Ethnography, the Internet, and Youth Culture: Strategies for Examining Social Resistance and "Online-Offline" Relationships

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The integration of traditional (offline and face-to-face) and virtual ethnographic methods can aid researchers interested in developing understandings of relationships between online and offline cultural life, and examining the diffuse and sometimes global character of youth resistance. In constructing this argument, I have used insights from studies on youth activism and the rave subculture. These studies also informed my central theoretical suggestion: that an approach to research underscored by a sensitivity to everyday experiences and the power structures framing these experiences can (still) be a powerful guide for understanding flows and circuits of resistance in Internet-influenced cultures.

Key words: globalization, qualitative research, social movements, rave culture, virtual ethnography

L'intégration de méthodes ethnographiques traditionnelles (hors ligne et en présentiel) ou recourant aux TIC peut aider les chercheurs à mieux comprendre les relations entre la vie culturelle en ligne et hors ligne et à étudier le caractère diffus et parfois planétaire de la résistance des jeunes. L'auteur fonde son argumentation sur des observations tirées d'études portant sur l'activisme chez les jeunes et la sous-culture techno-rave. Ces études servent également de point de départ à l'hypothèse centrale de l'auteur, à savoir qu'une approche de la recherche qui est sensible aux expériences quotidiennes et aux structures du pouvoir encadrant ces expériences peuvent (encore) servir de guide précieux pour comprendre les courants et circuits de résistance dans les cultures sous l'influence d'Internet.

Mots clés : mondialisation, recherche qualitative, mouvements sociaux, culture techno-rave, ethnographie virtuelle

Virtual reality and cyberspace are commonly imagined in terms of reaction against, or opposition to, the real world.... In certain cases, these are presented as some kind of utopian project. Virtual Reality is imagined as a nowhere-somewhere alternative to the dangerous conditions of contemporary social reality.... The mythology of cyberspace is preferred over its sociology. I have argued that it is time to re-locate virtual culture in the real world (the real world that virtual culturalists, seduced by their own metaphors, pronounce dead or dying). Through the development of new technologies, we are, indeed, more and more open to experiences of de-realisation and de-localisation. But we continue to have physical and localised existences. We must consider our state of suspension between these conditions. (Robins, 1996, pp. 16, 26)

In the years since Robins' (1996) critique, researchers have made important strides to better understand links between online and offline cultural life. Scholars like Burkhalter (1999), Ebo (1998) Harcourt (1999), and Stubbs (1999) have examined how race/ethnicity, class, and gender related identities are experienced offline and online. Other researchers have considered, for example, how youth subcultural life is a continuous virtual-real experience (Bennett, 2004; Wilson & Atkinson, 2005). Still others have examined online and offline addiction/recovery support group conventions (Pleace, Burrows, Loader, Muncer, & Nettleton, 2000).

Researchers are also considering how to best understand the experiences of those who navigate across online and offline spaces. In this context, Hine (2000), Markham (1998), Miller and Slater (2000), Mann and Stewart (2002, 2003), Kendall (1999), and others have emphasized the importance of an ethnographic approach to Internet research, and offered important insights into the use of (and relationships/differences between) computer mediated communication (CMC) and face to face (FTF) methods in interviewing and focus groups. Ethnographers who study Internet-related topics struggle to develop and apply novel approaches to their research, while remaining sensitive to still-useful elements of conventional techniques for qualitative inquiry. Markham (1998) called this the "the paradox of conducting a non-traditional ethnography in a non-traditional nonspace, with traditional sensibilities" (p. 62).

There remains much to explore in these areas given the various relationships between online and offline qualitative methodologies. For example, the Internet is a space where research subjects are recruited for offline interviews, documents produced by culture members are accessed for analysis, and experiential ethnographic explorations

through cultural spaces and online environments take place. The area of research that specifically considers relationships between online and offline ethnographic methods remains especially rich for development because there is a relative scarcity of work that includes detailed reflections on ways that online and offline ethnographic techniques can be integrated to aid research focused on cultural groups and especially on cultural flows – a topic of particular interest for those who study the globalization of culture. The reason that this is important for those working in education is that understanding the dissemination of culture is a way of understanding the dissemination of a dominant form of knowledge for young people – cultural knowledge – and the sets of cultural knowledge that people acquire and possess inform their interpretations of the world around them (including their interpretations of forms of knowledge they are offered in formal education contexts).

