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#NoDAPL: Social Media, Empowerment, and Civic Participation at Standing Rock

HAYLEY JOHNSON

ABSTRACT

The struggle for environmental and social justice within American Indian communities is one that has been ongoing since the beginning of United States history, but the main catalyst to effect change and to promote and disperse the American Indian narrative has emerged through the power of social media in today's hyperconnected society. This article examines the power of social media to effect change, as well as a hyperconnected society's ability to empower historically disadvantaged groups that have often been misrepresented within traditional media outlets. The historic movement occurring at Standing Rock, North Dakota, and the #NoDAPL protests illustrates the capacity of social media to galvanize individuals to become change-makers as well as create a vast support network within a population that might otherwise remain uninformed or unaware of media misrepresentations. The role of libraries as support systems within communities and the responsibility of libraries to provide unbiased and freely available information within a hyperconnected society are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The history of American Indians advocating for environmental justice and tribal sovereignty is not new.¹ Since colonialism, American Indians have fought for their rights, whether environmental, cultural, religious, or self-determination, against the United States government. Treaties brokered and oftentimes broken have sullied the relationship that American Indians hold with the government. Embedded within indigenous teachings is the strong belief in the sacredness and importance of the environment as a life source that must be respected and protected. It is this belief in the protection of the environment and the preservation of American Indian

culture that spurred the #NoDAPL movement at Standing Rock, North Dakota.

In October 1985, Madonna Thunderhawk, a water rights activist on the Standing Rock Reservation, spoke at the University of Colorado at Boulder. During this talk Thunderhawk said the following:

Water is the life blood, the key to the whole thing. Without water, our land rights struggles—even if we were to win back every square inch of our unceded lands—would be meaningless. With the water, which is ours by aboriginal right, by treaty right, and by simple moral right, we Indians can recover our self-sufficiency and our self-determination. Without that water, we are condemned to perpetual poverty, erosion of our land base, our culture, our population itself. If we do not recover our water rights, we are dooming ourselves to extinction. It's that simple, at least in the plains and desert regions, it's the battle for control over our water. (as cited in Guerrero 1992, 207–8)

Thirty-two years later, Thunderhawk's words on the importance of environmental justice capture the crux of the fight occurring today at Standing Rock. American Indians advocating for environmental justice have worked for decades to emphasize “the health of the environment, the protection of local economies, and the preservation of local and traditional cultures and practices” (Schlosberg and Carruthers 2010, 18). According to the Environmental Protection Agency's website (2017), “environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” The EPA (2017) goes on to say that all citizens should be afforded the same types of protection from environmental and health hazards and should have equal access to the decision-making process to obtain a healthy environment. In practice, however, research by environmental sociologists shows that American Indians and other minority groups often bear the brunt of an unequal distribution of environmental ills that is known as “the treadmill of production.”

According to Hooks and Smith (2004, 559), the treadmill of production is tied to the economic growth of business, labor, and government. These three sectors “promote economic expansion that results in undesirable environmental outcomes: natural resource withdrawals and waste additions. Often, the entire community faces exposures to these dangers. Due to institutional racism and class inequality, however, some residents face disproportionate risk” (Hooks and Smith 2004, 559–60).

In addition to the American Indian struggle for environmental justice, American Indian nations also fight to uphold their rights to self-determination and self-governance. Congress enacted two pieces of legislation, the Indian Self-determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 and the Tribal Self-Governance Act of 1994, to illustrate the concepts of tribal

self-determination and self-governance. This legislation also upheld the principle of tribal consultation. Tribal consultation requires the federal government to consult with tribes on federal actions, policies, and rules or regulations that will directly affect the tribe. Today, the Standing Rock Sioux are citing a lack of tribal consultation as one of the foundations of its arguments against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), along with the threat they claim it poses to their environment and way of life.

When fighting for environmental justice, academics “have also noted that the most important part of environmental justice activism is building community capacity and facilitating community empowerment” (Schlossberg and Carruthers 2010, 18). How does a group facilitate community capacity and empowerment? In today’s hyperconnected society, social media provides a tool that historically disenfranchised groups can utilize to bypass mainstream media and have their voices and stories heard by a larger population of people.

Collective action has been utilized by numerous groups in order to advance a cause. Collective action generally refers to “actions undertaken by individuals or groups for a collective purpose, such as the advancement of a particular ideology or idea, or the political struggle with another group” (Postmes and Brunsting 2002, 290–91). In the article “Making Sense of Social Change: Observing Collective Action in Networked Cultures,” Sandra Rodriguez examines how to make sense of collective actions within networked cultures. Rodriguez (2013, 1060) states, “In social movement scholarship, new social movement theories (NSM) have long underlined the impact of cultural transformation on the emergence of new forms of collective actions, crossing boundaries between politics, values, civic engagements, and identity processes.” Social media has the power to create collective action movements due to its unique ability to rapidly connect and mobilize large numbers of people in ways that traditional media is unable.

