Using Facebook differently in two education policy protests

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Abstract

Purpose. Scholars have identified various uses of Facebook by activists and social movements in political activism and beyond. They overlooked, however, the possibility that social movements may take advantage of certain capabilities provided by social media platforms, while neglecting others, thereby creating differences in patterns of use between movements. This article aims to investigate these differences and to assess the role of the lived experience of activists and supporters in shaping them.

Design/methodology/approach. The study compared two protests in Israel with respect to (a) activists' use of social media, (b) the class profile of participants, and (c) the leadership's demands and their resonance among various social groups. Each case was analyzed by combining thematic and quantitative analysis of online data from Facebook pages and of offline data from various sources.

Findings. The two protests exhibited distinctively different patterns of use of the capabilities provided by Facebook. These differences are associated with the lived experience of protest participants and of the individuals the movement leadership sought to mobilize.

Originality/value. The study is the first to show that successful public policy protests can exhibit distinctive use patterns of social media for political activism. It also identifies lived experience as an important factor in shaping these patterns.

Keywords. education policy, online political activism, middle class, mobilization, social media, social movements

1. Introduction

The rapid spread of social media had made non-institutionalized political participation highly accessible and easy. Consequently, social media has become a common tool in the hands of citizens trying to influence policy and politics (Bennett and Segerberg, 2015; Noveck, 2009; Shirky, 2011). Social media has been defined as "a specific set of internet-based networked communication platforms [that] enable the convergence of public and personal communication" (Meikle, 2016, p. x). Scholars have identified various ways in which activists and social movements use social media in political activism, with Facebook receiving the most attention (e.g., Fung *et al.*, 2013; Mercea, 2013; Valenzuela, 2013; Van Laer, 2010). These studies, however, did not pay sufficient attention to the possibility that social movements may take advantage of certain capabilities provided by platforms such as Facebook, while neglecting other capabilities, thereby creating differences in patterns of use between movements.[1] By contrast, the present study argues that social movements exhibit different patterns of using Facebook, both by leadership and activists. The study also shows that these patterns may originate from the lived experience of protest participants and of the individuals the movement leadership seeks to mobilize. Lived experience is understood as the status of individuals and groups in society, and of changes in that status, as shaped by socio-political and socioeconomic processes.

The study compares two recent successful protests in Israel: the Strollers Protest, in 2011, and the Sardines Protest, in 2014. The two cases are well-suited for this study because they shared three important, yet trivial, characteristics, which may affect the ways in which activists use Facebook in the course of a protest. First, the

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[1] Following Tarrow (2011), we understand social movements as well-structured social networks, "galvanized by culturally resonant, action-oriented symbols," that can conduct "sustained interaction with opponents" (Tarrow, 2011, p. 6).

protests were conducted in the same policy domain: public education. Second, both were led by parents, mainly women, and sought to mobilize parents. Third, both were e-mobilizations (Earl and Kimport, 2011), that is, they had an initial online phase in which the protest was conducted exclusively on Facebook, followed by a longer phase, in which online and offline activities were combined.

We posed three research questions that stem from our interest in the use of social media and the lived experience of (potential) participants:

- What were the demands raised by the protest leadership and how did they resonate with the lived experience of certain groups in Israeli society?

- What was the class profile of participants in the protest?

- How did the leadership and activists use social media?

We used both quantitative and thematic analyses to answer these questions. Most of the data for the study were mined from the official Facebook pages of the two protests, and supported by complementary data from other sources.
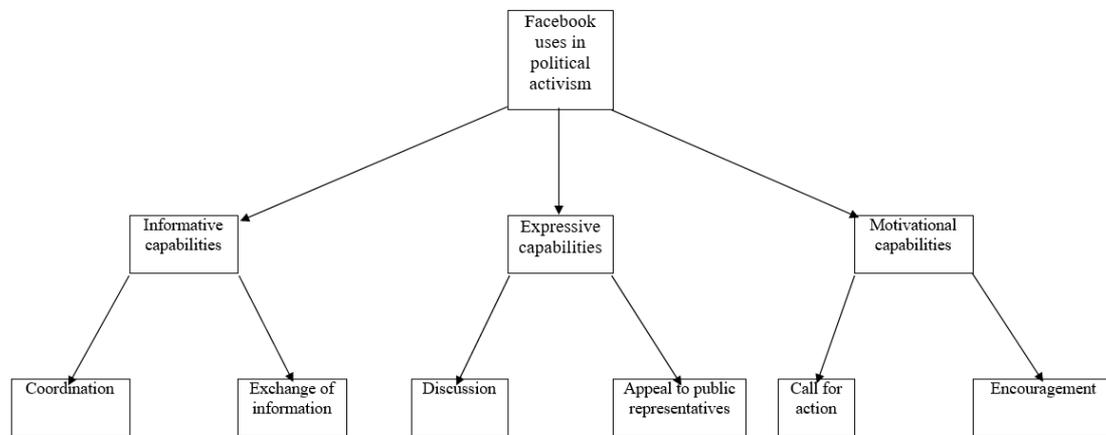
The research makes two important theoretical and empirical contributions to the emergence and working of e-mobilizations: (a) it offers a new taxonomy of Facebook uses in political activism, which guides the present research, and (b) it points at the lived experience of individuals as an important factor shaping use patterns of social media by social movements during periods of contention. More broadly, it improves our understanding of government-citizen relations in light of the increasing social and political importance of social media.