The goal of this article is to contribute to existing literature around these topics by offering methodological reflections from my experiences conducting an ethnographic study of online and offline cultural life in a youth subculture; describing and outlining the rationale for the methodology for a recently designed study of the online and offline cultural lives of members of youth-driven social movement groups; and ultimately offering a set of suggestions for examining social resistance in a global age – an age where (youth) culture circulates globally and locally, and where collective action is increasingly transnational. The argument that underlies this article is that the integration of ethnographic methods, both traditional (offline and face-to-face) and virtual, can be helpful in developing rich and comprehensive understandings of relationships between online and offline cultural life, and for examining the diffuse character of youth culture and resistance. This research is particularly pertinent for those interested in the ways that young people interact with and through Internet technology in and out of educational settings, the ways that online and offline cultural lives of youth transcend educational settings, and for those concerned with the ways that knowledge of social issues is sometimes translated into social action.

In making this argument, I acknowledge that a combined online-offline approach is not always preferable to exclusively online or

exclusively offline studies of Internet cultures and experiences. The choice of methods is largely dependent on the goal of the research and 'strands of experience' that the researcher is interested in studying (Eichhorn, 2001). As Hine (2000, p. 59) observes, even studies that include research conducted both online and offline should not be viewed as holistic, given that all ethnographic accounts are selective and partial. However, for research concerned with tracing connections/relationships between online forms of social organization and activism, and offline interactions and action, a *multi-site and multi-method approach* is sensible and desirable – although not without challenges and problems – as I intend to show.

ETHNOGRAPHY: THEORY, METHOD, AND RATIONALIZING AN ONLINE AND OFFLINE APPROACH

Ethnographic Methods and the Boundaries of Ethnographic Research

Although ethnography is a notoriously ambiguous term, some consensus occurs around the idea that ethnography includes some combination of participant and non-participant observation, informal and semi-structured interviews, and document analysis – and that the process of writing up research findings and (re)presenting life worlds is integrally related to the act of doing ethnography (Prus, 1996; Tedlock, 2000). Although oral interactions have traditionally been privileged "as part of the 'romantic legacy' of ethnography, that tends to treat speech as more authentic than writing," increasingly the written texts associated with cultures have become equally valued accounts of the realties of those being studied (Hine, 2000, p. 51, drawing on Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Hine (2000) elaborates on this more inclusive view of texts.

Rather than being seen as more or less accurate portrayals of reality, texts should be seen as ethnographic material which tells us about the understanding which authors have of the reality which they inhabit. Texts are an important part of life in many of the settings which ethnographers now address, and to ignore them would be a highly impartial account of cultural practices. Rule books, manuals, biographies, scientific papers, official statistics and codes of practice can all be seen as ethnographic material in the ways in which they present and shape reality and are embedded in practice. (p. 51)

Including online and offline texts as part of a broader ethnographic analysis means properly contextualizing and situating the writing and reading practices in ways that make the texts meaningful, or as Hine (2000) argues "tying those texts to particular circumstances of production and consumption" (p. 52). Implicit to this argument is the view that ethnographic work around the Internet ideally takes place in multiple sites, a point pursued later in this paper.

Connecting Theory and Method Around a Critical Interactionist Approach

Although the roots of sociology-based ethnographic research lie in the symbolic interactionist tradition, ethnography (especially as it related to the study of urban youth cultures) came to be associated with more critically oriented writing and studies in the 1970s at the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. The Centre, and especially centre-associate Paul Willis, advocated an approach known loosely as "critical interactionism" (Willis, 1977; see Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000 for an overview of this and related traditions). This approach – an approach that guided the research described in this article – is essentially an integration of a conventional, interpretive, micro-sociological approach to research and a structuralist approach to interpretation.

The critical interactionist position is aligned with a critical-realist stance – a positioning that is somewhat distinct from the more relativist stances adopted by those influenced by some strands of postmodern theory. The ontological position associated with critical realism is linked to the epistemological assumption that although multiple (even endless) interpretations of texts exist – whether these be images, webpage documents, interview transcripts – at some point a "relative anchorage" of meaning in interpretations of texts occurs (Hall, 1985, p. 93). Interpretations of media texts (e.g., webpages) made by media analysts/researchers can be useful in shedding light on how these texts might be used by audiences/users. In her textual analysis work on women in sport media, Margaret Duncan (1990) offers a succinct articulation of this position.

