

PULLING BACK THE CURTAIN: AN EXAMINATION OF THE ENGLISH DEFENCE LEAGUE AND THEIR USE OF FACEBOOK

Teddy Wayne Reynolds

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*Pulling Back the Curtain: An Examination of the
English Defence League and Their Use of
Facebook*

Teddy Wayne Reynolds



University of
St Andrews

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1413

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of PhD

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16 September, 2013

*Pulling Back the Curtain: An Examination of the
English Defence League and Their Use of
Facebook*

Submitted by: Teddy Wayne Reynolds



University of
St Andrews

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1413

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I, Teddy Wayne Reynolds, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September 2009 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in May 2010; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2009 and 2013.

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Abstract

As social media becomes an integral part of our daily lives, and groups seek to utilize this medium to facilitate activism, understanding the nature of these communications and the impact of the content on the individual user becomes a valid area of interest. When one then considers that extremist and terrorist groups have found social media to be an inexpensive and effective means for communication, radicalization, recruitment and member mobilization, the need for this understanding becomes critical. This research seeks to provide just such an understanding in its examination of Far-Right English Defence League and their use of Facebook during a period of increased activism and online growth. Important elements of this work include an understanding of the legal and ethical issues surrounding the collection of online content, particularly in extremist environments; the role of traditional media in their coverage of the group and whether the comments of the members reflect the group's mission statement or the characterization of traditional media; the ability to enhance data segregation and analysis through the development and use of specialized software; and most importantly the findings from the data analysis. Contained within these findings is an understanding of the intricacies of online participation in extremist social media. These include insights into overall traffic generation, the use of links within communications and their impact on the member traffic, and how the group narrative put forth by the administrator is reflected in the dialogue of the users. The most important finding was an understanding of individual user participation within the group and how, even with such an inexpensive and pervasive media outlet, activist groups still struggle to overcome the problem of participation. That this knowledge can be applied in a meaningful way in counter extremist and counterterrorism efforts was an interesting and satisfying development.

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Essential to the progress of this work was the late Professor Paul Wilkinson. He felt this research was important and when permission was needed from law enforcement to move forward with data collection, and this process was at a standstill, Professor Wilkinson facilitated a meeting in London that led to the acquisition of an authorization letter from ACPO's Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit. It was an honor to know him and it can easily be said that this research might not have been possible without his assistance at such a critical time.

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Abbreviations

ACPO – Association of Chiefs of Police

AQ-GB – Al-Qaeda in Great Britain

API – Application Programming Interface

ASCII - American Standard Code for Information Interchange

ASF – Aryan Strike Force

BNP – British National Party

CCTV – Closed Circuit Television

CMC – Computer Mediated Communication

CPS – Crown Prosecution Service

CSV - Comma Separated Values

CTIRU – Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit

DARPA – Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency

DPA – Data Protection Act

DPD – Data Protection Directive

DWAS – Dark Web Attribute System

EDL – English Defence League

FAST – Future Attribute Screening Technology

GCHQ – Government Communications Headquarters

GMT – Greenwich Mean Time

GUI – Graphic User Interface

HTML – HyperText Markup Language

HTTP – HyperText Transfer Protocol

HTTPS - HyperText Transfer Protocol Secure

IARPA – Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity

ID - Identity

INSTINCT – Innovative Science and Technology in Counter Terrorism

IRB – Institutional Review Board

ISP – Internet Service Provider

MAC Address – Media Access Control Address

MAC – Muslims Against Crusades

MDL – Muslim Defence League

MP – Member of Parliament

NS – Never Surrender

NSA – National Security Agency

NYPD – New York Police Department

OSCT – Office of Security and Counter Terrorism

OWS – Occupy Wall Street

RAM – Random Access Memory

SDL – Scottish Defence League

SIDE – Social Identity De-individuation Effect

SNS – Social Network Site

SOCMINT – Social Media Intelligence

SPSS – Statistical Package for Social Science

TOR – The Onion Router

UK – United Kingdom

UKTA – United Kingdom Terrorism Act

URL – Uniform Resource Locator

US – United States

UTREC – University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee

V 7.0 – Version 7.0

XML – Extensible Markup Language

ZHC – Z Company Hacking Crew

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First Supervisor: Dr. Roger MacGinty

Second Supervisor: Dr. Jeffrey Murer

Introduction

*“The vigor of a mass movement stems from the propensity of its followers for united action and self-sacrifice. When we ascribe the success of the movement to its faith, doctrine, propaganda, leadership, ruthlessness and so on, we are but referring to instruments of unification and to means used to inculcate a readiness for self-sacrifice. It is perhaps impossible to understand the nature of mass movements unless it is recognized that their chief preoccupation is to foster, perfect, and perpetuate a facility for united action and self-sacrifice. To know the processes by which such a facility is engendered is to grasp the inner logic of most of the characteristic attitudes and practices of an active mass movement.” (Eric Hoffer in *The True Believer*, 1951, p. 43)*

