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Spring 2020

Social Media's Impact on College Student Activism: Senior Student Affairs Professional's Perspectives

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Recommended Citation

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THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science in College Student Affairs

Eastern Illinois University

Charleston, Illinois

2020

Abstract

Activism has been an ever present on college campuses throughout history. The student activist has been a part of some of the biggest movements in American history, such as, the Anti-Vietnam War movement, the Civil Rights Movement, the Kent State Massacre, and the #MeToo movement. This study seeks to understand student activism on college campuses and how activism has changed in our new digital era. The internet's social media platforms have created new meeting places and areas for idea sharing for college activists. These social media platforms mean that students can remotely plan, organize, and execute their protests, demonstrations, or movements quicker than ever before. This has led to a relatively new idea of activism called slacktivism. This study interviewed student affair professionals about college student activists on their campuses and how they perceive students organizing and executing their movements.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to all student activists across the country on college campuses. Continue to question life and fight for the rights of others and yourself. Activists must continue to push forward the conversation on political and social issues that the world faces. This study is also dedicated to Miguel Cabrera, the greatest right-handed hitter of his generation and beloved Detroit Tiger. Lastly this study has been dedicated to 2 Chainz, the coldest in the game.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Activism has been a large part of America's history, starting with civil

disobedience during the Revolutionary War to women's suffrage to Vietnam War and the

Civil Rights Movement of the 60s to present day. Throughout all those generations of

activism the way people, especially college students, protest and demonstrate has

changed and evolved (Levine & Hirsch 1991; Altbach, 1989). Activism can be defined

as, "the action that movements undertake in order to challenge some existing element of

the social or political system and so help fulfill movement aims" (Saunders, 2013 p.1).

Activism can be about raising awareness (Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya, 2017) or could

be about demonstrating/protests like sit ins (Carl, 1960). Right now, activism is

undergoing another evolution with the rise of technology over the last 20 years

(Sivitanides and Shah, 2011). With the rise of technology, it is easier than ever to

participate in activism and help individuals feel like they are a part of a movement

(Foreman, 2018). Digital activism as the newest form can be interpreted in a variety of

contexts. It can be categorized as donating money to a GoFundMe, sharing a non-profit's

post on social media, or presenting on Facebook Live. But Digital activism can also be

categorized as hackers or terrorists coordinating their actions online (Sivitanides and

Shah, 2011).

Because of the rise and advancement of technology activism has had to adapt as

well (Sivitanides, 2011; Cabrera, Matias, Montoya, 2017). Today people are connected

across the globe more than all previous generations (Sivitanides, 2011). This has been

possible with the rise of social media, like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram.

Social media connects individuals around the world and allows people to share, post, update, or document movements globally (Holcomb, 2016; Bozarth & Budak, 2017).

With the rise of social media and its use with activism it has created a new term, slacktivism. Slacktivism can be described in a multitude of ways, but Christensen (2011) defined it as, "political activities that have no impact on real-life political outcomes, but only serve to increase the feel-good factor of the participants" (p.1). Examples of slacktivism include reposting an article or sharing a photo that is posted by someone else. This takes no effort to do other than to see the information and repost/retweet/like a post and engage in no other action related to the issue. Slacktivism is different from activism as it does not require a lot of money, time or effort and still raises awareness to a cause or movement (Hampton, 2015). This type of activism is popular among college students because it does not overtake their lives (Foreman, 2018). It is something that they can engage in for 5 minutes and then continue with their lives as normal and is a low effort way to show others what you believe/support (Holcomb, 2016).

Purpose of Study

Activism has always been closely associated with college students and campuses (Broadhurst, 2014). Activism has traditionally been something that required a lot of time, effort, and dedication (Cabrera, Matias, Montoya 2017). Over the decades, as different social and political movements have occurred students and the general public have reacted in different ways based on the societal infrastructures of the time (Bertowitz, 1970; Broadhurst, 2014). Activism used to be about activists pounding the pavement or putting as many boots on the ground as possible to spread their message through demonstrations like sit ins, marches, or handing out information (Searles and Williams Jr,

1962; Small, 1987). Colleges and universities have had activism take place on, and near their campuses for decades, as well as prepared students to serve in activists' roles, sometimes working side by side with faculty and staff of the institution (Small, 1987; Cabrera, Matias, Montoya, 2017).

The purpose of this study was to understand how activism has evolved over time and the way in which activism is currently impacting college campuses, especially in this era of slacktivism and digital activism. The purpose was to understand how college campuses, and especially administrators are adapting to this relatively new era. College students today are using a variety of social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and are referred to as digital natives (Junco, 2007). Understanding how they use these platforms to be informed and engaged in current social and political movements is important. This study wanted to learn more about how college students interact with each other as activists and what trends may be coming in the future will also be studied. This study attempts to understand how administrators work in this era of slacktivism, digital activism, and with new trends of activism. This qualitative study involved interviews with higher education administrators on mid-sized public state institutions.

Research Questions

Traditionally aged students now are individuals who grew up in the digital age so their interaction with social media and activism may be different than other generations. To identify how this may be changing student affairs, administrators were interviewed toward understanding this topic using these guiding research questions.

1. How have student affairs professionals seen activism change over their time in working in higher education?

2. How do student affairs professionals define slacktivism?

3. How is social media changing how students participate in social and political

    movements on college campuses?

Significance of the Study

　　　　This study helped better define activism and how it has evolved in our new digital

age. The study looked to explain what activism started as and how it has changed in

relation to our new globally inclusive internet driven society (Cabrera, Matias, Montoya

2017). Society is quite different from that of 50-60 years ago when activism could be

defined as marches, sit-ins, and passing out literature/information (Broadhurst, 2014;

Carl, 1961).

　　　　With society in this evolved era of digital media, it only makes sense that activism

has been affected as well. This study aimed to create new research on how activism has

evolved, but most importantly take a look at slacktivism and the role it played on college

campuses. The internet and social media are now engrained in our culture and shown no

sign of slowing down. The study hoped to explain the relatively new phenomenon of

slacktivism and how it changes activism. More so, higher education administrators have

typically played a role in activism on campuses both as allies and antagonists (Engler,

2015; Cabrera, Matias, Montoya, 2017). No matter their side administrators need to

understand the new digital activist era along with social media in order to best understand

what student activists are protesting. (Cabrera, Matias, Montoya, 2017).

Limitations

This study did have a couple limitations that may affect this study. The first limitation is the researcher himself. This is a study that I feel passionately about and my bias about digital activism as a whole may be seen as a limitation. This was mitigated with carefully constructed interview questions and providing space for participants to share their perspectives openly and honestly. Another limitation were the participants. Participants who were in Vice President of Assistant President positions were sought after for this study, and three white men serving in Vice President roles agreed to participate. With that that they each had over 25 years in higher education which means that they did not grow up with technology like college students have and may have been unfamiliar with some of the topics and terminology, but these participants were very informed and familiar with social media. Personal experiences with activism can impact one's perspective on those that engage. Gaining insight into what they have seen activism evolve on campus was more important than understanding whether they were activists. Learning about their perspective, knowledge, and awareness was key in providing insight in to training and development that was needed in this area for those in these types of positions.

The third limitation is how technology was used, such as Google hangout and Skype, to conduct this study. This required participants to be able to access and use such technology which means they have some basic knowledge of technology and various platforms. However, having conducted the study in this manner helped identify professionals who may have a bit more awareness of technology. Finally, the third limitation can be resolved by using a passive voice and analyzing the data carefully.

The last limitation for this study is the lack of students' voices and opinions in the study. The researcher always meant to interview administrators for the research. During the interview process it became clear that this study could benefit from hearing the students' prospective on activism and digital media, and this would make a great follow up study. This study was about gaining insight into the evolution of activism especially in a social media world today; which isn't a perspective that students would be able to provide since they experience one point on this path of evolution.

Definition of Terms

Activism- The action that movements undertake in order to challenge some existing element of the social or political system and so help fulfill movement aim (Saunders, 2013).

Senior Level Administrator- A higher educational professional with over 15 years of experience in the field Student Affairs and holds a senior level position.

Slacktivism- Political or social activities that have no impact on real-life political societal outcomes, but only serve to increase the feel-good factor of the participants (Lee, Hsieh, 2013).

Social Media - Websites or applications that allow individuals to share, post content for others to take in (Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya, 2017).

Summary

This study sought to better understand activism as it is defined and also what it is evolving into as society moves deeper into the digital age. Activism has been a way for those who are upset with politics, social movements, or bureaucracy to let their leaders know that they are unhappy with the direction society is moving. Activism has been alive

and well throughout the decades on college campuses. As seen throughout history college activists have been present in some of the biggest movements like the Vietnam War protests and Civil Rights Movement. Activism during those movements are markedly different from what we see on college campuses right now.

Right now, we are firmly in the digital age with the internet and social media dominating our culture. This study wanted to understand how the new digital age has affected how students participate in activism. With our new digital age comes new ideas and forms of activism like slacktivism. Slacktivism is the idea that activism can be handled online through liking, retweeting, sharing, or streaming. It requires little effort, money, and time which is part of the reason that college students have moved toward slacktivism rather than participatory activism.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Activism has been part of our society for hundreds of years. Throughout this time activism has been constantly adapting to our ever-changing society. This study will be discussing three different types of activism: conventional, confrontational, and cyber-activism, also referred to as digital activism. The literature review also will highlight the anti-Vietnam War demonstration and movement along with the Civil Rights Movement and demonstrations on college campuses. This literature review will also discuss the rise of the digital age and how social media has changed activism in relation to college students and campuses. The digital age has started a new era in activism called slacktivism. This review seeks to help readers understand how activism has changed and what role slacktivism plays in activism on college campuses.

Defining Activism

Activism is not a static idea, but a dynamic one. There is no one correct way to participate in activism. There are different types, and each has its own set of goals, expectations, and process. Saunders (2013) from Exeter University defined it this way, "In short, activism is the action that movements undertake in order to challenge some existing element of the social or political system and so help fulfill movements aims" (p. 1). Activism can be any type of action that is helping any given movement or cause. Many people become narrow minded and think solely of those in marches, demonstrations, or other active participatory acts (Small, 1987; Burstein & Freudenburg 1978). Activism can be anything from spreading awareness to donating money to buying a bumper sticker. This section will highlight three different types of activism and how

they are distinct from each other. The three types of activism are conventional,

confrontational, and digital (or cyber as it is referred to sometimes).

      The first type of activism that needs to be defined is conventional activism.

Conventional is defined by Saunders (2013) as, "related to party politics, and so involves

standing for, working with, or belonging to a political party, or contacting a party

official" (p.1). DiGrazia (2014) goes on to explain conventional activism as, "actions that

are seen as politically legitimate and low risk" (p.113). Based on these two authors'

reasonings, we can conclude that conventional activism is working within the system to

create awareness or change. This could include such actions as writing letters or calling

your legislator, working with administration on a college campus, or holding a forum to

discuss necessary changes. These are all considered low risk and legitimate by society

(DiGrazia, 2014). This type of activism is seen as organized and peaceful. DiGrazia

identified that those participating are not destructive or confrontational but seek to bring

awareness to a cause.