2. Social media uses in political activism

Scholars have identified and described a variety of capabilities that online platforms provide for political action. Previous taxonomies of online capabilities have either

become outdated, having been developed before the advent of social media (e.g., Denning, 2000; Vegh, 2003), or addressed the uses of social media in politics in general (e.g., Bimber, 2017; Fung *et al.*, 2013) rather than in political activism. Social media capabilities in political activism have not been conceptualized as an ordered taxonomy. For the focus of our research—social media in political activism—we suggest a three-class taxonomy based on the discursive function emphasized: informative, expressive, and motivational. Informative capabilities are those that allow easy sharing and distribution of information, which is important for facilitating collective action (e.g., Tufekci and Freelon, 2013; Valenzuela, 2013). Expressive capabilities allow the articulation of views in a public domain that can reach those for whom these views may be of interest (e.g., Fung *et al.*, 2013; Valenzuela, 2013). Motivational capabilities allow using social media to encourage activists to remain active. This helps diffuse one of the main problems of social media-based activism, which is the low commitment by supporters, which undermines continued activity of the social movement (e.g., Harlow, 2012; Mercea, 2013). Based on previous research, each of these three classes can be subdivided into two, resulting in six types of capabilities that social media provides to individuals, activists, and social movements in political activism: coordination, exchange of information, discussion, appeal to public representatives, call for action, and encouragement (Figure 1).

We focus our discussion on Facebook for two reasons. First, Facebook is considered more popular than Twitter, the other social media platform with widespread global reach (Vasi and Suh, 2016). Second, Facebook provides a wider range of capabilities than Twitter does, particularly interactive ones (Mercea, 2013).

Figure 1. Taxonomy of Facebook uses in political activism.

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                              ┌──────────────┐
                              │  Facebook    │
                              │  uses in     │
                              │  political   │
                              │  activism    │
                              └──────────────┘
             ┌───────────────────────┼────────────────────────┐
    ┌─────────────┐          ┌─────────────┐          ┌─────────────┐
    │ Informative │          │ Expressive  │          │ Motivational│
    │ capabilities│          │ capabilities│          │ capabilities│
    └─────────────┘          └─────────────┘          └─────────────┘
      ┌──────┴──────┐          ┌──────┴──────┐          ┌──────┴──────┐
 ┌────────┐  ┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
 │Coordi- │  │Exchange  │  │Discussion│ │Appeal to │ │Call for│ │Encouragement │
 │nation  │  │of        │  │          │ │public    │ │action  │ │              │
 │        │  │information│ │          │ │represent.│ │        │ │              │
 └────────┘  └──────────┘  └──────────┘ └──────────┘ └────────┘ └──────────────┘
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Coordination refers to the tools provided for the leadership to organize the activity of the movement (Bennett and Segerberg, 2015; Valenzuela, 2013; Van Laer, 2010). It can involve distribution of activity schedules, keeping in touch with the various groups and segments of the movement, and enquiring about their activities and experiences (Warren *et al.*, 2014). This is particularly important in the case of grassroots movements, where the accessibility and low cost of these tools helps overcome the rather fluid structure of the movement (Valenzuela, 2013).

Exchange of information refers to means by which activists and supporters of the movements can gain information about the actions being taken. Social media platforms, and Facebook in particular, allow information collection and dissemination by all members of the mobilized group, unlike previous Internet platforms that were more accommodating to top-down flows of information, and where horizontal flows were more difficult (Bennett and Segerberg, 2015; Fung *et al.*, 2013; Valenzuela, 2013; Vegh, 2003). This type of capability makes it possible for activists and supporters to request information about protest activities and to respond to requests by others (Mercea, 2013).

Social media also provides a platform for discussions within the mobilized group (Fung *et al.*, 2013; Mercea, 2013; Valenzuela, 2013; Warren *et al.*, 2014). It creates an easy channel for the leadership to publicize the demands, ideas, and principles that guide the movement. Such publication is likely to trigger responses from supporters and outsiders. Discussions may also be triggered by interventions of the activists themselves, and can include exchanges of ideas, comments on real-world developments related to the mobilization, and debates on relevant issues. Mercea (2013) has found that these discussions are not likely to affect the goals of the movement, however.

The popularity of social media with both individuals and with the traditional media has attracted politicians as well (Larsson and Kalsnes, 2014). Public representatives have opened Facebook and Twitter accounts, which they use to make public statements (Graham *et al.*, 2016), and have come to rely on these platforms to track the mood of the public. Although they are not necessarily influenced by the opinions that citizens express, politicians are attentive and sensitive to these opinions. Therefore, expression of opinions can produce another expressive capability: exerting pressure on politicians by directly appealing to them.

Another capability is calling on others to take action (Mercea, 2013; Van Laer, 2010; Vegh, 2003). This may come in the form of persuading others to take part in offline activities, such as demonstrations and lobbying of public representatives, and in online activities such as posting an image on their personal Facebook page or uploading their picture with some banner.