Responsible textual analysis studies do not assert with absolute certainty how particular texts are interpreted. But they suggest the kinds of interpretations that

may take place, based on available evidence, and likely interpretations of a particular text. Ultimately these interpretations must be judged on the basis of the persuasiveness and logic of the researcher's discussion. (p. 27)

This understanding is especially pertinent for textual analysis work focused on unveiling the potential meanings of webpages for users/audiences; and the likely goals of website producers. Textual analysis studies focused on the Internet are ideally complemented by ethnographic work that includes interviews with audiences and producers of online content, especially if insight into the relationships between online and offline cultural life are sought – a point that influenced the design of the second case study presented in this paper, described later.

This reflexive, critical-realist stance is inherently linked with an approach to studying and interpreting (youth) resistance that is grounded in the Marxist-related concepts hegemony and ideology. A neo-Marxist understanding of hegemony presumes a relationship between marginalized youth and a dominant group (e.g., moral entrepreneurs such as law-makers and media producers), a relationship that has been at least tentatively secured because the dominant group has been able to achieve and maintain consent to its dominance and because it has successfully allowed safety valve expressions of resistance amongst those who are marginalized (e.g., symbolic forms of resistance, like shocking hairstyles or musical forms, that might empower some young people, but seldom alter the social conditions that frame and reinforce the circumstances of their oppression–c.f., Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Wilson, 2002a, drawing on Gramsci, 1971). This understanding is inherently linked with Hall's and Duncan's view of interpreting texts (like webpages) because it is based on the assumption that dominant groups maintain their dominance through the use of ideological strategies (e.g., incorporating forms of alternative youth culture into mainstream culture) (Baron, 1989; Schissel, 1997). In a similar way, resistant (youth) groups, especially those who are (relatively) well-equipped and well-organized, often attempt to challenge the hegemony of dominant groups by undermining and disrupting the ideological messages and structures that have been created and disseminated to support their power positions. Succinct examples of this sort of

undermining/disruption are evident in the work of those at the Vancouver-based magazine *Adbusters* who devise and publish counter-advertisements and write articles that are intended to unveil the contradictions that underlie the practices of multinational corporations.

Underlying critical analyses of dominant structures and media messages is the assumption that a real set of power relations privileges some groups and marginalizes other groups, and that behind the ideological messages that support and justify these relations (e.g., oversimplified, decontextualized messages/images about youth – see Acland, 1995) is a hidden reality, a reality that must remain hidden if the privilege of powerful groups is to remain relatively unquestioned and unchallenged. For critical interactionist researchers, a primary goal is to uncover contradictions that emerge when comparing the ideological fronts presented by power groups and the actual practices of these groups (Howell, Andrews, & Jackson, 2002). This is important context for subsequent parts of this article, especially the description of and rationale for methodologies that I adopted to study the resistance of youth who were guided by these critical interactionist principles.

Studying Youth Cultural Resistance in a Global Age

What is unique about the critical study of everyday experience and forms of cultural resistance in the age of Internet communication is that these experiences and forms often take place on a global level. The challenge for social theorists and methodologists has been to figure out and clearly articulate what it means to study experience on this level.

Guiding my research on this topic has been the theoretical work of Arjun Appadurai (2000). Appadurai's writings are uniquely focused on theorizing the dynamics of global cultural transmission, or what he called "five dimensions of global cultural flows," to demonstrate the various ways that culture moves across borders and around the world (p. 33). Appadurai outlined five dimensions, or "scapes," that need to be taken into account when examining global cultural flow: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes. Ethnoscapes refers to the flow of people around the world (e.g., tourists, immigrants, or refugees). Technoscapes refers to the flow of technology (e.g., transnational business relocations or the hosting of mega-events like the

Olympics that include the movement of new technologies to various countries). Finanscapes refers to the patterns of capital transfer on a global level. Mediascapes refers to the modes of mediated image distribution (e.g., electronic or print media), and to how these images allow viewers to gain access to other parts of the world. Ideoscapes refers to images that are invested with political-ideological meaning (e.g., propaganda images distributed to and through mass media outlets). At the core of Appadurai's framework is the assumption that the various disjunctures or interactions that occur between global cultural flows (as they relate to the various scapes) offer cultural analysts insight into the complex ways that local cultures relate to global forces, and the ways that culture circulates (Carrington & Wilson, 2002).

