Diaspora Social Movements in Cyberspace: Epistemological and Ethnographic Considerations

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The concept that social networks impact individual and organizational choices is as old as Sociology itself. Theorist from Durkheim to Simmel, and Weber to Parsons have all struggled with how to quantify and measure the real or imagined influence of social structures on individual choice. Network analysis proceeds from a similar framework as structuralism in that it assumes that the choices of one individual will be constrained by their place within the broader interconnectivity of the other actors. Interpretation then is based on the assumption that one’s networks can be categorized, and that the meaning derived from that network are the same for all individuals within it. Several theoretical papers call these assumptions into question, but researchers examining online networks, especially from an international social movement perspective, have yet to examine their methods to verify that they capture the full extent of online networks, and if everyone associated with the network understands their place in it the same way. Our ability to gather and analyze data far outstrips our theorizing. In this dissertation I will examine the assumptions about what constitutes a network based on current collection techniques and show the current methods produce a systemic bias that cannot account for the entire issue based network, leading to errors in interpretation and the false identification of movement leaders. The new method, called Query Driven Sampling (QDS), uses webmaster tools to accurately record the missing inbound links and more fully complete the network compared to the outbound/co-link method. The second chapter will examine online
Kurdish activism using the QDS method. With this method I demonstrate how online social activists within diasporic settings react differently to perceived risk even within the same ethnic community. In the final chapter I ask Kurdish activists to explain from their perspective, how they conceptualize, interact and grow their activist network. Results from these analyses challenge the ability of current methods to accurately define what constitutes a network, to properly identify the key actors within the network, and correctly identify how state level immigration policies influence offline security and how understand how this translates into online behavior.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Networks have been used to describe numerous types of interactions from the individual level to the supra-organizational. At their essence these constructs are quite simple – consisting of a minimum of three nodes (individuals or institutions) and their edges (an indication of connection between them). While all networks are comprised of these simple constructs they are capable of describing the most complex organisms and interactions (Wellman and Berkowitz 1988). Almost the entirety of what sociologists refer to as “structures” can be reduced to the significance of the network that describes and constrains its actors. Social capital, socioeconomic status, social control in one form or another is in fact network analysis. Whether one is writing from a functional, structural, power/conflict, or interpretive perspective each of those theoretical frameworks constitutes at least two individuals/organizations interacting within a set of social parameters. Depending on the emphasis one places on the individual vs the structure; or actions vs one's interpretations of those actions, researchers can develop vastly different perspectives on the nature of the reality. Complicating this picture are the tools we use to examine the nature of reality. Each of theoretical frameworks have their own biases. As we move further into the digital age and with more and more of our social lives being monitored and monetized, these biases will be more easily exposed as our ability to collect data is far outstripping our methods of analysis and our ability to
envision the impact these changes may have on how we understand ourselves. These new complications to data collection and analysis should also cause us to consider the implications of our theories and if they remain viable given the current conditions individuals and organizations operate under.

**Structural analysis vs network analysis**

While Talcott Parson's and structural analysis have fallen out of favor, the reinvigoration of structural analyses can be credit to his work. To Parsons, society operated as an interconnected whole. If one were to form a predictive social theory it would also have to treat individuals as embedded within an interconnected framework. His work was an attempt to create a more rigorous spinoff of functionalism, and while he failed to live up to his aims at clearly defining the exact variable and processes by which society works and changes his work has had an enormous impact on sociological theory.

Parson's world was rooted in an internalization of the value of the science, capitalism and the nation-state. These organization and our interactions with them constituted "modern" society and consequently for Parsons the ideal society. While recognizing the power of these organizational powers the revival of Marxian theory has lead researchers to question who these structure benefit. Rather than seeing them as the culmination of an ideal history these structures are critiqued for the inequalities they impose on society. Social change for Parsons was either leading to his Western centric ideal, or was labeled deviant without much though as to the legitimate complaints certain component of society might have against the system he idolized.
While Parson's structuralism has its well-deserved critique, the development of structuralism as a school of thought still has value to consider within any form of network analysis. Nadel argued that actors within the network being examined would adopt their understanding of self, and their capacity or organization based on one's adopted role relative to others. While role theory may be overly deterministic, it remains true that individuals frequently understand themselves in relation to others and act in ways that are consistent with cultural expectations for their particular group (1957). Others like Radcliffe Brown proposed that social structure was the combination of individuals embedded within "a complex network of social relations" (1940). It is not the connection itself that matters, but the relationship a particular connection symbolizes. Humans were no longer organism, or constrained by their roles, as much as they occupied a particular position within the society structure that allowed them to derive meaning, power and significance.

There is a general consensus among structuralist that actors operate within some context that is fixed. Groups, sub-groups, roles, regulations, norms and cultural values are not imputable, but are more stable, and as real as the individuals operating within (Johnson 1960). In reality, it is not clear that any system is ever as stable as structuralist would argue, but organizational systems may be especially volatile when no hegemonic systems exist among the constituent parts. Others like Mac Iver and Page recognize this instability and argue that while change may be constant, at any given time individuals are operating under a set of given constraints. Whatever it is that binds the groups together for a time is the structure, even if it is constantly change. Thus the "structures" are more
abstract than real, but they become measurable as we name them and examine them (1950).

As stated earlier, each of these older structuralist theories have been rebutted, and found to be circular or reductive in their rational, but some of the themes and their biases are still present in modern network analysis. Returning to the idea of volatile networks - any analysis that looks at a single fixed time is going to overestimate the power of the players within the network. Networks are always changing, and even more so within active movements to induce change. To treat these ideas as static misrepresents the dynamic and assumption that each actor operates under. However, most network models are required to look at a snapshot in time to examine what the organization looks like from a particular perspective. While Structuralism may have been rejected, modern network analysis remains rooted in Mac Iver and Page’s concept of abstract structures that may change over time but in the moment impact individual decision making. While our general theories have progressed passed structuralism, the nature of any network analysis based on the emergent properties of the network at a particular place and time still has not escaped Parson’s ghost. The digital age has made this root challenge even more problematic.

Researcher can now leverage the existence of online networks to create endless databased of network connections. While each of these analyses may yield some insight into the network of social structures it will only be capable of presenting a static version of the network and it assumes that everyone within the network perceives there place and risks within the network in a similar fashion. There is little evidence that this is actually
the case. As long as the nature of one’s analysis does not require knowing what individual incentives each actor may have, then it may not introduce an inadvertent bias. However, if one suspects that the network may be comprised of individuals with varying degrees of exposure within the network, then current methods of network analysis will fall sort and may misrepresent the true nature and character of the network and those operating within it.

One of the central concern of this dissertation then is push the boundaries of our theoretical and methodological limitations regarding network analysis. Given what we know about how individuals perceive their place within networks, and how the online world has generated a unique set of circumstances that empowers certain individuals to act, one would expect severe limitations to any interoperation of a changing environment based on methods and theories that assume a static one. In this dissertation I will propose a new method of gathering websites for network analysis, and explore the differences in interpretation that are possible when one expands past the static and into a more dynamic construction and interpretation of networks.

This new method, combined with ethnographic research, will help validate the new method as potential new extension of our network analysis tools. Social structures may be emergent properties of our socially constructed world, but the presence of a network does not inherently convey any specific meaning. How individuals interact within their network, how they understand their place in it, and the individual meaning they derive from it, may all be very different for each individuals, leaving some with a greater capacity to act differently than they might otherwise be inclined to do. While
choices may be constrained by networks, individuals are still free, to a degree, to make other choices that may seem counter intuitive to their apparent position within the network. These different choices may be exceedingly difficult to act on depending on one’s place in the network, but understanding these differences – and how aware the actors are of their differences – will help us better understand how to interpret online network interactions.
Chapter 2: Epistemological Bias and the Query Driven Sampling Methodology: The paradox of Non-Connected Inbound Links in Dispersed Thematic Networks

Social movement theory has long recognized the importance of networks in the success of any social movement. Rapidly increasing access to online technology such as websites, blogs and social media platforms has revived interests in how the “strength of weak ties” (Granovetter 1973) argument may apply to online environments. Social movement research concerning the role of online networks play in social movements rests on the premise that online networks and events are, while digital, capable of influencing offline events in some meaningful way. Intuitively this makes sense based on our own personal experiences. As individuals we seamlessly interact in both the real and digital world on a daily basis. Based on the personal experience we often carry over assumptions from the real world in the digital world. We often expect that largest and most influential offline organizations also have the largest online networks, with the greatest number of inbound links, social media followers and that co-links between these online entities would be an expression of greater offline connectivity. Our intuition may be correct, but these assumptions are only beginning to be empirically tested and we are currently operating under some assumptions about online networks that may negatively impact our analyses.

While understanding the potential impact of online networks on offline events is important, this paper is far more concerned with a more fundamental question of meaning
and measurement. While related, the definition of what constitutes a network, and the ability to measure that network, are fundamentally distinct tasks. In theory, one should define what constitutes a network first, and then design a method of measurement to capture it, but current online network analysis methods may be proceeding in the opposite direction. Online network measurement tools are constructed on the assumption that collecting a series of outbound links between parties of known parties of interest will effectively return the network structure of these organizations. This seems straightforward, but like most statistical problems, missing or unknown populations may have an enormous impact on reliability and representativeness. Current social movement studies tend to look at a single organizations and their network. Discovering and analyzing the entire issue specific network is far more rare and difficult. The internet is nothing if not one large “Big Data” problem. How to find the right networks to analyze is challenging and current methods have not kept up with website design and the advent of social media.

At its heart finding the right organizations is a classic “hidden population” problem. Hidden populations, whether we are talking about subcultures, or highly dispersed global networks, have two characteristic in common: the sampling frame cannot be known upfront, and there exists some barrier preventing the population from accurately communicating their position on a given topic (Heckathorn 1997). For deviant populations, social stigma will constrain participation rates. For global social movement networks, distance, size and newness will prevent any randomly or even strategically selected organizations from knowing and working with all the potential influential actors.
in a given movement. This gap between the known population being studied and the potential influence these unknown and hidden organizations might have is intrinsic to all current online network gathering techniques. It is time explore if our current methods do in fact provide the data necessary to answer the questions we are demanding from it and if our assumptions about what the data might signify are accurate.

Examining the Scope of the Problem

How we know what we know about online networks is universally mediated through some form of programmatic technology. Analysis of online intra-organizational connectivity is dominated by a snowball sampling technique that relies on webcrawling technology. At its most basic, selected “seed” organizations are placed in a computer program that searches (crawls) through each seed website and identifies hyperlinks to other organizations. These programs find outbound links to new websites, which new website then become the next level of the network. This process is repeated for a specific number of iterations, or until no new outbound links are generated. While effective in its simplicity, programmatic efficiencies potentially introduce three epistemological errors into any sample: (1) which pages are important, (2) which links should be followed, (3) and which portion of the new website should be considered?

The cost to produce online content is relatively low and search engine algorithms incentivize the proliferation of online content by favoring websites with robust content on targeted topics. Some websites are further promoted over others by the content they link to and the degree to which other websites link to them. Links and content can appear at any level of the website from the first page to older buried content. Thus, the question of
which weblinks are important in the construction of the network is a question about the nature of a network itself. For example, are links on the first page more important than links buried deeper within the website? When the cost of producing multipage websites was high, webmasters tended to produce simple one page websites with all the relevant content display right up front. As search engine technology improved, the ability for companies like Google to find buried content became significantly easier. With this change in search engine power Google introduced changes to their search algorithm, placing a high priority on websites that generated lots of relevant content and received many inbound links. Programs are now forced to consider which content is important and which is superfluous in order to allocate computing resources efficiently.

Research on online organizational behavior has established that hyperlinks between websites indicate an affiliation of ideas (Ortega and Aguillo 2008; Himeriks and van den Besselaar 2006; van Alstyne and Brynjolfsson 2005). While this is true in the aggregate, not all links are created equal. International websites may contain links to general resources such as world clocks, weather, world news, and advertisements. These links, *even when they are shared between social movement organizations*, are not indicative of organizational or ideological affiliation. Webcrawling programs, at their most basic, assume that if website A links to website B and website B links to website C, then by the transitive property, A and C must necessarily be associated with each other - regardless of ideology, affiliation or event attendance – because link analysis cannot differentiation the “why” of each link, only its presence (Highfield, Kirchhoff and Nicolai 2011. Consider the example of a news aggregation website such as the New York Times.
News organizations tend to report on events rather than themes (Domhoff 2009). The implication of these is that any two organizations may connect to the Times, but the stories they link to may be extremely varied. The presence of the story does not indicate support, nor does the presence of any two links from the NYT mean that those two organization are affiliated with each other. Aggregating websites cannot even be considered traditional “bridging organization” because they are not connecting the organization together, they merely place them in the same online webcontent.

The final epistemological error potentially introduced in network generation program considers the webcrawling aspect of each snowball sampled website. Building off the last concern, if A links to specific content on another website designated as B₁, should the program only look for links on the B₁ webpage, or should the webcrawler look for hyperlinks on any Bₙ₊₁ webpage? Webcrawling programs can be asked to only find content on the specific page or to find all links on all webpages on the website. If B is an organization affiliated with the social movement, then all content Bₓ webpages ought to be considered. However, if B is a news aggregator website, links generated beyond B₁ will have a high likelihood of not being germane to the social movement. Any links generated on these other web pages may indicate a false positive.

These potential epistemological errors call into question the generalizability and reliability of the findings for studies that do not account for these biases. Increased processing power limits the need to make programming tradeoffs for efficiency sake, but even if no programming efficiency shortcuts are adopted, a final critical flaw remains endemic to the sampling method. Snowball sampling must assume that all relevant
website are necessarily connected to one another. This bias necessarily leads to an over sampling of certain older well connected outbound linking websites, and simultaneously under sampling lessor known organizations which have not had sufficient time to generate enough outbound links and be discovered by the older movement actors. During this period new websites have an incentive to connect to the issue network by creating hyperlink ties to older known organizations, but reciprocal outbound links to these new organizations will not exist – at least for some time. Resources are required to find and link to new website and outbound links do not help established websites to gain “authority” in web searches, therefore the incentives do not exist for established organization to invest the necessary resources to find and link to new content on other websites. Time and incentives structures conspire to create what I refer to this as the Non-Connected Inbound Link (NCIL) paradox. Inbound links help establish the authority of web based organizations, yet current network generation methods cannot account for certain types of inbound links.

The assumption that all relevant websites can be captured by snowball sampling the outbound links of a select number of original seed websites is not tenable. Unless one knows for certain the populations of websites to be analyzed there is a high probability that any subset of websites obtained through traditional snowball and scrap methods will be biased. It is now time to step back and consider the implications of the programs we have built to explore the online environment and ascertain if they do in fact provide the data necessary to answer the questions we are demanding from it (Maeyer 2012; Ruppert, Law and Savage 2013). After documenting in detail the theoretical extent of the Non-
Connected Inbound Link Paradox, this paper will describe a new form of snowball sampling termed “Query Driven Sampling” to address these weaknesses. Simulation network data will then be generated using the different methods to highlight the level of error found in traditional snowball and scrape methods.

