells a story of

violence at the hands of the state. It creates a narrative in which governments failed to do

their most basic function—protect citizens—and in fact, has become the arbiter of

repression. The audience is then encouraged to prepare for and eventually participate in a justifiable act against such a repressive regime, even if this act is simply learning basic first-aid. Read this way, this portion of the Care Package expands the notion of hacktivism to include more members, more activities, and more locales. Indeed, these alternate locations of action allow would-be hacktivists to identify with Anonymous and perhaps even its worldview.

Conclusion

The Anonymous Care Package should be considered within a discursive debate over the parameters of "hacktivism." In Anonymous' literature, "hacktivism" does not reference politically-motivated hacking software or even the defacement of websites. Instead, hacktivism as constructed by the Care Package is responsive to changing threats and is based upon the audience member's performance of hacktivism. Anonymous' conception of hacktivism extends activism beyond those with exceptional skill or a planned hacking event. Instead, routine actions are constituted as hacktivist through the Care Package. Indeed, hacktivism according to the Care Package can be enacted in many ways including crafting a paper mask or serving as a whistleblowing blogger. Although Anonymous does promote some traditional hacking tactics in the Care Package, the bulk of the files are almost exclusively devoted to guiding digital neophytes. In sum, one need not be an elite hacker to participate in Anonymous.

The Anonymous Care Package alters current conceptions of hacktivism to recruit broader membership. When read as a cohesive unit, the contents of the Care Package contribute to the creation of an expanded hacktivist identity. First, Anonymous symbols serve to narrow conceptions of hacktivism, attuning audiences towards an anti-

censorship, pro-populist ideology. Second, the how-to features of the Care Package situate hacktivism as an action taken in both the cybersphere and the physical sphere. While it suggests how audiences might react to acts of repression, the Care Package also constructs a crisis narrative whereby the state is attempting to silence dissent and harness the free exchange of information. Such threat construction helps to orient new Anons toward creating a hacktivist identity in response. New Anons are invited to see themselves as members of a community of activists working against institutional authorities who seek to surveil and censor the Internet. The Anonymous Care Package instructs people of various technological skill levels to agitate against the state and corporations by sharing images, disseminating information, or organizing a protest. As a result, despite disparate opinions in a large collective, audiences may take up a collective hacktivist identity and act in concert with Anonymous. Anonymous positions everyday online habits as revolutionary. Given that it lowers barriers to participation, the Care Package also serves a recruitment function, adding to the number of the collective while helping to congeal a diffuse movement towards hacktivist action.

In conclusion, this chapter has sought to locate a piece of Anonymous-produced rhetoric within a historical context in order to understand the way it assists in recruitment and community building. It is undoubtedly true that not all Anons contributed to or agree with this rhetoric or even the political underpinnings of the organization. The purpose of this analysis is not to create rigid boundaries or a static identity category for the collective. Indeed, I believe that although "hacktivism" serves as a loose structuring apparatus, the Anonymous Care Package demonstrates a commitment to contingency. At times, the contents of the Care Package contradict on a philosophical level. The Care

Package creates a uniform identity while still supporting individuality. Indeed, Anonymous' rhetorical construction of a hacktivist identity carefully balances the tension between creating a stable collective identity and emphasizing individuality. In order to maintain the movement, Anonymous needs to constitute a hacktivist identity to recruit and keep members. However, as this analysis shows, hacktivists reject a top-down approach that suppresses the individual's needs and desires. Anonymous' conception of hacktivism celebrates turning members' everyday experiences into acts of hacktivism, extending hacktivism from the technological elite to novices. In sum, the Care Package helps to create a malleable conception of hacktivism that unifies a diffuse movement by being responsive to those who constitute it. The Care Package demonstrates the hive-mind's ability to respond to perceive threats, organize members, and compel identification.

NOTES

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[3] Imperva, "Imperva's Hacker Intelligence Summary Report: The Anatomy of an Anonymous Attack," 2012, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://www.imperva.com/docs/ hii_the_anatomy_of_an_anonymous_attack.pdf*.

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[8] "NSA Warns 'Cyber Terrorists' Anonymous Can Take Out Entire Power Grid," video clip, accessed February 23, 2013, YouTube, *http://www.youtube.com/watch?v =xBtyuo31qCU*.

[9] Catherine Helen Palczewski, "Cyber-movements, New Social Movements, and Counterpublics," in *Counterpublics and The State*, eds. Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 168-170.