WATER PROTECTORS AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST DAPL

Once completed, the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), a project of Energy Transfer Partners, will span approximately 1,200 miles and connect the Bakken and Three Forks oil production areas in North Dakota to Patoka, Illinois. The pipeline will be able to transport approximately 470,000 barrels of crude oil per day and will cross beneath Lake Oahe near the Missouri River (Energy Transfer Partners n.d.). Since 2014, the Standing Rock Sioux have been protesting the construction of the pipeline because the pipeline is endangering the water supply of the reservation, and its construction has and will continue to destroy sacred sites and infringe upon their treaty-granted rights.

In April 2016, a Standing Rock Sioux elder, LaDonna Brave Bull Allard,

established the Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires) camp as a center for cultural preservation and spiritual resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline. According to Allard (2016), the “camp reclaims land stolen by the US government in direct violation of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, which affirmed it as sovereign unceded territory of the Great Sioux Nation.” Since the #NoDAPL movement began, more than three hundred federally recognized tribes have been represented within Camp Oceti Sakowin, Red Warrior Camp, and Sacred Stone Camp at Standing Rock near Cannon Ball, North Dakota, with estimates of up to five thousand camp inhabitants being reported. American Indians and their supporters are fighting to keep the reservation’s water supply clean and protect sacred sites that will be destroyed through the construction of the pipeline.

This historic gathering of water protectors, the term preferred by those opposed to the pipeline, is the largest gathering of American Indians in over 140 years. In 1876, treaties between American Indians and the United States were broken so that gold discovered in the Black Hills of South Dakota could be extracted. The Battle of the Greasy Grass (Battle of Little Bighorn) in 1876 was the last time that American Indians from various tribes gathered together in solidarity to oppose the United States Army and its disregard of treaty stipulations in the pursuit of natural resources. Today, American Indians are again fighting to protect their land, resources, way of life, and treaty rights to stop the extraction of natural resources that could pollute the environment on which they depend. In 1876, the fight was notoriously violent. Today’s battle insists on being a nonviolent direct action movement in which “protectors” seek to effect change through their peaceful demonstrations.

While the struggle to protect their land and culture has remained constant throughout history, the avenues American Indian tribes have to communicate their struggles have evolved because of the rise of social media. Social media provides a new outlet for communication and a malleable forum uncontrolled by major media outlets. The question remains, however, as to whether social media has the power to engage and effect change on a substantial level.

HYPERCONNECTEDNESS, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND ACTIVISM

Society’s information system has evolved since the time when television news and print news were the most popular formats the public utilized. Research states the percentage of Americans who receive news on a mobile device “has gone up from 54% in 2013 to 72% today” (Mitchell et al. 2016, 6). Age is a factor in seeking out news online. “The two younger groups of adults are much more likely than older adults to turn to online platforms for news—50% of 18- to 29-year-olds and 49% of those ages 30–49 often do so” (Mitchell et al. 2016, 4). A hyperconnected society is one in which

information travels quickly and through multiple avenues of dissemination. According to Colin Blackman (2014), the Director of the Centre for European Policy Research's Digital Forum, a hyperconnected society is one where there is "a global, immersive, invisible, ambient, networked computing environment—the so-called Internet of Things connecting smart sensors, cameras, software, databases and data centres."

Hyperconnectedness does not end with the electronic "things" that society is becoming increasingly reliant upon, but also extends to people. Blackman (2014) goes on to say that *hyperconnected* "also means an Internet of People making up an Internet of Everything, with machine-to-machine, people-to-people, and people-to-machine connectivity." While today's society is hyperconnected, it is important to note the barriers that American Indians continue to face due to the lack of access to fixed broadband services. In 2016, the Federal Communications Commission released the *2016 Broadband Progress Report*. This report highlighted a still shocking statistic: 41% of Americans living on Tribal lands lack access to advanced telecommunications capability (fixed broadband services) compared to 10% of the U.S. population as a whole (FCC 2016, 34). Because of the geographic connectivity issues American Indians face, many have found a way to jump over the digital divide through the utilization of cell phones. The 2012 *State of the News Media* report states, "Many Native people have moved straight to mobile internet, accessing digital content through cell phones that do not require broadband connection. In that sense, what has occurred in tribal lands in the United States mirrors the practice in other parts of the world where countries have largely skipped over the broadband era and jumped straight to mobile" (Guskin and Mitchell 2012).

A major component of hyperconnectedness is the constant and pervasive presence of social media. Research indicates that 62% of U.S. adults get news on social media, with 18% doing so often (Gottfried and Shearer 2016, 2). For example, the percentage of adults in the United States who get news from Facebook translates to roughly 67% of the total adult population (Gottfried and Shearer 2016, 4). When considering that 67% of the U.S. adult population receives news from a social media platform, the impact and implications of social media must not be ignored.