      Confrontational activism can be defined as activism that is in direct opposition

with another group or ideology and examples include sit-ins and blockades (Rootes,

2003; Saunders, 2013). Confrontational protest has become more popular in the digital

age we live in because, the confrontational protest will attract more social media attention

as well as media in general (Rootes, 2003). Rootes (2003) noted in his study, "the public

visibility of confrontational protest associated with environmental issues increased and

that it increased relative to that of moderate protest" (p. 36). The phrase, the squeaky

wheel gets the grease applies here. Confrontational is effective because public conflicts

and protests tend to be more highly visible and are more likely to be reported by the

media. Saunders (2013) defined this by saying, "high risk activism has anticipated

dangers, perhaps arrest or personal injury and high cost activism involves commitment of

time, energy, and resources" (p. 2). Confrontational activism is considered high risk

(Rootes, 2003, Saunders, 2013). Examples of this type again are sit-ins, marches,

gatherings, and blockades, and all carried the risk of injury, arrest, or fines.

The third type of activism important to this study is digital or cyber-activism as it

can be called. Over the last 20 years our society has moved more and more to online in

all aspects of our lives including activism. "Social technology such as social network

sites (e.g, Facebook) and content-sharing websites (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo) are allowing

online interaction between people at unprecedented large scales. These technologies hold

great potential for supporting activism and civic engagement" (Lee and Hsieh 2013 p.1).

Because of technology we are able to extend our protest and activism across the globe.

We can share up to the minute and in some cases, real time protesting that is happening

around the world at unfathomable rates. "Digital activism refers both to the digital

technology that is used in a given activism movement and to the economic, social, and

political context in which such technology use occurs" (Sivitanides, Shah 2011 p. 2).

While most think of the awareness digital activism can bring it can be forgotten that

protests or movements can be funded globally through sites like GoFundMe or

Kickstarter. (Sivitanides, Shah 2011).

Digital activism requires less risk, time, and energy which makes it a more viable

way for busy students to become involved. The involvement can happen quickly, no

longer do they need to be handing out pamphlets but can easily update followers on

current events in the movement quickly (Cabrera, Matias, & Montoya, 2017). For

example, if one is concerned about the environment, they can join a group discussion online and stay updated on events or news in the area and around the globe. Though easier to use, we must address the negative side which includes social media fatigue. Because of the popularity of social media, digital activism can be fleeting (Hampton, 2015). What is posted one day can be lost in chatter on social media by the next day. Those who engage in digital forms of activism must hope that their post or their message goes viral because if it does not, it will get lost in the shuffle (Hampton, 2015).

Evolution of Activism

The college student population massively increased throughout the 1960s, especially the late 60's-70's (Levine and Hirsch, 1991). According to Thelin (2004), Campus enrollment swelled from 3.6 million in 1960 to 8.5 million by 1970 (Lucas, 2006). This increase in enrollment included a population that for the first time was not predominantly white men from higher social class structures. For college campuses this meant a larger and more diverse student population that they were needing to manage. Campuses were no longer spacious, but increasingly busy and packed which meant that more students were around to hear about a movement (Altbach, 1987). There were also complaints of institutions becoming impersonal with the rise of larger classes in massive auditoriums, increased reliance on technology, and graduate students teaching more courses, which led to less teacher and student interactions in the classroom, but faculty were getting more involved with student led activism (Kezar, 2010).

During this time period student affairs professionals turned away from the concept of in loco parentis, which treated college students as young children and the institution as their guardian (Altbach, 1989; Kezar, 2010). No longer was the college seen as the parent,

enforcing curfews, monitoring interactions between sexes, or regulating drinking but allowing the students a new level of freedom to make choices for themselves as adults. Campuses also did away with dress codes and allowed students to freely express themselves (Broadhurst, 2014). This led to treating students as adults, campus administrators had to recognize that students now felt that they should have rights on campuses as well as a say in an institution's policies and regulations. Those who would become anti-war activists most likely got their start as campus activists for student rights (Broadhurst, 2014).

Impact on Family. Children being raised by the adults of the 1950's and 1960s were experiencing a different upbringing than previous generations because of what their parents had been through as they grew up. The activists of the 1960s were unique in that they most likely grew up experiencing the effects of war, World War I and II, and the Korean War, through their own childhood by knowing the sacrifices made and having parents and grandparents who served in the military (Broadhurst, 2014). These unique experiences showed a young generation the real realities of war and how it effects not only our nation, but those individuals who served. These young people experienced first-hand the effects of war growing up, and this changed the way they were raised (Duncan and Stewart, 1995). They grew up having experienced personally the effects of not only World War I and World War II, but also the Korean War in the 1950s (Duncan and Stewart, 1995). This radically changed how this next generation taught their children to think from various perspectives including: ideology, philosophy, politically, and understanding how the world works (Altbach and Cohen, 1990). It could be described as a trickle-down effect as those who lived through a war did not want their children to do the same and thus raised them to

think differently about the world they were in and to speak up when things did not appear to be right.

Armed with the ideas and philosophies of their parents the new young students of the 60s were able to create change. College students of this era were influential in questioning authority, rebelling against previous norms, and showing the ability to organize effectively (Engler, 2015). These were young students that learned from their upbringings and parents that change needed to happen. College campuses were perhaps the best place for demonstrations to start because of the high concentration of youth who are exposed to new ideas and independence for the first time (Engler, 2015).

The steady rise in those attending college could be attributed to a change of philosophy and the thought that having a degree was important; but a larger portion could be because of young men that were trying to avoid the draft (Card and Lemieux, 2001). Those in undergraduate and graduate studies received deferments from the draft (Card and Lemieux, 2001). The threat of being drafted was high for those between the ages of 18-25 (Card and Lemieux, 2001). The average time of service was 3 years when drafted as well (Card and Lemieux, 2001). While this was a reliable tactic in the early parts of the Vietnam draft, it became increasingly harder to acquire a deferment based off collegiate studies. All in all, those who did not have a degree were 50% more likely to be drafted while those with degrees were only 19% as likely. With all the data and information being researched, it was found that college growth increased by only 4-6% during the 1960s (Card and Lemieux, 2001).

With many college students using education for a deferment there was a large population on campuses that vocally opposed the Vietnam war. In one study done at

Columbia University it was shown that 75% of protestors at Vietnam demonstrations opposed the war regardless of their draft status or the main goals. Among those who favored the war, only 20% supported the main goals of said war (Barton, 1968).

Students were at the center of these demonstrations as they viewed their future in jeopardy and needed to do something. "The effect of unemployment and poverty is not only on the immediate victims but on the entire ghetto community as well. All are unhappy with the situation, and there is a sense of solidarity, a community climate of resentment and resistance. The cure for the discontent must come by changing the climate of the community, by giving its members believable evidence that major changes are actually happening. This may apply also to student unrest" (Barton, 1968 p.18) Students saw the issues and felt they were the most equipped to bring awareness to, what they felt, was an unjust war (Barton, 1968). The students were not the only individuals on campus that opposed the Vietnam War as the Columbia study found that 69% of the faculty who replied to the survey were opposed to the war as well. What is interesting is that those who opposed Vietnam also were heavily in favor of the civil rights movement and the black power movement (Barton, 1968). This shows that while the Vietnam was the focus on campuses, students were also active and supportive of other movements going on during the decade.

The 1960s were an activist's dream scenario. Everywhere, across the country, students and activists were getting involved in "The Movement" (Van Dyke, 1998 p.208). The Movement was not one singular event or specific to a cause. The 60s were littered with various causes that would be considered as distinct entities. Activism was so

prevalent that it was sometimes difficult to keep straight what the youth were protesting as many causes shared the same protestors (Van Dyke, 1998 p 208).

One of the biggest causes of the 60s, along with the Vietnam War, was the Civil Right Movement. While we know about the various adult leaders who led the fight for equality, people forget that college and university students were a large part of the organization, planning, and execution of marches, demonstrations, and protests (Pade, 2015). Student organizations were a large part of creating organizations on campuses that provided students the platform to be introduced to the idea and practice of activism (Brown and Thomas, 1971). There were many iconic and famous protests during the Vietnam War such as the March against the Vietnam War which took place in Washington D.C (Pade, 2015). Another famous protest that unfortunately has a tragic ending was the Kent State Massacre (Pade, 2015; Brown and Thomas, 1971). This event started as a student protest against the Vietnam War, but ended with members of the National Guard opening fire on Kent State student protestors (Pade, 2015; Brown and Thomas, 1971; Witte, 1994). This event will be discussed further in the Activism Demonstrations/Protests section.

Civil Rights Movement

Two organizations of students were seen as a breeding ground for new young activists to get involved (Van Dyke, 1998). SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) were clubs that existed during the Civil Rights Movement and they collaborated together, both organizations supported each other through common ideologies and sharing of materials (Van Dyke, 1998).

Members of the two organizations also participated in actions sponsored

by the other group and provided ideological support. The largest action

sponsored by SNCC during the early 1960's was the Mississippi voter

registration drive, that culminated in the 1964 Freedom Summer

Campaign (Van Dyke, 1998 p.209).

These groups helped create a larger dialogue about voter rights in the South where

blacks were being discriminated against (Van Dyke, 1998). Both groups were equally

impressed by the work of the other which motivated them to continue to collaborate and

work hard towards helping the movement. They also benefited from shared leadership,

meaning that some were top leaders of both, making for easier communication and

understanding (Van Dyke, 1998 p. 208). These two groups were not just activists for civil

rights, but also assisted with the anti-Vietnam war protests. Being a part of various

protests gave students experience in the fight for civil rights as they gained an

understanding about tactics and strategies from another movement (Van Dyke, 1998).

Students groups may have been essential to the fight, but they could only be as effective

as the school let them (Van Dyke, 1998). Institutions needed to be willing to let students

have a voice on campus. Killian (1984) found that many of the institutions that allowed

students or organizations to protest or gather were ones that historically allowed activism

in the past. No school wanted to be the ones that were left behind or seen as weak in

regard to activism (Killian, 1984). Institutions like the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

understood activism and protesting and created a favorable environment (Witte, 1994).

Obviously if colleges or universities were not supportive, it would've been more difficult

to for student groups to have the same impact on campus, let alone society at large.