Identifying the Network

Over the last twenty years our lives have intersected with technology in unprecedented ways. Collective action has been irrevocably changed by this technology (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2005; Lupia & Sin, 2003). Transnational social movement networks have had some limited success mobilizing resources across countries through the “boomerang effect” (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Shumate and Lipp 2008; Smith 2013). Still, the meaning and effectiveness of online organizational constructs are still being debated (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012; Holbert and Garrett 2010). Thus far, our ability to extract data from websites far outpaces our ability to process all of the data, and even fully consider the implications and interpretations of the data that we can collect (ibid). One key problem that remains is the proper identification of membership networks and who belongs to a specific movement (Shumate and Dewitt 2008).

Websites can be grouped by several different means; organizational ties, organizational associations, explicit links, and thematic content. Organizational ties may include conference panel participation, shared board members, or shared affiliations through organizational exchange. Rather than direct ties, organizations may share common affiliations such as membership in the same organizations. These ties will be
biased towards official events that are considered newsworthy. Informal meetings, which arguably are more important, such as participating in informal working groups over dinner, will not be recorded on the website, but do in fact constitute a significant tie that would otherwise be missed through standard online collection methods.

At least three types of networks exist based on the hyperlink structure and content of a website. Where the content between websites address a similar topic, there are two types of hyperlink structures; unidirectional and reciprocated. Reciprocated links occur when any two organization both share an outbound link to each other. Unidirectional links lack the reciprocal tie. Reciprocated links are an indication of a correlative network, where both organizations are aware of each other and promote each other. Unidirectional links are indicative of an issue network. Unidirectional links are those outbound hyperlinks from one website to another that are not reciprocated. These outbound links constitute an “issue network” because the websites is drawing the attention of the reader to specific supporting data to the issue of interest. Affiliation networks are different from issue networks. Organization that affiliate with each other will be more likely to share reciprocated hyperlinks between them. Absent any direct hyperlink structure websites may still be part of an affiliation network. In network analysis this is referred to as a two-mode network (Breiger 1974, Borgatti and Everett, 1997; Latapy et al., 2008). Two-mode networks represent ties between organizations based on a mutual connection other than a direct tie, such as participation on the same directorate (Seierstad and Opsahl, 2011), or participation on a paper (Newman, 2001). With or without unidirectional or reciprocated links organizations may still address a similar concern or population where the lack of a
direct tie is not necessarily an indication of being a distinct network. For instance, ethnic social movement organizations in one country may not directly affiliate with one another due to linguistic or distance differences, but the fact that they both advocate for the same ethnic rights within their respective sphere is an indication that they are part of particular type of *affiliation network*.

When only the theme of a collection of websites can be known upfront, for instance all websites that address maternal mortality, or all Occupy Wall Street websites, then a different approach will be required to identify the network. The researcher may know a few of the websites to begin the search, but in addition to these websites the program is tasked with finding all relevant content from the whole of the internet. I refer to these websites as *Dispersed Thematic Websites*. These are websites that cluster around a specific topic, but are not necessarily all connected to each other. More so than with any of the previous scenarios, programs are required to engage in a trade-off between the breadth of coverage and the level of efficiency.

If a researcher is interested in the network of a specific organization then a program called a “web-crawler” is capable of discovering connected websites. A program query is used to systemically move from one webpage to the next collecting the pertinent data determined by the programmer. Web crawler programs use the same link protocol, but rather than remain on the first website the program follows the link to the new website. The program then searches for links on the new website. This process can be repeated for a specific set of iterations, or until all link paths have been explored.
To further complicate matters, programs that were developed prior to 2006 face an additional challenge. While the term has lost some of its significance over the last decade, a change in how content on the internet is created and displayed to users has been commonly referred to as Web 2.0. Modern websites have several new characteristic that bear little resemblance to their earlier processors. Web 1.0 can be thought of as websites that were designed around the retrieval of information. Web 2.0, on the other hand, is about user generated creation and active shaping of information. Regardless of the term used, modern websites are more highly interactive than their predecessors. New blogging technology platforms allowed greater access to more individuals to create their own content without large start-up costs typically associated with website creation. Any individual with a computer and a passion could now create a professional looking website with the click of a button. The implication of these changes is not benign to our research methods.

Search engine technology dominates how websites are currently programmed. Webmasters are constantly trying to do what is referred to as Search Engine Optimization (SEO). The essence of SEO programing is to make one’s website as attractive to the search engine algorithms as possible. The goal is to have one’s page displayed near the top of the first page. Based on Google’s shifting algorithm, programmers attempt to create content that will make their website more attractive to the search engines. One of the key changes for google was a focus on key word density and the nature of the inbound and outbound links. Rather than focusing on the content and the links on the first page, google began preference expert websites that had content at much deeper level and
had more densely connected links throughout the website rather than concentrated in one location (http://moz.com/google-algorithm-change#2006). There were of course many other changes but these two changes have a profound impact on how data generation programs “see” websites and categorize them. Because of these changes programs built on assumptions about how websites are created based on 1.0 technology may inadvertently introduce a bias in the reported networks.

Data generation process - the introduction of an epistemological bias.

While the processing power of computers has increased exponentially over the years, so has the level of sophistication of the programs and the sheer volume of information on the internet. Without access to infinite computing power, programmers must make tradeoffs between efficiency and the likelihood of identifying useful patterns. This is sometimes referred to as a pragmatic bias. It is not inherently bad, and sometimes it is even necessary, so long as the data generated are not inaccurately collected and overrepresented. The problem arises when these pragmatic biases begin to affect our epistemological understanding of how the world we are examining is constructed.

Within computer programs, ontology is the formally expressed hierarchy of concepts within a particular program that allow a program to not only present data to an end user, but also interpret data for the user (McGuinness and van Hamelen 2004). Objects within the program share the same language and the program establishes an interrelationship between these programming objects; property, object and subject (Park et al 2007). Programming considerations have favored organization over efficiency in the
face of categorizing and interpreting vast amounts of information (ibid). Like all computer programs, the formal rules within the computer program cannot inherently interpret any errors or biases within the program itself. As long as the program meets the logical standards required by the programming language, an output will be generated, regardless of how logical the actual data or conclusion might be. This is not unlike statistical programs that will allow the user to use ordinal data in an OLS model, and will even provide estimates, even though the data used may violate nearly all the assumptions required to appropriately use OLS regression. A program’s ability to produce a result should not be confused with the accuracy or validity of the result.

When we consider how to generate network data several options are available. One of the more common methods for generating network data is the ‘nomination’ process. Programs do not “know” anything that is not given to them by their program parameters. The minimum input necessary for learning programs then is a sense of where to start and how to process the world around them. In a closed system each person can be asked to nominate 5-10 people (for instance) that they interact with the most. Networks of communication patterns and affiliation can then be constructed based on these nodes (the point of communication) and edges (the direction of the communication). Other methods that do not require a nomination process include transactional records such as the Medici family money leading patterns (Padgett and Ansell 1993), citation indices (Bruggeman, Traag and Uitermark 2010), employment exchange between sending and receiving institutions of higher learning (Burris 2004), workflow patterns and conference attendance (Brass 1985; Hitchcock, Maurice A., Carole J. Bland, Francine Hekelman
and Mark Blumenthal 1995; Perry-Smith and Shalley 2014). Since social movement organizations began organizing online, scholars have been interested in the meaning and significance of the hyperlink structure (Brin and Page 1998; Kleinberg 1999). More recently social scientists have taken up the question of the usefulness of these hyperlink link structures on political outcomes (Moghadam 2000; Bennett and Segerberg 2011; Pilny and Shumate 2012). Hyperlinks are assumed to indicate some level of collaboration - even if only ideologically - as well as the possibility of the network that could contribute to the mobilization of resources (Garrido and Halavais 2003). What these hyperlinks can and cannot tell us will be dealt in a later chapter, for the moment our focus should remain on the data production of hyperlink networks.

Programmatically, outbound links are the easiest to scrape from any website. Most websites, provide a map of the pages on their website and a program scans each of these pages for the hyperlink codes indicating an external address. When one knows the universe of websites that one is interested in, it is possible to scrape each of these websites for all of their externally linked ties and thereby find both the inbound and outbound websites. This works well as long as you know the whole population of websites to query. If you only know some of the websites then this method will necessarily miss legitimate inbound and links.
If we believe that A, B, and C are the only websites that need to be examined, then I can look at A and find all links to external websites. In this example I find one link to website B. When I examine B I find that there is one connection to C. When I examine C I find that there is a connection to B. If the population of websites is known then one can find both in and outbound links for all websites by only needing to examine the external links for any given websites. This is programmatically efficient, however, if A, B, and C are not the entire population, but rather an example of a set of thematic websites, then the possibility exists that there is a website D that is connected thematically, but not by a direct outbound link that can be known through a standard snowball Survey. These *Thematically Dispersed Websites* cannot be known through traditional network generation methods. In the analysis section of this paper, after explaining the logic behind the need for a Query Driven Sampling method, I will show how these missing data cannot be assumed to be random, and that their exclusion will
impact our assumptions and conclusions. In this example, the outcome of the network models would be considerable different were D’s links to be included. I refer to this as the problem of the Non-Connected Inbound Link (NcIL).

Snowball sampling is frequently used to address the problem of known websites. If A is the only known website then from A, the program could learn about B and from B learn about C, and upon learning about C would find that the universe is complete with a link back to B. The challenge here is that directionality matters (starting at C would only yield a connection to B and A would be excluded), and as soon as there is a gap in outbound links the program will assume the extent of the universe has been found. Finding all the links for connected websites will be limited by the efficiency demanded of the program and how deep the program is allowed to crawl.

In an effort to identify the relevant websites in a network some program will introduce a co-link analysis filter. Co-links analyses look for reciprocated ties between sites and drop those nodes which do not have mutual a mutual connection. For example, referring back to Figure 1, from B the program finds website C. Website C is examined for co-links back to B. If they exist then C is kept and C is examined for further links to additional websites. In the scenario above C would be kept, but A and D would not be included in the website network. Had the program begun with website A no additional websites would be reported as being in the network because B does not provide a co-link back to A. The output of such a program would produce a result depicting a highly disconnected website system, when in fact the network is limited not by actual
connections, but rather by limited assumptions about what constitutes a legitimate connection.

In addition to the problem of the co-link analysis requirement, where the links are “allowed” to exist for the program to find them is another efficiency problem that must be addressed.

Webcrawlers can be used to find inbound links by systematically going through each website and looking to see if there is a link back to one of the original seed websites. While this is possible to do other efficiencies must be given up. Time and computing resources will be taxed with each query. In order to provide some limiting parameter to the search to bring it into the realm of possibility, programmers generally chose to limit the number of pages that will be examined. Searches are limited by iteration or depth parameters. Iteration parameters are the number of times a program is allowed to look for more links. Depth parameters indicate the number of websites the program is able to travel to looking for more links.

Let us consider the implications of this method. If a program were set with an iteration limit of 3 and a depth limit of 3, the following weblinks could be generated. First web page A is scanned for links. Harvested links are placed in a table. This is depth level 1. These new pages are then examined for links, which are then also placed in a table. This is depth level 2. And the process is repeated one more time for a depth level 3. Programs that use iterations will now examine the links found at these three levels through a co-link analysis. Any webpages are found to reference each other are kept. All others may be discarded. This is iteration 1. If there are websites with co-links (a page
that both sends and receives a link from one of the original websites) a new depth and colink analysis is performed. This is iteration 2. This would continue until the limit of 3 - or until no additional co-linked pages are found.

While this is very efficient for a program to handle there are several limitations that must be considered. Iterations limit the total number of pages that are allowed to proceed to the next round. Consider the following scenario; one seed webpage may contain ten links to other websites. Of these ten websites only one of them may have a co-link back to the original seed website. In this scenario then only 1 website of the 10 would be retained for the next iteration to find additional links. Any websites that may have been attached to the other 9 would be missing. Further from a depth perspective only those links the target page are considered. If there are no links, or if the links are on other pages on the same website, these links will not be considered and the search program will stop. Other pages on the website are not considered. These losses of fidelity are especially problematic for diffuse networks.

Even when the co-link analysis is dropped as a requirement, and when ABC websites are known, and if depth were eliminated as a structural constraint on where the program can look for websites, the current methods still leave out the *Non-Connected Inbound Link* (NcIL’s) websites. If a website ought to be included in the analysis because it belongs thematically to the topic of interest – then no change in the page depth examined, or the lifting of the requirement for a co-link, will allow the program to find the D websites if they are not know in the first place. NcIL’s are a black box as they can exist anywhere in the trillion websites pages that have been created since the 90’s. They
are difficult to find, but not impossible. The degree of difficulty and the level of bias that will be introduced will be a product of network dispersion. Topics which are highly densely connected to begin with will be much easier to find via typical snowball sampling (assuming the co-link analysis is not enforced), but in the event that a website is not connected to the seed websites, if the topic is densely covered on the internet, then finding the additional websites requires relatively less computing power. The higher the level of dispersion the less likely webcrawler programs will be able to find these connections.

The implications of missing data based on the NcIL problem are several fold. In each of these examples programmatic efficiency are obtained at the expense of the reliability and validity of the data collected. One cannot be certain that all relevant links were captured, or determine the bias of the websites that were included in the program search. The program excludes data not based on theory or relevance but on pragmatic computer efficiency. Any claim about the usefulness, or not, of hyperlink analysis ought to reassessed based on these weaknesses in how the data were compiled in the first place. The Query Driven Sampling (QDS) methodology addresses each of these weaknesses. In the process the QDS also creates greater efficiencies in processing time such that the generation of network data require only minutes to process rather than days or weeks.

Query Driven Sampling: A simple solution to addressing the epistemological bias

In the previous section several key challenges in current network gathering techniques are highlighted. Current methods may be appropriate in certain circumstances,
but one must be careful to understand the network in question (Table 1) and the biases each method introduces (Table 2). Unless all pertinent websites to the study are known upfront, then the current methods to generate the website will introduce a bias to the network that favors newer websites, designed by professional with income to invest in content development, will focus on top level content, and will ignores the influence search engine algorithms have on content development itself. Highly dispersed networks of loosely affiliated organizations further exacerbate these issues. To address these concerns and biases one must address the problem of Non-Connected Inbound Link through a completely different methods that does not rely on entirely on website seeding, outbound link searchers, or top level content.

Table 1: Determining Necessary Requirements for Network Generation Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tightly clustered</th>
<th>Highly Dispersed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A priori websites knowledge</td>
<td>Co-Link Analysis</td>
<td>Snowball Sampling – no co-links used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No a priori knowledge</td>
<td>Co-Link Analysis with Snowball Sampling</td>
<td>Non-Connected Inbound Link Problem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using traditional snowball sampling and webcralwing methods to do online organizational network analyses introduces several biases. Since 2006 “Web 2.0” style websites will likely have weblinks dispersed through the websites at much deeper levels than may be commonly crawled for links. Webcrawling takes time and computing resources and programmers frequently prioritize pages based on assumption of importance. 1.0 website development operated under the assumption that weblinks on the first page were more important than other links. Some programs limit the number of
pages crawled, or limit the depth of a crawl either as an efficiency trade-off, or under the assumption that these links are less important. Some programs may falsely determine that there are no networks, when in fact networks exist – only at a level not examined by the program. False negatives will skew any interpretations under this scenario, meaning the websites will appear to be far less connected than they otherwise are (Table 2).