According to Dolata and Schrape (2016, 6), "Empowerment, coordination, and control—these are the ambivalent effects of the technological infrastructures of the web and its platforms on the formation and movement of non-organized collectives." Harnessing the power of social media to empower, coordinate, and control the news narrative has been done successfully in the past as evidenced by the #Ferguson movement that occurred in 2014 when Michael Brown was fatally shot by police in Ferguson, Missouri. When discussing the importance of social media, specifically Twitter, during Ferguson, Bonilla and Rosa (2015, 8) state:

It is surely not coincidental that the groups most likely to experience police brutality, to have their protests disparaged as acts of “rioting” or “looting,” and to be misrepresented in the media are precisely those turning to digital activism at the highest rates. Indeed, some of the most important hashtag campaigns emerging out of #Ferguson were targeted at calling attention to both police practices and media representations, suggesting that social media can serve as an important tool for challenging these various forms of racial profiling.

The ability to reframe mass media representation of a movement, event, or group is an important characteristic of social media that #Ferguson aptly demonstrates. Social media provides “*spaces* where individuals resist and challenge dominant political or cultural discourse and foment the idea of a ‘right time’ for change” (Rodriguez 2013, 1059). Additionally, social media provides a first-person perspective of unfolding events that aids in the ability of movements to reframe mass media representation. Blueprints of social media change movements created through the #BlackLivesMatter Movement begun in 2012, and continued with the #Ferguson movement in 2014, are especially helpful to other minority groups learning how to utilize social media to facilitate action and frame events. The IdleNoMore movement begun by indigenous peoples in Canada to protect the environment and honor indigenous sovereignty has been extremely successful and shares the same essential message of the #NoDAPL movement.

Through the frameworks established by these movements, the #NoDAPL movement can learn how to effectively harness the power of social media to shape its image and message. The importance of these different movements in recognizing and supporting one another is paramount. Supporting similar social and environmental justice movements only expands support and visibility for all movements. The #BlackLivesMatter movement has recognized the importance of the work being done by the American Indian community and supports the efforts of these tribal nations in advocating for clean water and the preservation of their cultural sites. The Black Lives Matter Network (2016) released a statement in support of Standing Rock. The network states the following:

Mainstream media is doing its part to ignore this resistance; it is not in the interests of large corporations or the federal government for the world to see Indigenous peoples in America working together to protect the land and water we all need to survive. The gathering at Standing Rock is a testimony against capitalism—we do not have to destroy the world and our resources for money to provide for one another.

Movements of marginalized groups recognize the need to support one another via the social media communities they have established as their struggles mirror one another. This recognition and support can help a movement’s audience grow both in number of participants and increased understanding through additional exposure.

MEDIA COVERAGE: THEN AND NOW

Mass Media and the Dictation of a Narrative

In *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Herman and Chomsky examine mass media through a propaganda model of communication and discuss the five filters of editorial bias. “A propaganda model focuses on this inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choices. It traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public” (Herman and Chomsky 1988, 2). The five filters of editorial bias serves as a mechanism to formulate the news narrative that is disseminated to the greater public.

In his 1996 article “Media Framing of Movement Protest: The Case of American Indian Protest,” Tim Baylor examines how television news framed the American Indian protests that occurred during the late 1960s through the mid-1970s. During this time, television news was cited as the major news source utilized by the public (Baylor 1996, 2). Baylor examined NBC evening news coverage, between 1968 and 1979, in order to decipher the major frames television news utilized to give meaning to the American Indian social movement organizations (SMOs) protests for a national audience. The relationship between the mass media and the public is one that can be detailed through the use of contextual frames. The media and the public can be viewed as part of the same cultural system in which the media utilizes “frames” to connect to the public. “Frames’ represent a set of ideas that interpret, define and give meaning to social and cultural phenomenon” (Baylor 1996, 2). The five frames utilized within the news segments discussing the American Indian social movement organizations were militant, stereotype, treaty rights, civil rights, and factionalism, and at least one frame was used in 93 percent of news segments (Baylor 1996, 3–4).

Of the five frames, the militant frame was the most pervasive frame utilized to provide context, and occurred in 90 percent of the total news segments examined by Baylor. “The operationalized Militant frame included any segment that labeled Indian protestors as ‘militant’ or where the focus was on violence and the breakdown of law and order” (Baylor 1996, 4). Even when positive frames, such as civil rights and treaty rights, were included in television news coverage, negative frames worked in tandem during those news segments to undermine the message that American Indians were hoping to impart to the nation. Baylor’s article stresses how the news media and the context in which it frames an issue has a powerful impact on how the public interprets and understands the issue presented. Baylor questioned how much control a movement could have over its portrayal in the media when the group is not part of the dominant group that

controls media outlets. Parallels between Baylor's discoveries regarding media coverage of the events from the 1960s and 1970s can be made to the American Indian movement occurring today at Standing Rock.