[10] Gabriella Coleman, *Coding Freedom: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Hacking* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), 40-41, 64-65, 70-71.

[11] metac0m, "What Is a Hacktivist?" *The Hacktivist*, 2003, accessed February 23, 2013. www.thehacktivist.com/whatishacktivism.pdf.

[12] metac0m, "What is A Hacktivist?"

[13] Coleman documents the hacker community as constantly evolving and self-reflexive. She points to two major debates over hacking; the debate over role of corporations in hacking and code and how open software advocate Richard Stallman rejected copyright law. See Coleman, *Coding Freedom*, 40-45, 68-71.

[14] Richard Stallman, for instance, was a vocal figure for the "Free software movement," see note 13.

[15] "About: Who We Be," Cult of the Dead Cow, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://w3.cultdeadcow.com/cms/about.html*.

[16] Michelle Delio, "Hacktivism and How It Got Here," *WIRED*, July 14, 2004, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://www.wired.com/techbiz/it/news/2004/07/64193 ?currentPage=all*.

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[28] Alexis C. Madrigal, "#Occupy: The Tech at The Heart of the Movement," *The Atlantic*, November 15, 2011, accessed February 23, 2012, *http://www.theatlantic.com/ technology/archive/2011/11/-occupy-the-tech-at-the-heart-of-the-movement/248435/*.

[29] Quinn Norton, "How Anonymous Picks Targets."

[30] Yasmine Ryan, "Anonymous and The Arab Uprisings," *AlJazeera*, May 19, 2011, accessed February 23, 2011, *http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/ 2011/05/201151917634659824.html*.

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[32] Olson, "5 Things Every Organization Can Learn."

[33] James Ball, "The LulzSec Hacking Arrests Won't Make It Safer Online," *Guardian*, March 7, 2012, accessed February 23, 2012, *http://www.guardian.co.uk/ commentisfree/2012/mar/07/lulzsec-hacking-arrests-fbi*.

[34] Rob Walker, "Recognizably Anonymous," *Slate*, December 8, 2011, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/design/2011/12/guy_fawkes_mask_how _anonymous_hacker_group_created_a_powerful_visual_brand.html*.

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[36] Brian L. Ott, "The Visceral Politics of *V for Vendetta*: On Political Affect in Cinema," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27 (2010): 39-44.

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[41] Walker, "Recognizably Anonymous."

[42] Ott, "The Visceral Politics of *V for Vendetta*," 40.

[43] Nick Bilton, "Masked Protesters Aid Time Warner's Bottom Line," *New York Times*, August 28, 2011, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/29/technology/masked-anonymous-protesters-aid-time -warners-profits.html*.

[44] Anonymous railed against copyright law in Operation: Payback and roundly rejected SOPA and PIPA legislation by attacking government websites and helping organize an online blackout in protest of copyright anti-piracy laws.

[45] Bilton, "Masked Protesters Aid Time Warner's Bottom Line."

[46] Paul Wagenseil, "Anonymous Harasses Time Warner Chief Over SOPA, Reports Say," January 14, 2012, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://www.nbcnews.com/id/45997872/ns/technology_and_science-security/t/anonymous-harasses-time-warner-chief-over-sopa-reports-say/*.

[47] Ott, "The Visceral Politics of *V for Vendetta*;" Walker, "Recognizably Anonymous."

[48] "Anonymous Uber-Secret Handbook," The Anonymous Care Package, February 20, 2011.

[49] *NAACP v. Alabama ex. Rel. Patterson*, 357 U.S. 449 (1958).

[50] Such a statement depends on whether or not one views whistleblowers and cyber-dissidents as protesters or as criminals. Anonymous tends to view government reactions against whistleblowers such as Julian Assange and hacktivists such as Aaron Swartz as repressive and violent.

[51] Elinor Mills, "FBI Arrests 16 in Anonymous Hacking Investigation," *CNET*, July 19, 2011, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://news.cnet.com/8301-27080_3-20080746-245/fbi-arrests-16-in-anonymous-hacking-investigation/*.

[52] "Anonymous Uber-Secret Handbook," The Anonymous Care Package, February 20, 2011.

[53] "Anonymous Uber-Secret Handbook," The Anonymous Care Package, February 20, 2011.

[54] Olson, "5 Things Every Organization Can Learn."

[55] Walker, "Recognizably Anonymous."

[56] A cursory glance through the top five Google News stories on Anonymous on any given day is likely to reference one of the three main Anon icons.