Finally, actors can provide emotional encouragement through social media. Emotions have been identified as an important factor underlying social movement action, and scholars of social media activism have lately integrated them into their

analyses (Gerbaudo, 2012; Harlow, 2012; Warren *et al.*, 2014). Emotional support

messages may have "thick" objectives of constructing a shared identity and emotional

bonds between people who have never met face-to-face, or "thinner" objectives, such

as keeping up the spirit of the movement and preserving its vitality, e.g., by

"prais[ing] past, on-going or forthcoming actions" (Mercea, 2013, p. 1313).

Viewed collectively, these types of capabilities (and possibly others that will

be identified in the future) provide tools that social movements and individual

activists *can* use. Nevertheless, this inventory is not sufficient for understanding

which capabilities movements and activists use *in practice*. The issue of why do

activists use some types of capabilities more than others has not received focused

attention in the literature. A good starting point for answering these questions is

Theocharis and Lowe's (2016) appeal to scholars interested in the relations between

social media and society to take "contextual factors into greater consideration" (p.

1481).

In relation to the use of social media in political activism, this call echoes a

similar appeal by Walder (2009) to scholars of social movements to introduce social

circumstances as a central factor in the analysis of the rise and activity of social

movements. Although Walder's main concern was with the political orientation of

social movements, his discussion emphasized two important questions: why certain

people or groups join social movements (Bimber, 2017) and why these movements

develop certain demands. He suggested that answers can be found in the lived

experience of potential participants, as shaped by social circumstances, and in the

ability of movements (or movement leaderships) to present their demands so that they

resonate with this experience. This view is shared by prominent analysts emphasizing

the role of collective action frames in the study of social movements. Benford and

Snow (2000, p. 621) argued that for a collective action frame to stand out with a particular audience, it must resonate with their "personal, everyday experience." In the following analysis we seek to link lived experience, demands and their resonance, and participation in protest with how activists and social movements use the capabilities offered by the Facebook platform for the purposes of political activism.

3. Case description

Both protests took place against a background of profound change in Israeli political economy and education system since the mid-1980s. At that time, Israel embarked on a gradual but consistent turn toward neoliberalism, which involved significant cuts in government expenditure, market liberalization, privatization of state assets, and changes in the provision of social services, partly by increasing the influence of private initiative and the share of private funding (Filc and Ram, 2004). The education system, which until then was centralized and tightly controlled by the Ministry of Education (Berkovich, 2014), was infused with neoliberal policy ideas of decentralization, accountability, and competition, which were deemed necessary by policymakers even at the cost of increasing inequality (Ichilov, 2009). As these ideas became policy, private spending on education began to rise (Berkovich, 2014; Ichilov, 2009). Concomitantly, the opportunities created by neoliberal reforms allowed affluent parents to become "intrapreneurs" (Yemini *et al.*, 2016) and introduce private funding into the public education system.

Despite its profound effects, the neoliberal transition produced relatively low levels of public reaction. Israel is an "enlisted society," and issues of national security have traditionally been at the center of public debate and political concern, sidelining many other conflictual issues, including socioeconomic ones (Moore, 2011).

Additionally, protest orientation in Israeli civil society remained low at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century (Yishai, 2003). A change in this tendency paralleled the massive expansion of Internet connectivity.

The Internet became a widely used media and communication resource during the first decade of the 21st century, with the percentage of connected Israelis rising sharply from 27.9% in 2006 to 59.4% in 2008 (Israel Internet Association, 2011).[2] The rise of the Internet opened new avenues for engagement with public and political issues. A prominent example is a public teachers' strike in 2007, in which teachers used weblogs and partisan school websites to mobilize the public against government reform plans (Berkovich, 2011). Facebook also became an important platform for launching online and offline protest activities during the Israeli "Social Protest," which broke in July 2011 (Avigur-Eshel, 2014), inspired by the worldwide wave of protest that year (Halvorsen, 2012).

3.1 The Strollers protest

Large segments of the Israeli middle and working classes suffered real income stagnation in the first decade of the 21st century, and one of the hardest-hit groups was that of young families (Shalev, 2012). As demonstrations of the Social Protest grew in size and geographic extent, four middle-class mothers of young children from Tel-Aviv decided to take advantage of the contentious mood in the public sphere and initiated a protest against the living conditions of young families, particularly young mothers. The Strollers Protest focused on the huge costs for parents of bringing up children in Israel, referring to it as "a second mortgage" (Lior *et al.*, 2011). In late July of 2011, the initiative gained momentum rapidly on Facebook, and

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[2] These data include a social group of ultra-Orthodox Jews amounting to more than 10% of the population, who overwhelmingly tend not to connect to the Internet.

demonstrations were organized in various cities in a matter of days. The protest eventually led the government to formally adopt a public program for early childhood education, with state funding and regulation (Basok *et al.*, 2012).