When examining media coverage of the #NoDAPL movement, the first hurdle that media outlets, as well as those directly involved in the movement, needed to cross was the geographically removed location of the Standing Rock reservation situated in a remote section of North Dakota with intermittent cellular service. Over the course of the protests, Facebook Hill was established as the spot closest to the camp where cell signals could be picked up. Activists or "water protectors" would frequently travel to Facebook Hill to post videos to Facebook or other social media platforms to get images, videos, and first-person accounts out to the world about what was transpiring at Standing Rock. Because of the isolated location, there was a period of little news coverage of this event in major national media coverage. Many people equated the scant coverage to a news "blackout." Videos from supporters on the front lines were the main way that information was communicated to the outside world. The BBC was the first major news outlet to cover the protests in detail. News outlets in the United States, such as CNN, often reported events secondhand and relayed information from sources such as the Morton County Sheriff's Department because the network had no reporters on site. Oftentimes, these reports were disputed via social media and independent news outlets due to the readily available videos, images, and first-hand accounts present on social media.

Similarly, Baylor (1996) examined the struggle the American Indian social movement organizations (SMOs) faced decades earlier when attempting to get their message out to the nation and to obtain sustained news coverage of events. Baylor noted "the location of many events further hindered national media coverage. Many protests and events occurred in isolated rural areas where Indians had been removed to decades before on land thought to have little value" (1996, 8). The idea that the locations where these environmental affronts occur are so geographically removed is one of the main reasons to fight for environmental justice. Because a location is geographically removed from the main population does not make it right to heap environmental damage in those areas. Additionally, geographically removed locations mean that media outlets are less likely to retain a steady news presence at the location. According to Herman and Chomsky (1988, 18–19), "Economics dictates that they [mass media] concentrate their resources where significant news often occurs, where important rumors and leaks abound, and where regular press conferences are held."

In addition to isolated locations, Baylor (1996) argued that the dominant news media oftentimes does not cover important events if those events do not fit into the frames being utilized. In 1974, a gathering of

several thousand activists and leaders occurred on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation and was called an “International Treaty Convention” to examine the sovereignty status of American Indians based on treaty rights. Baylor argued that the three major television networks failed to cover this important convention because the meeting’s purpose did not fit any of the five dominant frames the media was using to interpret and understand American Indian events of the time (1996, 8). According to Herman and Chomsky’s (1988) theory of the mass media as a propaganda machine, it could be argued that major outlets waited so long to cover the Standing Rock protest because there were other more prominent and profitable stories to fill the headlines and garner ratings—such as the 2016 presidential election. It could also be argued that major news outlets were reluctant to cover the current Standing Rock protests as the dominant view from the media focuses on the importance of oil for the country’s economy.

Dakota Access Pipeline: Altering the Narrative through Social Media

The issues Baylor uncovered in his examination of mainstream media coverage during the 1960s and 1970s are the same issues that plague American Indian media coverage today. Today’s mainstream media continues to frame events using dominant frames that can minimize the message American Indians are trying to communicate through their protests. Social media allows minority groups an avenue through which they can rebuke, alter, or control the dominant media narrative.

Desiree Kane, who acted as a Standing Rock media coordinator, said of the Standing Rock movement, “Part of what makes this historic is that one of the weapons we have now is our own cameras and our own internet connections to tell our own narratives and stories without having to bow to traditional media outlets that maybe aren’t friendly to the cause” (Roberts 2016). Utilizing their own technology and the power of social media, American Indians and their supporters are able to create their own frame through which the public at large can interpret their issues. “E-mail, television, radio, and print have long managed to open up windows into the experience of social movements, but the dialogicality and temporality of Twitter creates a unique feeling of direct participation” (Bonilla and Rosa 2015, 7).

A pivotal event that occurred during the pipeline protests illustrates the power of social media and its ability to change public perception. On November 20, 2016, water protectors at Standing Rock were sprayed with water cannons in below-freezing temperatures by the North Dakota State Police and the Morton County Sheriff’s Department. Initially, the Morton County Sheriff’s Department released a statement that water cannons were being used to put out fires and to control the rioting of the protestors (Barajas 2016). Videos from the scene quickly emerged on social media

to rebuke that assertion; the sheriff's department updated their statement to reflect that the water cannons were being used as a crowd control mechanism. Without access to social media platforms, citizens across the country and world would not have had access to those first-hand accounts that changed the tone of the protests and the perception of the police response.

Social media has provided the public avenues for direct participation with live streams, real-time tweets and postings, hashtag campaigns, and virtual petitions as various ways to feel involved and engaged with the movement. There is a real-time engagement and immediacy inherent in social media that allows users to observe, react, and interact with people from all geographic areas.