[57] Walker, "Recognizably Anonymous."

[58] Olson, "5 Things Every Organization Can Learn."

[59] Olson, "5 Things Every Organization Can Learn."

[60] Gabriella Coleman, "The Aesthetic Face(s) of Anonymous," Savage Minds: Notes and Queries in Anthropology—A Group Blog," December 15, 2010, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://savageminds.org/2010/12/15/aesthetic-face-of-anonymou/*.

[61] Sascha Segan, "Part II: Female Hackers Face Challenges," *ABC News*, June 9, 2011, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/part-ii-female-hackers-face-challenges/story?id=99341*.

[62] Anons have routinely rejected legislation that strengthens copyright law, aims to decrease piracy, or increases surveillance on the Internet. In addition, the Anonymous Care Package validates this claim with its inclusion of several pro-open Internet, pro-open source materials like "The Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace."

[63] Byron Acochido, "Web Tracking Has Become a Privacy Time Bomb," *USA TODAY,* August 4, 2011, accessed February 23, 2011, *http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/tech/news/2011-08-03-internet-tracking-mobile-privacy_n.htm*.

[64] John Perry Barlow, "Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace," The Anonymous Care Package.

[65] *Bypassing Censorship*, The Anonymous Care Package.

[66] Damon Poeter, "Anonymous BART Protest Shuts Down Several Underground Stations," *PCMag*, August 15, 2011, accessed February 23, 2011, *http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2391160,00.asp*.

[67] *Bypassing Censorship*, 1.

[68] "Tracking the Companies that Track You Online," *NPR*, August 19, 2010, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129298003*.

[69] "Anonymous Uber-Secret Handbook," The Anonymous Care Package, February 20, 2011.

[70] Reporters without Borders, *Handbook for Bloggers and Dissidents*, The Anonymous Care Package, 47.

[71] "About Mozilla Add-Ons," Mozilla Corporation, accessed February 23, 2013, *https://addons.mozilla.org/EN-us/about*.

[72] "Newsroom: Key Facts," Facebook, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts*.

[73] Clothilde le Coz, "Bloggers, A New Source of News," in *Handbook for Bloggers and Dissidents,* ed. Reporters without Borders, The Anonymous Care Package, 5.

[74] Journalists who are concerned with privacy or fear repression routinely use Tor. Virginia Heffernan, "Granting Anonymity," *New York Times,* December 17, 2010, accessed February 21, 2013, *http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/19/magazine/19FOB-Medium-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0*. See also "Tor: Overview," Tor, accessed February 23, 2013, *https://www.torproject.org/about/overview*.

[75] Ryan, "Anonymous and The Arab Uprisings."

[76] Norton, "How Anonymous Picks Targets."

[77] Margaret Warner, "Syria Internet Shutdown: A Loser's Strategy," *PBS*, November 30, 2012, accessed February 23, 2013,

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2012/11/syria-internet-shutdown---a-losers-strategy.html.

[78] Norton, "How Anonymous Picks Targets."

[79] Barrett Brown, "Guide to Safety for Tunisians, Please Distribute," *Daily Kos*, January 15, 2011, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://www.dailykos.com/story/2011 /01/15/936628/-Guide-to-safety-for-Tunisians-please-distribute*.

[80] Norton, "How Anonymous Picks Targets."

[81] "Anonymous Project Mayhem 2012 | Leak it ALL! Call to Action," June 5, 2012, YourAnonNews Tumblr, video clip, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://youranonnews.tumblr.com/post/24469154408/anonymous-project-mayhem-2012-leak-it-all-call*; "Unseat the #1 Public Enemy of the Internet: Representative Lamar Smith," YourAnonNews Tumblr, May 6, 2009, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://youranonnews.tumblr.com/post/22510179349/unseat-the-1-public-enemy-of-the-internet*; "Anonymous-Stop CISPA," YourAnonNews, May 5, 2012, accessed February 23, 2013, *http://youranonnews.tumblr.com/post/22486563237/anonymous-stop-cispa-greetings-from-the*; "Come Together To Stop CISPA," YourAnonNews Tumblr, April 18, 2012, accessed February 23, 2012, *http://youranonnews.tumblr.com/post/ 21314689010/updated-with-us-senate-information-come*.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Introduction

Over the course of this thesis, my primary purpose was to analyze the rhetoric of

the online collective Anonymous in order to determine how it uses discourse to craft an

identity for the group and members. I was interested to learn the ways that Anonymous'

discourse and actions redefined that term and used it for recruitment. In particular, I

sought to understand the ways Anonymous' hacktivist rhetoric influences potential

participants, compels action on behalf of members, and perhaps even sways public

opinion about the organization. In order to make my case, I interrogated the hacktivist

rhetoric of the Anonymous Care Package.