While some universities and colleges were able and eager to help students, Black organizations were also reaching out to help students and others who were being discriminated against. Killian (1984), describes how the bus boycott was a form of protest in sharing the perspective from those involved;

The bus boycott came into focus when Carrie and I boarded a city bus here in Tallahassee on Saturday afternoon. We dropped our dimes into the meter and sat next to a white lady on the seat behind the driver. It was the only seat available. When we sat down, the driver said, "You girls can't sit there." I said, "Why?" He said, "You just can't sit there." I got up, went to him and said, "Give me back my dime and I will get off." He said, "I can't give you your dime." I returned to my seat and I sat. He drove the bus to the nearest service station; he went into the station and made a call. He returned to the bus and parked and said, "Everyone remain seated." Within five minutes three cars loaded with policemen came. Two of the officers came on the bus. They talked with the driver and then came over to Carrie and I. One of the officers said, "Are you girls having a problem?" I explained to him what had happened and told him that I would get off if the driver would give me my dime. He then said, "You girls want to ride-then I'll give you a ride; come with me." So Carrie and I, we followed the officer to his car and got in. He took us to the police station. When we got there, it appeared as if the entire police force was there to greet us. It was somewhat frightening. He charged us for inciting a riot. We were really surprised and shocked. The dean of city students sent a bondsman to bail

us out. The next morning when we read the paper, "Carrie Patterson and

Wilhemina Jakes arrested for Inciting a Riot," we tried to call our parents

and let them know what had happened, and that we were alright. Then

about 9 a.m. Sunday Reverend Steele and a representative of the NAACP

came to see us. They told us that when they read the paper they thought

that we were still in jail and they had been there to bond us out. We told

them the story; they offered us their support (p 772-773).

Activism, demonstrations, and protests. The media was an important player

during the Vietnam War protests and movements (Schreiber, 1976). This was one of the

first times people saw protesters and activists effectively use the media to their advantage

(Schreiber, 1976).

In many ways, the sound of the tree falling in the forest metaphor can be

applied to the success of political activism in the modern democracy. If

the media did not cover it, it might as well not have happened as far as the

impact on the president, advisors, the general public, and even other

nations is concerned (Small, 1987, p. 189).

This quote is important, because it is the reality of the society that we live in now and

lived in the 1960s. At this time there was no internet and media were consumed via

television, radio, and print. Since it was limited, the American people were at the mercy

of the media, only hearing and learning about what they selected to be presented

(Schreiber, 1976). If happenings about the Vietnam War were not deemed important,

then the American people were not aware or educated on the topic. (Barton, 1968) The

American people were at the mercy of the media and Vietnam activists understood this

(Berkowitz, 1970). The radical protests, marches, and demonstrations were the ways to attract media coverage (Small, 1987).

One example of radical protesting was what is now referred to as the Kent State Massacre. Brown and Thomas (1971) spoke to residents of Kent, Ohio where the massacre happened referred to the protestors as radicals that would have torn the city down unless the national guard showed up. Pade (2015) identified it as one of the most infamous and tragic demonstrations of the Vietnam War which was started by students protesting the expansion into Cambodia, which claimed neutrality in the conflict. The decision to bomb Cambodia sparked large scale and angry protests across the United States, not just at Kent State University (Witte, 1994). The bombing in Cambodia was seen as an expansion of a war that was already unpopular on college campuses as it had been going on for too long in their eyes (Witte, 1994). Kent State students were protesting and sharing their dissatisfaction with the government's actions. According to Brown and Thomas (1971), students caused destruction to property, business, and burned the ROTC building on campus. Those who lived in Kent, OH during the event stated that rioting and destruction by the students had been going on for two days and then the National Guard arrived and attempted to calm down the protesting (Brown and Thomas, 1971).

Then on May 4, 1970 the National Guard opened fire on protestors and resulted in 4 dead and 9 injured (Pade, 2015). While the media covered the climax of the protest which was the shootings, the destructive protesting by the students had been going on for two days. (Brown and Thomas, 1971). While the response to the massacre was swift and intense with many schools and institutions around the United States closing, the public

and media opinion was mixed and full of pro and anti-protest rhetoric (Brown and

Thomas, 1971). One resident was quoted saying, "The only way to stop those degenerates

is for those who believe in the flag to band together and kick the hell out of some people.

Brute force is the only answer" (Brown and Thomas, 1971 p. 3). While another resident

stated, "The National Guard is just a bunch of trigger-happy, draft-dodging, high school

dropouts. Unless evidence of a sniper is positively proven, the Guard is at fault" (Brown

and Thomas, 1971 p. 3). Overall, the public had differing opinions on who deserved

blame for what happened at Kent State. Many saw the students as agitators that would

have burned down the city and school without a second thought. Others saw the students

as victims of a trigger-happy National Guard who misread a situation and killed unarmed

young men and women (Pade, 2015). One thing is for sure, this event captivated the

nation and led to more discussions about the Vietnam War and the protesting that was

taking place because of it.

Demonstrations were a vital part of the activist's agenda especially with the

notion of having to capture the media's attention in order to get their message to the

American people (Berkowitz, 1970). "For many looking back at the turbulent sixties, the

periodic gatherings in Washington, New York, San Francisco, and other major cities

were the major events of the period" (Small, 1987, p. 190). Activists understood where

large demonstrations should be held in order to gather the most people, create the biggest

buzz, and draw the media (Small, 1987). This tactical placement of demonstrations also

caught the attention of politicians or administrators who felt that they needed to

understand those who were protesting (Small, 1987; Engler, 2015). These demonstrations

could alter how politicians voted on various bills (Small, 1987). This makes sense as

politicians need to understand what their constituents want (Burstein and Freudenberg, 1978).

Organizing demonstrations and protests went further than just choosing a large city. The leaders took it to the next level and almost always tried to plan the demonstrations in the fall or spring, rarely were they planned for the summer, for two reasons. One reason they went for spring and fall was that organizers wanted to have their protests and demonstrations when there was less chance of bad weather that could hurt their attendance (Small, 1987). Another reason they wanted to avoid the summer was because of the break college students would be on (Small, 1987). Organizers were always thinking ahead and made sure to plan events when they knew students were able to attend (Small, 1987). While portrayed as the outsiders and dissidents, the organizers and leaders of the Anti-War movement were intelligent and understood how to effectively plan so that the impact of the event was at its maximum (Small, 1987).

While we remember now, and even perhaps romanticize the protests of the 1960's, in reality the various protests and movements were successful, but many failed to hold or capture the public's attention (Schreiber,1976; Berkowitz, 1970). The movement was watched closely by lawmakers and the public alike due in part to the media coverage. Small (1987) described the tactic, "We also know that anti-war leaders developed their protests with an eye to influencing both the White House directly and the public indirectly through the media" (Small, 1987 p. 186). Activist leaders thought deeply about the strategy they implemented. They understood that they needed to not only reach lawmakers, but also the public; and this formed a two-prong attack to make sure their message was not lost. While they did effectively use the media to draw attention it can be disputed that the American

people were apathetic to the anti-war movement as a whole. Schreiber's (1978) study showed,

> If it were conceded that anti-war demonstrations did not have a short-run effect (even up to 24 months later, as shown by Berkowitz), it still could be argued that demonstrations had long-run effects, effects that were confounded by other events, and that the cumulative effect of anti-Vietnam war demonstrations was to reduce the American public's support for the war in Vietnam (p.227).

According to Schreiber we need to look closer and adjust expectations for what was accomplished. Short term goals of awareness may not be enough.

Schreiber (1976) read and studied the public opinion of the Vietnam protests and state,

> The major finding was that American public opinion did not appear to respond to anti-Vietnam war demonstrations in terms of either disapproval of American involvement in Vietnam, disapproval of the President's handling of the Vietnam situation, or disapproval of the President's handling of the job (p. 226).

Schreiber argued that no relationship emerged between anti-war protests and the American opinion about Vietnam. It was found that there was a similarity between disapproval of the war and reporting of American casualties. So rather than protests changing opinions, it was the death of American soldiers that swayed beliefs (Schreiber, 1976). "Casualties are a symptom of what wars cost and when visible progress is limited, it can be expected that the public increasingly will see the war as representing an unfavorable balance between

costs and benefits" (Schreiber, 1976 p. 228). Schreiber found that in the short-term Americans were apathetic to the Anti-Vietnam demonstrations, but long term they were memorable and instructed future demonstrations. Basically, it found that Americans can accept soldier deaths, but only if we are winning or progressing towards a win.

The Civil Rights Movement had their fair share of iconic demonstrations and protests throughout all communities, such as marches, sit-ins, and boycotts (Searles and Williams 1962). While the community was ever present in their activism of Civil Rights, college campuses were rife with protest and young Black Americans who felt passionately about the movement (Searles and Williams 1962). As mentioned before, the students of the era were not new to activism. Many were participants in the Vietnam War protests during this time. These were not unexperienced rookies in their first foray into the activist battleground, but seasoned activists who knew how to make a statement and gather a crowd. For example, UC Irvine received recognition for protesting the Vietnam War (Engler, 2015), UNC-Greensboro was where the protest tactic, sit-ins were born (Searles and Williams 1962), and Columbia University's students and faculty were involved in protesting the Vietnam War (Barton, 1968).

Students and faculty involved with the movement were diverse and the institutions that were most involved tended to be bigger schools where more independent thought prevailed (Fendrich, 1977). "Studies show that students majoring in liberal arts particularly the social sciences and humanities, are further to the left politically than other college majors" (Fendrich 1977, p 147). It would make sense that those involved with liberal arts would feel more attached to the ideology of the movement (Fendrich, 1977). These are history students learning about revolutions throughout history, psychology,

sociology, and anthropology who are studying humans in how they have organized,

behaved, and lived and adapted throughout human existence. These were not the only

ones who joined in the movement though, athletes were also a part of the activism

movement and used their platform to show support for the Civil Rights Movement.

"Perhaps the most recognizable symbol of black male athlete activism is San Jose State

University track athletes, John Carlos's and Tommie Smith's Black Power salute on the

victory stand at the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City" (Agyemang, Singer,

DeLorme, 2010 p. 420). "These black male athletes and many others all played an

integral part in the movement that illuminated social injustices of the time and incited

change regarding American social, cultural, and economic policy" (Agyemang, Singer,

DeLorme, 2010, p 420). This shows that protest and demonstration were not new to

African Americans involved in the Movement. To have the confidence to protest in such

a public way when the world was watching was not a coincidence. Activists understood

how to use the media to their advantage. this was the original act that showed that

athletes, even black ones, could use their platform to raise awareness about societal

issues. While iconic and memorable, not all activists had the platform of star athletes.

Most protests started with a single individual and grew from there.

     One of the demonstrations that is closely associated with the Civil Rights

Movements are sit ins (Searles and Williams 1962; Biggs, 2006). These were devised to

be non-violent ways to protest discrimination and racism during the late 1950's and into

the 1960's.

     On February 1, four freshmen from North Carolina Agricultural and

     Technical college in Greensboro occupied the lunch counter of

Woolworth's after being refused service. The protests were repeated, with

increasing numbers of students on the following days. This form of protest

was soon known as a "sit in" was not new (Andrews and Biggs, 2006,

p.753).

This form of protest was not new but was not seen as common at the time. A sit-in

is the action of going to a location, like a restaurant, diner, or lunch table and peacefully

sitting down (Searles & Williams 1962; Bigg, 2006; Carl, 1960). Those who sat down

were usually harassed physically, mentally or arrested (Carl, 1961). The idea was that, no

matter what, an individual or group would not retaliate against those who tried to harm

them (Carl, 1961). While it started at the lunch counter of dime stores, this type of protest

was seen as effective in a variety of ways.