An integral component in the success of the #NoDAPL social media movement has been the utilization of Facebook. Water protectors on-site at Standing Rock took advantage of the immediacy of social media and used Facebook to post real-time videos, photos, and first-person accounts and updates of the events occurring throughout the protests. The sheer number of online Facebook participants speaks to the power of social media to spread the word about a movement to the public at large. The Standing Rock Indian Reservation Facebook page has over 1.7 million visitors to the site (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Standing-Rock-Indian-Reservation/109268902425837>).

In October 2016, a call for assistance was posted to Facebook claiming that the Morton County Sheriff's Department was using Facebook as a way to conduct surveillance and monitor the movements of camp protestors. The call asked for individuals to "check-in" at Standing Rock as a tool to deter the supposed surveillance efforts of the sheriff's department. Over 1.5 million people worldwide answered the call in a show of solidarity with the movement (Kennedy 2016). The Morton County Sheriff's Department denied the claims that they were surveilling any of the camp protestors and the attempt at "checking-in" to thwart any type of surveillance effort was debunked as ineffective. The over 1.5 million people who "checked-in" demonstrated solidarity and support of the movement and chose to make their voices heard. The large numbers of people who participated highlights the ability of social media to reach large numbers of people and elicit action.

Another example of the power of Facebook to galvanize large numbers of individuals to participate in a movement can be demonstrated through Veterans for Standing Rock. Two thousand veterans answered the call to show solidarity with the #NoDAPL water protectors and traveled to Standing Rock to participate in this movement. The support of veterans was overwhelming, but should not be surprising. According to statistics, "American Indians serve in their country's armed forces in greater numbers per capita than any other ethnic group, and they have served with

distinction in every major conflict for over 200 years” (Gover 2015). The Veterans for Standing Rock GoFundMe campaign raised over \$1.1 million with over 26,000 contributors to the campaign (Cichy 2016). The Morton County Sheriff’s Department weighed in on the 2,000 veterans flooding the camp and attempted to discredit the veteran support and presence at Standing Rock. During a December 5, 2016, press conference, Sheriff Paul D. Laney stated, “An element within the protest movement wants to exploit veterans with PTSD, arm them, try to trigger their PTSD and turn them aggressive” (Sainato and Skojec, 2016). The assertion that water protectors were attempting to exploit veterans was an absurd notion that did not help the image of the sheriff’s department and was quickly spread over social media.

Engaging individuals on social media can be done through the creation and sharing of memes. The #NoDAPL Archive (<http://www.nodaplarchive.com/>) is a site that aims to capture all of the online content being created and shared over the internet through various social media channels. An interesting section of the #NoDAPL Archive is the meme section that attempts to archive all memes utilized to bring awareness to the resistance efforts of the Standing Rock water protectors. Through the examination of various memes, important messages of the resistance movement are articulated.

Memes have the ability to make powerful connections through visual representations. For example, two such memes, which circulated across various social media platforms, make visual connections between the brutality faced by civil rights activists in the 1960s and the methods of intimidation and brutality used to counter nonviolent protests in 2016 at Standing Rock.² Both movements hinged upon the same demand for equal treatment and rights regardless of race or ethnicity, and both pursued a nonviolent direct-action method to advocate for their rights. While the majority of society believes that brutality against individuals fighting for equality ended when civil rights were granted, the images of dogs and water hoses being used against nonviolent protestors proves that society’s response to change and resistance has not evolved.

Memes were also employed to show how the struggle American Indians faced during colonialism is similar to the struggles they still face today. The historic image of an American Indian with a modern gas mask on his face shows the juxtaposition between history and the modern world.³ While the methods used to attack American Indians have evolved from disease to forms of modern weaponry as the meme suggests, the battle continues over the same issues that remain at the heart of indigenous struggles. The struggle for self-determination and environmental, cultural, and land rights all still exist in our modern world.

Throughout the entire #NoDAPL movement, both water protectors and supporters of the pipeline have each utilized social media as a way

to share news of the unfolding events. Throughout the process, however, each side has accused the other of promoting and disseminating false information. Many supporters of the #NoDAPL movement have berated major news outlets, such as CNN, for simply parroting statements released by the Morton County Sheriff's Department without independent verification of facts.⁴

Another power aspect of social media is its ability to elicit direct action from those who would otherwise not participate in a movement. News coverage of the #NoDAPL movement cites numerous individuals who were inspired to participate physically in the protests after viewing Facebook Live videos of the events unfolding at Standing Rock. One such example quotes an individual who viewed Facebook Live feeds of the protests and was motivated to participate. The ex-police officer said, "I decided to come and support after watching video footage online that I believe clearly demonstrates unlawful use of force. I've watched the videos of people being shot in the face with plastic bullets, struck in the head with riot batons, and the use of untrained police dogs. The abuses are many. I hope more police officers will come and stand with us" (Whittle 2016).