3.2 The Sardines protest

In 2008, the government decided to limit the number of students in classrooms to 32, but did not allocate sufficient funds to implement the decision. The Ministry of Education then tacitly agreed that municipalities use local funding to reduce the number of students in classrooms by creating "non-standard" classes, i.e., splitting the existing ones. The non-standard class arrangement benefitted mostly richer municipalities that could allocate funds for this goal. In early 2014, the Ministry of Education decided to prohibit non-standard classes as of the next school year. One of the richer municipalities (Hod HaSharon) appealed to the High Court of Justice against this decision but was turned down. On May16, three mothers from the middle-class city of Holon created a new Facebook group named The Struggle for Reducing Class Density. After a purely online phase, in which the protest gained momentum and popularity, it became an online-offline protest in mid-June. The term "sardines" was successfully used by protesters to convey the conditions of students if non-standard classes were eliminated and 40-student classes established. The protest eventually caused the government to renounce its intention to prohibit the creation of non-standard classes (Dattel, 2014).

4. Research methodology

4.1 Research design

The study used a comparative case study approach, involving an in-depth systematic investigation of two or more sets of data points (Bartlett and Vavrus, 2016). Case study is a starting point for developing insights into under-theorized social phenomena (Yin, 1994), such as the use of social media for political activism.

4.2 Data collection

Data collection focused on the first week of each protest. Prior research on offline social movements suggests that the first week of protest is critical because this is when the activists' commitment to the protest is formed. During the first week, undecided and uninvolved individuals choose whether to join or abstain (Dixon and Roscigno, 2003). Unlike those who joined during the pre-protest phase, first week participants are not naive about the focus of the protest and the scope of possible counter-reactions (Gamson, 1991). The first week is therefore a crucial period for the construction of social movements as protesting entities (Gamson, 1991). The Strollers data were collected between 27 July and 2 August, 2011. The Sardines data were collected between 20-27 June, 2014, excluding one day (21 June), in which there was no online activity. In both cases, the first week was marked by combined online and offline activity.

We used both primary and secondary sources to collect the data, which enabled multisource triangulation (Thurmond, 2001). The main sources were the official Facebook pages of the two protests. In total, we found 62 posts, 571 comments, and 11,213 likes. First, we counted the number of comments and likes during each day of the first week of online-offline activity, and downloaded the

contents of posts and comments. Second, to account for protest demands, we retrieved

the lists of demands as published in posts on the official Facebook page of each

protest. Third, because modes of protest that fully integrate online and offline

components are becoming a common feature of social movements today (Harlow,

2012; Warren *et al.*, 2014), we documented the locations of the demonstrations noted

in posts and comments. These data were supplemented by data extracted from press

reports and Knesset (Israeli parliament) protocols, two sources that allowed us to

triangulate the online information on protest demands and demonstrations, and from

the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS).

4.2 Data analysis

First, we used quantitative and thematic analyses to analyze posts, comments, and

likes. We used quantitative analysis to compare trends in comments and likes.

Because the use of Facebook in Israel increased dramatically during the three years

separating the protests, we found the comparison of raw data unhelpful. Therefore,

following Kwok and Yu (2013), who advocated adjusting data to enable meaningful

comparison of online activity across cases, we normalized the data, using the first day

of the analyzed week in each case as the 100% baseline. We synchronized this day-

by-day analysis with protest-related real-life events (demonstrations in municipalities

and sessions of parliamentary committees concerning the protests). Analysis of this

type is considered informative and helpful in understating social media activism

(Veenstra *et al.*, 2014). Next, we accounted for the frequency of use of each type of

capability by the leadership and activists. To do so, we used the directed content

analysis approach, in which theory and early findings serve as initial schemes guiding

the analytical work (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Categorization of text items was

based on the taxonomy of capabilities that social media provides for social movements, presented earlier (Figure 1). Following categorization, we compared the share of each category in the Strollers protest with its share in the Sardines protest (both comments and posts), using a series of two sample t-tests between percentages.

Second, because our interest is in the resonance of protest demands with the lived experience of certain groups in Israeli society, we aspired to identify the audiences to which the demands appealed, according to their lived experience (Benford and Snow, 2000; Walder, 2009). For this purpose, we conducted theoretical sensitivity analysis on protest demands, an interpretive latent content analysis aimed at uncovering the subtler meanings of narratives through deeper understanding of the historical context in which they were produced (Ahuvia, 2011). In doing so, we took into consideration both long-term societal processes and recent socio-political events that shaped the lived experience of certain social groups and their demands.

Third, to identify the class profile of each protest, we listed the municipalities in which the demonstrations were held during the first week of combined online-offline protest. We then determined the socioeconomic positions of these municipalities using the CBS Socio-Economic Index, which ranks all 252 municipalities in Israel into ten clusters (1-poorest, 10-wealthiest) (CBS, 2013).

4.3. Reliability and rigor

We took several measures to ensure reliability and rigorous analyses. Directed content analysis of Facebook data was conducted separately by the two authors. Shortly after coding began, we held an inter-coder reliability check that included a quarter of the comments and about a quarter of posts. Krippendorff's alphas, calculated using a bootstrapping method (5000 samples; see Hayes and Krippendorff,

2007), ranged from acceptable (0.75) to good (0.86) (Krippendorff, 2004; see Table

I), indicating high inter-coder reliability.