Table 2: Method and Bias

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Epistemological Bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-link</td>
<td>Find websites with reciprocal links.</td>
<td>Cannot define diffuse networks. Links require time. Newer organizations will be excluded from the network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Level</td>
<td>Content on Top Page is registered as most important.</td>
<td>Ignore Web 2.0 priorities that focus on content generation at multiple levels. Will ignore smaller organizations that cannot pay to have as much content created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Seeding</td>
<td>Uses search engines to find websites with similar search terms.</td>
<td>Will focus on organizations within the same linguistic system. Will be limited to national vs international movement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If one believes their study population consists of an unknown number of highly dispersed websites, then it cannot be assumed that even a careful strategic sampling will identify the whole population of relevant websites. There will always be a substantial risk that some number of unknown websites will have Non-Connected Inbound Links that
may bias the network. The answer to this conundrum is an overwhelming yet simple answer. All one needs is a database of to the all the known websites on the internet and all of their hyperlinks. This is beyond any simple programming or academic research effort, but fortunately, such tools now exist in the market. Several webmaster tools already systemically index the entire internet providing the needed database for these types of queries. Whereas WebCrawler techniques require weeks to complete and can only follow outbound links, if one already has a list of all the links, one can query the database and ask the program to return not only all outbound links – but all the non-connected inbound links as well in a matter of seconds. This is the simple but important key to the QDS method. By accessing links in a database the QDS method is not limited to only following outbound links, but can now find all the inbound ones as well. As important, the QDS method is not as limited to sampling error in the original seed organizations. Even if the websites themselves favored certain organizations, the QDS will find all the websites pointing to the seed organizations regardless of whether the seed organization knew about the new website or deemed it an equal partner by linking to it (see Figure 1). Using the QDS methods network generation is no longer limited by the outbound links within the original seed websites. Each time a new website is identified by either the snowball sampling method, or by the query method it now becomes a new seed website. Each iteration for both inbound and outbound links comes closer to establishing the entire network. This process can continue until no additional websites pertinent to the network are identified.
In theory the QDS method will yield more complete and less biased results – particularly for diffuse thematic based social movements. But what is the impact of this bias, and how might it influence social movement studies? The next section of this paper will explore the impact on the international Kurdish movement.

The Setting

The Kurds are commonly referred to as the largest stateless ethnic group in the world. There are approximately 25 million Kurds in the world with about 10% of the population living outside the traditional homeland. This is roughly, southeast Turkey, northeastern Syria, northern Iraq and northeastern Iran. However, from the outset it is important to understand that because Kurdistan has no official recognized boarders it is impossible to clearly define what the homeland means. What constitutes the homeland will vary by person, based on their personal experience, goals and political interests. I will use “homeland” to refer to the conceptualization of a recognized entity called “Kurdistan”, even if the exact boards, language, tribes, and interest of this homeland are not easily definable and may vary by context. Initially the Kurdish population was selected to explore differences in the construction of online identity and advocacy among Kurds living in over two dozen European countries. Previous studies had found that online Kurdish organizations were not well connected (O’Shea 2004; Gresh 2009; Sheyholislami 2012), despite incentives to organize, possibly due to linguistic, cultural and issue based interests (Webster 2011; van Alstyne and Brynjolfsson 2005). Prior to being able to study differences in identity and intra organizational ties the generation of a
complete online network was imperative. When two tools failed to reproduce the networks generated through qualitative studies it became clear that something in the programmatic methodology was ill suited for Thematically Dispersed Websites. By manually exploring and cataloging hundreds of websites the problem of Non-Connected Internet Links began to emerge. Now, having used the QDS method to generate a several fold increase in the number of detected websites and web links, I have what is ostensibly the largest and most complete database of ethnic Kurdish websites. Based on these complete data, simulations can be run to determine the overall effectiveness of the QDS method relative to traditional snowball and scrape methodologies. 100 randomly drawn sets of 50 websites have been created out of the population. With these initial starting points the network is extracted using traditional methods. Comparisons between each of the simulations will be highlighted as well as a comparison to the QDS network.

A Formal Model

For comparison purposes two popular programs used to generate online networks will be used. First, IssueCrawler is a well-designed, pre-packaged program that employs a snowball sampling technique to find and nominate websites to create an “issue network”. The program can work with as few as two websites and when the organizations are not known upfront at least two websites can be entered into the search query and the program can be asked to find the outbound links on each website. Depending on the settings these new websites will then also be queried for links, for a specified number of iterations. Finite processing power means that IssueCrawler must make decisions to limit
where the program will look for links. This feature is called page depth. Not every page can and will be scrapped for links. Websites that are programmed in the old long form Web 1.0 style with links mostly on the top level domain will be the most easily harvested. Websites with more complex organizations may not have all areas of the website scanned equally, or in a non-biased process, meaning that where the programmer felt the best place to build pages and links may not necessarily match with how the program prioritizes pages. “The Issue Crawler crawls the specified starting points, captures the starting points' outlinks and retains them. This is one degree of separation. Subsequently capturing the outlinks of the retained URLs is the second degree of separation. By default the Issue Crawler snowball analysis captures two degrees of separation, and up to three in total. If the first page does not contain links to all of the website pages, then the program will miss those potential connections.

Programs like Node.js operate in a similar fashion, but rather than preprogrammed limitation on searches these programs are capable of issuing a series of queries to a website. With no limitation to the number of queries that can be processed these types of programs are potentially very efficient at capturing all of the outbound links on any given websites. Limitations are self-imposed by the programmer rather than the program. The process is more thorough on a per website basis; however it requires more complex computing and programming resources and does not solve the Non-connected Inbound Link paradox previously outlined. The success of the entire network generation process remains dependent on outbound links from one website to the next. If
these outbound links do not lead to all of the websites concerning a particular issue, then potentially non-randomized errors could accrue in the data.

Differences in the number of nodes and hyperlink structure between these two methods and the NcIL Query method is striking. Rather than no network, after a single iteration a clear pattern of connectivity emerges (Table 3). By allowing the program to scrape the entire network for potential links connectivity patterns emerge that were not visible exploring the top level domain alone. However, this increase still does not identify all relevant nodes and connections. By allowing a second iteration and examining all inbound links to the originally identified organizational websites 10 times as many connections become visible. It is not surprising that many of these websites are not Kurdish organizations. The program allows the user to input a list of excluded websites to limit connections to our through non-bridging organizations. How these websites are processed is up to the end user. For instance, if one wants to better understand how Kurds communicate with each other then excluding websites like the NY Times might make sense in that scenario. Conversely, if the researcher wants to understand which non-Kurdish cultural links are included, it might be important to the study to know that some Kurdish websites link to the NY Times whereas others do not. These patterns may emerge as important depending on the research question. Large aggregating and news websites such as Yahoo, Google and NY Times have been removed but a number of links still need to be cleaned out of the sample. For purposes of this paper, these large aggregating websites have been excluded.
Results from the initial sample and its associated network suggest that the prior conclusion, that Kurdish websites were not well connected, was not entirely without merit. Only 1/3 of the identified website had any connection to any other website. Any research using these early 1.0 websites as the sample population would accurately conclude according to the data that the online Kurdish Diaspora was extremely Balkanized. Because of the limited connections between all of the organizations available, it would not have mattered which seed organizations were chosen to begin the snowball sample. It is important to note that these differences are not random nor completely isolated. Most of these disconnected websites were built early in the history of the internet, are not maintained any longer, and were initially divided by linguistic and geographic barriers. Using better seed selection and a more modern websites, core online figures emerge as well as different strategies and incentives for linking behavior. Figure 1 shows the network that emerges when all links from all pages of the original 44 websites are collected. Moving forward from these original studies then, the question is not so
much *if* Kurdish organizations create online networks as it is, why do they organize online in some instance and not others, and are these patterns random, or do they vary based on some measurable condition?

Figure 2: Snowball and Scrape Method with No Programmatic Restrictions

15 of the original 44 ethnic Kurdish websites had at least one to another website. 233 nodes were identified. A sample of the network is displayed here.

The network that emerges by scraping each webpage on a website is more complete. However, the epistemological bias of assuming that all relevant websites will be connected via outbound links remains. The Non-connected Inbound Link problem must still be addressed. It is possible that rather than building a tool and implementing the QDS method that perhaps the problem could be solved by choosing a different set of seed websites. To explore this possibility I ran 100 simulations to examine if some
combination of randomly selected websites has the possibility of generating the complete network through the traditional snowball and scrape methodology.

Figure 3: Network Cluster of Nodes with At Least 10 In/Outbound Links

Given the size of the entire network only those sites with 10 or more links are included here. 252 nodes qualified with 10 or more links. The strength of each node is not represented in this graph.

Simulation

The first iteration of the Query Design Sampling methodology produced 589 Kurdish websites. From these Kurdish websites 8279 total inbound and outbound links were identified. All aggregate websites such as Google, Yahoo, or advertisements have been removed. Out of the 589 websites 100 sets of 50 randomly selected websites were selected as seed organizations. Following current snowball sampling and webscraping
protocols every webpage on each site was crawled and scraped for outbound links. Based on this first iteration there is an enormous amount of variation between the each of the 100 simulations (Table 4).

All values are bimodal with the maximum level skewed based on the presence of one of six Kurdish Hub websites. Hub websites were popular during the earlier days of the internet when finding affiliated websites was more difficult. Individuals and/or organizations would submit their organization’s website to an aggregating Hub for inclusion on their list. If the host approved their website the site would be categorized and listed on single page with all other available websites. Hub websites aggregate connections, but not necessarily facilitate communication between actual organizations, even if they happen to be present on the same website. Individual looking for all things Kurdish could then come to one website and find organizations that catered to a range of interests. As search engine technology improved, and the ability to do targeted marketing increased, the need for Hub websites declined. These hub websites have not been recently updated. This means that while a single hub websites may have a substantial impact on the network size; its overall effect on the network at large is minimized because the hubs only aggregate older websites. Their inclusion in a strategically drawn sample is not sufficient to overcome the Non-connected Inbound Link problem nor an effective alternative strategy to the Query Driven Sampling methodology.
Table 4: Summary Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nodes</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>687.37</td>
<td>466.1289</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>2563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Edges</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>756.8</td>
<td>486.6011</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>2749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weighted Degree</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.868528</td>
<td>1.243109</td>
<td>2.173</td>
<td>5.0138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diameter</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>6.29</td>
<td>1.827373</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modularity</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>.72597</td>
<td>.5693984</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>6.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connected Components</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>2.263545</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clustering Coefficient</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>.00745</td>
<td>.0174138</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Path Length</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2.46716</td>
<td>.52406</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.962</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The maximum extent of a website network is researched when the websites identified in N iterations fails to add new websites to the network. The descriptive statistics for the simulated networks of the 100 randomly selected sets of 50 websites is found in Table 4. Based on the simulations, 6 iterations are needed to reach the maximum extent of each simulation. No simulation was capable of replicating more than 50% of the entire network made possible through the Query Driven Sampling method. On average, only 47% of the entire network could be produced from any of the 100 randomly drawn seed websites. The evidence suggests that network coverage is not dependent on the number of starting points. Some portions of the network are not accessible through traditional methods because their entry point is part of the Non-Connected Inbound Link
paradox. These websites belong to the network, but cannot be identified without using the QDS sampling technique.

Table 5: Summary Statistics of Each Iteration Attempt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iterations Required to Reach Full Extent</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iteration 1</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>1.9703</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iteration 2</td>
<td>406.28</td>
<td>167.6386</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iteration 3</td>
<td>1707.92</td>
<td>424.2657</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>2433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iteration 4</td>
<td>2777.4</td>
<td>505.1658</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>3641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iteration 5</td>
<td>3362.84</td>
<td>457.4161</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>3841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iteration 6</td>
<td>3511.64</td>
<td>435.113</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>3841</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Iteration 1-6 present the minimum and maximum results among all simulations. Because all simulations are pooled together the minimum and maximum levels do not vary once at least one sample of 50 reaches the maximum extent.

Iterations 7-9 do not differ substantially from Iteration 6 because only about 10% of the potential simulations required more than 6 iterations to reach the maximum extent of the available network through traditional measures.

When the simulations for each of the 50 randomly chosen seed websites are allowed to run to the full extent of the network the variation between the minimum and maximum extent reduces from <1% to 48% by at least the 4th iteration depending on the initial network seeds. Complete convergence is not possible because of dispersion among the network. Allowing seed websites to run through as many iterations as are required to reach saturation for any given set of seed websites will reduce the bias inherent in the choice of seed websites, but once saturation has been researched, if the NcIL problem is not address it will not be possible to recover over 50% of all available links. Even if one
were to focus their analysis on the portion of the websites links recovered, the researcher could not be confident in any generalizability of the data. Minimum and maximum results are not stable and vary considerably by the initial seeding choice. Because segments of the network are only accessible through a query driven method no matter where one begins the seeding process some portion of the network has a very high probability of always remaining disconnected from the initial seed population.

Conclusion

Automated network research on hyperlinks has operated under the assumption that all relevant links can be found exclusively through the identification of outbound links based on a set of random or even strategically selected “seed” organizations. The proceeding thought experiments, simulations and analysis demonstrate that standard snowball and scrape methods will inadvertently exclude a large portion of the available network. These hidden website connections are not random. “Authoritative” websites according to search engine standards have more inbound connections than outbound links. These missing websites create two problems for social movement studies of intraorganization websites. First, when half of all connections are missing from the analysis (in the case of the Kurdish Diaspora) researchers are led to conclude that these ethnic organizations are far less connected than they are in reality. Second, missing connections are not only a problem of network density, but also content. Missing websites present a particular aspect of Kurdish aspiration and identity. These differences
are not random and their absence will impact any interpretation of what constitutes Kurdish identity and goals – as represented in cyberspace.

It should be noted that the Query Driven Sampling methodology will not capture every possible website. Some organizations intentionally suppress the use of certain key and do not link to the broader civil society organizations. In the process of my research I found a few websites that were password protected and isolated from all but a single link. There is a distinct possibility that whatever the intent of these websites is some may exist completely independent from the visible civil society network. It is possible that the represent a distinct type of organizations and should not be considered part of the civil society network. Without any additional information it is just as likely that within the password protected portion of the website they do link to the broader civil society. Automated search tools cannot overcome this barrier alone. Ethnographic research funded by this NSF grant will help me explore the nature of these websites and determine if they should be considered part of the same network, and if their lack of inclusion represents a bias that must be accounted for in future research.