Social media's ability to influence individuals to participate in direct action measures can also be verified through the monetary results of the over 1,200 GoFundMe campaigns dedicated to Standing Rock and the #NoDAPL movement. In just over eight months, these crowdfunding campaigns raised a staggering amount of money—over \$7.8 million. Donations to the campaigns were received from all fifty states and ninety-five countries. The second largest GoFundMe campaign *ever* is the official Sacred Stone Camp campaign that has alone raised almost three million dollars (Cichy 2016). This monetary success is a tangible result of how social media campaigns can be effective catalysts to inspire individuals to participate in direct-action movements. Around 22 percent, or one in five, of American adults have contributed to a crowdsourced online fundraising project (Smith 2016, 43). The ability to provide monetary donations or to contribute in some other form, together with the belief that those contributions will have a direct and positive impact on the success of the movement, enables those contributors to feel connected to the movement. A survey of crowdfunding donors shows that 87 percent of donors believe these platforms help contributors feel connected to the projects they are supporting, and 84 percent believe these platforms serve as a positive mechanism to highlight causes that could not get much attention otherwise (Smith 2016, 48).

On November 15, 2016, the #NoDAPL Day of Action occurred during which three hundred solidarity events occurred in all fifty states, drawing tens of thousands of demonstrators. The #NoDAPL Day of Action also went global with dozens of cities, including London, Paris, Auckland,

Kyoto, and Marrakesh, demonstrating their support of the movement. Greenpeace reported that along with the physical display of support on the Day of Action, 7,000 individuals also called the White House to express their support of the movement and call a halt to the pipeline construction (Schleeter 2016). The physical mobilization of supporters across the country and the world who participated in the #NoDAPL Day of Action demonstrates the power of social media to elicit direct participation and empower movements in ways that were previously impossible.

Further highlighting the power of social media is the response of the Morton County Sheriff's Department and the Governor of North Dakota, Jack Dalrymple. Both entities have spoken out against the social media representations posted by Standing Rock protestors and supporters. In an effort to combat and compete with the social media power exhibited by the #NoDAPL movement, the Morton County Sheriff's Department created YouTube videos highlighting their side of the story in Standing Rock, police actions, in an effort to refute the representation of law enforcement portrayed by water protectors (see fig. 1). The very fact that the sheriff's department deemed it necessary to produce a propaganda video series dedicated to highlighting their side of events and debunking social media reports demonstrates how much the department was affected by social media and the negative response they received. Sheriff Kirchmeier said of the videos, "These are short narratives that will tell you the real story of what's occurring in our community" (Rohlfing 2016).

North Dakota's Governor Dalrymple even weighed in on the power of social media and its effects regarding the Standing Rock movement. Quoted in the *Inforum*, "'There's a new paradigm,' he [Governor Dalrymple] said, referring to the influence of social media in molding public opinion. 'I try to do what I can, but I'm no match for that organization. That's a long-term challenge. That may be going on well after the pipeline is laid'" (Springer 2016).

Ultimately, the pressure put on government officials through social media and the outcry of constituents caused the U.S. Army Corps to postpone the completion of the pipeline pending further investigation. Governor Dalrymple said of the decision to postpone the pipeline pending additional study, "This truly tramples on a legal and orderly process in favor of mob rule. If we allow these tactics to succeed, we will only encourage those who have chosen illegal means over the rule of law to achieve their goals" (Dalrymple 2016).

Dalrymple claimed that environmental activists used "a massive social media machine to drive misinformation about the pipeline and protests" (Dalrymple 2016). The Governor also attacked Energy Transfer Partners and said that the company "abdicated completely their responsibility to explain the safety of the pipeline" (Springer 2016). The governor's com-



Figure 1. This is a screenshot of the Morton County Sheriff Department's YouTube video series titled "Know the Truth." Credit: Morton County North Dakota YouTube Account.

ments regarding Energy Transfer Partners came at the beginning of December 2016. By December 25, 2016, Energy Transfer Partners had completely revamped the web presence of their DAPL site.

The DAPL site, as it appeared prior to its revision at the end of December, was visually very sparse and did not heavily tout the pipeline's benefits and safety measures. There was a small attempt to debunk the claims circulating regarding the history of the pipeline. Overall, the site was not an especially engaging attempt to relay information that could convince visitors looking for information concerning the positive effect of the pipeline and whether it followed all the appropriate legal channels for its construction.