The Anonymous Care Package serves as a basic manual or set of how-to guides

and tools for the digital activist and technological neophyte. Available on a well-visited

Anonymous-identified page, the Anonymous Care Package prepares the reader to

anticipate oppression in both the digital and physical sphere by constructing threatening

scenarios. Then, the tools and how-to guides serve as opportunities to resist such

repression. By completing simple tasks both online and offline, participants are invited

to identify with and act on behalf of the hacktivist group. In so doing, I argued that the

rhetoric of the Care Package extends hacktivism from a purely technological realm to a

larger audience by inviting the audience to engage in everyday acts of resistance. The

merger of hacking and activism in the Care Package's hacktivist rhetoric helps to

rearticulate the collective positively, as defenders of justice rather than cybercriminals. Further, the Care Package's hacktivist rhetoric lowers barriers for participation, serving a recruitment function for Anonymous.

In this chapter, I offer concluding thoughts about Anonymous and the Anonymous Care Package. I summarize my findings and describe how my scholarship contributes to the study of Anonymous and more generally, scholarship on online social movements. Then, I suggest the limitations of this thesis and areas for future research.

Supplementing the Literature Base

Analysis of the Anonymous Care Package adds to scholarly understandings of Anonymous as a collective. First, given that there is little academic scholarship on Anonymous, this thesis provides much needed intellectual engagement with the collective. The popular press produces most treatments of Anonymous. These tend to either simply report Anonymous' actions as news stories or attempt to reveal the identities of Anons. Most book-length discussions of the collective commonly focus on simply reporting on one cross-section of Anonymous and are less interested in dissecting their persuasive moves. One exception to this trend is anthropologist and ethnographer Gabriella Coleman, who critically interrogates hacker cultures, including those found in Anonymous.[1] Her focus, however, is mainly on describing hackers as a culture. While studying culture is certainly important, her research does not help to illuminate how that culture is persuasively communicated to potential members and others. This thesis, then, adds to scholarship on Anonymous by specifically describing the group's rhetorical strategies for these audiences. Indeed, my work contributes to the ongoing conversation

about online, hacker culture by indicating how Anonymous uses its hacktivist rhetoric to construct group identity and elicit action.

Studying Anonymous' use of hacktivist rhetoric adds depth to our field's understanding of online social movements. Current literature on online social movements from a rhetorical perspective falls in one of two camps: how the Internet facilitates communication or how the Internet operates as a site of controversy. Illustrative examples from the first trend include Wendy Harcourt and Theresa Lynn Petray who each describe how movements that started offline (Violence Against Women and Aboriginal activists, respectively) use tools unique to the Internet to remain connected, engage in consciousness raising, and even make demands upon institutions.[2] Essays of this nature emphasize how the web as a medium supports social movements. An example of the second trend is Shaorong Huang's essay on Google in China. Instead of showing how activists take advantage of digital media to further causes, Huang suggests that the Internet is also a social sphere where political controversies develop; activists may then respond in a variety of different ways. In the case of Google in China, the Chinese government developed a rhetorical vision that casts doubt on Google as a neutral service provider.[3] Harcourt, Petray, and Huang's essays usefully contribute to the burgeoning study of online social movements through case studies that demonstrate the ways the Internet is a unique medium for action and controversy.

Unlike these perspectives, my analysis of the Anonymous Care Package studies how an online social movement employs a specific rhetorical strategy that spans beyond simple online communication or sites of controversy. I argue that the Anonymous Care Package employs hacktivist rhetoric to speak to a variety of perceived threats, offering

multiple vehicles for an average person to dissent. Therefore, this thesis can extend communication scholarship on online social movements by turning a rhetorical lens to an under-represented digital movement. In particular, I maintain that hacktivism becomes a particularly important rhetorical tool for identity construction in relationship to online social movements.