Additional research using these same data presented in the next chapter demonstrates that Kurdish websites have three distinct organizational goals/frames; (1) nationalist, (2) autonomy, (3) and ethnic identity. These distinct frames are not randomly assigned throughout the network, but vary by immigration regime. If all inbound connecting websites were similar to each other than missing website would not be a problem, however because these patterns are not random any conclusion drawn from the incomplete sample will not have taken into consideration all relevant data.
Chapter 3: International Diaspora Social Movements in Cyberspace

Our world is in the midst of the largest transposition of individuals in the history of the world (Castles and Miller 2009). We are also in the middle of a social movement revolution. The organizational power provided by the internet has led to greater awareness and democratic participation by a greater number of people (Dahlberg-Grundberg 2014) and among a greater variety of topics than the world has ever seen (Bennett 2012a). This democratization process has resulted in a shift away from top down leadership strategies (or at least our understanding of top down leadership) towards more diverse coalitions of loosely connected organizations working together towards a common goal (Morris and Staggenborg 2004). These coalitions rise and fall as needs and interests shift, and governance is becoming more collective than hierarchical. Which is not to say that there are no leaders, only that the lines of authority are have become blurred as more individuals and organizations occupy the social movement space (Bennett 2012b). Hierarchy has yet to be eliminated; money remains a necessity; and entrenched interested still resist changes to their hegemonic power. While the internet has drastically changed the nature of social movements our methods for studying them have remained largely the same – and the lack of new tools is impacting our ability to see and predict changes.
In this chapter I draw upon network analysis theory and enclave theory to reveal how differences in ethnic assimilation and opportunity are transposed onto online intra-organizational networks in a systemic and measurable fashion. Network analysis theory is a broad term used to describe a set of analytical tools rooted in a specific set of principles, assumptions and methodologies (Rowley 1997). The two main organizing principles are first, the analysis is focused on the patterned relationship between units, and second, joint relationship patterns constrain individual behavior. These principles are premised on the assumption that each actor is independent, that resources can only flow through network connections, and finally that the network patterns are enduring. Based on these principles and assumptions network models can define the boundaries of each network, identify subgroups, the degree of isolation between subgroups, and the direction of resource flow. Theoretically, an individual could potentially interact with any other individual in the network, but significant restraints may impede these connections. Divisions between ethnic groups may constitute an impediment to network development.

Enclave theory argues that consistently disadvantaged populations – in the absence of a clear path to assimilation – will develop “resilient ethnic communities” (Portes and Manning 1986). Ethnic community development is expected, as are variations between and across communities. Each ethnic community will experience differential access to local resources as well as variation in acceptance among the host population. Combined with network theory then, one would expect patterns of ethnic networks to be greater within the community, than between it and members of host country. The degree of this difference should vary depending on the clarity of the path to
assimilation. As this relates to the online environment, individuals now operate within hybrid space where online and offline interactions merge and overlap (Lindgren 2014). I posit that because offline connections tend to be more enduring that the online world will mirror offline realities rather than the other way around. This means that visualizing online networks may offer researchers another approach to studying enclave communities and assessing the degree of threat and assimilation they experience. By combining these two theories to expand our understand of ethnic social movement development I am following in the tradition of Pachukali and Breiger who encourage network and cultural scholars to not fall into the trap of creating false dichotomies between complementary systems of understanding and analysis (2010).

Most scholarship on how marginalized ethnic groups use and occupy cyberspace focuses on textual discourses with less attention to the structure or usage patterns of cyberspace (e.g. Jackson and Purcell 1997; Froehling 1997; Watts 2004; Khayati 2007; Ackermann 2008; Sheyholislami 2010). Other scholarship has focused on demonstrating differences in organizational patterns as movements transition/interact transnationally (such as Keck and Sikkink 1998; Stewart 2004; Salehyan 2009; Smith et al 2014), how these differences are expressed online within the same ethnic social movement have been studied far less. At this point it is not even clear if discernable and meaningful differences in online networks, within the same broad movement, can be detected. There is a possibility because of the general anonymity potentially provided online that ethnic social movements will look very similar to each other because they may be able to

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1 Although some authors are beginning to explore these relationship for political activism in general such as Simon Lindgren 2104; Geert Lovink 2011; Highfield, Kirchhoff, and Nicolai 2011)
operate without exposing themselves to significant risk regardless of their status within the host country. It is also possible that online networks will mirror online organizational behavior and reflect difference organizational incentives based on the country of residence. Until recently the tools necessary to explore these network differences or similarities systemically did not exist. Now we have the ability to examine online international ethnic social movements in their entirety and explore what similarities or differences exist online. To explore these relationships this paper will examine the international Kurdish movement.

The Kurds, Diaspora and Activism

It is estimated that there are over 25 million Kurds in the world today. They are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East and the largest people in the world without their own state (Natali 2005, 19). Approximately 5% of the Kurdish population are scattered around the world, away from political oppression or armed conflicts in the homeland (Hassanpour and Mojab 2005) (Figure 2). While the Kurd lacks a common language, ethnicity, and religion a common connection to their identity as Kurds still remains. These differences have not kept the Kurds from finding substantial common ground. In every country where Kurds resides, either within their traditional homeland or in the diaspora, they are generally treated as second class citizens. The vulnerability of being a minority group in so many states has incentivized a long history of activism. Kurdish activist, militants, and various political parties began to organize Diaspora

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2 This number will have risen substantially in the wake of the Arab Spring and the resulting political/regional instability caused by ISIS.
communities in Europe and the USA as early as the 1960s. Nearly every Kurdish movement organization will make some appeal to a national homeland (Hassanpour and Mojab 2005). In this way, Kurds in diaspora and promote their national identity based on an exaggerated sense of ethnic unity (Wahlbeck 1999; O’Shea 2004). What is meant by this exaggerated sense of ethnic unity is that there exists a social and ethnic construct of “Kurd” even while each individual’s definition of what it means to be Kurdish, what the goals of the Kurdish people are, and even the exact location of Kurdistan remains in flux.

This exaggerated sense of unity hides an organizational paradox. Kurds are frequently more concerned about defining what Kurdistan is than what makes them Kurds (Özoğlu 2004, 10). If the concept of Kurdistan is universal, the same cannot be said for the objectives and methods for each Kurdish organization. The reason, timing, and location of their migration all influence organizational interests and desired outcomes (Wahlbeck 1999). As they experience different forms and degrees of repression, Kurds across borders frequently developed different ideas of their national identity and are divided on a variety of issues (Somer 2005). For example, Kurds in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq became fragmented to the point where they use different terms even for such key concepts as autonomy. Some sought partnership with mainstream political organizations while others encouraged radical nationalist agendas to the extent that their political parties became considered terrorist groups by the international community (Hiltermann 2008). Between these extremes it is believed that Kurdish organizations are more preoccupied with local politics in their originating city, rather than the national politics of their host country, or forming alliances with other likeminded organizations (Keles 2014,
These demographic and political situations in the Kurdish nationalist movement suggest that online organizing may follow a similar pattern as the networks are designed to address local issues rather than more broadly appearing national interests that might otherwise encourage more cooperation. Yet, given the increased animosity within host country politics, there is still a significant incentive to organize collectively for protection and the maintenance of identity within a competitive environment far from one homeland. How do these competing pressures express themselves online? Which of these patterns are detectable in the online social networks of Kurdish activist organizations? Can we use websites hyperlink structures to visualize and analyze which organizations are more likely to associate with each other online and do these patterns entrench local values and concerns? Or do they transcend the local and reinforce a more universal Kurdish identity?
The size of the circle increases based on the size of the estimated Kurdish population in each county.

Organization and Identity

By investigating Kurdish diaspora organizations’ websites, this paper departs from the mainstream place-oriented approach and investigates the networks among diaspora groups. Cyberspace allows unprecedented possibilities of diaspora research, not confined by physical or geopolitical boundaries. While there is a large literature employing hyperlink network analysis, few have studied how ethnicity or nationalism is represented in cyberspace. Based on the current methods there is evidence for both collaboration and fragmentation. Studies like Heimeriks and van den Besselaar (2006)
find that hyperlinks show local preference and a positive correlation to geographical and linguistic proximity. Others find a positive correlation between hyperlinks and linguistic and cultural relationships (Ortega and Aguillo 2008). However, van Alstyne and Brynjolfsson (2005) argue that the Internet is not so tension-free and that cyberspace may be balkanized into narrowly-focused small networks. These opposing outcomes set up the first two hypothesis to examine through the lens of online organizational hyperlink networks:

H1: Kurdish NGO’s in different countries will reveal distinct online network patterns depending on the immigration regime of the host county.

H2: Within country NGO’s will express an affinity towards within country organizations.

Shifting to a transnational focus, some studies have already found that diaspora nationalism may benefit from this newly available space in overcoming the physical distance between the homeland and host societies and developing network across borders among different diaspora communities, such as the Yezidis in Germany (Ackermann 2008), Moravians in the Czech Republic, Silesians in Poland, or even the Native Americans in the United States and greater American continent. Advanced communication technologies provide people in diaspora with a better means to talk about their national identity, and thus a better way to imagine the nation from afar or to reinforce local ties and identities. For people who are denied the possibility of a physical manifestation of their ideology in the form of a country, or even the recognition of their identity, cyberspace can be a space to encounter and promote these shared identities.
Studies focusing on the use of social media from the leveraged network perspective have found that organizations have benefited greatly in accomplishing their primary goals by establishing international networks of cooperation (see Keck and Sikkink 1998 and McMahon 2007). Many of the studies and methods are dated and it is not clear if online network patterns can be measured and if they are a proxy for offline organizing. Kurdish websites have been created at great speed and some scholars have found evidence that they have focused on spreading nationalist goals through transnational networks (O’Shea 2004; Gresh 2009; Sheyholislami 2012). These findings lead to the third and fourth hypothesis,

H3: Kurdish Diaspora organizations will be equally incentivized to organize transnationally,

H4: Kurdish network patterns will be highly diffuse with no clear power center.

Online identities have several purposes. For ethnic organizations these websites become a place to express their sense of self in ways that maybe denied to them in their country or origin or even in their host county. Similar to the various incentives to organize expressed in hypotheses one through four, how these organizations express their ethnicities may also express similarities within and across borders. Because these sites consistently express their Kurdish identify and sense of homeland, one might expect that:

H5: Kurdish websites will use similar symbols and identity expressions, regardless of their country of residence.
H6: Kurdish organizations will primarily link to other Kurdish organizations in order to promote their identity interests.

H7: Kurdish websites will primarily produce content in their native language.

Method and Data

Online intra-organizational online networks consist of two basic components; nodes (websites) and the links that connect the nodes (hyperlinks). Online networks are also bidirectional. Every websites will have both Outlinks and Inlinks. The meaning of each type of link is site dependent. For websites A, an outlink to site B is an expression of similar interests. Website A is showing its followers the content of B in order to reaffirm its own positions and interests. However, again from A’s perspective, a link from B to A is an expression of leadership. Website B sees A as authoritative enough to link to the content in order to demonstrate a point of interest. Co-links between two websites indicate strong mutual support. Each inbound and outbound link is an act of active networking. Organizations make connection to maintain and extend offline affiliations (Park and Thelwall 2003). Because some effort is required to find and establish online connections, and because web developers are aware that linking to each other promotes the other websites, Rogers and Marres (2000) conclude that “to link is to recognize”. Conversely, organizations are very aware of image, and the act of non-linking is an act of silencing (Rogers and Ben-David 2008).
This study primarily scrutinizes the hyperlink network of websites that represent Kurdish diaspora organizations, but will also look at Kurdish symbolism that link the organizations to a common Kurdish theme. First, I collected Kurdish diaspora organizations from lists of Kurdish organizations provided by Kurdish hubs. A hub is an authoritative webpage that points out to a large set of other authorities (Kleinberg 1999). I began with the same three hubs identified by Sheyholislami (2010) in his study of Kurdish identity in an era of new media; koord.com, ekurd.net and kurdland.com. The three hubs have extensive directories of Kurdish websites. These are self-identified Kurdish websites which may potentially introduce a selection bias. Organizations that are willing to self-identify may be distinct from other websites not represented on the hubs. Additionally, hub websites have lost popularity as search engines and websites optimization make it easier for individuals to find content directly. These limitations challenge any form of representativeness – unless specific steps are taken to expand beyond the hub websites and the networks attached to them. The websites collected from the hub cover a range of topic from news, entertainment, travel and nationalist designs. Websites are coded for type of websites. In a future statistical analysis categories will be employed as controls.

For purposes of this study I adopt a broad definition of promoting a nationalist identity. Business organizations that only market to Kurd, may be tangentially contributing to a Kurdish identity, but the purpose of the websites it to sell product rather than promote and identity or advocate for increased rights and political participation. I am primarily interested in organizational engagement at this time and as such personal blogs
were excluded. All other sites are included. Kurdland.com created the following broad categories: Art and Humanities, Education, Health, Organizations, Religion, Sports, Business and Economy, Entertainment, Music, Science, News and Media, Political Websites, and Society and Culture. These categories create a broad spectrum of interest and cover a range of Kurdish identities from those actively seeking their own country to autonomy and the promotion of the Kurdish identity. All websites regardless of place of operation were collected.

Only unique top-level domain websites were included. Any link which used a subdomain was recoded as the main top level domain and included in the analysis as part of the parent organization. The location of the websites was determined by the physical address given on the Contact Us Page, or other site information data. (van den Bos 2006). Where no address was given we relied first on the registration data at the international clearing house for domain names. It is possible for this information to be set to private. In these instances I used a pinging service to determine the location of the website servers. 187 websites were identified from these Hub websites and each category had at least two organizations.

It is not known exactly how many Kurdish websites there, but it is certain that the 187 only represent a fraction of them. The standard method of following all outbound links will generate a larger network, but cannot eliminate the uncertainty that all of the websites, or at least a representative sample of Kurdish websites would be collected. A new method for collecting the relevant links that is not dependent on the bias introduced
by the original seed websites is necessary to obtain any kind of representativeness.
Fortunately such a method now exists.

The central challenge to collecting all relevant weblinks and extending beyond the bias of the original seed websites is to solve the challenge of Non-Connected Inbound Links (NCIL). Traditional methods only look for outbound links to develop the network. This method is sufficient if all the websites in question are known and one is just interested in studying the level of connectivity to these known websites. However, if there are an unknown number of websites, in highly dispersed cyberspace – meaning there is reason to believe the websites have different interests and may not be tightly connected to each other, or if there has been considerable growth in the number of new organizations, then one cannot assume that looking at outbound links from one website will necessarily lead to all relevant content. In a forthcoming piece I find that no combination of seed websites is capable of producing no more than 50% of the relevant network.

Employing a method I call Query Driven Sampling (QDS) I use a series of web development tools to find these Non-Connected Inbound Links to generate a more complete network than would otherwise be possible. To use a query driven method a database of known websites around the in the internet must be first collected and completely indexed for all of their links. This is beyond the ability of any academic research project, but fortunately there are businesses that compile these types of databases on update them on a daily basis. With this database in place, rather than only looking for outbound links a query can be posted to the database service to see if there
are any inbound links from websites that were not found in the outbound searchers (see Figure 1 Simplified Representation of the NcIL problem).

Searches were conducted between May-Nov 2014. SEO Moz was also used to determine the follow data: Domain Authority, FB Shares, FB Likes, Tweets, Google + Followers, Location, Org type, Date Founded, Languages, Target URL’s, domain authority of linking URL, total count of links per websites. From the original 187 Kurdish websites identified through the web, all additional links were examined to determine if they were Kurdish. Kurdish websites were determined by the website indicating through the invocation of the Kurdish name, or the use of some other common symbol such as language, colors, flags, and or the Kurdish Flower. The resulting database includes 4,253 total websites. This is a substantially larger population of websites than identified in previous studies. While this large population may not represent the entire universe of Kurdish websites, it does capture a significantly more diverse network of websites that should be more representative than previous studies because it reaches beyond the natural limitation of the any original seed network.
Appendix A shows the geographical distribution of the sampled organizations as well as the known founding dates of over 4000 Kurdish organizations. A total of 37 countries have at least one Kurdish websites located there. 16 countries only had one country and for data display purposes they have been collapsed into the “Other” category. These are included independently in the country level analysis. Of those websites which are currently known, half are located in the USA and the UK. In Europe itself most of the organizations are located in Germany, Sweden, and France. Many are also located in the Middle East where Iraq, unsurprisingly, has the highest number of Kurdish organizations. Most of these are political organizations as well. Websites development is not always in proportion to the Kurdish population within a host country. The incentive and ability to
organize differs by county, but outside of the two main international political centers for the Kurdish movement (USA and UK) the ratio of websites population is relatively correlated – meaning that the number of Kurdish organizations is roughly proportional to the number of Kurds within the country. This is important to note because the incentive to organize is roughly the same within each county, but how they choose to organize varies widely by location.