After being criticized by the governor of North Dakota, Energy Transfer Partners eventually revamped the DAPL website (<http://daplpipelinefacts.com/>).⁵ The new site now boasts a more visual presence in an effort to quickly convey information to visitors. Information on the legality of the pipeline and its safety are highlighted. Additionally, a misconceptions

section now exists to combat the common ideas held by protestors of the pipeline. A news and opinion section has been added, along with a message of support from the new North Dakota Governor, Doug Burgum. This redesigned site could be viewed as an attempt by Energy Transfer Partners to combat the negative press received from the prior governor, as well as those opposed to the pipeline.

The abundance of information that is created and communicated on social media platforms can be daunting and difficult to verify. Fortunately, individuals are not alone in their pursuit of internet and information access, since tools are available—such as through libraries and community centers—to assist in educating themselves about social and political issues that arise on social media.

SUPPORT OF LIBRARIES IN A HYPERCONNECTED SOCIETY

The role of libraries within hyperconnected societies is one that needs continued examination and attention so that libraries can most effectively serve as front-line responders in times of crisis within the communities they reach. The American Library Association (ALA) firmly believes in the power of libraries to serve as community first responders during times of division and unrest.

The American Library Association (2016) Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services created Libraries Respond in response to the contentious and divisive 2016 presidential election as a “space for us to help keep current events in conversation with libraries’ ongoing work in and commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. This page will be a resource for the library community to share information, find resources, and connect as they serve their communities.” ALA’s Libraries Respond has its own hashtag, #librariesrespond, which librarians can use to discuss current issues on social media. ALA’s Office of Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services also created a blog titled *Intersections* that “highlights the work of library and information science workers as they create safe, responsible, and all-inclusive spaces that serve and represent the entire community, as well as initiatives and projects supported by the office that promotes their work” (n.d.). ALA recognizes the importance of having a voice within the social media environment and through these initiatives is encouraging all librarians to advocate and discuss issues via social media platforms.

While the national association for libraries has taken an active role in providing information and avenues to discuss topics through their specific forums, it is important that individual libraries across the country recognize the importance of providing comprehensive information in the face of divisive events. After all, a few tenets of librarianship that form the core values of the profession include access, freedom of information, intellectual freedom, social responsibility, and the public good.

Libraries serve as information advocates that can educate community members on how to engage in their civic rights and responsibilities and have a voice in their community and their government. Libraries empower individuals through sharing the knowledge and skills necessary to be an informed and engaged member of society and aim to inform and engage community members in a variety of ways.

Some libraries took action to engage and inform through the creation of LibGuides. One example that circulated online was created by Sarah Kostelecky, a member of the Zuni Pueblo tribe, at the University of New Mexico. The LibGuide provides information on the Dakota Access Pipeline from the Native American perspective (University of New Mexico Libraries 2017). Kostelecky wrote a blog on ALA's *Intersections* in which she mentions her social media connections as valuable tools to use to locate information when it is not being covered via mainstream media (2016). Kostelecky also wrote, "Creating this guide provided an opportunity to connect to underserved library patrons by emphasizing a current event and sharing relevant information that was not readily available. The guide is an example of one way librarians can support other underserved communities by recognizing issues affecting them and providing space for those unheard voices to be acknowledged" (2016).

Libraries across the country have also hosted teach-ins and other types of programs to inform and engage their communities where participants can listen to experts speak on various issues associated with the pipeline controversy and discuss those issues with fellow participants. Examples of programming include the University of Kansas Standing Rock Teach-Ins (University of Kansas 2016) and the Skokie Public Library's Civic Lab: Let's Talk about Standing Rock (Skokie Public Library 2016).

Even in the midst of massive crowdfunding efforts to support various aspects of the #NoDAPL movement, libraries and their importance did not go unnoticed. One GoFundMe campaign, Taking the Library to Standing Rock, aimed to raise money to purchase children's books to support the home-schooled children staying at the camps (<https://www.gofundme.com/librarytostandingrock>).

Through the sharing of resources, libraries become a community safe haven that provides access to all available resources on a given topic. In a hyperconnected society, it is important to have an unbiased information hub where citizens can seek out information to learn more about the things they see and read about on social media. Open, unbiased, and freely accessible resources found within libraries are integral to the ability of individuals to filter through and make sense of the barrage of information obtained via social media. Libraries are important information advocates that provide tools for citizens to make sense of the new hyperconnected and information-saturated environment of today.

CONCLUSION

On September 9, 2016, a joint statement from the Department of Justice, Department of the Army, and the Department of the Interior was released that issued a call to halt construction on the pipeline bordering or under Lake Oahe until further examination. The closing of the joint statement recognized the nonviolent historic gathering. “In recent days, we have seen thousands of demonstrators come together peacefully, with support from scores of sovereign tribal governments, to exercise their First Amendment rights and to voice heartfelt concerns about the environment and historic, sacred sites. It is now incumbent on all of us to develop a path forward that serves the broadest public interest” (Department of Justice, 2016).