Hacktivism as A Rhetorical Tactic and Term of Art

In chapters two and three I argued that rhetoricians ought to be interested in hacktivism as a rhetorical construct partially because it is a term under dispute. A portmanteau of hacking and activism, hacktivists may choose to self-identify as such in order to demarcate themselves as digital contentious objectors. Others, including government and infosecurity agencies, may oppose hacktivist tactics. Such rhetors tend to make little discursive distinction between hacktivist groups such as Anonymous and hacks from military threats.[4] Therefore, the negotiation of the term is of great importance. In addition, in outlining the characteristics of hacktivism, I illustrated how that term and concept may be renegotiated through the performances of those who identify as hackers. Hacktivism is an inherently creative process, and Anonymous employs hacktivist rhetoric to help foster a strong, yet malleable collective identity. Thus, the study of hacktivism as a rhetorical concept in the context of the Anonymous Care Package contributes to an ongoing conversation of what the term means and how it is used.

My analysis of Anonymous' use of hacktivism teaches social movement scholars about this new online movement in several ways. In the following paragraphs, I will outline this study's contributions to online social movement scholarship. First, study of

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Anonymous can supplement social movement scholarship, because, Anonymous is a non-hierarchical, multiple-issue, diffuse movement. Second, analysis of hacktivism as a constantly negotiated and renegotiated concept adds to the complexity of social movement scholarship because it demonstrates an important rhetorical tactic often used in cyber-dissident groups. Third, this thesis demonstrates how Anonymous appropriates traditional social movement tactics such as sits-ins for contemporary purposes. Including such tactics in the hacktivist arsenal adds legitimacy to the claim that hacktivists are defending justice, rather than acting as cybercriminals. Finally, it is incredibly important for scholars to understand how people organize online, especially in light of the Obama administration's promise of retaliation against cyber-terrorists, although what a cyber-terrorist constitutes is up for debate as much as is the definition of hacktivism.[5] A discussion of hacktivism may serve as a catalyst for future scholars interested in digital resistance and dissent.

First, my analysis of the Anonymous Care Package demonstrates how one social movement adapted to rapidly changing environments both on and offline. The Anonymous Care Package rhetorically constructs threats to its audiences including the state and other policing regimes. In so doing, it positions its audiences within a material reality where repression is imminent from multiple institutions. Indeed, as I argued in chapter three, the Care Package constructs two distinct but interrelated threats—censorship and digital surveillance. According to the rhetoric of Anonymous, hacktivists are vulnerable both online and offline and a variety of agents (such as the state or litigious corporations) may seek punitive measures against them. These rhetorical tactics emphasize the complexity of political situations and urge a large, decentralized

community to enact justice in a multiplicity of ways—from sharing iconography to field dressing protesters' wounds during a demonstration. In this sense, fluidity and a lack of hierarchy or singular ideology serves as a strength for the group given that Anons are not mandated to act in any one particular way. After all, given that Anonymous proclaims that the enemy is everywhere, a flexible approach is more sensible than a top-down, dogmatic strategy. With a flexible approach, more hackers can participate by engaging in acts of resistance that fit their technological prowess and personal ambitions. In this way, Anonymous may respond to diverse threats with increased numbers and dexterity. Other digital social movements may engage a similar strategy by maintaining diversity in membership and offering multiple roles for activism. A rhetorical analysis of Anonymous' hacktivist rhetoric demonstrates one way digital movements can adopt this approach.

Much of this thesis builds on scholarship about how social movements construct a notion of identity as an organizing and recruitment tool. In particular, the study of hacktivism as an identity may be especially instructive for scholars. Hacktivism is a term that Anonymous uses to constitute a collective identity and compel action even as it works to alter traditional understandings of the term. As I argued in chapter three, hacktivism is performed and in so doing, altered in meaning by the actions of hackers. Anonymous uses the Care Package to sway the performance of hacktivism and as such, modifies hacktivism as a concept. However, Anons' performance of hacktivism is not tied to any one ideology, nationality, gender, or in the case of the Care Package, skill level. Anonymous' use of a rhetorically charged and constantly renegotiated term allows the collective to appropriate that term for its own purposes. In addition, it helps construct

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a community of activists who are galvanized by hacktivism and undivided by other identity markers. The Care Package rhetorically fashions a community of vigilantes, poised to act with vengeance against institutions or corporations that violate their value systems. I believe that this strategy is also applicable to other larger, multiple-issue movements and may serve as a fruitful topic for further research.