According to James Robinson, Executive Secretary of the Congress on

Racial Equality and one of the participants in the Palisade affair, the

group, after refused admission, remained in line in front of the pool's

ticket booth. Shortly, several employees of the park physically attacked

them. In conformance with the non-violent principles of CORE, they

refused to retaliate but remained more or less in their places until their

arrest at the hands of Police Chief Stengel. The report of the case is

unclear as to the precise charge filed against the plaintiffs (Carl, 1961 p

449).

This was a common theme of sit-ins across the country as students were becoming more

political and outspoken on issues that involved them (Biggs, 2006). This became more

common also because, now more than ever we are seeing a rise in the black middle class

(Searles and Williams 1962). Those who are middle class and now college educated were more likely to participate in protest events like sit ins (Searles and Williams 1962).

While protests, such as sit-ins, started in the late 1950's they were not recognized as effective or successful right away (Andrews and Biggs 2006). They were also initially opposed by groups like the NAACP, eventually protestors, mostly college aged, were given recognition for their efforts and were highlighted as success (Biggs, 2006; Andrews and Biggs 2006). Sit-ins eventually forced white officials to the table to negotiate with black leaders (Andrews and Biggs 2006). Part of the reason they were so successful was that this particular form of protest was coordinated and made up of friends who had each other's backs (Searles and Williams 1962). Sit-ins were not usually a group of random activists thrown together, but those who knew one another and had connections to each other. According to Andrews and Biggs (2006) this created a stronger bond and ultimately helped those activists be successful.

Slacktivism

The term slacktivism comes from combining slacker and activism. Slacktivism has been defined as "low-risk, low-cost activity via social media whose purpose is to raise awareness, produce change, or grant satisfaction to the person engaged in the activity" (Lee, Hsieh, 2013 p. 1). As we move to a more digital and connected society, things we are familiar with, like activism, can change or transform into a new understanding. Slacktivism is the idea that you can affect change and participate, to a degree, as an activist with minimal commitment to a cause (Skoric 2012; Kristofferson, White, and Peloza 2013).

While the origin of the term slacktivism is debated, Ozard and Clark (1995) take credit for using the term for the first time at a music festival in 1995. A portmanteau of the word "slacker" and "activism" it was used to denote "bottom-up activities by young people to affect society on a small personal level" (Skoric, 2012, p. 78). The word has been recognized for over 20 years, and it has taken a whole new context with the rapid rise of technology (Cabrera, Matias, Montoya, 2017). Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya (2017) wrote *Activism or Slacktivism? The Potential and Pitfalls of Social Media in Contemporary Student Activism* which talks about the pros and cons of social media in relation to the rapid rise of the phenomenon known as slacktivism. They specifically talk about how it relates to college students and traditional participatory activism. Because of technology our society is more connected than ever before. Those in North America can be aware of issues or events happening across the globe, almost to the minute that they happen. With this globalization we are able to react quicker and many times it is through social media where we are able to spread awareness. "A key distinction between activism and slacktivism is the risk that each activity requires Liking a Facebook page generally does not put a person in danger but engaging in activism does" (Cabrera, Matias, Montoya, 2017 p.406). This is the key difference that many see in activism versus slacktivism. Activism has, for many, been defined by the risk and cost of what you are advocating for (Kristofferson, White, Peloza 2013; Lee and Hsieh 2013). Holcomb, (2016) stated that slacktivism is more focused on the idea of spreading awareness than mobilizing individuals into action. Though the word slacktivism comes partly from activism it is its own entity with its own meaning and value that is different from activism (Skoric, 2012; Bozarth and Budak 2017).

The question that is being asked now about slacktivism is whether it is a positive or negative addition to the ideology of activism (Holcomb, 2016). There are positives and negatives associated with the term slacktivism that will be presented later in this section, but overall it is not an easy ideology to define. With the rise of social media and literally hundreds of thousands of new users daily is slacktivism, is it worth asking if this is our new normal (Holcomb, 2016)?

Slacktivism pros vs. cons. Slacktivism has been perceived from multiple perspectives, with some seeing it as positive because it engages people in a low-risk manner (Boulton, 2015; Holcomb, 2016). Others would argue that it is not a useful or productive form of activism in that it does not require and time, energy, or effort on behalf of the individual and only serves for the "activist" to feel good about themselves (Lee and Hsieh, 2013) To fully understand slacktivism, it is important to look at it from various perspectives to see how it is part of the lived experience today. Slacktivism is its own form of activism and to see the impact it has we have to know how it has come to be utilized and the purpose it serves as a means of activism (Holcomb, 2016; Foreman, 2018). If your expectations are reasonable in what you are looking to achieve then it can be an effective way to raise awareness and keep a movement in the public eye (Holcomb, 2016; Boulton, 2018).

Boulton (2015), who wrote about the Kony 2012 online story, stated,

I looked to my idols, rock bands of course, for guidance, U2 endorsed

Amnesty International, a human rights organization working for the

release of political prisoners, and REM backed Greenpeace, a radical

environmental organization using direct action to confront polluters. These

> bands' endorsements of political activism were very important to me.
>
> They made the issues relevant and, most importantly for an insecure
>
> adolescent, popular. (p. 323)

What Boulton points out is how important spreading information can be and how

different celebrities and organizations can convey their message in passive forms.

Celebrities, even before the digital age, have been influential in spreading slacktivist

ideologies. It takes them less than a minute to plug a cause or movement on stage or

during an interview. This example does not have to be famous bands either, if an

individual's friend's start sharing movements or organizations that individual could start

to identify with those events or share them with his connections online as well.

There is another example Boulton (2015) used in the form of a movement that

highlights how successful a slacktivism campaign can be, that is Kony 2012. At its peak

the world, especially the online world was captivated by the story of Joseph Kony, leader

of child soldiers who were forced to serve in his Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), in

Uganda (Boulton, 2015). There was a massive online campaign to shed light on the

human rights violations that Kony was involved with at the time. Celebrities and

everyday people took to social media to raise awareness by sharing videos, testimonials,

or other information about what was happening in Uganda (Boulton, 2015).

> Of course, it's ironic that such an active vision of hundreds of young
>
> participants taking to the streets was passively watched by millions more
>
> who stayed indoors. Yet, at the same time, this is the very beauty of
>
> slacktivism—its ability to use the Internet to connect causes to
>
> marginalized supporters. In this way, friendships can be formed across

divides of distance and levels of interest/commitment. It's important to

remember that even in the heyday of the anti-Vietnam War movement,

there were plenty of people who showed up to the demonstration to get

drugs, meet the opposite sex, or just watch; for a time, it was trendy,

stylish, and even aspirational to be against the war (Boulton, 2018 p.327)

This quote illustrates an important understanding, there will never be 100% active

participatory activism. Slacktivism presents the different levels of involvement that an

individual can take in a way we have not necessarily seen in the past. Slacktivism

essentially allows an individual to choose the level of effort, commitment, and energy

they want to put forth. It also shows how to get involved for those who are new to the

topic, albeit with less commitment (Boulton, 2018; Foreman, 2018).

There are always going to be those who show up for the fun or share just so they

look involved, and that is not necessarily a bad thing. True activism takes engagement, as

well as time and money and not everyone has an abundance of either to give (Forman,

2018; Holcomb, 2016). Slacktivism allows everyone, no matter their economic status or

availability to have at least a semblance of the feeling of activism. Which could always

lead to a more involved form of activism in the future (Cabrera, Matias, Montoya 2017).

In the same breath, slacktivism is a modern society's option because we still have some

of the world that does not have easy access to computers, TV, or radio.

One of the biggest current movements that utilized social media to be successful

is the #MeToo movement (Bhattacharyya, 2018). The #MeToo movement started online

with women stepping forward and sharing their stories of sexual harassment, assault, or

degradation by their male peers. While this movement started with the entertainment

industry with women coming forward and sharing their stories on social media using the hashtag, #MeToo (Beigi, Liu, Kambhampati, and Manikonda, 2018). "At the same time, facilitated by expanding technologies, #MeToo has catalyzed the creation of new channels for reporting sexual misconduct without directly invoking the legal system or law- adjacent institutional structures" (Beigi, Liu, Kambhampati, and Manikonda, 2018 p.276) This was a new way for those who had suffered misconduct and abuse to call out their accusers and also share their truth, not in a court of law, but in the court of public opinion.

This was an empowering moment for women who are now able to bring awareness to what is happening in their personal and professional lives while giving them the platform they needed. "Women have long chosen to share their accounts of sexual abuse with one another rather than report through formal channels" (Tuerkheimer, 2019 p.277). Women have never had the platform to share what they are experiencing so before #MeToo and social media they used "whisper networks" (Tuerkheimer, 2019; Airey, 2018). This is a network where women share their experiences and warn other women on who to avoid. So, while women knew in their community or work environment on who might be dangerous, there was never a way to formal accuse an individual besides going to the courts (Turekheimer, 2019).

With social media, women now have an alternative to the legal system. Social media allows these #MeToo stories to reach even wider communities throughout not only their community or area, but nationwide or even globally (Airey, 2018; Tuerkheimer, 2019). Another positive about the #MeToo campaign is that it did not force women to give up their anonymity if they did not want too (Tuerkheimer, 2019). The whisper

network that has been used for decades let women share their information with others

about men to avoid contact with. It also let them share this information without anyone

else knowing what they were saying. Social media can do the same, anyone can create an

anonymous profile or account and share what they want; and they can choose to share

and accuse the men that hurt them without fear of retaliation (Tuerkheimer, 2019).

While there are positives, there are many who feel that slacktivism is hurting what

they consider real activism. "Originally, it had a positive connotation, but it has since

evolved into a more pejorative term used to belittle activities that do not express a full-

blown political commitment to a particular cause or movement" (Skoric, 2012 p.78). One

of the issues brought up is the idea that activism takes sacrifice and full commitment. The

authors Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya argue, "A key distinction between activism and

slacktivism is the risk that each activity requires "Liking" a Facebook page generally

does not put a person in danger but engaging in activism does (Cabrera, Matias, Montoya

2017 p.406). There is a notion that those who are a part of true participatory activism can

say they are activists because they are putting themselves out there for criticism, they are

sacrificing, and basically walking the walk.

For example, those who participated in sit-ins during the Civil Rights Movement

were routinely ridiculed, harassed, and even beaten for their activism (Biggs, 2006).

Those who do not see slacktivism as activism argue that without financial or personal risk

there cannot be commitment to a movement or cause, but in reality, it is for social

acknowledgment and praise (Skoric 2012; Kristofferson, White, Peloza 2013). There is

an element of self-centeredness recognition with little action required.

Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya (2017) said,

> Student activism for the sake of activism becomes a form of public
>
> narcissism under the guise of promoting social justice. To combat this,
>
> localized actions have to be contextualized within visions of social
>
> progress and possibilities of a non-oppressive future (p.407).

Activism for the sake of activism does nothing to help further a cause or bring more awareness to any given issue and is used for self-promotion (Cabrera, Matias, Montoya 2017). It creates shallow narcissistic reasons for engaging. Those who are participating online for selfish reasons are more likely to not engage in traditional activism as they will view their contribution as "good enough" (Hampton 2015). These individuals will most likely not engage further and their slacktivism will not lead to a more committed activism role. These individuals will feel as they have done all they could and accomplished what they set out to do (Hampton 2015).