A variety of methodological strategies are used to study cultural flows and specifically the ways that culture flows to and from individuals around the world, although methods for studying cultural flow and the Internet (in ways that account for the complexities of global movement described by Appadurai) are only beginning to be considered. The body of work on the broad topic of globalization and cultural flows includes studies focused on the flow and impact of Americanizing forces, such as the global transmission of images of Michael Jordan (and the corporate values associated with Jordan's sponsor Nike [Andrews, Carrington, Mazur, & Jackson, 1996]) and the reactions that people have to these sorts of messages and images (Wilson & Sparks, 2001). Methods used to examine such phenomena include the analysis of images, spaces, and discourses using textual analysis techniques drawn from media studies, historical analyses that are sensitized to the development of (and relationships between) political, economic, and cultural phenomena over time, and the use of focus group interviews as part of audience research projects that assess how individuals understand cultural messages (from abroad).

Michael Burawoy (Burawoy et. al., 1999) and his colleagues in *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World* offer a most encompassing approach to the study of global forces and power relations. These studies use what Burawoy termed an "extended case study" approach, an approach that was guided by the following four principles: that the researcher must enter the field to appreciate the

experiences of individuals; that fieldwork must take place over time and space; that research must extend from micro-processes to macro-forces; and that theory is extended and challenged as due process when examining research findings (pp. 26-28). This is a useful departure point for considering globalization and the Internet because it requires analyses of both the micro-interactions that take place in the production of Internet content and across the Internet medium, as well as the macro-structures that frame these interactions (e.g., evident in analyses of who has access to the Internet and who offers Internet services). This approach is consistent with the critical interactionist position embodied in the classic work of Paul Willis (1977) – except that the "macro-forces" referred to by some of those in Burawoy et. al.'s book include global phenomena not considered by Willis. What the following two case studies offer this literature is a way of thinking theoretically and methodologically about cultural flow as it relates specifically to the Internet communication medium, and with particular attention to flows through online and offline settings, and from local to global spaces.

STUDYING YOUTH CULTURE, SOCIAL RESISTANCE, AND ONLINE-OFFLINE CULTURAL FLOW

In this section I have described and reflected on two studies of online and offline cultural life, social resistance, and youth. The first is a now-completed study of the rave youth subculture I conducted from 1995-1999 in Southern Ontario, Canada (Wilson, 2002a, 2006; Wilson & Atkinson, 2005). The second is an in-progress study of youth-driven social movement groups, with a focus on relationships between online organization/activism and offline collective action. In these contexts, the term youth is used loosely to refer to adolescents and young adults, with participants in the rave scene ranging from approximately 13-25 years old, although several ravers were older than this. Participants in the youth-driven activist groups range in age from approximately 13-30 years old.

Cultural Resistance, Globalization and Online-Offline Cultural Flow

Three interconnected arguments, derived from literature focused around youth, resistance, social movements, globalization, and communication

technology, form the background for the discussion of the two studies. First, the subcultural lives of many Internet-using young people should not be understood as virtual *or* real because the online and offline experiences of youth are oftentimes continuous and interconnected. For example, in an ethnographic study of online-offline relationships embedded in cultural life in Trinidad and Tobago, Miller and Slater (2000) stated that the focus of so much research on "virtuality or separateness as the defining feature of the Internet may well have less to do with the characteristics of the Internet and more to do with the needs of these various intellectual projects" (p. 5). Extending Miller and Slater's point into the context of research on youth cultural life, I assert that it is important to consider not only how the division between online and offline is in many respects (for many youth) a theoretical one, but also how the study of connections between and flows through online and offline requires methodologies that are sensitive to this form of experience and interaction. This point is especially pertinent for those interested in better gauging the cultural experiences of young people in developing pertinent curricula in schools and other settings.