In addition, this thesis adds to the study of online social movements because it illuminates an important rhetorical strategy for negotiating public perception. Hacktivism itself draws upon positive features of the hacking community by using hacking actions for political ends.[6] The word hacktivism distinguishes itself from earlier understandings of hacking by situating it as a mode of protest. As my analysis suggests, doing so may positively reconfigure hacktivism as defensive, justified action in response to a constantly encroaching state. Such a rhetorical tactic may be useful in the study of other social movements who may adopt such an approach because it helps advocate for the legitimacy of the movement. In addition, positively defining hacktivism as part of the movement's identity may help to aid social cohesion in an otherwise disparate, diffuse movement. Collectively, the rhetorical study of Anonymous' use of hacktivism demonstrate how one online social movement's rhetoric organized participants with a collective identity despite boasting considerable diversity in membership.

Finally, scholars must pay special attention to how people organize online, especially in light of the Obama administration's recent rhetoric describing the Internet as the next potential international battleground.[7] Government and infosecurity agents have long been skeptical about hacktivism, especially when it leads to the release of internal government documents or the costly interruption of a corporation's web presence. It is

true that several of Anonymous' recent acts have been extra-legal, despite the collective's attempts to justify them as necessary and legitimate protest.[8] As the Obama administration and other state and corporate agencies redefine the rules of engagement in the cybersphere, cybercriminals become a security and economic threat. Indeed, the Obama administration recently claimed the right to preemptively strike.[9] To grasp the terms and tenor of this important new battleground, it is important to understand how cyber-dissidents construct their own vision of hacktivism against that of the state.

In such a political climate, the line between cyber-criminal and protester is not only rhetorically relevant but also legally important. Attorney and Stanford professor Jennifer Granick reports that U.S. Internet legislation has a history of being vague and open to broad interpretation.[10] The definition of cyber-terrorism and hacktivism are also open for negotiation. A tradition of vague legislation on the Internet coupled with Obama's ability to preemptively attack cyber-threats means that the rhetorical applications of hacktivism and hacking are especially important. A broad definition of cyber-terrorism that includes some hacktivist tactics may render digital dissent a military threat. Scholars must be attentive to the tension between hacktivists and government entities, for governments may be able to silence effectively (or dramatically lessen) dissent by labeling hacktivists cyber-terrorists or cyber-criminals.

In summary, this thesis extends and adds to the study of online social movements at a critical time in digital history. First, my analysis of the Care Package demonstrates how employing hacktivism as a rhetorical strategy can work to unify members in an otherwise diffuse, decentralized movement. In addition, viewing hacktivism as a rhetorical strategy demonstrates the utility of renegotiating a concept under dispute

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because it may offer the movement flexibility in responding to threats. For instance, the Care Package situates hacktivism as a digital and physical activity. Such rhetoric helped to broaden hacktivism to a larger audience. Further, positively appropriating the term hacktivism serves to counter external rhetoric demonizing a movement. Constructing hacktivism as a defensive, justifiable tactic is especially important as the U.S. extends its powers to the digital sphere. Overall, this thesis can supplement scholarship on social movements and affirm the complexity of protest via the Care Package case study.

The Constitutive Rhetoric of Anonymous

Applying a rhetorical lens to the Anonymous Care Package uncovers important new information about the collective. First, analyzing the Care Package through the theory of constitutive rhetoric demonstrates how Anonymous employed hacktivism as a rhetorical strategy. Narratives of hacktivism function to recruit members as well as alter public perceptions of Anonymous. Second, the Care Package's articulation of hacktivism solicits action from digital neophytes by extending hacktivism beyond its purely technological roots. Third, hacktivism as a term of art helps to construct a certain vision of reality in the minds of audience members. In particular, hacktivism becomes a key component to constructing an overarching identity for an (in)famously amorphous group. The following section reviews these findings.

My analysis of the Anonymous Care Package demonstrates how Anonymous' rhetorical reconstruction of hacktivism may increase participation in the collective, and as a result, alters negative conceptions about the group. As I suggest in chapter three, pushing past negative conceptions of the collective was perhaps Anonymous' key rhetorical exigency at the time Anonymous was releasing the Care Package. Altering

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popular understandings of hacktivism may function to change popular perceptions. The term is under dispute by both hacktivists and those who view hacktivism as a threat. The Care Package's rearticulation of hacking and hacktivism is an intervention into both debates: for potential hacktivists, Anonymous' rhetoric suggests moving hacktivism beyond the technological elite; for oppositional audiences, the Care Package defends hacktivist action as necessary and justified. While neither audience will necessarily adopt the vision of hacktivism set forth by Anonymous, its rhetoric attempts to persuasively respond to the contested and controversial terrain of cyber-dissidence.