Summary

Activism has been around, in one way or another, forever. Activism in the last 50-60 years has changed greatly. Activism in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s was seen as a high effort, time consuming, and required great dedication (Lee and Hsieh, 2013). During this era of activism, we saw high levels of sit-ins, boycotts, marches, and so on that were led by students on their college campuses (Searles and Williams 1962; Small 1987). On college campuses students were getting involved and becoming leaders in movements like the anti-Vietnam War and Civil Rights (Small, 1987; Carl, 1961). More recently society has developed, and it is the digital age that is changing how activism is defined and accomplished. The digital age has created a relatively new type of activism referred to as slacktivism (Cabrera, Matias, Montoya, 2017).

Slacktivism can be described as a low effort, cost and time alternative to what would be considered participatory activism (Holcomb, 2016; Foreman 2018). Slacktivism, while argued as effective, does have its drawbacks and can be seen as an inherent selfish act (Holcomb, 2016; Cabrera, Matias, Montoya, 2017). It is argued that slacktivism is not activism but narcissistic actions that only help an individual be perceived as an activist (Cabrera, Matias, Montoya, 2017). The other side of that argument is that no matter how small the action, even just liking a page or sharing a post, should be considered activism (Boulton, 2015; Lee and Hsieh, 2013). The fact that an individual is sharing something and could be bringing increased awareness to a movement is enough (Boulton, 2015). College students are engaging in slacktivism more than ever because of the relative ease and quickness. No longer do students have to dedicate a lot of money, time, or effort to activism and slacktivism provides a relatively easy option for showing support to a political or social movement (Foreman 2018; Hampton 2015).

Chapter III

Methods

This study was seeking to explain and understand various types of activism throughout different eras. Activism has gone from needing high participatory, effort, and time to a new form that has taken shape in our new digital age (Cabrera, Matias, Montoya, 2017). This relatively new word is slacktivism and it has risen along with the meteoric popularity of social media. This study has been looking at how the digital age and social media has affected activism on college campuses and the students who participate. This was a qualitative study that involved interviewing higher education administrators to learn about how they see the differences of activism through the years and how they work with students in this new digital age.

Design of the Study

This study used a qualitative research model to gather and analyze data. By using interviews, it allowed higher education administrators to give their answers without the confines of predetermined choices that may or not fit how they want to answer.

Qualitative methods have the potential to contribute significantly to the development of meaningful "quantities"; however, they have inherent as well as instrumental value. Some phenomena, including historical events, are so unusual that by the time one has a way to quantify them, they have either changed or disappeared (Sofaer, 2010 p. 1102).

Activism can be sustained for any length of time, but the longer it is, the harder it becomes. In our digital age especially, activism moves quickly and many times a movement can be started and completed before there is any time to study or research it.

The qualitative research model allowed researchers to interview participants or attendees about their experience. The study wanted those who were interviewed to be able to answer freely. Interviews were approximately 30 minutes to one hour and consisted of a number of static questions that was asked to each participant. These participants were chosen based years of experience in higher education and familiarity with different types of activism. An understanding of the different types of activism and also basic understanding of social media was necessary for participants. Participants were also asked to talk about their personal experience with activism throughout their career, starting as undergraduate students and all the way to their positions now. Participants were also asked how their opinions may have changed since entering into the digital age. Participants were also questioned on their knowledge of social media in general and their use of the various platforms available.

Participants

The three participants in this study were high level administrators on various college campuses throughout the country. The administrators targeted for this study are those with the title of Vice President, Dean, or Director, who have been in their specific position or institution for at least three years and possess at least 20 years of experience in student affairs. Those who were interviewed also served in positions working directly and indirectly with students. Many times, in student affairs as individuals move up in the administration the focus becomes less on the interactions with students. Confidentiality was secured by conducting the Skype or phone interview in a closed office space and in the research by changing the names of those who are interviewed along with their institution. Participants were identified with the support of the thesis committee as well as

utilizing the snowball method; that is as one participant is contacted, they will be asked to identify others who might be good to speak with regarding this topic. There were three participants that were interviewed and all three hold Vice President titles on their campuses.

The administrators chosen were from 3 different universities and both their names and their universities will be referred to by pseudonyms to protect their identities. The first participant will be called Jeffery and he is a Dean of Students and Associate Vice President at Triangle College which is a private mid-sized school in on the East Coast. The second participant will be named Bruce and he is the Associate Vice President of Student Services at Golden College which is a mid-sized midwestern public institution. The last participant is Harry and he is the Vice President of Student Life at Southern College which is a mid-sized, public, and Southern Midwest institution.

Research Site

The research site was dynamic and could not be confined to one area. The interviews were conducted via Skype or phone, so they did not require face to face interaction. The institutions where interviewees were from are those that have seen or experienced some type of activism within the last five years. Both the researcher and the participant held the interview in private locations to maintain confidentiality. Also, to ensure the interviewee's answers were kept unbiased by the researcher the interview was recorded and transcribed to create the transcript.

Instrumentation

This study remained ethical by requiring two different forms of informed consent (Appendix A). There was a written consent form that will be sent to the interviewee and

they reviewed, signed, and returned the form to the researcher prior to the interview being

conducted. Before the interview began the researcher took the time to go over the

informed consent form again and the interviewee gave verbal consent. In addition to the

consent form, the researcher's questions (Appendix B) were submitted to the IRB for

approval and questions consisted of both primary and secondary. The research was

conducted via video call like Skype or through the phone. This was recorded and

transcribed verbatim.

Interview Protocol

Potential participants were supplied to the researcher through their thesis

committee's recommendation. Those provided were emailed with a request for a 30

minute to an hour interview through phone or Skype. Once the interview had been

scheduled there was a follow up email the day before as a reminder. At the time of the

interview the researcher conducted the phone or Skype interview in a private room where

it could not be overheard. The beginning of the interview was greeting the participant and

going over the interview's structure. Before starting the questioning there was time taken

to explain the informed consent form and how the data gathered will be treated. After the

interview the interviewee was thanked and told if they have questions, to contact the

researcher personally.

Data Collection

Collection of the data was done via Skype or phone interviews. Ultimately, each

participant decided to conduct the interview through telephone.. The answers they gave

was recorded via voice recorder and the researcher transcribed the interviews within two

weeks of the interview. Recordings of the interview was kept on a secure flash drive for

up to a year and then all copies will be deleted. Confidentiality was the utmost importance and was taken seriously. Participants were given fake names and their institutions and specific identifiable information were renamed as needed. Each participant's information was labeled with their pseudonyms, numbered, and kept in organized separate files as not to dilute the data.

Data Analysis

After the research was gathered the researcher did transcribe the data and then looked it over for common themes between participants. The data was coded into primary and secondary. This study was qualitative and gathered data through interviews. "In a survey, a large and representative sample of an explicitly defined target population is interviewed. Characteristically, a large number of standardized questions are asked and the responses coded in standardized answer categories" (Hox, Boeije 2005 p. 594). This was the strategy that the researcher used to analyze the data. Answers were categorized by common wording/ideas while answers that do not follow main themes of activism were coded as secondary data. Secondary data sought to study and understand social media and the digital age.

Treatment of Data

The data gathered from participants was kept confidential. Confidentiality was achieved through the use of pseudonyms, numbering the participants and their data, and changing the names of their institutions. There was complete anonymity in regard to the participants. Besides the researcher there was no one who knows their personal information. When the interview is conducted participants were addressed as their pseudonym and will have their corresponding number listed on all documents. The data

was stored securely on a flash drive that only the researcher has had access too. The

stored interview recordings will be kept for up to a year and then deleted.

Summary

This study sought to understand activism as it relates to the new digital age that

society finds itself navigating. Social media and the internet have made it easier than ever

to participate in activism, but has given rise to new forms of activism, slacktivism. The

research was gathered through the qualitative research model. This is so we could obtain

accurate data that cannot be gathered as well through the quantitative model.

Chapter IV

Analysis

This chapter is intended to provide information and insight into student activism on college campuses and how it may have changed throughout the years. College campuses have been dynamic through the years and have changed along with their students and technology. Like everything else student activism also changed throughout the decades. The individuals that would be present for all the changes and differences through the years are not the students, but the administrators. For the majority of students, college is a finite time in their lives, it is 4-5 years while administrators can be on campus working for decades.

The participants are all from different areas of the country which helps diversify the responses and apply it to the nation as a whole. The direction of the interviews was based on the research questions: What changes have they seen on college campuses related to activism, how they define slacktivism, and how do they see social media change the way that student engage in activism on the college campus.

Changes in activism on the college campus from the perspective of senior level administrators

After interviewing all the participants, their recordings were coded and analyzed for commonalities and themes. A couple subthemes were constant in all participants' interviews while answering the research questions, such as the differences from private vs. public institutions, current student apathy towards current events and societal issues, and finally the lack of coordination and organizational leaders. When asked how student affairs professionals have seen activism change over time working in higher education, the

participants provided a variety of different answers. To begin with they spoke about their own personal experiences as students themselves and then as professionals moving their way up to their current position, they identified that some students are coming from a place of apathy because they lack awareness of societal issues. Participants also identified that they see students lacking the ability to engage in civil discourse and how that is played out through social media. Finally, they identified a lack of coordination for movements because it appears that there are few stepping up to the challenge. It is also important to identify that the two participants from the public institutions spoke differently about their experiences in comparison to the individual at the private school. This will all be further presented below.

Apathy and Lacking leaders

The participants spoke about not seeing students step as leaders to coordinate activism related events on campus and how this influences their role on campus with activism. Jeffrey from Triangle College talked about racial incidents that have happened on his institution's campus and how groups of students have come together to speak out, with not necessarily a specific individual leading the efforts. He talked about the importance of supporting students. During these incidents' students, faculty, and administration all worked together to combat this hate.

> Initially, they wanted to have speak outs, which essentially meant they
> would get the place outside on campus. We provide sound equipment. And
> I would speak and sometimes their speech was extremely painful, and hard
> to hear both, bout their experience in our community, but also their
> experience in our country, and I was present for all of them because it's

important that our students had the support to express these fears and these

principal-driven concerns.

The students not only worked with the administration, but Jeffrey attended the

events and spoke to show his support. He talked about knowing that the students

hold these things dear; and he identified that it was important enough to the students

to warrant a demonstration, so he should acknowledge their efforts by showing up

himself. He talked about how sometimes administration needed to step in and either

help or provide perspective. Jeffrey had this to say,

> Many of us that work in the field have been working in the field for a while,
>
> can remember long periods of time of student apathy. And the real concern
>
> was that students were not engaged in the issues of the day, and there was a
>
> lot of concern about that. In fact, we would do programs around those issues
>
> to generate discussion. We were attempting to kick up dissonance around
>
> an issue.