6280 organizations were captured in the original search for Kurdish organizations based on self-identify as Kurdish (either in the title of the website, or on the first page without having to scroll), or having a connection to the Kurdish movement. Of these 1476 were already inactive at the time of the analysis. 1112 were activist organizations with a connection to the Kurdish movement and 594 were dedicated to the Kurdish cause. Of these 594 there were four main types of websites; informational about the Kurdish people and their interest, music and heritage, news and political parties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Primary Language</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Primary Objective</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kurdish</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>Ethnic Recognition</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>German</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>No Clear Goal</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were seven main languages that were offered on the main page, and the websites were translated into a possible combination of 15 languages. Additionally, three discernable goals coded on the top level page of these websites. These included ethnic recognitions, autonomy, and nationalism. Those with no clear goal were almost
exclusively news organizations. To regular readers, their bias and interests may be clear, but to the casual reader this was not discernable.

At the beginning of this chapter I stated that my work would draw upon network analysis theory and enclave theory to reveal how differences in ethnic assimilation and opportunity are transposed onto online intra-organizational networks in a systemic and measurable fashion. To recap, network analysis theory argues that while connections can theoretically be made to any other position in the network, patterns of cooperation and exclusion are expected based on situational constraints imposed by one’s location within the network. Combined with enclave theory we gain some insight into how these patterns of online network activity might unfold. Each ethnic community will experience differential access to local resources as well as variation in acceptance among the host population. These differential experiences then suggest that ethnic networks will be denser within the community, than between it and members of host country. However, the degree of this difference should vary depending on the clarity of the path to assimilation.

If the combination of enclave theory and network analysis theory is correct, then we hypothesize some specific organization variation in the hybrid space occupied by online international ethnic social movements. A comparative analysis of network patterns and structure among countries with different immigration regimes will allow us to gain insight into the emergent characteristics of the online network among these ethnic movements. Rather than look at every organization, this paper will focus on the organizations that operate in countries with very distinct immigration systems and
treatment of the Kurdish population. From these ideas the six hypotheses can be operationalized in the following manner.

**Operationalization**

- **H1 – Because of differences in how countries incorporate their minority populations, Kurdish NGO’s in different countries will reveal distinct organizational patterns.** Every node, and all of their links were extracted from the entire network. This subnetwork was then graphed using the Fruchterman-Reingold 2D Energize option in Pajeck. A partition was created to identify websites that were Kurdish and non-Kurdish (Yellow=Kurdish). The size of each node is adjusted for the total indegree and outdegree values. The largest networks from four distinct country types were chosen. The USA and UK immigration systems were instrumental in providing money and political lobbying strength. It is possible that the UK system is similar to the US, but also different because of its much higher Kurdish population and the UK’s direct participation in European politics. Germany has the largest Kurdish population outside of Turkey. It is also a country that has a strong history of integrationalist policies during the observed period. Sweden has one of the higher Kurdish populations in Europe, but Sweden’s immigration laws and cultural attitudes are much different than Germany. Sweden considers itself a multi-cultural society. All migrants are allowed to participate as they choose, and little effort is made to force the adults to integrate. Children do get this from school, but they are encouraged to develop
their historical ethnic identity. To evaluate this hypothesis, the energized patterns will be examined for all five countries. I will also look for differences in strong and weak components within each country.

- **H2 and 3 – Within country organizational patterns will not impact the incentive to organize transnationally:** First, The entire network data was used. First I computed the total indegree and out degree for each website in the dataset. Then to obtain the global view Pajek was used to collapse all of the total degree values by country. This left a total of 37 nodes which are now recorded as the total in and out degree links by country. This helps visualize which countries share links outside their borders. Each country was then extracted from the complete network with their total links left intact for each website. The total number of countries with no links within country is compared. If each country retains a high number of outside link, even while internal organizational patterns differ, this will be interpreted as accepting the hypothesis.

- **H4 – Network patterns will be highly diffuse. There will be few, if any, strong network components.** In a directed network a Strong Components is one where each node in the identified component can reach the other identified nodes following the direction of the link. This may be through reciprocated links between nodes, but also were node A and C are connected by traveling through Node B. Weak Components are identified by sending links, which are either not directly reciprocated, or cannot travel back through other nodes. The analysis was
performed on each unique country subset, on all nodes with at least 2 or more sending links.

- **H5 – Despite different patterns of organization, the use of identity symbols on the website will be roughly equal for all Kurdish organization websites.** The total count of identity symbols for each website was transformed into a vector to measure the relative use of symbols between each node within a country. The size of the node is adjusted based on the total number of symbols used by the each website. Even though direct links may not exist between each organization I expect that these organizations will use similar numbers of symbols to promote their Kurdishness to both their followers as well as non-Kurdish visitors. Each Kurdish website, in addition to whatever its primary goal may be, is also engaged in cultural reproduction and all Kurdish websites are expected to employ a similar number of ethnic cues.

- **H6 – Because how Kurds will derive their identity from organizations, the likelihood of Kurdish websites to linking to non-Kurdish websites will differ by country.** It is hypothesized in the literature that organization will respond to perceived risk and reward through bonding and bridging patterns. In each country the level of organization may vary. Countries with high acceptance or low acceptance should have lower levels of organization. In highly accepting countries the NGO’s are not necessary because access to resources is most efficient obtained. Conversely in a lower acceptance society minorities place themselves at risk by self-identifying and will minimize their presence. However,
in each of these scenarios there remains an incentive to reach out, though the reasons may differ. In a lower risk society one may reach out because they feel accepted, whereas in a higher risk environment one may reach out to select organization in an attempt to build some solidarity or better understanding (See Maps and Distributions in Appendix A).

- **H7 – Kurdish websites will primarily produce content in their native language.**

  The primary language used on the website will be used as an indication of who the individuals are trying to communicate with. The development of enclaves should coincide with the expression of their primary language, but language expression will be moderated by the degree of community threat within each immigration regime. A count of websites using the host country language, Kurdish, English, and Other will be recorded.

**Discussion**

For Hypothesis 1, examining the potential difference in network structure by country, I find there is substantial variation among the countries examined (Table 6 and Appendix A). The US and UK have the most similar immigration policies, political systems and economic structures to incentivize the formation of Kurdish organizations. Both were heavily involved in the original push to create civil society among ethnic minorities in Europe and both have strong economic systems that encourage civic engagement at home and abroad. Both countries have strong internal networks as well as strong transnational networks. Internally, these are the only two countries with a strong component, and as a whole, both systems have a roughly equal mix of organizations.
which link to Kurdish and non-Kurdish websites. Differences between the two systems remain and these political and demographic differences are also manifest in the distinct network structures seen even among these two similar systems.

Table 6: Data Description for Primary Networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full Network</th>
<th>Country Network</th>
<th>USA Network</th>
<th>UK Network</th>
<th>Germany Network</th>
<th>Sweden Network</th>
<th>France Network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vertices</td>
<td>4253</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arcs</td>
<td>16500</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>1034</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loops</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Lines</td>
<td>11049</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density (no loops)</td>
<td>0.09%</td>
<td>1.75%</td>
<td>2.86%</td>
<td>3.43%</td>
<td>0.99%</td>
<td>7.39%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density (with loops)</td>
<td>17.24%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike the US Kurdish organizational system, which is primarily focused on raising capital and forming political alliances, the UK system has both a political component and an actively engaged Kurdish population which actively asserts a Kurdish identity and organizes for their own interests. This difference can be seen in the two distinct star structures in the UK system. One cluster only organizes with other political type organizations and non-Kurdish websites, and the other only actively engages other Kurdish organizations.
The Germany system is considered Integrationist. Germans have a very strong sense of who belongs in Germany, but Turks and Kurds have been emigrating from their homeland to Germany for hundreds of years and are now considered active participants in German politics with parties organized for their interest and even elected official from their ethnic background. Of the countries examined, Germany has the clearest path to integration and assimilation. However, there remains a great deal of animosity, and economic hard times have occasionally led to increased violence against minorities. Further complicating matters, the militant Kurdish organizations, which conducted terror and sabotage campaigns in Turkey in the 70’s through early 90’s, also actively sabotaged Turkish targets in Germany. Despite the progress that has been made it is not unsurprising to learn that Kurds and other minorities frequently have to strongly advocate continuing to receive the protections currently afforded them. Despite these challenges, the opportunity to engage in a constructive way is available to them.

There are several key organizations which network with each other, but there is very little cross contact between them, and there is even less contact with non-Kurdish websites. There is possibly little need, given the history of the Kurdish population in Germany, to reach out through cyber space. Because their Kurdish identity is likely to be challenged (though it is largely accepted), they may feel the need to collectively assert their identity. Organization is only through weakly connected websites, although the overall density of these connections is the second highest of the comparison countries. Given the total number of websites compared to France (almost 4 times as many) the high density is especially notable.
Sweden’s immigration system actively encourages ethnic minorities, many of whom come to Sweden as asylum seekers, to retain their ethnic identity. The political and economic systems are largely accommodating. Under this structure minority organizations face little opposition (though it is growing in recent years) to their needs. It is not surprising that in this environment that Kurdish organizations have not faced an overwhelming need to organize. There is not a clear path, nor specific need to assimilate. Individuals within these countries should not feel especially challenged in the expression of their ethnic identity. Of the organizations that exist within Sweden, they are just as likely to link to non-Kurdish websites as Kurdish organizations. There remains a strong international component to their organizations structure, which can be easily seen in the total organizations with no internal links, and the country network maps which show that the Swedish organizations branch out to support other Kurds in many other countries.

Of the countries examined here, France is the least accommodating to migrants. They are considered an assimilationist country where it is expected that any individual who wishes to remain in France will adopt French customs. Minorities are frequent targets of the political system. There are a few loosely connected organizations that command the majority of the weblinks. While organization is relatively infrequent the French Kurdish organizations remain just as likely to connect with French organizations as they are Kurdish organizations. And the majority of French Kurdish organizations retain connection, though mostly weak connections, with the transnational Kurdish movement.
Hypothesis 1 stated that we expected ethnic organizations to adjust their organizational patterns based on differential treatment encountered within each country regarding their immigration status. I find substantial evidence that such a variation within each country exists (See Appendix A for specific examples of these differences). Hypothesis 2 stated that regardless of within country organizational patterns, these enclave populations would be equally incentivized to connect transnationally. I do not find evidence for these hypotheses. While every country did have organizations that would interact internationally, some countries were more willing to do so. In Sweden, where there is the least amount of pressure, or incentive, to assimilate the Kurdish organizations spent comparatively little effort to organize internally and were significantly more likely to reach out and link to organizations in other countries. France on the other hand, with a much more ambiguous path to assimilation appeared comparatively reluctant to organize within country or externally.

Hypothesis 3, that network patterns will be highly diffuse, is accepted. In Germany, Sweden and France there are no strong components, and in the US and UK system there were only one and two respectively. The Kurdish network is dominated by weakly connected organizational structures; however, these weak connections should not necessarily be interpreted as disconnected or divergent interests, only that the network structure itself is diffuse. Based on the organizational goals that were also concentrated in specific countries, it is possible that a further examination of these websites based on the stated goal would reveal a tighter connection among those whose intended operational
purpose is to enact national level changes and would therefore require more organizational support.

Hypothesis 4 argued that despite different patterns of organization, the use of identity symbols on the website will be roughly equal for all Kurdish organization websites. Enclave theory suggests that countries without a clear path to assimilation should be more likely to generate resilient ethnic identities and we would expect these identities to be expressed in their online behavior based on network and hybrid theory. However, in countries where the path to social acceptance is not clear, they may also feel more exposed by publicly adopting a counter-culture ethnic identity. For this hypotheses, the observation is mixed. The US based organizations on average invoke the highest number of Kurdish symbols in both organization that network within the country, and those that network transnational. The German and UK system are similar in this respect. Organizations that network within France and Sweden rarely invoke direct references to their Kurdishness, but in France organizations that network transnationally rarely invoke any Kurdish symbols, whereas in Sweden this is quite common. This requires both a rejection and extension of enclave theory in a hybrid online environment. It may be that the lack of a clear path to assimilation does in fact generate a strong sense of ethnic awareness, while simultaneously generating a sense of otherness and potential risk of being different. This potential threat may be the mechanism that both generates and identity and suppresses it in the online environment.

Hypothesis 5 stated that the likelihood of Kurdish websites to linking to non-Kurdish websites would differ by country. There is some variation here; through there are
some generally consistent patterns as well. In the USA system the network is relatively populated with the highest number of organizations internally and transnationally. Most transnational sites are non-Kurdish and are receiving organizations rather than sending. Although there are a number of education sites that do link to transnational Kurdish material. The UK has the bifurcated system with the Kurdish sites primarily linking with each other, and one other Kurdish organization linking to the non-Kurdish material. Transnationally it is a similar pattern with the US where most of the non-Kurdish sites and being linked to, but do not send links to transnational Kurdish organizations. However, there are more Kurdish orgs that do not network within country, but do have large networks outside the UK.

Considering Hypothesis 6, the Kurdish network within the German system is relatively tightly bound compared to the other states (Table 6), and there are relatively few links to non-Kurdish material within the country. Internationally, there are only a few German Kurdish websites that link to other countries, but they do exist. In Sweden there is very little linking to non-Kurd sites, but unlike Germany, the Swedish ones are simply not likely to link with any type of websites. They just do not network. Transnationally there is a mix of Kurdish and Turkish websites that send and receive links outside the country. France has the highest degree of within country linking between Kurdish organizations. While the level of connections to non-Kurdish material is comparatively low, the French Kurdish websites do link with roughly equal numbers of Kurdish and non-Kurdish material.
For Hypothesis 7, enclave theory predicted that there should be a strong presence of Kurdish language websites. However the number of websites should be moderated by the degree of threat experienced and the degree to which there is a clear path to assimilation. One would then expect that in countries like France where there is not a clear path and the government has instituted an assimilationist regime, these Kurdish organization may not want to draw as much attention to themselves, and will therefore go out of their way to appear that they are accepting French culture and practices. On the opposite side, multiculturalist regimes will have the least concern for developing content in the host country language because they feel the least threat here. Integrationist regime will be the most evenly balanced as the organizations meet the needs of their constituents and interests. Political regimes will be difficult to predict. For some there will be an interest in promoting content in the Kurdish language, not for any cultural purpose per se, but to help gain recruits for larger coalition networks.