The manuals and tools in the Anonymous Care Package suggest ways to participate as a hacktivist, and in so doing, they invite a broader set of audiences to identify with a new form of hacktivism. In the case of the Anonymous Care Package, one need not be a hacker in the strictest sense to be a hacktivist. Indeed, digital neophytes are not asked to produce software, steal passwords, or breach the security of websites. The reader learns from the Care Package that one can be a hacktivist by simply learning about the ways in which governments can regulate and restrict access to the digital sphere. Hacktivist action may include creating a do-it-yourself version of the Guy Fawkes mask. Would-be members can uphold Anonymous' ideals by simply passing on information when others cannot. These lower-risk, technologically simple acts redirect focus from technological elites to those with only cursory experience with the digital sphere. Including more activist roles in the Anonymous Care Package rhetorically constitutes a more inclusive, expanded notion of hacktivism.

As such, I read the Anonymous Care Package as a recruitment tool and an invitation for participants to take up a hacktivist identity. In the Care Package,

hacktivism is used to construct overarching identity for the collective. First, the Care Package rhetorically encourages action by increasing the roles activists can perform while validating their actions as revolutionary. In turn, such hacktivist performances help to solidify Anonymous' extended, inclusive understanding of hacktivism. Hacktivism is a unique rhetorical strategy insofar as it is a galvanizing concept. Indeed, as I argued in chapter three, the performances suggested by the Care Package not only demonstrate collective values of hacktivism, but also constitute a community. Such a strategy is crucial for Anonymous given that it is a collective without a singular ideology or mission. The Care Package constructs a notion of hacktivism that allows for a uniform expression of identity in an otherwise inchoate, decentralized collective.

In addition, this thesis confirms the utility of constitutive rhetoric in studying social movements. My analysis of the Anonymous Care Package in chapter three is informed by Maurice Charland's theory of constitutive rhetoric wherein the critic studies the ways a rhetor's audience is constructed and reconstructed by ideological narratives.[11] As a result of applying this rhetorical theory, I found that the Care Package's overall account of dissent employed hacktivism as a tool to help constitute a group identity and thereby organize the collective and invite participation. In turn, performance of this hacktivist identity could serve to legitimize Anonymous and its actions, increasing recruitment and positively altering Anonymous' public image. Constructing a hacktivist identity required the Care Package to respond to previous articulations of hacking and hacktivism in order to shape future understandings of those concepts. The Care Package defines hacktivism as a simple form of digital protest that combats the repressive actions of the state and other forces. In so doing, the Care Package enacts a community of

hacktivists who perform their identity with easy, everyday actions. As such, this thesis confirms that even in digital movements, a theory of constitutive rhetoric is a useful lens through which to view dissent.

Reading the Anonymous Care Package as constitutive rhetoric reveals how Anonymous constructs a hacktivist community by inviting participation from would-be members. My analysis of the relationship between Anonymous and hacktivism can contribute to social movement studies by analyzing hacktivism as an important rhetorical tool. In addition, my analysis contributes to the ongoing discussion of what constitutes hacktivism by tracing the evolution of the term within the Care Package. Finally, it demonstrates how hacktivism can serve to galvanize movements, strengthen digital presence, and unify participants despite an otherwise decentralized structure. The following section describes some limitations of my study and suggests areas for future research.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

For the purposes of time and space, my investigation into Anonymous focused on one object of inquiry, the Anonymous Care Package. As such, its scope is limited to the study of its inclusive documents, leaving much ground to be covered. For instance, because of its fluid and malleable nature, future research on the development of hacktivism is needed. Creating a more nuanced understanding of that term of art requires documenting its evolution over a longer period of time. Further case studies into hacktivism as a rhetorical tactic inaugurated in the 1960s and 1970s may be a good starting point. Second, critics should look to other Anonymous-produced artifacts to understand how the collective deploys the term in other texts. I believe that rhetorical

analysis of these documents will enrich both social movement studies and scholarship on Anonymous. Third, Anonymous' extreme diversity of opinion and membership cannot be understood adequately from a single analysis; indeed, the collective as a whole requires more analysis from a variety of fields. Because it is extremely difficult to concretely describe the collective, smaller studies on specific actions or rhetoric may help scholars create a mosaic of meaning or at least uncover its other digital strategies. In addition, some of the artifacts contained in the Care Package may be studied on their own. For instance, the artwork and iconography in the Care Package could prove useful to the visual rhetorician. In sum, it is my hope that this case study is just one of many on Anonymous and hacktivism and that this thesis may serve as a catalyst for future scholarship.