What Jefferey was speaking to was what he identified as an important part of the

undergraduate experience; that is, learning about and becoming passionate about issues

that the students need to be aware of and should be upset about. And, providing them with

space to learn and let their voices be heard. The administration at many institutions are

acutely aware of what is and is not happening on their campus. Those in administration

want to see passionate students and want them to continue to grow. This is an example of

student apathy while important current events that effect their lives happen. Since there

were not any students leading the dissonance, the administration took it upon themselves

to try and create a conversation. Harry at Southern College also dealt with student apathy

and the lack of leaders on social issues. His institution is a rural regional college where he spoke about not seeing much in the form of activism.

> They were in smaller communities, rural. And I don't know that they were
> a hotbed of activism. You know, like you might think in terms of larger
> grant flagship institutions who tended to draw more diverse student
> population of both students and even faculty and staff that were more
> inclined towards social action and activism. So, I think I tended to be on
> campuses where one wouldn't expect that or that typically it didn't manifest
> itself.

Harry recognizes the type of University that he works at, a smaller rural institution being a place that lacks a diverse and active student body as well as activism of any sort. He also understands and expressed how not having students with differing opinions he does not see the discourse or conversation being sparked as you would with a larger institution with more diversity within staff, students, and administration.

Jeffrey spoke about the way he sees social media influencing activism today as he said "They are communicating with each other, sometimes anonymously, about their concerns or things that are happening in the world. They organize the latest iteration of activism around the idea of a leaderless group." And Jeffrey talked about how this makes it harder for the administration to work with student activists. Administrators may want to speak to a representative of the group, but what do you do when there is not one? Jeffery stated,

> It can be very hard to know who's organizing it and it's really hard to get
> information to them so that they know what would disrupt the institution in

our eyes. They're exploring their freedom of expression while we deal with

the different responsibilities that we believe students have when expressing

themselves. So, a leaderless group it can be really challenging and

sometimes frustrating to manage.

Jeffrey's quote illustrates how difficult working with these new leaderless groups is for

administrators, even those who support civil discourse like Jeffrey. Jeffrey expressed how

it is near impossible to inform these activists about rules and regulations to follow so that

their protest is considered peaceful. Jeffrey said earlier in a quote that he went to some

demonstrations and spoke on behalf the administration, supporting the demonstration.

Jeffery pondered what if the next group is leaderless, how does he start a conversation with

them about showing support.

Engaging in Civil Discourse

Civil discourse means that individuals with opposing viewpoints can civilly discuss

their thoughts or positions without being offended or intentionally putting down the other.

At Southern College, Harry spoke to his experience related to civil discourse. Harry stated,

Oftentimes some levels of activists are so passionate about it that they lose

all perspective, that, reasonable people can disagree and that there are other

elements that weigh into it. I think sometimes, senior administration of the

universities have to insert themselves, to remind and assure [people] that

there's civil discourse and that the opportunity for counterpoints, can exist

and have opportunity.

Defining Slacktivism

During the course of the interview process with the participants slacktivism was discussed and the researcher asked each participant to define the term and explain what they may know about slacktivism; however these administrators were not familiar with the term slacktivism until it was explained to them. The other theme found was that there is a real disconnect in the relationship between higher administration and social media regarding use and knowledge.

Jeffrey at Triangle College had this to say when asked to define slacktivism, "I would imagine that it's, maybe posting something on your Facebook or on your social media platform that involves very low risk to you, but that expresses an opinion on a topic." Harry provided this answer when asked to define slacktivism,

> If I was characterizing or defining that, it's caring and words that are token
>
> efforts. It takes a little effort to say, say something in passing or in this case
>
> you click a button and you hit the like, or you, you've, uh, posted/reposted
>
> something or what have you.

Bruce from Golden College did not provide a definition of slacktivism as he had never heard of it. It was clear that none of the participants really had a definition of this word.

After asking the participants to define slacktivism, the definition used in this study was shared. Once the definition was shared and examples were provided, Bruce stated, "So to answer your question. I do not think of it that way. I do not dissect activism in that way, by subsets." Jeffrey began to understand and provided more insight. He was able to come up with real-life examples of slacktivism, but just had never heard the name associated with it. Jeffrey went on to say,

> Well, I think it's not just students, I think that throughout our society, we
>
> have people engaging in low commitment, low risk post, but making posts,
>
> that's expressed strong opinions about things. So, if you have an anonymous
>
> account, you can do that more, do that more freely. I don't think that's a
>
> student phenomenon I think that's an American phenomenon.

Jeffrey also pointed out how anonymity plays a part in slacktivism. Those who engage anonymously have absolute freedom to speak what they believe with no repercussions.

Harry's definition also included modern day slacktivism pitfalls, social media. Liking and posting on social media is how people are engaging in activism currently. While Harry mostly knew what slacktivism meant, he could not provide any examples specifically on how students are using slacktivism on campus. Bruce does see slacktivism on his campus, but he does not count it as activism. He said, "You're either part of something or not part of something." He spoke about how he believes in traditional activism and being participatory as the only way to be a true activist.

Participants were also asked about their own use of social media, including which platforms they use and may be familiar with and those which they are not. Jeffrey expressed rudimentary skills in regards of social media use. When asked about his ability and also how aware he is about what is happening on social media on their campus Jeffrey said,

> I understand the importance of being aware of what's being posted on social
>
> media, if we can. And that doesn't mean monitoring, it just means well, and
>
> in my community, if something's put out there, typically students will bring
>
> it to us. I wouldn't say I'm very proficient, but I know enough to understand

what's being communicated and how that might affect either individual
members or members of our community.

Jeffrey spoke about the importance of social media use for college students. He has
identified that students are engaging more and more on social media and will be, if not
already, the most common way students interact. Harry, when asked the same question
about social media, said, "I'm not much (of a social media user). I mean, I have a Facebook
account. I look at things on Facebook, but as far as really posting things personally, not a
lot of that goes on with me and I don't have Instagram or Twitter accounts." He said he
knows that students engage online, but he is not monitoring it personally. He went on to
say that he works closely with the marketing and communications team who are more in
tune with what students are doing and saying online. So, though he is not super proficient,
he knows to rely on those who are.

Bruce was the most active and proficient in social media usage of the three
participants. When asked how knowledgeable he is as a social media user Bruce said, "I
think I'm pretty proficient for my age, I think I'm highly proficient for my age, I think I'm
in the top 1%." When asked which social media he uses, "I am an over-user on Facebook.
I used to be an over user on Twitter but have cut back because I think they've dumbed it
down. I use Instagram and I use Snapchat. Bruce not only knows what social media
students are using, but also using the same as students. Even though all three interviewees
have different levels of social media knowledge and skill, all of them know what students
are using. All three spoke about how this generation of students are no longer on Facebook
and all three spoke about how Instagram is now the most used student social media.

How Social Media has Changed Activism on College Campuses

Participants were asked to talk about the ways they see social media changing activism on the college campus in more recent years. Along with this they were asked to talk about the ways in which they have seen the institution also use social media. Participants spoke more about how social media is used and less about how it has changed activism on the college campus, but the insights they provide are worth sharing here. In analyzing this it was clear that there were three themes, how they see students using social media today, how students use social media for their version of activism, and how institutions are using social media.

Use of social media. Each of the participants identified that students are using social media every day. It is worth noting that Harry identified that he is not a big user of social media platforms and is less familiar about how students may be engaging and using them than his staff. Jeffrey from Triangle College defined social media in this way, "Social media really are the peer to peer quick communication or websites that are out there where everybody is connected on their phone." He continued stating that students are interacting more and more online and it is making it harder to monitor students on campus. When asked how he sees students using social media today Bruce from Golden University simply said, "To promote" themselves and what they see through social media. He went on to further explain that he sees student social media use as a way to promote what fun things they are doing on the weekends, look how good my life is, or on the opposite spectrum complain about their bad day to gather sympathy, or look for a pity party

Bruce went on to say he is probably in the 1% of social media users for his age group. He is an administrator that has really embraced the social media of the digital age

and believes he understands how students are engaging in activism in the current social media age. With regards to which social media students are using, he said, "I realized that many college kids are much more on Instagram or Snapchat than Twitter and Facebook. It is not that they are not on there but doesn't seem to be the first preference for the younger generation."

Social media activism. The participants did talk about the way they see the students using social media to and how it is impacting them. Bruce talked about other ways students are using social media in respect to activism. "Across the country we are seeing more and more of this keyboard courage". Meaning that more and more are using social media on a daily basis and using it in a variety of ways. Social media allows individuals who may not have a had a voice or audience in the past to share their views on any given topic. "They'll sit in classroom discussions and fire away on people, judge people, philosophize and solve the world's problems." Seeing students use social media this way means that they are testing and learning the importance of social media use. This also shows students' evolving from using social media as purely personal to weaponizing it to make their opinions and views known. It is not a perfect way to create activism, but some say this is the first time. Bruce brings up an alternate opinion, that social media is actually hurting students and creating critics, but not activists.

> Jeffrey in explaining how he sees students engaging through social media said,
>
> If you have this ground swell of interest in making a statement, it can be
>
> very hard to know who's organizing it and that makes it really hard to get
>
> information to them so they can know what would disrupt the institution in
>
> our eyes.

What Jeffrey was sharing was that identifying a leader through social media groups is harder which makes interacting and working with students who want to protest or gather is almost impossible. Jeffrey points out that not all activism is bad or unwanted, but that it's hard to know today who to work with to express their positions. Administrators, like Jeffrey, are willing to work with students and are eager to help them succeed in their causes. When administrators cannot identify a leader or a council to engage with, then the college is forced to enact their authority if the students break the laws/rules.

Harry, who is not a big social media user, did explain how his institution's students show their activist nature through volunteerism. "I think our students are very responsive. They do philanthropic events, give up their time, donate to food drives and those kinds of things." He also went to on to say,

I do think our students are quick to engage and act when they feel they can

help those in need. We might say the community needs help and next thing

you know 600, 700 students will show up and do what they can to help.

Harry's quotes illustrate a different form of activism which features low social media usage. As Harry explained his institution does not experience the movements or demonstrations that bigger schools do, but they are still active when they can be. From the participants view they are not seeing traditional activism; they are seeing how a school which does not see polarizing activism still works with students to create change.

Institutional use of social media. The participants also spoke about the ways the institution uses social media so that they can connect with the students and understands the ways in which they are communicating today. Bruce identified that administrators need to be able to find where the students gather and share ideas if they want to be a part of the

dialogue or conversation around campus activism, and he has identified the various platforms they are using and works himself to stay current in these arenas. Jeffrey spoke about how administrators and the institution as a whole needed to adjust to the new digital era and rise of social media.

> We've had to adjust our communication systems and also carefully think through statements. Our communications office has done an exceptional job with that. We're prepared to release around a wide range of issues, but I really think it's the demand for when social media is being used. Number one, it's a way to garner widespread support and certainly when something goes viral as we've seen, every year on college campuses across the country we hear about those incidents and then go right to social media to understand what's happening in that community. But for the universities, it's really meant that we need to be more nimble in responding, more prepared, and that waves of backlash that can come from if it's your students, but it might come from parents afterwards or alumni. And then when it gets covered more broadly, you might get the outside community members, voicing their opinions.