These patterns did indeed play out among the coded websites. While France does not have an inordinate number of Kurdish organizations, those that do organize online are careful to produce content that is easily accessible to the host country government and neighbors. There are higher expectations to assimilate in France, but also the least clear path towards integration. This ambiguity may encourage the adoption of the ethnic identity, but it also suppresses the expression of that identity in favor of projecting a potentially safer image of Kurds within the community.
Table 7: Percent Primary Language Out of Total Number of Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Host Language</th>
<th>Kurdish</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

The examination of the online hybrid environment of Kurdish online social movement has confirmed several expectations from the combination of enclave and network theory. Enclave theory predicts the emergence of ethnic networks, but cannot explain the variation in development. Network theory predicts, or at least expects, that there will be variation in network dynamic between different subgroups, but alone cannot predict why these patterns would emerge. The combination of the two theories allows us to predict not just that an identity will emerge, but the degree and characteristics of its expression. One of the key extensions/revisions of enclave theory is that while ethnic identity may emerge from conditions of ambiguity, the expression of this identity will vary widely depending on the circumstances within one’s host community.

According to Boyle (2001), there are largely three perspectives in diaspora research; emigrant, homeland and immigrant. The emigrant perspective is interested in the original discrepancies within the homeland and how the emigrants become transplanted to Diasporas. The homeland perspective looks at the rise and fall of nationalism movements in the homeland as sources of change to diaspora communities.
The immigrant perspective focuses on discrepancies among Diaspora communities in host countries that develop as they remain in their host country. Scholars of Kurdish nationalism have taken more or less the first and second perspectives by emphasizing the political tensions around the issue of Kurdish autonomy over the homeland. For example, in a study of Kurdish refugee associations in London, Wahlbeck (1998) argues that political parties tend to dominate other types of social organizations in Kurdistan and that Kurds in diaspora are politicized due to the politicization of Kurdistan. This paper has adopted the immigrant perspective and investigates Kurdish nationalism in diaspora networks that have developed over time in response to national and international policies and perceptions of risk.

This research has focused on the organizations structure, the symbols used to construct nationalist identity, and the interaction between the organizational level and the individual. All of the main organizations emphasized active networking with other Kurdish organizations, but overall connectivity was low. Geographic proximity and linguistic affinity did not produce any subgroup of network and organizations within the same city were not linked to one another. The disconnected network pattern was not consistent from one country to the next, nor did the disconnected pattern interfere with the adoption of the same common identity patterns. Connection does appear to have been driven by perceived local network needs rather than a natural affinity between Kurdish organizations themselves. Enclave theory, extended through a network analysis can explain these differences where enclave theory alone would not.
Ethnic groups scattered in different countries do not constitute a strong network of transnational community, however, there are extensive weak networks within countries and between countries that do facilitate the transfer of ideas. Among ethnic Kurds the websites may represent an expression of cultural identity rather than an active tool of nationalism and direct nation building, at least as a viewed through the entire transnational network. It will be important to look at the network between organizations that share similar organizational goals. Networks that may appear to be rather diffused at the transnational level (for all the websites), may in fact hide higher degrees of networking when examined by goal type. This study did not look at network organization by subtype because it was primarily focused on questions of Kurdish identity and online expression. Additional studies will be needed to explore the network structure at subgroup level. Based on the analysis available at this point one might expect that organizations with nationalist to autonomy goals to interact more with each other than those promoting ethnic awareness as that latter does not require a coalition in order to achieve their goals. One might also expect that transnational bridging may be more prevalent among these two types of goals and that ties to organizations in the homeland would be strong and that their use of nationalist symbols would be the strongest. It is unclear which immigration regime would potentially promote higher levels of nationalism/autonomy activism.

From the analysis of different patterns of networked activity within each sampled country, and between countries, there is evidence that supports the theory that organizations respond to perceived risk and rewards and do not organize simply because
they are of the same nationality or ethnicity. That is, Kurdishness, and one’s immigration status is not intrinsically linked with higher rates of networking, rather networking is related to perceived needs and the migrants perception that organizations and networks will help them obtain their goals. Because needs and threats differ by country networking patterns reveal these differences within each country. At the same time each country examined was just as likely as the others to organize transnationally. Even if the immigrant feels confident in their host country they there are sizable numbers of organizations that do reach out to those in different countries to help them achieve their goals. This is a validation of Keck and Sikkink’s idea of the boomerang effect of transnational organizing.

Analysis at the organization level has been criticized because organizational goals may or may not be associated with popular goals and perceptions. Organizations are easier to measure and track, but may not provide meaningful information about individuals within each society. Given then rise of social networking and the advent of search engine tools it is now possible to link organizational behavior with individual behavior by tracking which messages are adopted by individuals. Using Facebook as a means of evaluating the popular sentiment or organizational messaging is a form of frame analysis and allows us to link more closely micro and macro level behavior.

From the information analyzed, Kurdish organizations were generally willing to reach out in equal numbers to Kurdish and non-Kurdish organizations. While the adoption of the host country language was common, it did vary by country. In countries like Germany and Sweden where the immigrant felt secure in their identity as Kurds,
organizations did not frequently create content in the host country language, and the individuals did not modify their sharing behavior based on language differences. In France, where their ethnic identity is more precarious and ethnic differences are often perceived as a threat to French culture, the Kurdish organizations were careful to publish content in the host country language. Individuals were also much more likely to share publicly from websites which had translated content. On the aggregate the organizational behavior and the Facebook sharing behavior at the individual level match relatively well, with the most popular sites in the network also being those websites that were most commonly shared on Facebook. This is a new technique to bridge the micro and macro levels of analysis that will be explored in more detail in future analyses.
A paradox of participation identified by the diaspora movement literature (representing over 20 populations and tens of millions of people, around the world), shows that while Diaspora migrants tend to have a strong affiliation with their homeland and a strong sense of ethnic identity, these individuals and organizations establish relatively few ties between each other in their various host countries. To outsiders it may seem counterintuitive that strong evidence of ethnic pride and solidarity – exhibited through clothing, parades, advocacy and even the presence of ethnic business – belies enormous divisions between individuals and organizations that at times can actually undermine their ethnic identity. In many ways, these divisions should not be a surprise. Not all citizens of a single country agree with each other politically. Every large bureaucracy will have office politics and factions. There are frequently many sects within one large religious umbrella. All of these experiences point towards the likelihood that diaspora migrants would not be as united as they might appear on the surface. And yet, while the trend is towards network dispersion, some do pursue closer linkages.

That organizations with overlapping interests would work together is not revolutionary. Success for any social movement will require that they find and form alliances. These interactions happen within movement niches, within party interests, within country boarders and even between countries around the globe. All of these
interactions create a complex milieu of competing interests that have measurable impacts on organizational strategies alliances and outcomes. Researchers have noted that both individuals and organizations modify their behavior in the presence of positive or negative interactions in an effort to maximize their interests and minimize their risk. We expect to see these efforts materialize in some measureable fashion. The purpose of this paper is to explore how these interactions and decision-making processes are encoded onto website design and online hyperlinking strategies. Specifically in relation to diaspora communities, can measurable differences in online behaviors be a reasonable proxy for assessing the level of risk ethnic social movement organizations/activists feel within their host country? This question will be explored through the lens of Kurdish activism.

Why the Kurds?

The Kurdish diaspora provides a good test case for the interorganizational structure, identity and methodology questions. While the Kurds themselves do have a homogenous ethnic identity tied to a common conception of a homeland (even if this “homeland” is not clearly defined beyond the construct of calling it Kurdistan), the Kurdish movement is internally heterogeneous. Further, while the Kurds have been fighting for their homeland and the right to be recognized as a distinct ethnicity for nearly a century, the organizational structure to achieve this goal from an international perspective did not advance until after the early 1990’s when three developments converged. The first was the imposition of the No-Fly Zone in Northern Iraq after the
Desert Storm invasion. Second was the EU’s rapid funding of civil society organizations after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The final key was the invention of the modern internet interface which allows for both easy online organization and relatively easy access to organization content. With all of these conditions in place, the online organization of Kurdish advocacy groups grew exponentially, providing a perfect test case of the methodology as well as the organizational structure and identity questions.

Although the purpose of this paper is primarily focused on international ethnic movements; there are several aspects of the Kurdish movement that are similar to other diffuse international social movements. Ethnic organizations were not the only entities to benefit from the civil society movement of the 90’s and early 2000’s. A diverse set of international social movements were started or accelerated during this period including groups advocating for environmental justice, religious freedom, peace, human rights, consumer protection, and class based solidarity. While each of these organizations are different from the ethnic movements that rose up at this time, there share enough similarities that some of the implications for international network research may be applicable.

Ethnic Social Movements and the Influence of Technology

Research on online and offline activism has gone through three transformations. Earlier papers talked about digital offline divides (Castells 1996; Rheingold, 1994; Turkle, 1995). If this division were ever true, it certainly is no longer. Individuals no longer live in only the online or offline universes. The two inform each other and are
intimately intertwined. As online influence and space grew, so did the interaction between the two spaces. The next round of researchers often referred to these as mixed or augmented space (Milgram and Colquhoun 1999; Galloway 2004). The internet was a way to find and provide information, but people’s lived experience remained primarily in the offline world. With the addition of social media and the ubiquitous access to the internet we have moved into a new area some researchers are referring to as a hybrid culture (Lindgren 2014). It is here that the internet becomes an extension of ideas, identity and self-expression allowing for an increased interplay between the symbolic and material dimensions of media. Hybrid space not only refers to mixing, but also the extension of one into the other so that the two realms become indistinguishable from each other. In this way cyberspace can both challenge and reinforce hierarchies and boundaries (Souza e Silva 2006; Kluitenber 2006). If online and offline activism are becoming more integrated, how then do the two constrain each other and do different members of society experience the same sets of risks and rewards as do others? There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating reason to believe that online participation and expression are not equally incentivized for all participants.

Consider expressions of Moral Outrage, where an individual hears about an event and then expresses concern about it in some form of online forum. It is one of the simplest and abundant forms of online activism. Recent studies suggest that his behavior is engrained in us from an evolutionary perspective and that expressing such outrage is a form of trust currency (Jordan, Hoffman, Bloom, and Rand 2016). Along these lines, expressing moral outrage not only becomes a currency of trust, but also identity (Jasper
Expressions of moral outrage become a signal to others that you belong to the right group and think correct thoughts (Jasper 2008). Following these lines of research, others have noted that expressions of moral outrage are associated with a form of privileged slacktivism (Rothenstadt and Brussel 2013). This last line of research suggests that one should expect differential levels and types of moral expression congruent with the perceived opportunities and costs for the interlocutor.

For diasporic migrants there is a complex set of relationships they must navigate. Not only do they retain a sense of identity tied to their homeland\(^3\), but they must develop and retain this identity within a national context of their host county. These national contexts will create different incentives and risk for participating in any social movement and the expression of their ethnic identity as a framework for activism. Location shapes these individual’s perception of self and their collective demands (Baser 2013). Others have posited that individual level perceptions and organizational patterns are influenced by the political opportunity structures within each host country (Hassanpour & Mojab 2005: 219). While there may be similar external pressures, individuals possess a multisitedness that complicates how they interact with their environment and with each other (Levit and Glick Schiller 2004; Marie-Laure Djelic and Sigrid Quack 2010). This means that individuals within the same country will not always experience the same level of threat, interest or identity. Baser and Swain find that diaspora groups express multiple identities and interest and that these differences are frequently unaccounted in the

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\(^3\) Further complicating a sense of Kurdish identity is multi-tribal ethnic nature of Kurdistan itself. They are not a completely homogenous people and these differences will play out in the analysis section about perceived risks.
literature (2010). Differences in these identities have not been ignored, so much as they have not been critical to the question under analysis.

The primary focus of the literature has been on understanding ties back to the homeland (for examples see Baubock and Faist T 2010; Baser and Swain 2010; Bolognani 2014), more than understanding where individuals within the same country differ on their identity and if there are general patterns that might express themselves if examined. Those that do look at ties have focused on leadership roles rather than shared identity, or the lack thereof (Boccagni 2012). Studies of this nature, while extremely important to our understanding of diaspora communities tend to focus on the reasons for leaving, or the challenges migrants face in their host county. As such they are situated in their present circumstances and cannot capture the multi-sited nature of transnationalism (Martiniello 2013). One way to both capture the multi-sidedness of transnational diaspora movements would be to situate interview data within the context of online hyperlink networks which would allow the researcher access to both discourse analysis and the aggregate effect of each organizations position within the transnational movement by seeing who they connect with online, and how they express themselves in these different settings. Looking at diaspora movements in this way can help us determine if measurable differences in online behaviors can be used as a reasonable proxy for assessing the level of risk ethnic social movement organizations/activists feel within their host country. But first we need to better understand the relationship between individuals and the organizations they use to represent themselves and their interests.
Identity and Mobilization

How does this hybrid nature of the online and offline world play out within organizations? First, organizations face similar complex interactions that impact their decisions and are lived out in both online and offline spaces. Interorganizational structures are influenced by the political opportunities for immigrants in the countries in which they reside (Diani 2011, 2013; Diani and Pilati 2011). Organizational structures are also influenced by the transnational nature of the diaspora (Zhou and Lee 2013).

Unlike within-nation movements by the majority populations, diaspora populations may share common interests with organizations outside their country of residence and may an additional incentive to seek transnational ties to help gain influence with the country of interest (Keck and Sikkink 1998), or to create additional pressure on the home country through these transnational ties (Salehyan 2009). Country level responses will vary based on the degree of xenophobia within the country (Semyonov and Raijman 2006; Caiani and Parenti 2013), the length and complications of the history of immigration within the country (Martiniello 2013), and if they belong to any supranational organizations like the EU, UN etc. While the aforementioned areas have been extensively examined, the impact of an individual’s security within this complex environment, to their online expression has yet to be tested in the interorganizational and transnational identity literature (Figure 1). Prior researchers have found a dichotomy in online behavior with some Kurdish researchers showing lower degrees of integration that are more localized than transnational (Heimerik and van den Besselaar 2006; Ortega and Aguillo 2008; Alstyne and Brynjolfsson 2005) while others find a higher degree of interconnectivity (Kissau and
Hunger in Baubock and Faist 2010). The sites one chooses to sample will matter significantly, but another explanation is also possible. If the online world has indeed become a natural extension of the offline world, then variation between these networks, which in these studies took place in different countries and different types of networks, could be explained by the level of threat felt by the Kurdish individuals and their sensitivity to their "other" status within their host community. In other words, host country opportunities may account for these differences.