Second, a need exists to more adequately account for and theorize the increasingly global and political character of youth cultural life. Early theoretical explanation offered by those working in a classical American delinquency tradition (e.g., Cohen, 1955) helped subsequent researchers describe how young people react to feelings of marginalization and alienation by connecting with a group of similar others and creating an alternative (counter-middle class) value system. Researchers at the University of Birmingham (at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies – the CCCS) in the 1970s theorized a reactive and proactive youth, a youth who assertively expressed their dissatisfaction with the dominant system through symbolic rituals and outlandish/shocking styles (Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979). More recently, theorists studying the most prominent late twentieth century subculture, the rave subculture, have argued that members of this supposedly postmodern youth group are less overtly political and confrontational than those of past subcultural generations (Malbon, 1998, 1999; McRobbie, 1993, 1994; Redhead, 1990; Redhead, O'Connor, & Wynn, 1997). In a similar way, classical social movement theorist

Alberto Mellucci (1996) has commented on the apparent disappearance of political action among youth in the 1990s and beyond (compared to previous eras).

These approaches fail to account for more global and political forms of resistance and cultural dissemination that have emerged in recent years around a range of social issues, including the environment, globalization, poverty, and gender/racial/ethnic inequality (Barlow & Clarke, 2002; Klein, 2000; Niedzviecki, 2000; Sage, 1999; Wilson, 2002b), a point I elaborate on in my discussion of the methodology for the second case study. In the same way, the global flows of youth (culture), flows that occur through tourism, mass media, Internet media, migration, and other means, are only beginning to be accounted for in literature around youth resistance (Carrington & Wilson, 2002).

This observation is at the base of the third and final argument, which is, that the identified link between the rise of Internet communication and the emergence of various social movements (and the related potential for transnational collective action, [Downing, 2001; Dyer-Witheford, 2000; Fisher, 1998; Myers, 1994]) has not been investigated in any depth by those who study youth resistance (Wilson, 2002b) This lack of research focused on the global dissemination of youth cultural forms and on the enhanced potential for collective action in an age of Internet communication has also meant that methodologies aimed at examining online-offline culture, global flows of culture, and the impact of Internet communication on attempts at collective action remain underdeveloped and unexplored.

Case Study 1 – Rave Culture, Online and Offline

Rave culture, as it existed in Southern Ontario in the mid to late 1990s, was a largely middle class culture of youth whose members were renowned for their interest in computer-generated dance music, attendance at all-night dance parties and, in many cases, amphetamine drugs. Unlike previous youth subcultures that rejected mainstream progressions in communications and media, ravers embraced technology as part of their philosophy (Wilson, 2002a, 2006). My study did not initially aim to examine relationships between online and offline cultural life, although eventually this became an interest (and requirement) once

it was clear that the Internet was a central meeting place, space of organization, and cultural reference point for youth ravers (Wilson & Atkinson, 2005).

I chose a variety of methods and data sources to study this group, many focused around the Internet. I joined three rave newsgroups: two Toronto-based newsgroups and one inhabited by ravers around the world. I read weekly and monthly online rave zines produced in Toronto and abroad. I attended online-offline raves that featured online video of DJs playing at a dance party, and a chatroom where those in attendance at the offline rave location could interact with online participants/viewers. I also, more conventionally, spent time at all-night rave dance parties in various Toronto locations, and conducted in-person and online interviews with rave DJs, rave promoters, and members of the rave subculture.

There were several instances where my work online and offline (especially my involvement on local rave newsgroups) was complementary. The following set of examples drawn from my research is evidence of this:

- information gleaned from reading newsgroup discussions and debates in the local rave scene provided a basis from which to develop early "sensitizing concepts." These experiences and early 'mini-hypotheses' informed the development of interview guides, guides designed to allow for explorations around these identified concepts.
- the local newsgroup was a forum through which I recruited interviewees for both offline and online interviews (although the majority were offline). I was especially aware of the need to be viewed as credible and trustworthy by potential interviewees because ravers were commonly being stigmatized in local and national media at the time (and for this reason, concerned about and suspicious of outsiders who might lurk on their newsgroups). At the same time, I was sensitive to the fact that posts that included too much depth and detail might not be read. For this reason, I adopted what I called a "two message" approach to recruitment. The first letter was a short summary of who I was, the nature of my involvement on the newsgroups, the reasons for the research, and

my interest in interviewing ravers. In this letter, I directed those interested in the project to a second letter (i.e., newsgroup posting) where I provided greater detail about myself and the research. I received several responses from interested ravers. Perhaps surprisingly, there was no online negative response to the research request.

• the newsgroup was an excellent information source about upcoming events (i.e., online and offline events). My research schedule was heavily influenced by the daily information I received.