Jeffrey identifies how much institutions are wary of social media usage and recognizes that social media can be incredibly positive and bring positive publicity to an institution. He is also aware that it could just as quickly, create a negative viral headline that could destroy the reputation of a college or university.

Jeffrey alludes to the fact, but administrations and departments need to be prepared to handle a variety of situations nowadays. He talked how they needed to adjust their

communications systems and be ready to release statements around a wide variety of issues

that could possibly come up. Harry from Southern College saw a different relationship

between students, activism, and social media happening on his campus. Harry could not

provide many examples of activism on his campus and is not especially knowledgeable

about how students are or are not organizing through social media. Harry did go on to

explain how his institution's students show their activist nature through volunteerism. "I

think our students are very responsive. They do philanthropic events, give up their time,

donate to food drives and those kinds of things." He also went to on to say, "I do think our

students are quick to engage and act when they feel they can help those in need. We might

say the community needs help and next thing you know 600, 700 students will show up

and do what they can to help". Harry's quotes illustrate a different form of activism which

features low social media usage. At his institution they do not experience the "movements

or demonstrations" that bigger schools do, but they are still active when they can be. While

we are not seeing traditional activism, we are seeing how a school which does not see

polarizing activism still works with students to create change.

Chapter Summary

After collecting the data from the participants and analyzing it for themes, this

study found several that are important to this topic. Students are organizing more online

and on social media that ever before. This has impacted the relationship that

administrators used to have with their student activists on campus. All the participants

brought up how it is more difficult to find the leaders of these movements because of the

move to online organization. Along with the move to online organizing, they saw

increasing levels of leaderless groups in activism. Not only were the activists harder to

identify because of remote organization, but also because they did not have one singular leader. It was no longer mandatory for a movement to need a central figure to organize and rally around.

Another theme identified was the increased awareness and knowledge that an administrator needs about social media and the way students use it. Students are using social media more than ever to share ideas, problems, issues, and information. Administrators want to be a part of the conversation, but it is no longer taking place face to face or in a concrete place, it happens online. This means that administrators need to know what is happening online and what students are discussing. As some of the participants said, they are not experts in social media, but they rely on a marketing or communications team to report on what students are talking about. It is important to not dismiss social media as unimportant because it is only going to become more integrated into out society. Today's and future students will only become more social media savvy and administrators will need to keep pace with their students.

Chapter V

Discussion

This chapter will discuss both the participants' interviews and also the

information that was gathered from the literature review. This study was conducted to

gain insight into student activism on college campuses, and also to learn how the digital

age and social media have impacted student activism This chapter will also cover the

implications for student affairs professionals in the future and recommendations for

future research on this topic.

Discussion

The concept of activism has been influenced by social media over time, especially

on the college campus. With the rise of social media there has been a greater impact on

how this impacts individuals engagement in activism. Given this, the second research

question looked at student affairs professional's knowledge of and ability to define the

term slacktivism. Finally, the research looked at how social media is changing how

students participate in social and political movements on college campuses.

Understanding what is happening on their campus in regard to student activism is part of

an administrator's job. These will be further discussed below.

Evolution of activism from student affairs professional's perspective. To

understand the evolution of activism on the college campus it is important to understand

where it started. (Barton, 1968). Research as well as all three participants identified that

activism in the 1950s and 1960s was about creating awareness in any means necessary

(Small, 1987; Burstein, Freudenburg 1978). Rootes (2003) indicated that this included

signs during protesting, flyers and pamphlets, and generally being out in public furthering

the cause. The idea of putting activism into action was something that, before the digital age, took a concerted effort, plan, and dedication to achieve the goal of a movement.

The participants of this study each had over twenty-five years of experience in higher education, meaning they have been working on college campuses since the late 1980s to early 1990s. Although participants did not discuss their own level of activism they did allude to their own involvement through various parts of the interview. Jeffrey was by far the most engaged in activism in his younger days as well as today. He talked about engaging in activism with his current students as a way to show support and be visible to them, and this influences how he approaches activism on his campus. The other two participants did not identify as activists and admitted that they do not really see activism on their campuses. They both have been on their campuses for most of their careers while Jeffrey has moved institutions several times. Bruce did share about his involvement and awareness of how social media can be used today and identified that he is an active participant through online platforms. Again, not being involved as activists themselves as students or professionals may influence the type of environment, they seek to work in.

While we do still see activism in the traditional sense, there is a far larger population that has adapted to the digital age and have found that social media can be a somewhat effective way to participate in activism (Skoric 2012; Kristofferson, White, and Peloza 2013). The participants each spoke about activism on their campuses being present in different ways from speaking up in class, to reaching out to other students through social media, and even participating in volunteer service projects. Although social media does bring like-minded individuals together who might not have met

otherwise, there are clear differences in social media activism/slacktivism and the traditional activism from the 1950-60s (Boulton 2015, Holcomb, 2016) .

One thing that all participants mentioned is that they know that student activism has mostly moved to an online platform. Bruce, Harry, and Jeffrey all spoke about how students organize now online rather than in person. Jeffrey specifically talked how student activists organizing online makes it increasingly difficult to identify leaders of movements and the other two participants talked about similar challenges they see with students taking to social media with activism. The rise of the leaderless groups we are now seeing can be attributed to the rise of social media, that is they are all connected through social media and determining who may have started something or encouraged people may be difficult (Hampton, 2015). Social media allows like-minded individuals to connect and share ideas and opinions without face to face interaction (Cabrera, Matias, & Montoya, 2017). In the past administrators could identify student activist leaders and could talk with them and discuss what they want to accomplish, and in some instances, as Jeffery indicated aid or support them. Social media means that students are finding one another in new and different ways and identifying similar causes. Jeffrey stated that it makes it harder for an administration of an institution to work with students and possibly provide support.

The other thing that has happened is constant awareness of what is happening, and this goes for what is happening at an institution and potential current events could cause the students to turn to activism on a moment's notice. The speed of information currently is minute to minute which allows students to react to an injustice or event in almost real time (Cabrera, Matias, & Montoya, 2017). Right now, with social media the fastest way to

gather individuals to a cause is for it to go viral. Jeffrey and Harry alluded to the idea that it is important for administrators to be knowledgeable about what is happening currently in the world and Bruce took it a step further by saying that professionals should be aware of what's happening online that is affecting students. If professionals are aware of that they can be better responders, addressing events early rather than reacting to student responses. Harry spoke of passion and how he sees students being driven by it, possibly a little too much. Passion is an important aspect of being an activist, but sometimes the point can get lost in translation (Boulton, 2018; Foreman, 2018). Activism is about civil discourse, being able to voice your opinion, but the other half of activism is listening and understanding the other side's perspective. The administration's job is to find a way to harmonize the two sides of civil discourse so both can learn and grow.

   Administrators definition of slacktivism. The participants in this study struggled with defining slacktivism because they were not familiar with the term, but they understood it once it was discussed and explained. Slacktivism as defined by Christensen (2011) may only help participants feel better or that they are making a difference rather than having any sort of impact on a political or social outcome. How slacktivism is used in the digital age is mostly in regard to liking, sharing, retweeting etc. something on a social media site to those who follow you or are friends with (Cabrera, Matias, &Montoya, 2017). College students are participating in slacktivism more than ever now, whether that be politically, socially, or without full understanding (Boulton, 2018; Foreman, 2018). The digital age has been so influential on creating a more connected global society where information can be spread with minute to minute updates.

Those who are participating in slacktivism can very well become complacent or feel that they have already done enough by simply sharing the message. The study's participants were all asked if they have heard or knew of the word slacktivism and asked to define it in their own words. Both Jeffrey and Harry used the context clues of our conversation to create their definition, and it was correct. Both did not have an answer when first asked, but when pressed to thought they defined it accurately. They understood the concept and could provide concrete examples and thus have an awareness of the term and action but did not have the specific definition or were familiar with the terminology.

Bruce did not provide a definition of slacktivism but did go on to explain how he understands the term and focused more on the hard questions we need to ask about slacktivism. While the ability to connect at an alarmingly fast rate is amazing, it can lead to inaction and discussion without action. Bruce spoke about the need to gather together in person and learn to have conversations again with those who think differently and teach students how to civilly disagree so we can work together to find compromise. This is what he identified administrators should be doing with their students when protests or movements occur. Instead of fighting each other, work together to find a way to protest or demonstrate without causing harm or breaking the laws.

Each participant was able to get to the meaning of what slacktivism is, and more importantly how it is being used on college campuses. These administrators see that students are increasingly moving to online to connect and coordinate; as well as share ideologies and find like-minded individuals. These students no longer are just speaking or sharing with their college communities but gathering ideas or causes from all over the world.

All three referenced in their explanation or definition low effort which means that the students sharing, or retweeting are not putting in a whole lot for the cause or movement. Activism used to be characterized by the amount of time you dedicated to a cause or movement, but with social media things can be done in an instant and then set aside. The study's participants still see activism as something that takes time, effort, and dedication and slacktivism does not always fulfill all those criteria. Again, the participants spoke about the level of effectiveness, especially Bruce. All three said similar statements questioning the effectiveness of slacktivism by itself, but Bruce spoke most harshly about it. Bruce brings up a good point in that college students may be losing their ability to socially and civilly disagree. Without that ability students will not be able to expand their mind or thinking to incorporate new ideas.

Slacktivism is not leaving college campuses anytime soon. It allows students to voice their opinions and forces administrations to be aware of not only what is happening on their campus, but also what is happening digitally on their college campuses. Whether an administrator knows the term slacktivism or not specifically does not mean they are not already watching their students' online presence. It seems that, no matter the level of social media ability, each administrator knows the positives attributed to it, but also wary of the pitfalls if not taken seriously.

Activism on college campuses today. Participants were able to talk about activism on college campuses today but for each it looked different and presented itself differently. Activism on college campuses is a dynamic concept which means that it changes with society and the generation of students attending. Activism of the 1960s was about meeting and gathering in numbers to protest or advance a movement (Rootes,

2003). We have entered a new era of student activism on campus where those activists are gathering online and using social media to spread their message (Lee and Hsieh, 2013).

Jeffrey sees social media activism taking students online rather than protesting outside and finds it difficult to identify leaders of movements or protests. Jeffrey also stated that, in his experience, he has always wanted to work with students in terms of activism, but it is increasingly difficult to disseminate information to said leaders when they cannot be identified. Jeffrey's statement highlights how an administrator, who is open to working in tandem with student activists, can be left behind or in the dark during the students' planning if they or their staff are not also online and have ways to connect with students beyond face to face. An administrator like Jeffrey mostly wants to provide information to students on rules and regulations so they do not get in any trouble during their protest and can be proactive instead of reactive. If administrators cannot find the leaders, then misunderstanding and lack of knowledge can hurt a movement before it even begins.

These administrators also articulated a need to be careful on how they approach student activism. This is an era where individuals need to be careful of what they are saying or putting out on social media (Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya, 2017). An administrator cannot respond to every single thing they see online posted by students. As Bruce said, social media is being used to present only what the students want others to see, whether that is as a positive or negative, or something else. Bruce brought up the idea that students are engaging in slacktivism or as he called it, "keyboard courage;" the idea that students are speaking out strongly about topics online. This is a form of

slacktivism and administrators need to be careful not to be pulled into a situation where their words are being taken out of context or weaponized. It is a professional's job to create an open space for civil discourse, where points and counterpoints can be heard.