Table I. Coding categories

Group and Type of capability	Definition	Example	Intercoder reliability (Krippendorff's alpha)
Informative capabilities			
Coordination	Communication between the central leadership and local leaders, with a clear organizational content.	'[the city of] Modiin, please contact us urgently in private, thanks'	0.79
Exchange of information	Exchange of information about the location and timing of rallies.	'Did [the demonstration] move to Thursday?'	0.86
Expressive capabilities			
Discussion	Comments on the protest goals and on real-world developments during the protest that do not concern organizing rallies.	'32 students per class is too much, we need to demand 25 similar to the OECD standard'	0.75
Appeal to public representatives	Comments on elected representatives' actions and statements, before and during the protest.	'The union head and his servants are part of the problem rather than part of the solution'	0.83
Motivational capabilities			
Call for action	Suggestions for action and urging to take specific action.	'I thought that before the summer vacation begins we should storm the Parliament with Strollers'	0.76
Encouragement	Praise of activists, moral support and information describing the achievements of the protest.	'It's a pleasure to see everyone gathering for the struggle'	0.83

We also used multisource triangulation to enhance rigor (Thurmond, 2001). Press reports assisted in verifying data extracted from Facebook. We could triangulate protest demands and locations of demonstrations, improving our analyses of demands and of class profile. When combined with data from Knesset meetings, press reports allowed us to triangulate real-world events noted on the Facebook pages. In this way, multisource triangulation provided support for internal validity and objectivity, increasing the credibility and confirmability of the case study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

5. Findings

We present the findings comparatively, ordered according to the topics of our three research questions: demands and their resonance, class profile of participants, and use of social media. The demands of the Strollers resonated with the recent lived experience of a broad audience, whereas those of the Sardines resonated with the experience of a relatively small group. The main demands of the Strollers, as published on Facebook, were:

- Expand the Compulsory Free Education Law to include children from the age of three months (at the time, it was from the age of five years);

- Institute price controls on basic baby products, such as breast milk substitutes and diapers;

- Expand the maternity leave and institutionalize the paternity leave.

These demands resonated with the lived experience of a large group of young families (and their supporting relatives), who had experienced declining real income in the years before the protest. Shalev (2012) found that most affected among this group were well-educated parents living in the Tel-Aviv metropolitan area, where jobs are

generally more abundant and income is higher. A focus on these middle-class parents appears in a post published on the official Strollers page early in the protest, where following a detailed description of demands, the leadership emphasized that "[t]he middle class… demands to be part of welfare [benefits]." Realization of the demands would lift a considerable economic burden off the shoulders of young families, by making the state bear part of that burden through the expansion of public services and intervention in the commodity and labor markets.

The Sardines had one essential demand: rescinding the decision to eliminate the non-standard class arrangement and establish 40-student classes. This demand resonated with the lived experience of a particular group that was directly affected by the decision of the Minister of Education: parents living in affluent municipalities. To increase resonance among the members of this group, one of the leadership's earliest calls published on Facebook defined those whom the protest concerned as: "You [plural] and us, parents against the decision of the Ministry of Education to break up the entire age group [in school] in order to create a new redistribution of 40-student classes." Clearly, parents and mayors from affluent municipalities were to be the beneficiaries of the abrogation of the ministerial decision because they would be able to resume the allocation of additional private and municipal funds to public schools, thus maintaining their ability to influence the conditions under which students are educated (i.e., fewer students per class), undermining the regulatory ability of the state.

The class profile of the two protests was also distinct because the Strollers were more heterogeneous than the Sardines (Figure 2). Municipalities in which Strollers' demonstrations were held were more evenly spread across CBS socioeconomic clusters than were municipalities in which Sardines' demonstrations

were held. Furthermore, Sardines' demonstrations had a stronger presence in upper-

middle-class municipalities. The virtual absence of protest in poor municipalities

(clusters 1-3 in the CBS index) can be explained by the fact that the overwhelming

majority of these municipalities are Arab or Druze. This ethno-national cleavage is a

central structural feature of Israeli society and politics, and neither protest was able to

overcome it (Shafir and Peled, 2002; Rosenhek and Shalev, 2014).