The online and offline qualitative approaches were harmonious in other ways. My online research, focused on websites that promoted the rave scene and offered insights into the rave philosophy, provided an excellent reference point for examining contradictions and tensions within the rave scene, and distinguishing between the official rhetoric about the scene, and the various (and often contradictory) practices and cultural behaviors embedded in it. In several instances, offline interviews included follow-up email conversations that allowed me to continue developing rapport and trust. In a general way, my early experiences in the rave scene (e.g., attending rave parties and reading about the scene on webpages and newsgroups), when referred to during interviews, allowed me to demonstrate to respondents that I was deeply interested in their culture, and was not looking to do a superficial, journalistic story about rave (and drugs) that would further discredit their culture.

The design of the second study, outlined in detail below, was heavily influenced by my realization that the research on rave was not only about a specific group and set of spaces, but also about the circuits through which information about the culture flowed and through which aspects of the culture were enabled. This is akin, retrospectively, to the position that Hine (2000) took in her online ethnographic research.

By focusing on sites, locales and places, we may be missing out on other ways of understanding culture, based on connection, difference, heterogeneity and incoherence. We miss out on the opportunity to consider the role of space in structuring social relations. [It is simultaneously important to consider] the idea that a new form of space is increasingly important in structuring social relations. This space is the space of flows, which, in contrasts to the space of place, is organized around connection rather than location…[and that] the organization of

social relations is not necessarily linked to local context in a straightforward way. By analogy, the field site of ethnography could become a field flow, which is organized around tracing connections rather than about location in a singular bounded way. (p. 61)

Case Study 2 – Connected Youth: A Study of Youth-Driven Social Movements, Globalization, and Community in the Age of the Internet

In recent years, youth-driven, social activist networks/organizations that address a variety of social, political, and cultural concerns have become abundant and at times prominent. Issues addressed within these networks are both youth-specific (e.g., school bullying) and more general (poverty, the environment, violence, human rights, Aboriginal issues), and are engaged on both a local and global level. Many of these organizations exist, and in some cases thrive, because they have access to and make strategic use of the far-reaching and relatively inexpensive Internet. In most cases, in fact, webpages are a central meeting point and basis for information dissemination and expression for these groups.

These developments are so notable because studies on youth, to date, have tended to focus on the symbolic, stylistic, apolitical, and local ways that young people respond to their feelings of marginalization and social concerns, a point elaborated on earlier in this article. Moreover, those who study youth resistance have not investigated in any depth the identified link between the rise of Internet communication and the emergence of various (transnational) social movements. For these reasons, several questions about youth, social action, identity, and globalization remain largely unanswered: What do these developments tell researchers about the nature of youth community and social cohesion at a time when young people are increasingly gaining access to and actively using the Internet as a forum for meeting similarly positioned peers? How might the development of these networks/movement-organizations alter how researchers explain the resistive efforts of young people? How might the emergence of transnational youth-driven efforts influence how young people's relationships to globalization are understood, relationships that have traditionally been understood in terms of youth being impacted by global forces? What is the relationship between young people's online (activist) activities and offline social action?

The study design was informed by traditional ethnographic principles, lessons derived from my experience conducting research on the rave subculture, and existing ethnographic work and methodological papers sensitive to online-offline relationships (especially Hine, 2000; Mann & Stewart, 2002, 2003; Sade-Beck, 2004) and to the study of globalization and cultural flows (Burawoy et. al., 2000). The research focuses on youth-driven networks/organizations that use the Internet as a primary forum for promotion and communication. Organizations were chosen that had a mandate related to the engagement of local (i.e., Vancouver-based) issues and concerns and participation in and promotion of local networks. Others were chosen because of their engagement of global issues and participation in and promotion of global networks.

Representatives for thirty-seven organizations were interviewed over the course of study. The organizations/movements were focused on a range of issues/topics, including racial conflict, the environment, violence, native youth issues, native activism, globalization, sweatshops, genetic engineering, problems with mass media, war issues, and social development through sport. Because parts of the research are still in progress – and because this article is about the research methods and methodology adopted for the research (not the findings) — I will keep the organizations' identities anonymous.

Phase One. In the first phase, the content of these websites was monitored and analyzed, including an examination of articles on the websites, chatroom activities, and online materials designed to describe and promote the organization/movement. Following this stage, the websites remained a key information source (i.e., keeping the research team informed of upcoming events and emergent issues of interest to the group). The information also provided a basis to compare the values and goals of the group as they were formally described on their website to the informal and actual practices of the organization. In this way, the collected data acted as a foundation for subsequent interviews with movement organizers and website-producers, as well as for the ethnographic work at meetings and conferences (phases 2 and 3).