What was interesting was that Harry identified students engaging in civic engagement through social media and using it to engage others in service and volunteer projects. He shared that students participating in activism can be led by passion, but sometimes it's too much. Harry cautioned that professionals should be aware and careful so that they cannot be pulled into a war of words or make it personal. Lastly, administrators need to understand how to prioritize social media activism that their students are participating in. Slacktivism online can be overwhelming as there are infinite amount of causes or movements any one student could be promoting. Institution's administrators will have to be wary of being inundated with their student's online slacktivism and will have to be savvy enough to know which are real and which are self-promotion.

Implications for Student Affairs Professionals

Throughout the course of this study the researcher sought to learn more about how student affairs professionals adapt and work with students in regard to activism and social media. During the study there were points made that have deep implications for student affairs professionals and future professionals in the industry. One of the biggest takeaways from our study and the interviews with Jeffrey, Harry and Bruce are that professionals in student affairs absolutely need to have knowledge of social media and how their students are engaging in it. The participants had a wide range of social media usage ability. They did acknowledge that they have gaps in knowledge when it comes to

social media use. This brings up an important point to clarify, administrators do not need to be social media experts to monitor student's online activism. It would be beneficial to have staff within the student affairs division who are more proficient and can stay in touch with what is happening within the student culture. This typically falls on younger or newer professionals at the institution who may not have connections to the Vice President for student affairs. Because of this those in upper administration roles need to develop relationships and be in communication with staff in all levels. If a professional does not understand or use social media, it is vital that they surround themselves with at least someone who does. No longer can administrators ignore social media, as it is too much the norm for providing and receiving information.

With students using social media more and more to share information and experiences means that students are more aware of what is happening globally and can use that information to better understand how the world works. Administrators need to be cognizant of the speed that information travels now in the digital age. Students are more informed about what is happening around them and will not just accept generic answers or solutions. In loco parentis is long gone and students have opinions on how any given administration handles an event or protest. Administrators will need to prove they understand students' perspectives and the plight or way of thinking.

Recommendations for future research

There are a few recommendations for future research on the topic of student activism on college campuses in the digital age. The first recommendation would be to diversify the participants racially, institution population wise, and geographically. While each participant was certainly helpful and provided a different take on student activism,

there were things that perhaps not covered because each participant was from the same racial background. Getting a larger participant population would allow for greater perspective on this topic and perhaps more insight about this topic.

The institutions were all midsized and two were from rural Midwest areas. At least two of the institutions were very similar in size and geography. Intentionally seeking out participants from R1 research institutions, liberal arts colleges as well as large, medium, and small population schools, and ones that are geographically diverse around the country may bring out more insight regarding the topic. By getting a more diverse participant pool only helps illustrate what is happening nationwide in terms of activism, and not just on midsized Midwest institutions.

Another recommendation would be to attempt to find a better and larger mix of public vs. private institutions and also urban campuses vs. rural campuses. The public vs. private debate would help show whether it makes a difference in student activism participation. Many times, public and private schools have different agendas based on the students they service. A deeper dive into the differences on campus in activism between the two could provide a better understanding of student activism on both campuses.

One of the most important recommendations to be made is the urban vs. rural campus. This was highlighted in my participants and the differences between them. Both Harry and Bruce are administrators at rural institutions and Jeffrey's campus is in a more urban area. As you could see from my participants, both Harry and Bruce saw much less activism on their campuses. They referenced even that their institutions are both in rural areas that do not have much history in college campus activism. Jeffrey on the other hand is in a more urban area and had many more examples showing the activist nature on his

institution's campus. The researcher believes that a further research is needed. This could help understand why some campuses have more history in activism than others.

It would be important in further studies to consider interviewing professionals working in Student affairs with different years of experience as well as those in different types of positions. The participants in this study all had over twenty-five years of experience and were in senior level positions. Interviewing those in director type mid-level positions with less years of experience would likely receive some different results. If younger professionals were to be interviewed, as more tech savvy, would likely have a very different perspective and responses to the same questions. While speaking about potential interviewees, it would be this researcher's recommendation that students be interviewed if possible. As discussed, students have a deeper understanding of social media and how to use it in tandem with activism. It would be interesting to hear and compare what students think about social media, activism, and the rise of slacktivism on college campuses versus how administrators think and feel about these topics. A deeper understanding on why student activists have gone online for activism and voicing their opinions could be found through those student interviews.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand the impact of social media on student activism on college campuses from the perspective of senior level administrators. With the rise of social media and other digital media we are seeing increased activity in movements or protests through slacktivism (Cabrera, Matias, and Montoya, 2017). Students of yesteryear were move apt to organize in person and market their cause through flyers, pamphlets, or word of mouth. Through these practices past generations would organize

their protests or movements. This required a vast number of participants who were highly

dedicated to the cause or movement in order to execute their demonstrations whether it be

marches, sit ins, speak outs, or boycotts (Small, 1987). This type of activism required

complete dedication, time, effort to their cause or else it would fizzle out. This, of course,

is not the way it is now in our current generation of student activists.

Social media has changed the activist game on college campuses. Students are

now connecting quicker than ever with up to the minute news or information being

shared worldwide. This allows students to gather in a digital arena rather than in a quad

or courtyard. This makes it more difficult for administrators to find the student activists

on campus. The other reason this is becoming more difficult is because students are

organizing in leaderless group. Many movements and protests no longer have a central

figure in a movement that administrators can call into a meeting which makes it hard on

administrations to target what students want to achieve through their demonstrations.

What also is being seen in the era of social media is the rise of slacktivism. Students are

engaging in low effort, time, and dedication activism by sharing, liking, posting, or

retweeting on social media. This allows students to feel and act as if they are activists and

dedicated to a cause. While there are positives to this such as maximizing awareness, it is

mostly seen as a way to self-promote or draw attention to oneself to be seen as a pseudo-

activist.

Administrators need to be able to adapt with these new rapid changes in the

digital era. Student activists are becoming harder and harder to identify because they are

using face to face tactics less than ever before. It would help administrators if they

understood social media platforms or at least have those working for them that can help

navigate social media platforms that students are interacting on. While it may be harder to narrow down who is leading a demonstration or protest, administrators cannot become complacent. Students have access to more information than ever before and will not be quick to accept easy or vague solutions. Even if most of the conversation or organizing is done online it is important for professionals to engage in conversation with student activists to help them understand what is lawful and what is not. Overall social media has changed how student activism is accomplished and handled on college campuses and it will be on the current and future professionals to adapt.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate with this study. I have received and

reviewed your resume/vitae and I really appreciate you sending it ahead of time.

1. As we begin what do you want to highlight from your resume?

    a. What is not on your resume that you want me to know?

2. In what ways have you seen activism on campus throughout your career?

    a. Can you provide some examples?

        i. What did they protest?

        ii. What was the outcome?

        iii. What was your involvement in these situations?

    b. In what way has your role changed over time in regard to situations like

        this?

    c. How have you seen activism on the college campus change and/or remain

        the same over the course of your time in higher education?

3. What forms of activism have you dealt with or seen over the course of your

    experience?

    a. What types – can you describe?

4. In what ways have you seen social and political movements by college students

    change over the course of your career?

As this is a study on activism, I would like you to define a few words:

5. Please define activism.

    a. Can you provide examples?

      b. Are you aware of different types of activism? Can you elaborate?

      c. What type of activism events and/or protests have taken place on your

         campus in the last 5 years?

6. Please define social media.

      a. Can you provide examples?

           i. What types of social media do you use?

      b. How proficient of a social media user are you?

      c. How do you use social media personally

      d. How do you stay current on social media information?

7. What social media platforms do you see students using on your campus?

      a. How do you see students using social media?

      b. Have you dealt with conduct issues on campus related to social media use?

8. Do you see a relationship between social media and activism on your campus?

      a. In what ways are your students using social media to engage in political or

         social movements?

           i. If you don't see students using social media in this way why do

              you think that is?

      b. Earlier I asked you to talk about activism events that have taken place on

         your campus in the last five years – how do you think these were

         influenced by social media?

9. How, if at all, has activism on campus been changed by the rise of digital and

   social media?

10. Have you heard the term slacktivism? What does it mean?

a. How do you see students engaging in slacktivism today?

b. Have you seen students engaging in slacktivism on your campus?

11. How visible is activism on your physical campus today?

a. How do activists communicate on your institution's campus?

b. Is there a difference between the physical and the online activism on your campus? Please elaborate.

i. Do you see students participating in both online and in person activism?

12. How do you see social and digital media influencing social and political movement today?

a. How about on your own campus?

13. I know I asked this earlier but is there anything you would add to what changes you have seen in the way students engage in activism over the course of your career?

14. Were you an activist in college? And as a professional?

15. As you prepared to talk with me was there anything you thought I would ask you about that I did not?

16. Is there anything else you want to share at this time?

Appendix B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

College Activism in the Digital Age

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Louis Soltysiak and sponsor Dr. Dianne Timm, from the College Student Affairs Program at Eastern Illinois University.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate. Generally, the investigator and potential subject(s) read through and discuss the informed consent information together.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a high-level administrator at a college or university. I am looking to interview individuals who may see or be a part of activism in their position on campus. I will be interviewing 4-6 individuals for approximately half an hour to an hour. Again, these individuals being interviewed have been at their institution for at least 5 years and are high level administrators such as Vice President or Director.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to understand and examine activism and how it relates to college students. It will mostly seek to find out how students engage in activism in the digital age and the rise of social media. Also, the study is looking to find out how administrators at institutions view social media and its impact on student activism.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

You will be emailed with an invitation to participate in the interview portion of the study. Those who agree will then be asked for day and time that an interview would work into their schedule. All interviews will be held via phone or Skype as the participants will be from all over the country.

The interview will be approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour and the interview will be recorded and transcribed. The interviewer will handle the transcription of the interview and both the recording and transcription shall be kept private. The interviewees' names will be changed to protect their identity.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

Those being interviewed may be asked to talk about events that happened which are sensitive in nature. You may be asked to talk about negative effects from the events that you are speaking about. Personal information will hopefully be kept to a minimum, but subject may have to disclose personal information.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

There are benefits for participation such as deeper understanding about student activism on college campuses. The end product will be shared with those who participated. This study should also help explain how the digital age is changing activism.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of keeping all details about the participants private. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants and their institutions will also be renamed to avoid any controversy. You will be recorded during your interview, but the interview will be conducted privately and no one other than the researcher will have a copy of the interview. After 1 year the researcher will destroy the recording.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.

There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

OPTIONAL: You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board

Eastern Illinois University

600 Lincoln Ave.

Charleston, IL   61920

Telephone: (217) 581-8576

E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

_____

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

I hereby consent to the participation of _____, a minor/subject in the investigation herein described. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my child's participation at any time.

_____   _____

Signature of Minor/Handicapped Subject's Parent or Guardian   Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Date