Figure 2. No. of protest locations by socio-economic clusters.
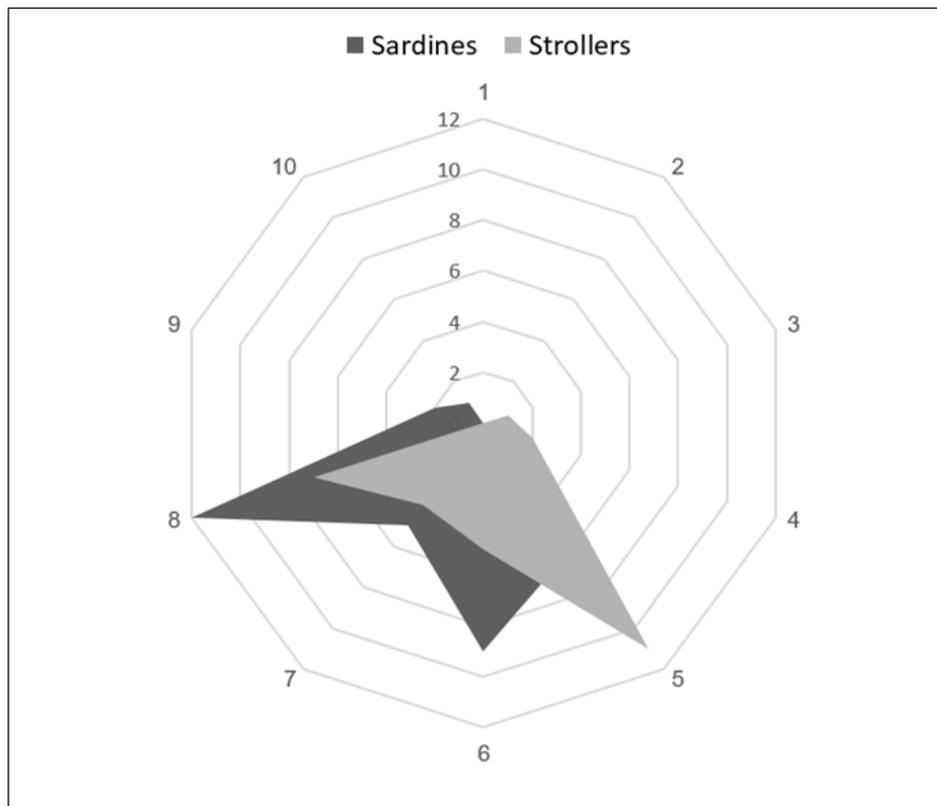
Note: CBS ranks all municipalities in Israel according to their socio-economic status
and then groups them into clusters in which 1 is the poorest and 10 is the richest.
Source: CBS (2013).

The two protest also exhibit different uses of the capabilities provided by

Facebook, which crystallize into distinctive use patterns. Although both protests used

the encouragement capability in similar proportions, the Strollers relied on

informative capabilities, whereas the Sardines relied on expressive capabilities (Table 2).

The Strollers' leadership used the Facebook page mainly to coordinate local associations across the country, and supporters were active mainly in exchanging information. The expressive and call for action capabilities were much less used. Note that the category of appeal to public representatives is inflated because it contains mostly references to a single quotation of the Head of the Histadrut Labor Federation, in which he questioned the need for a Strollers protest.

The Sardines used more frequently the capabilities of discussion and appeal to public representatives, and to a lesser degree, call for action. Discussions focused mainly on infusing more meaning into their sole demand of reducing the number of students per class. For example, one supporter wrote: "The number of children [in class] affects the quality and character of study. Only intimacy with the teacher… can lead to high quality education for values and excellence." Appeal to public representatives included either criticism, mainly directed at the Minister of Education (for obvious reasons), or praise for politicians who expressed support for the protest. Calls for action focused on motivating supporters for action: "The entire country is enraged and angry over the Ministry of Education's decision… everyone is preparing for Friday protests."
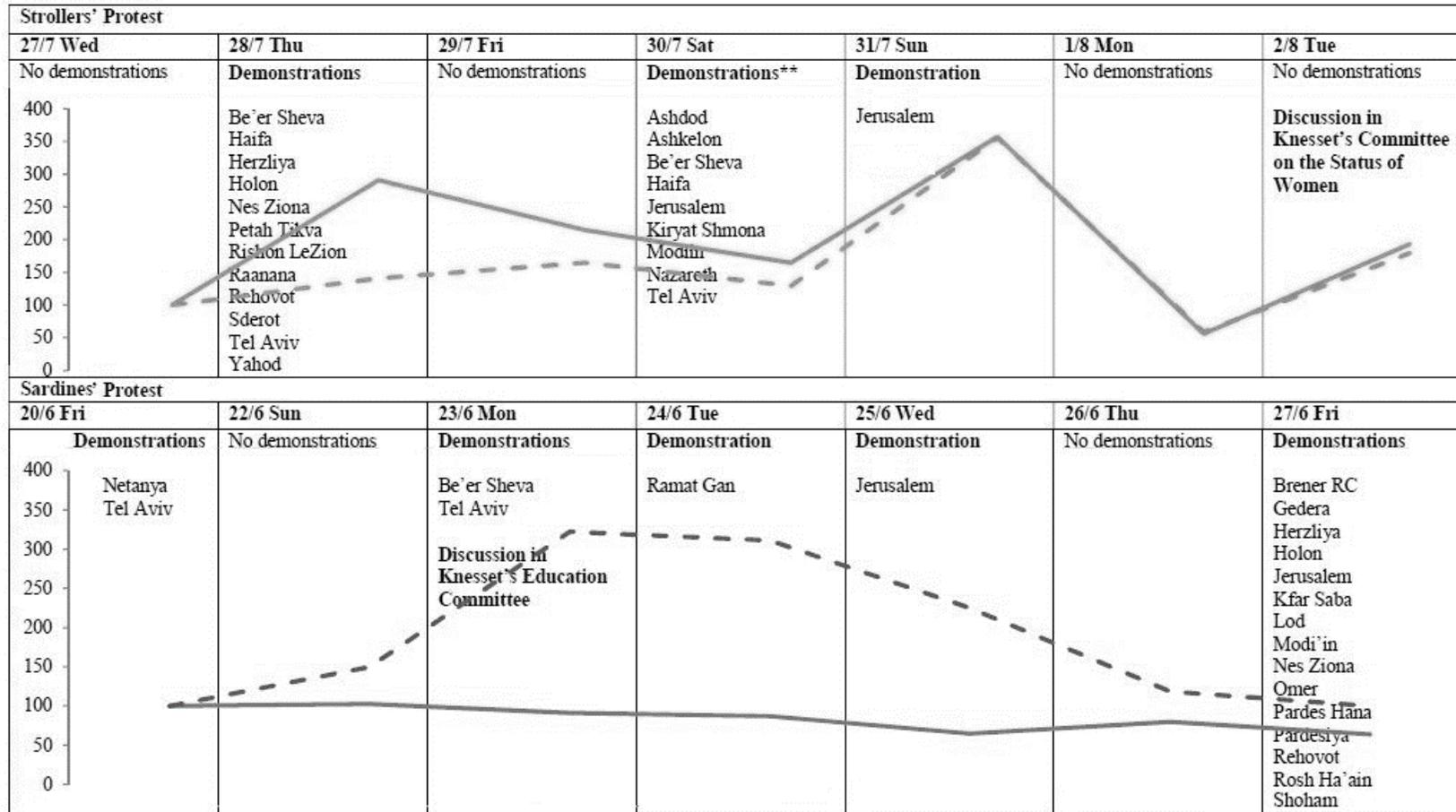
Table II. Frequency of categories