Figure 6: Interaction Between Online and Offline Identities

Solid lines represent relationships that have been tested in prior literature. Dotted lines represent theoretical connections that will be explicitly tested.
Returning to the focus of this paper, can we see these interactions and decision-making processes encoded onto website design and online hyperlinking strategies? In order to evaluate how online and offline activism are related to each other from an identity expression standpoint one needs to have a better understanding of how the websites are interconnected, and how the website administrators use these websites within different contexts. In a prior analysis variation between interorganizational structures that can be measured through a network analysis of hyperlinks under countries with different immigration regimes was conducted. To do this I built a tool, and tested a new network collection method, to collect all ethnic Kurdish websites. The new method is called Query Driven Sampling and it uses webmetric tools to capture both inbound and outbound links to a given set of websites (Stearmer 2016). This method substantially increases the number of websites captured and limit the network bias of the original sample. After capturing the total inbound and outbound hyperlinks the network portion of the analysis is similar to other network studies were each website represents a node in the network with the hyperlinks representing the connections between them.4

In order to examine the connection between online and offline activism one has to first have a sense of the online and offline environments in which any social movement activist resides. The focus of this paper is on the overall immigration regime where the individual resides. Immigration regimes are the long standing immigration politics and social practices towards migrants that represent the political, economic and social fields

4 Organizations make connection to maintain and extend offline affiliations (Park and Thelwall 2003). Because some effort is required to find and establish online connections, and because web developers are aware that linking to each other promotes the other websites, Rogers and Marres (2000) conclude that “to link is to recognize”. Conversely, organizations are very aware of image, and the act of non-linking is an act of silencing (Rogers and Ben-David 2008).
all minorities must learn to navigate. The European immigration system can be
categorized into three broad regimes; (1) assimilationist, (2) integrationist, and (3) multi-
culturalist. Assimilation regimes are those that create a distinct two-tier citizenship
system where the ability to fully participate in society (such as political or economic
organization), access to employment and educations, security and discrimination
protections are relatively limited (France, Poland, Slovakia and Lithuania are examples).
Multiculturalist regimes actively encourage their migrant populations to both participate
in the host country and provide protections and space for them to express their ethnic
heritage as well. In these regimes it is assumed that ethnic groups will retain their
heritage and become part of a pluralistic society. It does not mean there is not
discrimination, only that there are systems in place to at least theoretically to deal with it
rather than institutionalize it (Sweden, The Netherlands and Spain are some examples).
Integrationist regimes are a mixture of the two. Some policies may actively encourage
different types of participation by ethnic minorities and migrants, but other policies and
cultural practices also create some institutionalized isolation and discrimination
(Germany and Denmark are some examples).

Each regime type is associated with different types of pressures on the diaspora
populations. If online and offline actives are merging then one would expect that
differences in immigration regime strategies would have a similar impact on online and
offline communication. In Assimilationist regimes the primary goal of the state and

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5 These categories are based on Thomas Janoksi (2010) three tiered system and immigration law data
provided by the MIPEX Project (http://www.mipex.eu/). Countries in the top quartile of MIPEX score
range are considered Multicultural, second quartile are Integrationist, third quartile are Assimilationist and
the last quartile are hostile to ethnic minorities and immigrants.
society is to make ethnic minorities conform to their existing social structure. Assimilation is envisioned as happening across political, economic and cultural measures. The goal is a suppression of ethnic identity in favor of the adoption of a new host country identity. Social expectation to conform may result in two somewhat opposing organizational pressures. Ethnic social movements may feel a need to suppress more visible expressions of their identity while at the same time being incentivized to make connections with our ethnic Kurdish organizations to create a sense of solidarity within the country and gain additional allies in the international community for the expression and recognition of their identity (Keck and Sikkink 1998; 1999).

Multiculturalist regimes, at least in theory, are at least politically/legally open to minorities. Politically, legally, culturally and economically, they at least espouse the ideal of encouraging the maintenance of distinct ethnic identities. Voting rights may be extended, the right to organize socially and economically will be recognized, and few if any laws will be passed infringing on cultural practices. Of course there is no guarantee that these ideals will translate into a fully accepting mutually coexisting society is considered the norm. The rise of the far right xenophobic parties in Europe are evidence suggests that the even where legal regimes allow for diversity some portion of the population will feel threatened by perceived changes to their society. While there may be some growing animosity in these countries, the cultural values still indicate the minorities should be accepted for who they are. Here too exist two somewhat contradictory motivations among the ethnic activists. Because they are encouraged to maintain and express their identity, ethnic social movements will be among the most insular. They
should connect to each other more than in other countries, and they should use the strongest visible symbols of their heritage - one of the strongest being language. Simultaneously, because they are not as threatened by their host country they will not feel as strong a need to communicate in the host county language because their primary intent of communication is amongst each other. While these acts of insularity should be more common, they will also be the most free to connect with whomever they want online. Rather than international ties to other ethnic organizations, they will maintain the strongest ties to nationalist organizations.

Within Integration Regimes there is a mix of both support and antagonism. While there is no definitive definition of what constitutes an internationalist policy, there are some general principles that it is a regime that expects greater interaction between the major ethnic groups and minority groups to be mutually influence each other (Banton 2001). While the native population itself may not be particularly accommodating, governmental organizations will have granted some negotiation room for minorities to organize themselves and will allow them some right to advocate for their needs and interests. Minorities which are allowed space to negotiate for their own interest will be prone to more intra-country networking between themselves and non-Kurdish organizations and online material. They may not feel any particular need to increase the number of internal and external website connections.

Given the various risks and rewards Kurdish activist face one might expect the following set of suppositions about identity and network connectivity to occur among the three types of immigration regimes (Table 2). An in-depth exploration of all of these
points is beyond the scope of one research paper, but several aspects of these suppositions will be explored. The first part of the analysis will focus on differences in network connectivity for each regime type and the second part of the analysis will explore how the activists perceived their actions and online choices through interviews with Kurdish activist living within an Integrationist regime.

Table 8: Typology of Regime and Network Intersection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Assimilationist</th>
<th>Multiculturalist</th>
<th>Integrationist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>Less Expressive</td>
<td>Highly Expressive within own language</td>
<td>Highly Expressive within Host Country Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Networks</strong></td>
<td>Fewer Overall Connections</td>
<td>Higher Within Ethnic Network</td>
<td>Equally likely to connect to with Ethnic or non-Ethnic sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Networks</strong></td>
<td>Greater Inbound Connections</td>
<td>Greater Outbound Connections</td>
<td>Equally likely to have inbound/outbound links</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Shape of Online Networks

According to Boyle (2001), there are largely three perspectives in diaspora research; Emigrant, Homeland and Immigrant. The *Emigrant* perspective is interested in the original discrepancies within the homeland and how the emigrant becomes transplanted throughout the Diasporas community. The *Homeland* perspective looks at the rise and fall of nationalism movements in the homeland as sources of change to diaspora communities. The *Immigrant* perspective focuses on discrepancies among Diaspora communities in host countries that develop as they remain in their host country.
Previous Kurdish Scholarship on nationalism tended to adopt the first and second perspectives by emphasizing the political tensions around the issue of Kurdish autonomy over the homeland. For example, in a study of Kurdish refugee associations in London, Wahlbeck (1998) argues that political parties tend to dominate other types of social organizations in Kurdistan and that Kurds in diaspora are politicized due to the politicization of Kurdistan. This paper has adopted the immigrant perspective and investigates Kurdish nationalism in diaspora networks that have developed over time in response to national and international policies and perceptions of risk.

This research has focused on the organizations structure, the symbols used to construct nationalist identity, and the interaction between the organizational level and the individual. The initial data was gathered between May-Nov 2013. SEO Moz was also used to determine the follow data: Domain Authority, FB Shares, FB Likes, Tweets, Google + Followers, target URL’s domain authority, and total count of links per websites. Additionally Location, Org type, Date Founded, Languages, and identity symbols such as language, colors, flags, and or the Kurdish Flower were recorded for each of the original Kurdish websites. From the original 187 Kurdish websites identified through the hub sites, all additional links were examined to determine if they were Kurdish or not. Kurdish websites were determined by the website indicating through the invocation of the Kurdish name, or the use of some other common symbol or language. The existing database includes over 4000 total websites.

Regime types are judged based on their MIPEX score. MIPEX is the Migrant Integration Policy Index. It measures 167 policy indicators, in eight distinct policy areas,
to rank EU (and other) nations on the level of opportunity migrants have to participate within the country. Those counties in the top quartile are considered to be multiculturalist, those in the second tier are considered as integrationist, the third as assimilationist and the last quartile are hostile to ethnic minorities and immigrants. I will explore the network structure of the Assimilationist regimes first for those countries with that have more than five thousand Kurds living in them.

Table 9: MIPEX Score and Regime Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>MIPEX Ranking</th>
<th>Regime Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Multiculturalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Multiculturalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Multiculturalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Multiculturalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Multiculturalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Multiculturalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Integrationist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Integrationist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Integrationist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Integrationist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Integrationist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Assimilationist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Assimilationist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Assimilationist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Assimilationist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assimilationist regimes in the study include France, Switzerland, Poland and Turkey. According to the suppositions of risk, it was expected that these countries would have fewer overall connections but would be more likely to have relatively greater inbound links. If we consider the outbound links from country to country, were do
assimilationist regimes fall on the spectrum? On the graph France appears between Germany and Italy, but this is not because of the level of connections, but who they are connected to. From a network connection standpoint these four countries have the fewest connections of those being examined with the exception of Belgium (Figure 7). Looking at France as an example, while the connections are the fewest overall, a large percentage of the come from international inbound links – suggesting that other are more aware of the situation of Kurds in France and comfortable connecting to them, but the Kurds in France do not feel equally safe to reciprocate the connections. Additionally, the most popular and visible Kurdish organizations publish content in the host county’s language suggesting that they seek to communicate with those who might be suspicious of their activities and status within the community as they do between themselves (Figure 8).

Figure 8: France Network Graphs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Degree</th>
<th>Host Country Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Multiculturalist regimes include Sweden, Finland, Norway, Canada, Belgium and Austria. According to the suppositions of risk these networks should be characterized by
higher within network connectivity and greater outbound connections along with a lower degree of websites communicating in the national host language. From an overall network perspective these countries are in the middle in terms of international connections (Figure 9) and are far more likely to have websites with outbound links to other countries than inbound links, evidence from Sweden suggests that they are not very likely to establish strong linkages between them within the country. These organizations exist relatively autonomously within Sweden and expend a great deal of energy connecting to Kurds in other countries. While slightly different that the supposition it is possible that these individuals feel so secure in their status within the community that they do not feel compelled to link to and support each other in ways that are more necessary in other countries (Figure 9). Linguistically these sites conform to our expectations in that they are far more likely to use Kurdish language content. In fact they were the most likely to only produce content in Kurdish dialects.

Figure 9: Sweden Network Graphs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Degree</th>
<th>Host Country Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Integrationist regimes include the United States, Denmark, Netherlands,
Germany, and the United Kingdom. Kurdish organizations operating within these regimes should be equally likely to connect with ethnic and non-ethnic websites and be equally likely to have inbound and outbound connections. From Figure 7 it is easy to see that these organizations are on the extreme end of outbound communication between countries. The degree of connection between them is the highest of any country type. Further, using Germany as an example, within country networks are the most prolific and most dense. While there are few clear leaders within these counties, there are several organizations that command large audiences of supporters. Additional these websites are highly likely to communicate in both the host county’s language as well as producing content in their native dialect (Figure 10). Each of these observations suggests that integrationist regimes do in fact afford their ethnic immigrant a high degree of security combined with an increased incentive to communicate. These observations suggest that network analyses can potentially be used as a potential proxy for the level of threat felt within communities. What remains to be seen is if these network expressions are intentional or latent bi-products.
Causality and Meaning

The purpose of this paper was to explore if there were measurable differences in online behavior due to the level of perceived threat by diasporic Kurds, and if these differences were intentional or subconscious. Understanding the level of intention will help future researcher better understand under what conditions online expression may be a proxy for assessing the level of risk ethnic social movement organizations/activists feel within their host country, and what type of activist organizations express themselves through websites, links and social media?

At an individual level ethnographic research has shown that immigrants are conscious of their "other" status within their host community, and that this awareness impacts daily choices about how they interact with their community (Baubock and Faist 2010; Farnham and Churchill 2011; Lingel, Naaman and Boyd 2014). They learn to navigate multiple identities in countries with varying degrees of hostility towards them (Bradatan, Popan, and Melton 2010). While it is expected that individual choices will be
constrained by these multiple identities and expectations it is not clear how these translate into online activism or the choices that social activists might make. While individuals may feel constrained to operate within the limits accepted by society, social activists might intentionally challenge these expectations in order to create room for greater autonomy and access to resources.

To assess how Kurdish activist evaluate their risks and opportunities within a community and how these perceived risk translate into online activism I arranged 40 interviews with Kurdish activist from three different countries from several different types of Kurdish organizations and interviewed them about their experiences as activist and how these experiences were reflected in their online choices. In the end I was able to have one-on-one interviews with 19 individuals and email communication with another 13. Individuals interviewed ranged from politicians, academics, community organizers, political operative, students and some of the original freedom fighters. The ages ranged from their mid-twenties to mid-sixties. Nine of them were women. It is important to note that the community of Kurdish activists is very small. In order to protect their anonymity several aspects of each participant’s identity and location have been changed. All interviewees resided in integrationist states.

Because all of these individuals come from integrationist states it is expected that the results will be biased toward political opportunities, within country networking, and an emphasis on ethnic recognitions more than autonomy or nationalism. However, because the ideals of integration are seldom carried out in practice, one would still expect a degree of variation in threat perception. While these interviews did take place within
states where acceptance is relatively high, visiting with those who experience greater
degrees of threat and understanding how they moderate, or not, their behavior will still
provide insight into how activist may behave in settings where the level of threat is
higher for all Kurdish citizens. It may also be important to point out that not all of the
activist understood the construct of what it means to be a “Kurd” in the same way. The
nature of the goals, the languages promoted, the location of the homeland, and who
belongs within the community varied widely depending on social position of the
individual. Which is not to say that there is not a generally common notion of what it
means to be Kurdish, or that there isn’t a significant overlap in the definitions, but it does
mean that along the physical and philosophical boarders there is wide variation in what it
means to be a Kurd. These differences are not unique to the Kurds. Similar scenarios play
out among most countries and regions.

Identity, Consciousness and Threat Assessment

In order to use online websites and network as a proxy for Kurdish identity, goals
and the level of insecurity within their host country it is crucial to understand why the
online connections are being made so that appropriate conclusions can be drawn from
website network analysis. The central relationship between websites organization,
activism and identity, in order for it to be used as a proxy, is that individuals will
moderate their online behavior in responses to offline events. I will show those the
interviews that this relationship does exist, but the interviews also revealed several
potentially challenges in additional to supporting the overall premise. For instance, I had
assumed that “activism” would entail pushing for rights, recognition, or assistance in building greater capacity to pressure Turkey into concessions on territory. While these are aspects of certain types of Kurdish activism, it was not the central focus for most of those I interview. Due to the fact that these individuals all lived within integrationist states this is not wholly unexpected, however, “recognition” and “capacity” were not as direct or as tangible as I had imagined. Many of the individuals I interviewed were not looking for Kurdish activism in a traditional sense of petitions, laws, or protests, but rather for a more existential liberation. For these activists, what they were looking for, and linking to, was not always expressly about Kurdish issues. Several expressed that they were more interested in learning what individuals like themselves were thinking about other topics, even if it did not directly relate to something traditionally recognized as “activism”. The ability to express themselves and follow others, without referencing their Kurdish heritage, or assuming their interest in the topic was due to their ethnic heritage, was for many an act of liberation. This brand of activism is consistent with the possibilities of interactions within an integrationist state. However, it also means that “activism” might be under counted or mis-categorized because it does not look like activism one might otherwise expect.