Phase Two. In phase two, team members conducted in-depth interviews with website producers and movement organizers. The

interviews focused on the details of the movements' emergence and development, strategies underlying the movements' promotion (and the role of the Internet in this context), relationships between online and offline movement-activities, and the various identities and perspectives of those involved in the movement. Team members also considered relationships between the various participants in the movement (local relationships, global relationships), between the movement and other movements, and between the movement and others (e.g., mainstream press, politicians, government organizations, key figures relevant to the social concerns of the group). The key goal of this phase was to find out more about the main features of youth movement-organizations and attain a sense of the relationship between online writing/activism and offline culture/activism/action.

Phase Three. Phase three was based around observation and interviewing at formal and informal events organized by these movement-groups (e.g., rallies, cultural festivals, fundraisers, protests, demonstrations, or conventions) and around an analysis of the promotion of and media coverage surrounding higher profile events (e.g., meetings of these groups prior to the G8 Economic Summit or the Earth Summit – this part of the research is in-progress). These events are easily found on event calendars that can be accessed through the Internet. Large-scale events, such as Vancouver's Rhyme and Resist – a cultural festival attended by thousands of youth, include workshops on topics such as anti-imperialism and rainforest-defense – occur semi-regularly (while smaller events occur frequently). A combination of observation and informal interviewing followed by fieldnote-taking, transcription of recorded interviews, and ongoing (reflexive) analysis were central to this phase.

Rationale and Reflections

Phase one was designed with several ethnographic principles in mind. Perhaps most notably, the early explorations of the webpages informed the construction of the interview guide. At the same time, the website analysis could be viewed as 'casing the joint,' that is, using information from the website to make decisions about how research team members should present themselves to those the organizations, and for identifying

potential gatekeepers and interviewees. I also consider the websites produced by the youth groups as documents to understand the official rules and stances underlying group-culture, acting as a key reference point during other parts of the study where the unofficial and informal rules, systems, and strategies will potentially be uncovered.

The task of assessing the ability of these youth-driven movement groups to organize and raise consciousness around certain issues (and accomplish other related goals they have set), while examining the Internet's role in this process, are being guided by Lemire's (2002) previous research on social movement groups. Lemire's research identified a list of known strategies for enabling social action through Internet communication. Factors identified in his research included using email and websites to mobilize the signing of petitions, using webpages to promote the ideologies/doctrine of the group/movement, and using the webpage as an alternative media source. The aim in considering these and other factors through interviews with key group members is to be in a position to comment on Internet-related strategies for collective action adopted by these groups, and the logic underlying these strategies. I also intend, with this background, to consider how these group members define the success of their Internet-related efforts, and ultimately reflect on the way that the Internet enabled or constrained in their efforts.

CONCLUSIONS, CONCERNS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In this article, I have raised several issues pertinent to researchers interested in the study of youth cultural resistance in an age of Internet communication. I also consider in reflection how a critical interactionist/ethnographic approach, which is underscored by a theoretical sensitivity to everyday experiences and the power structures that frame these experiences, is a useful guide for understanding youth resistance in a global age and Internet-influenced culture. The Internet is a space where aspects of youth cultural resistance that are evident in community-formation and online production exist alongside and in the same virtual space as forms of culture operated by power groups associated with the Internet (e.g., AOL/TIME Warner). A critical ethnographic approach is useful in sensitizing scholars to this broader

context that youth groups exist within, and for considering this struggle in relation to notions of hegemony and ideology described earlier – leading to questions about whether flows of youth cultural resistance are, in fact, effectively challenging power groups, and the extent to which youth cultural forms are consented to or incorporated. Underlying research on topics such as these is a commitment to understand 'whose knowledge counts' and understanding the Internet as a space where battles between different message producers and knowledge claims play out. This sort of research contributes to a body of work in education focused around the diffusion of knowledge from and through various media.

Ultimately, by considering how more conventional approaches to studying social groups' relationships with and use of the Internet (as an interactive, global medium) and the social-political context that Internet use takes place within, a better understanding of media, youth and resistance, and cultural experience into the twenty-first century can be approached.

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