Group / Category	Posts			Comments		
	Strollers	Sardines	*t*	Strollers	Sardines	*t*
Informative capabilities						
Coordination	15 (39.47%)	0 (0%)	3.53***	36 (15.25%)	0 (0%)	7.38***
Exchange of information	8 (21.05%)	2 (8.33%)	1.32	81 (34.32%)	48 (14.33%)	5.62***
Expressive capabilities						
Discussion	2 (5.26%)	6 (25%)	2.26*	18 (7.36%)	92 (27.46%)	5.91***
Appeal to public representatives	4 (10.53%)	4 (16.67%)	0.70	18 (7.36%)	65 (19.4%)	3.92***
Motivational capabilities						
Call for action	2 (5.26%)	6 (25%)	2.26*	14 (5.93%)	35 (10.45%)	1.89 †
Encouragement	7 (18.42%)	6 (25%)	0.62	52 (22.03%)	74 (22.09%)	0.01
Other	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	-	17 (7.2%)	21 (6.27%)	0.43
Total N	38	24		236	335	

Notes: *t* values are the product of a two sample t-test between percents; †*p* <.10; **p* < .05; **p < .01;*** *p* < .001. External posts shared by page admins but not written by them were not included.

Findings about differences in the use patterns of Facebook are further enriched by data on trends of online activity and on the connections of this activity with real-world protest-related events (Figure 3). First, the Strollers' reliance on informative capabilities is evident on the day with the highest levels of online activity (Day 5), where half the leadership's posts were dedicated to coordination of offline activities, and more than half of comments posted by activists were used to exchange information about the times and locations of demonstrations. Second, the Sardines'

reliance on expressive capabilities is apparent in the two peak days of likes. These peaks were a response to two posts, one on each day, that used the discussion capability. The first post initiated a discussion by publicizing the Minister's decision to allow non-standard classes in the following school year, but not for first-graders. In the second post, a mother shared her thoughts and feelings about her daughter's future experience in a 40-student class. Note that although comments did not increase as likes did, activists commented on these two posts mainly by using the discussion capability. Third, the Strollers' trends of online activity are correlated with real-world protest-related events, whereas those of the Sardines are not. The data are consistent with previous findings to the effect that it is plausible for activists who increase their online activity surrounding real-world events to use the coordination and exchange of information capabilities during these periods.

Figure 3. Online activity trends (normalized daily averages) and protest timelines.

Strollers' Protest						
27/7 Wed	28/7 Thu	29/7 Fri	30/7 Sat	31/7 Sun	1/8 Mon	2/8 Tue
No demonstrations	Demonstrations	No demonstrations	Demonstrations**	Demonstration	No demonstrations	No demonstrations
	Be'er Sheva Haifa Herzliya Holon Nes Ziona Petah Tikva Rishon LeZion Raanana Rehovot Sderot Tel Aviv Yahod		Ashdod Ashkelon Be'er Sheva Haifa Jerusalem Kiryat Shmona Modiin Nazareth Tel Aviv	Jerusalem		Discussion in Knesset's Committee on the Status of Women

Sardines' Protest						
20/6 Fri	22/6 Sun	23/6 Mon	24/6 Tue	25/6 Wed	26/6 Thu	27/6 Fri
Demonstrations	No demonstrations	Demonstrations	Demonstration	Demonstration	No demonstrations	Demonstrations
Netanya Tel Aviv		Be'er Sheva Tel Aviv Discussion in Knesset's Education Committee	Ramat Gan	Jerusalem		Brener RC Gedera Herzliya Holon Jerusalem Kfar Saba Lod Modi'in Nes Ziona Omer Pardes Hana Pardesiya Rehovot Rosh Ha'ain Shoham

Notes: Solid lines represent the ratio of daily averaged comments normalized to day 1. Dashed lines represent the ratio of likes normalized to day 1. Daily average was calculated as the number of likes/comments divided by the number of posts. External posts shared by page admins but not written by them were not included. **Part of the Social Protest demonstrations

6. Discussion and conclusion

The present study showed that social movements present different patterns of use of the capabilities provided by the Facebook platform for political activism, and that the lived experience of activists and (potential) supporters plays an important role in shaping these patterns. Assessing the results of the study leads to the conclusion that successful protests vary considerably in the type of social media capabilities used for political activism. Specifically, we identified that the Strollers relayed mainly on informative capabilities, and used Facebook as a resource in their offline activities, whereas the Sardines concentrated on expressive capabilities, and hardly relied on Facebook for their offline activities.