Returning to the primary purpose of the interviews, did I find evidence that these activists intentionally structured their behavior in response to offline events. In other words, how did identity shape online behavior? Consistent with previous findings, each of those I interviewed expressed some sense of insecurity within the community and each confirmed that they moderated their online decisions based on these experiences. Some
would not refer to themselves as victims of anti-Kurdish sentiment, but would talk in more general terms of racial prejudice. It was not clear if this was because they genuinely did not experience specific ethnic violence, or because they felt safer tapping into the frames of general racial prejudices rather than singling themselves out. It was clear from several interviewees that some activists did not feel comfortable expressing their Kurdish identity online for fear of becoming a target – though it was not clear if the threat was from the host government or if it was due to risk with Turkish involvement. Sometimes the term Kurd was substituted with regional references like Anatolia, or "The South", without any additional reference to a specific ethnicity. In context, verbally or online, those familiar with the content would immediately recognize the location based descriptions as a reference to their Kurdishness, while remaining less apparent to outsiders.

While the primary sense of insecurity may focus on the political complications and contradictions between the actions of both home and host country, there are other mediating forces from within the Kurdish movement itself that also have a substantial impact on online activity. Within group connections are fraught with complication because of how they may be perceived by outsiders and these relationships centered on maintaining trust. Those that violated this sense of trust were shunned. Because activists have to worry about the nature of the content and how the link to the organization might look to outsiders, they have to consider the risk of guilt by association. Interestingly, there was at least one organization with very disparate goals from more mainstream activism sites. These individuals from this organization under their antagonistic
relationship and will use it to try to undermine their rivals. Here is how the method works. One organization may have a strategy to establish a cooperative arrangement with their host government and perhaps only desires recognition of their ethnic identity in the homeland. These limited objectives can be perceived as a threat to Kurdish organizations that have more nationalist goals, or whose focus is on religious, or class recognition rather than ethnic. Knowing that cooperative agreements rely on trust, some opposition groups will intentionally link to content with their rival groups, show up at conferences, and have their pictures taken with their less aggressive counterparts in an attempt to create the appearance that they may have an ulterior agenda. The individuals I talked to monitored their online connections and were very careful to avoid or block anyone that might generate awkward questions about their alliance and allegiance.

There is a great deal that divides the Kurdish identity the individuals I spoke with identified differences in sub-ethnic identity that were more important to them then a "Kurdish" identity which is more like the concept of “Pan-Arab” idea from the 1970’s of a united people within a constrained nation state. The older generation of activist, and especially those who fought with the PKK for a national cause, were the most likely to appeal to these pan-Kurdish ideals. Most of the others recognized large differences between individuals claiming a Kurdish identity. These different groups have strong differences in religious devotion and sect, differences in the holidays celebrated (or at least the days they celebrate the same holiday). For those who just wanted the ability to assert their ethnic identity there was a sense that the political groups were always trying to exploit their identity for power. The political class would try to tap into the populism
of the ethnic organizations to attempt to co-opt them into a stronger partnership and to solidify an identity. While the political organization tended focus on the unity between the Kurdish identities, the community centers and ethnic organizations were primarily interested in the reproduction of diverse languages, cultures and religious perspectives. There was a sense of irritation that the political groups wanted to use them for a larger purpose that did not necessarily relate to their needs as community members.

When asked about the languages promoted on the website there was some variation in the response. Some sites were in English only, others in the host country language only. Then there were those that led with the English language of the host country language, but then provided translated content in a Kurdish dialect. And finally there were those which only produced content in a Kurdish dialect. I asked each interviewee with these choices were done because they wanted to project a sense of belonging, or if there was a sense of fear, or perhaps that they were trying to communicate with non-Kurds as much as their own community. The most common response was that English or the host country language was just practical. Kurdish dialects are not well spoken or wide spread within the diaspora community. Individuals are coming from many locations within the broader Kurdistan to a common country. What they now share is a general location and set of relatively few dialects that are commonly referred to as Kurdish – even if these references are somewhat disconnected from places and languages of their ancestry. Additionally there are generational divides. The younger activists have spent most if not all of their lives in the "host" country. This is in fact their own country and for them part of a mixed identity.
One of the other questions that I asked was if they wrote content in order to be more easily indexed by the search engines. In each interview with a website owner no one expressed concern over search engine optimization. They are not conscious engaging in activities to attract new visitors, but rather to inform their current followers. That said, linking was not without its strategy. Because they are hyper conscious of their position within the host country they are very careful with whom they link to. This means that many links are established after the activist has already vetted the individual or organization before linking to them. This is especially true for organizations that share multiple links. However, co-links may not be necessary to show a strong connection. Organizations which share common interest will often specialize in the production of specific types of content. Due to these niche markets it is possible for organizations to link to each other without a co-link being necessary to show a stronger connection.

For those with ties and interest in homeland family and politics, in addition to being aware of their status within their host community they also recognize that their actions in their host country posed risks that originated from their homeland. Some activist shared their concern that while they personally felt safe stating whatever opinion they wanted on any given topic, they recognized that they were not completely autonomous in these actions. Family and friends still living in the homeland were often subjected to harassment, or promotions, based on the activism engaged in abroad by their family members. Family members could be placed in a favorable or risky position based on the content of the websites. This is especially true for Kurdish political parties. Membership in opposition or complementary parties can carry with it real world
consequences for themselves and close relations. One activist referred to the government's interest in which parties Diaspora Kurds belong to as "Obsessive". The concerns then were not always related to how the Turkish government might act, but how Kurdish organizations and political parties (where they are allowed to exist) would interpret family loyalty.

Websites vs activism

During the 70’s and 80’s Kurdish activism was primarily driven by an internal militaristic push for sovereignty. Beginning in the 90’s there was a substantial shift towards activism primarily associated with the development of civil society organizations throughout Europe and political parties in Iraq. In the early days it was relatively easy to find grants to start websites, organize events, and publish material in a Kurdish dialect. However, as the EU’s interest in Turkey has waned so have the funds to support such organizations. Money has become less available from ostensibly neutral sources, and has driven an increasing on political and religious organizations. Some of the activists indicated that the presence of website and clearly established organization were signs of political support rather than effectiveness at grassroots activism. The tightening of funds combined with the rise of social media platforms has given rise to another substantial shift in the activist network structure. Most of the smaller activists have turned to Facebook and other free social media sites for their primary point of organization and the dissemination of information to their followers. This change has also driven a massive change in the location of power within the Kurdish movement that is not necessarily
visible through traditional internet research methods. Facebook feeds and participants are not easily scrapped from the website any longer and are much less accessible than weblinks on traditional websites.

During the rise of civil society organizations in the 90’s, multiculturalist regimes invested large sums of money in these organizations to help them maintain their language and culture. Websites, staff, printed material and translation all cost money to publish and maintain and with the influx of cash resources and a safe haven from where to operate from, multiculturalist regimes attracted most of the exiled political elite. With access to these resources much of the early content had two purposes; first, promote pan-Kurdishness and culture, and second the denunciation of the PKK and their brand of nationalism combined with Marxism and class warfare. It also placed a certain level of activism leadership out of the hands of the non-elite. As long as Kurdish activism could only “legitimately” happen through the Kurdish language only certain individuals would be capable of leading and running such a network. The choice of using a specific dialect galvanized a particular type of activist, but also left a substantial number of them disenfranchised from the process. The languages used would allow the elites to coordinate with each other better and create stronger times, but would simultaneously alienate others. This created a rather large division between distinct types of Kurdish organizations; political, religious and cultural. These divisions were further fractured across country borders. This is one of the reasons why measuring online activism can produce very different results. If one looks at elite Kurdish organizations from multiculturalist countries one will find a higher degree of centrality, while as a whole or
within specific countries the network may appear very diffuse.

Rapid changes in technology have fostered a difference in how activism takes place and among whom it appeals to. The oldest activist that I visited with was part of the Kurdish uprising in the 70’s and 80’s. He hold onto every Pan-Kurdish ideals and comports himself like a true believe in the cause. Even though he has been fighting for autonomy for nearly forty years he still speaks with the hope of the freshly recruited. According to him the various tribal groups collectively known as the Kurds, Alevi, Allowites, Zorastrians, and were all Kurdish, and was insistent that all of them recognized this at some level at least at some point in their history. All were once Kurds – even if they happen to change their name. He was equally insistent that if they would just recognize their common heritage they would have a powerful country and that this recognition was just around the corner. When I asked him how he was using online technologies to promote this message and identity, it was clear he did not understand the impact of the social media shift on identity and activism. He accepted that some activism was taking place online, but was strident in his position that pan-Kurdish activism on the ground was still the most influential form of activism to engage. He personally expressed no interest in online activists and when I asked how their online activities might undermine his interests he waved away the concern stating that he was glad to see them doing something, but did not see their action as counter to his own, even when they were clearly advocating for positions that were contrary to his own. In his mind, they were either small organizations that did not matter, or they were on the verge of converting to his way of thinking.
From the younger generation’s perspective this older generation is entirely out of touch with their lives and interests. Much of the animosity seemed to center on the political nature of the older activists. Diaspora activism had become too political. Just as the older activists were certain that the online activism would soon die away and they would all be united under a single banner, the younger activists were equally insistent that the older political power was dying and the push for a pan-Kurdistan would die with them. I do not see evidence for either of those coming to pass in the near future, though the momentum was clearly in the younger generation’s favor. The younger generation are not as interested in returning to Turkey and Iraq and want more autonomy to more directly advocate for their needs and interests in their home of residence.

There is also the reality that the political interests of the host countries have shifted in the last decade and it is no longer in many of their national interest to continue to assist political Kurdish activists in establishing their own homeland.

Research Implications

The results of my interviews with these individuals pose several serious challenges for any researchers doing work on online international ethnic network analyses though the currently accepted practices. Knowing that ethnic Kurdish activist (as opposed to nationalist), are a growing – if not the largest type of activist already – and that are not fixated on their Kurdish identity signifies that at least a substantial portion of what it means to be an activist will not be visible through explicit links to Kurdish websites nor in references to “Kurdish” causes. If researchers are interested in
understanding how these individuals understand themselves and how they situate themselves in the broader conversation within their host country any website networks that exclude or minimize connections to non-Kurdish resources or fail to incorporate social media presence will miss a substantial portion of how these individuals understand their activism. The end result is that current methods that explicitly emphasize declaring one’s ethnicity, and prioritize co-links between websites as an indication of the importance of an organization and the centrality of certain goals, will only be accurate for a particular type of activism.

Further complicating online network research is the increased level of difficulty researchers might have in identifying Kurdish websites in the first place. Current methods require a certain number of seed websites to start the online analysis. Common practice is to do a websearch to find highly ranked websites that mention the keywords of interest. As some of my interviewees indicated, due to the level of threat they perceive in the community, they may not refer to their cause as Kurdish. Organizations headquartered in Multiculturalist countries will be the most willing to express their ethnic identity, but individuals and organizations living within Integrationist or Assimilationist regimes may be much less forthcoming. Depending on which country and type of organization one is interested in studying it is possible that finding online websites that talk about Kurdish activism, might be more hidden that previously considered. Meaning that any conclusions in previous papers that draw conclusions about the “Kurdish” movement very likely undercount the number of organizations that should be included in the analysis, will under represent the degree of network connectivity, will overemphasize that nationalist
goals of Kurdish organization and interests, and if online social networks are not considered they will misidentify the centrality of certain actors, and will severely underestimate the legitimate leaders of the movement. In our digital age research much accept that the existence of a website is not the central point of activism, and it can no longer be used as a proxy for activism without taking into consideration a substantial change to our methods.

Based on these points alone one might be tempted to draw the conclusion that returning to ethnographic research is the best method for capturing the sense of ethnic activism. While there is certainly a central role for ethnographic research to play this method also cannot be relied on to capture the true sense of the network and its leaders and interests. The activists I visited all believed that the Kurdish network was smaller and more closely connected than my online analysis would otherwise indicate. When I asked them about specific Kurdish websites that were popular online (in terms of social media access, network position and or total volume of visitors) most of them were not familiar with every popular website. Several possible implications can be drawn from this dislocation of awareness; first, it is possible that the relationship between online and offline world is more disconnected than one might otherwise assume; second, it is also possible that the elite activist and the populace are interacting in different networks; and third, online connectivity may be driven by something other than popularity or centrality.

These dislocations call into question the meaning and generalizability of network centrality scores on any Kurdish website. These score may not, or at least no longer, reflect a specific activist network of activism, but rather a specific network of ideas. If it
is the latter then one must begin to answer whose ideas they represent before any general conclusions can be drawn. These dislocations should not be seen as a disappointment. Most movements become more nuanced over time. This is not necessarily an indication of a lack of Kurdish identity, or that the identity itself is fractured, but may actually be an indication of maturity. The larger point here is that even ethnographic research is not going to give one general sense of sphere of activism, but only of a specific and possibly increasingly narrow perspective.

Conclusion

One of the central interests of this paper was to discover if the online network strategies researchers currently use adequately captures an approximation of the offline networks. I hypothesized that there would be differences in online expression based on the potential/perceived level of threat. As a reminder, each of these interviews was with an individual living in an integrationist regime. Based on that regime type I expected to find that activist would be equally likely to connect with Kurdish and non-Kurdish websites and these the language used would be in English or the host country language. I found evidence for this looking at the websites. The purpose then of the interviews was to ask the activist how intentional these actions were. When I asked what decisions drove their linking and content strategy two central themes operate simultaneously. First, was an overt concern over the content being linked to and second a latent concern about the organization itself. While the main focus certainly was if the content was favorable to their own position, each person expressed to varying degrees of concern the problem of
affiliation. The more connected the individual was to the politics of the host country the more likely they were to express strong concerns over who they were seen associating with. This played out in who was invited to conferences, restaurants, whose websites they connected to, who they were photographed with and even being aware of what others were saying about them. Most did not express any specific event that lead them to this level of caution, but two individuals said that they had been called by a contact within the host government asking about the connection. There was no indication that they were being accused of anything of concern, but nonetheless, the “right” and “wrong” associations were present on both the Kurdish activist’s mind as well as some of the people they associated with.

Based on these interviews I am confident that the content represents a series of strategic choices made by the activists. As such they can be used as a proxy for offline activism. However, it was also clear from the interviews that even within integrationist regimes each individual has their own level of perceived risk. It is not as easily argued that online activism can be used as a proxy for the level of threat someone felt in the community. One may personally feel safe, but recognize that their family back home will feel less secure depending on the nature of their activism. Thus, the website networks and content are proxies for a level of threat, but it is not possible to assign the source of that threat to community where they live.

The final and greatest implication is the predicament of the generalizability of online networks findings using the traditional methods. While it is more difficult to track down the appropriate websites to include in the study, and more challenging to find the
degree of popularity on social media websites, these are not insurmountable challenges. But they cannot be accomplished with traditional methods. If one only examines websites, co-links, and language, the organizations will be highly skewed towards older organizations formed in the 90’s, primarily from Diaspora members living in multiculturalist regimes, and generally affiliated with some specific higher funding interests whether that be a political, religious or nationalist organization. If these are the sites one intends to examine traditional methods will suffice, but other methods will have to be utilized if other types of sites and locations are to be examined, or if general claims about the movement will be made.
References

Ashutosh, Ishan. 2008. “(Re-)creating the community: South Asian transnationalism on Chicago’s Devon Avenue,” Urban Geography 29 (3): 224-245.


### Appendix A: Network Maps by Country and Type

#### Table 6: Geographical and Chronological Distribution of Kurdish Websites

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**Grand Total:** 79,360
Appendix B: Network Maps by Country and Type

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Sweden Network Graphs

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### Appendix C: Sample Websites of Kurdish Diaspora Organizations.

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