According to American Indians, the path forward that serves the broadest public interest should maintain the integrity of the environment. There is an American Indian prophecy that foretells of a black snake consuming the land and destroying the earth in the pursuit of natural resources for industry and profit. The #NoDAPL movement and its historic gathering of indigenous people is an effort to stop this prophetic tale of environmental destruction in order to preserve the Earth and its natural resources for all future generations.

Chief Arvol Looking Horse, the nineteenth-generation Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe, wrote an opinion piece published in August 2016. In this piece, he pleads for society to consider and understand the Indigenous viewpoint on what has occurred to the environment in America. He gives various examples of environmental destruction and encourages society to look beyond traditional forms of energy in order to stop future damage. Chief Looking Horse states,

There needs to be a fast move toward other forms of energy that are safe for all nations upon Mother Earth. We need to understand the types of minds that are continuing to destroy the spirit of our global community. Unless we do this, the powers of destruction will overwhelm us.

Our Ancestors foretold that water would someday be for sale. Back then this was hard to believe, since the water was so plentiful, so pure, and so full of energy, nutrition, and spirit. Today we have to buy pure water, and even then the nutritional minerals have been taken out; it’s just empty liquid. Someday water will be like gold, too expensive to afford.

Not everyone will have the right to drink safe water. We fail to appreciate and honor our Sacred Sites, ripping out the minerals and gifts that lay underneath them as if Mother Earth were simply a resource, instead of the source of life itself. (Looking Horse, 2016)

Chief Looking Horse goes on to discuss the prophecies of American Indians, much like the prophecy of the Black Snake, and relates them to the current events unfolding at DAPL. He writes,

In our prophecies it is told that we are now at the crossroads; Either unite spiritually as a global nation, or be faced with chaos, disasters, diseases, and tears from our relatives' eyes.

We are the only species that is destroying the source of life, meaning Mother Earth, in the name of power, mineral resources, and ownership of land. Using chemicals and methods of warfare that are doing irreversible damage, as Mother Earth is becoming tired and cannot sustain any more impacts of war.

I ask you to join me on this endeavor. Our vision is for the peoples of all continents, regardless of their beliefs in the Creator, to come together as one at their Sacred Sites to pray and meditate and commune with one another, thus promoting an energy shift to heal our Mother Earth and achieve a universal consciousness toward attaining Peace. (Looking Horse, 2016)

Chief Looking Horse is articulating a global call for individuals to realize the importance of the environment and to hold themselves accountable for what happens, regardless of their belief systems. He is arguing that the American Indian belief in the sacredness of the environment and the necessity of its protection for current and future generations is a universal good that will benefit all people, regardless of belief systems. The utilization of social media to reach a worldwide audience and bring attention to the issues of environment, energy, and tribal sovereignty inherent in the struggle occurring at Standing Rock has had a powerful impact. This movement, in tandem with its social media component, has been able to stop, albeit temporarily, the construction of the pipeline near the tribe's sacred sites and vital water supply. The struggle of American Indians to protect their land, water, and sovereignty is a struggle that has never ceased. The visibility of the struggle faced today becomes amplified through a hyperconnected society that provides multiple avenues to get first-person accounts out to the world to shape the conversation surrounding the movement.

The battle at Standing Rock is far from over. It remains to be seen how this momentous movement and its effects will determine the fate of the pipeline. What cannot be denied, however, is the effect of the #NoDAPL social media juggernaut and its ability to reframe mass media representations and alter the conversation surrounding the American Indian struggle for sovereignty, cultural protection, and environmental justice.

NOTES

1. While this article focuses on the events occurring at Standing Rock, the Oglala Sioux reservation, the indigenous participants involved in this historic movement have various tribal affiliations. Because of the numerous tribes participating in this movement, I am unable to refer to specific tribal affiliations, as would be the preference of many indigenous people. I have chosen to refer to indigenous peoples as "American Indians." In 1995, the U.S. Census Bureau conducted a survey (the last survey of this type done) of indigenous Americans to gauge their preferences for names. The survey found that 49% of respondents preferred the term "Indian" and 37% preferred "Native American." The remaining

percentage chose “some other name” or expressed no preference. Oglala Sioux activist, Russell Means, stated, “I prefer the term American Indian because I know its origins . . . As an added distinction the American Indian is the only ethnic group in the United States with the American before our ethnicity.”

2. The two memes can be located at www.memes4bernie.com/gallery/albums/nodapl/page/27 (the 17th image on the page); and www.memes4bernie.com/gallery/albums/nodapl/page/29/ (image 7267).
3. See www.memes4bernie.com/gallery/albums/nodapl/page/28/ (image 7319).
4. See www.memes4bernie.com/gallery/albums/nodapl/page/30/ (image 7225).
5. For comparison, the older version of the website can be found at <https://web.archive.org/web/20161208183936/https://dapipelinefacts.com/>.

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