As is clear from my analysis, hacktivism is a concept that is malleable and constantly constructed and reconstructed. While I think that understanding how activists and groups in power deploy hacktivism as a rhetorical tactic is key, I believe that this thesis serves only as a starting point for such discussion. The limited scope of my analysis leaves many more applications of hacktivism to be studied. Anonymous, although a key player in digital dissent, is not the only group that employs hacktivist discourses and actions. Critics who study online social movements are likely to find many which are called or self-identify as hacktivist. For instance, whistleblowing journalism website WikiLeaks—and those who support it—can easily be considered a site for hacktivism.[12] Future research in this area should attempt to uncover how hacktivism is constructed and demonstrate its evolution within the history of the term.

Second, I believe that this thesis has not exhausted research on the relationship

between Anonymous and hacktivism. In addition to the fluidity of hacktivism as definition, Anonymous may present evolving notions of hacktivism over time. A key component of the Anonymous strategy is to produce routinely and disseminate information about the group and its operations or missions. As such, perhaps thousands of Anonymous-identified artifacts have been created and circulated. Because of the sheer number of documents, files, videos, manifestos, images, and Care Packages, scholars must limit their scope to only one or perhaps a few of these rhetorical messages, leaving others to be studied. I suspect that Anonymous' discourse elsewhere produces similar notions of hacktivism and applies hacktivism as a tool for recruitment and creating a massive following. I argued that Anonymous' flexible articulations of hacktivism could be potentially advantageous in light of a rapidly changing technological scene. Therefore, scholars interested in Anonymous may find that the collective's construction of hacktivism changes over time, depending on the artifact and exigency.

Third, I am especially cognizant of the fluidity of language and identity as it relates to Anonymous. The group's adamant rejection of labels (or really, any definitive statement regarding its activities or beliefs) requires a critic to tread lightly when discussing such potentially constricting notions as collective identity. My focus in this thesis was on one specific artifact released by one particular Anonymous-identified website. Although there is evidence that the Care Package receives wide-readership, it would be a mistake to say that this one particular set of files represents all of Anonymous. My choice in this object of inquiry from YourAnonNews may be biased in that YourAnonNews tends to spread information that is more politically motivated information than other Anon websites. It is true that some Anons reject the recent

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political turn in the collective, preferring pranks and isolation to activism and collective political action. I attended to this difference by analyzing the ways Anonymous-produced rhetoric can be deciphered or interpreted by various audiences who themselves may not be attentive to the diversity of opinion within the group.

Finally, my analysis of the Anonymous Care Package considered all of the package's contents together, in conversation with one another. When analyzed as a whole, the Care Package tells a story about repression and restrictions on human rights such as freedom of speech. It then helps compel audiences to respond by offering activist roles to adopt. However, deeper study into individual components may be a fruitful endeavor. For visual rhetoricians especially, investigation into Anonymous' appropriation and circulation of the Guy Fawkes mask could offer insight into Anonymous as a social movement as well as demonstrate how digital icons are produced, altered and disseminated online.

Analysis of the Anonymous Care Package reveals one instance where Anonymous employs hacktivist rhetoric as a tool to complete tasks. There remains much to be understood about hacktivism more generally. Chapter three is but one case study within a larger genre of digital dissent and may serve as a catalyst for further examination of hacktivism as a rhetorical tool. Future research on the evolution of hacktivism is warranted, especially as government institutions' anti-hacking rhetoric becomes more plentiful and vitriolic. In addition, scholars interested in Anonymous will find a breadth of material to investigate including Anonymous-produced rhetoric as well as rhetoric produced about Anonymous. Although Anonymous routinely rejects static definition,

critics should not be dissuaded from writing about the collective. Instead, they must be careful to attend to the complexities of the collective.

Over the course of this thesis, I argued that Anonymous deploys hacktivism as simple acts of resistance against repression in the digital and physical sphere. Engaging how Anonymous defines hacktivism helps scholars to understand the rhetoric of Anonymous: the persuasive tactics the group employs to recruit new members and define its identity. I hope that this thesis has helped explain how Anonymous' rhetoric works to compel audience identification and action. In addition, I hope that this thesis encourages scholars to further investigate Anonymous and the evolution of hacktivism in future movements.

NOTES

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