We also discovered that the Facebook use patterns of the two protests have to do with their different class bases of support and with the lived experiences of their (potential) activists. The Strollers' heterogeneous class base produced an organizational structure in which the leadership acted as a hub, and local activists acted as rather autonomous nodes. Informative capabilities, namely coordination by the leadership and exchange of information by activists, were vital for ensuring action under such a structure. Heterogeneity, in turn, was constructed by the lived experience of middle-class families, and by demands published by the leadership, which resonated with that experience. In the Sardines' case, the pattern of use of Facebook was affected by the relative homogeneity of the class base of support. The specific demand raised by the leadership resonated with the lived experience of a rather homogeneous social group of mainly upper-middle-class parents, who had begun participating in the funding of educational activities in public schools in the context of neoliberalization and semi-privatization (Ichilov, 2009). This transition into a "customer" position in public education led them to use the discussion capability to

express their deep discontent with the decision by the Minister of Education to eliminate non-standard classes, and use the appeal to public representatives capability to practice "outside lobbying" (Kollman, 1998).

6.1 Theoretical implications

This study makes several theoretical contributions. First, it promotes research on the capabilities of social media for political activists by offering a taxonomy of capabilities. Prior works on political activism and social media aspired mainly to identify and map the capabilities offered by social media (e.g., Mercea, 2013; Van Laer, 2010; Valenzuela, 2013; Warren *et al.*, 2014), but disregarded the possibility that uses can vary significantly across protests, forming distinctive patterns. Furthermore, the study proposed an original taxonomy that enables to identify different use patterns of capabilities provided by Facebook, and also demonstrated its contribution by applying it to two cases. The taxonomy enabled insights into operational dynamic of the protests.

Second, the study indicated that differences in patterns of use between movements have to do with the social context in which Facebook is used for purposes of political activism. We extended Walder's (2009) claim about the importance and centrality of lived experience in the rise and action of social movements to e-mobilizations and their use of social media. The lived experience of certain social groups, and the ways in which demands raised by the movement leadership resonate with this experience, shape the opportunities, challenges, and characteristics of the movement, which in turn affect the mode in which Facebook is used by the leadership and activists alike.

6.2 Policy and societal implications

The study has practical implications for both activists and policymakers, particularly because both protests were successful in promoting policy changes. For activists, it suggests that the use of social media should be constructed from the very beginning by taking into consideration movement demands and the audience from which the movement seeks to draw its supporters and activists. For example, the Sardines' case emphasizes the effectiveness of enabling the sharing of opinions and thoughts, by which the leadership could draw upper-middle-class supporters and turn them into activists. This aim is manifest in the fact that a quarter of posts published by the leadership concerned calls for action.

For policymakers, the study suggests that a certain pattern of use of social media by a social movement may serve as an indication of social movement characteristics. Proper movement characterization can assist in constructing a suitable strategy for engaging with movement demands and activities. Taking the Sardines again as an example, their excessive use of expressive capabilities (particularly, appeal to public representatives), their sole demand, and the homogeneous social base of support positioned them as a quasi-interest group that aspires to push forward a limited set of policy changes to benefit its members (Dür and Mateo, 2013) rather than a social movement driven by a broad agenda of ideological and policy change.

6.3 Limitations and future research

The study has four prominent limitations that open the way for further research. First, it examined the use of Facebook only in the context of political activism. But the discussion of the effects of social media use on political participation is wider (Alathur *et al.*, 2012; Graham *et al.*, 2016; Shirky, 2011; Theocharis and Lowe, 2016),

and therefore an examination of whether the patterns of use revealed by the present study, and the taxonomy it outlines, are applicable to other forms of political participation is in order. Second, the study focused on Facebook pages, and only on the official pages of the two movements. Future research could benefit from exploring the Facebook pages of local activist groups, as well as other social media platforms and mobile phone applications. Third, the collection of data covered only the first week in which both movements began combining online and offline activities. A longer time frame would allow exploring the construction of a shared identity (Gerbaudo, 2012). Fourth, the study was situated in a country that, despite increasing privatization, largely holds a social welfare model offering broad public services to its citizens. Therefore, it is advised to explore social media-based activism regarding public services in countries with non-welfare governance models. Despite these limitations, we trust that the insights of the study are valuable to other public policy domains (e.g., health) and to other welfare model countries. Given the nature of our research, i.e., case study, replicability and generalizability consistent with positivist thinking are less feasible, but transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) is more than possible.

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