Being in the right place at the right time is likely the wish of every person who seeks knowledge or has a penchant for exploration. Certainly researchers dream of that moment when they might be witness to a significant event or a new discovery that will provide them the opportunity to make a substantive contribution to their field of study and possibly to mankind. While there will be no such grandiose claims regarding the outcome of this research project, the desire to conduct research into the characteristics of online social networking in extremist environments coupled with the birth and growth of the far-right extremist movement known as the English Defence League (EDL), who sought to use Facebook as their primary mode of communication, did indeed place this researcher in the right place at the right time.

However, this research is not just about an extremist group or data collection and analysis. It also offers a unique opportunity to explore new methods for collecting, segregating, and analyzing social media traffic in the search for the next step forward

in an emerging and very important field of inquiry. Several of the challenges that were faced during this project could have, in themselves, become the focus of a full thesis. From the desire to engage in an interdisciplinary effort of investigation, the legal and ethical issues that surrounded the project, the collection and transformation of the social media traffic, and the on the ground fieldwork that was done to provide a real world perspective on the virtual phenomenon; each would have made for an interesting and substantive thesis. However, put together they tell the story of a process that was difficult yet fascinating, often reclusive yet sometimes quite adventurous. And in the end, there are real findings that provide a unique glimpse into what is perceived as the power of social media. Even still, the true value of this work is to be found in the compilation of questions, experiences, and answers that have fused together as a result of this research project; all toward the goal of understanding the nature and use of social media by the English Defence League and determining the effectiveness of this medium as a tool for garnering widespread support and recruitment, facilitating the members identification with the EDL narrative, and the mobilization of its membership.

Following the Arab uprisings and the Occupy Movements that captured the attention of the world and the media, academics have begun to query the nature of social media and the true power of this medium to recruit and mobilize members to a cause (Morozov, 2011; Alterman, 2011; Comunello & Anzera, 2012). It is clear that the changes that took place in Tunisia and Egypt were sparked by events first reported online, precipitating public action. Further, there is no doubt that the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement had an online presence on Facebook early in their formative days. However, there are questions as to the true power of these online movements and the capacity of social media to promote and facilitate the growth of these

movements (Morozov, 2011; Alterman, 2011; Comunello & Anzera, 2012). Given the interest of governments and academics in the linkage between social media and radicalization (Casciani, 2009; Williams, 2012; Weimann, 2006; Hoffman, 2006b), resulting in considerable speculation, this research seeks to provide some clarity regarding the true nature of this relationship via an empirical examination of social media traffic.

It is widely accepted that the video of the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010, first played on YouTube, sparked the uprising in Tunisia and was the first link in the chain of events that led to the Arab Spring and the fall of oppressive regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and the still ongoing conflict in Syria. However, this perception is now being challenged by researchers (Morozov, 2011; Alterman, 2011; Comunello & Anzera, 2012; Dalacoura, 2012; Lim, 2012) who are pointing to and suggesting that the coverage by traditional media was responsible for the growth of these movements into the agents of change in the region. While it is clear that these movements began online in social media environments that include blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, it seems that critical mass by these movements was not achieved until they were picked up and reported on television stations like Al-Jazeera (Lim, 2012; Alterman, 2011; Comunello & Anzera, 2012). This mass media coverage then allowed for the dissemination of the movement to a larger audience thereby promoting mass participation. Comparing the movements to a campfire, new media can potentially be viewed as the spark that is then fanned by traditional mass media to create the firestorm that then becomes a fully involved social-political movement.

This phenomenon can be also seen in the data available from the early days of the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement that was collected and analyzed by this

researcher for a future project. A movement that eventually garnered an online membership of over 350,000 Facebook members, OWS began its Facebook page in August 2011. Having followed the traffic from the birth of the OWS Facebook page it seems, anecdotally, that while there was interest in the dialogue, the tipping point of this movement came on 1- October 2011 when the group marched on the Brooklyn Bridge, which led to the arrest of 700 demonstrators. The spark of this pivotal event, fanned by mass media coverage from across the country, led to the increase in traffic and support that fueled the growth of the OWS movement. With continued mass media coverage, and the inclusion of this coverage in OWS posts via URL links of news articles and YouTube videos of media coverage, the activity seems to suggest that while the Movement had an online component, the national support was precipitated by traditional mass media where it was brought into the homes and minds of millions of viewers. An examination of this phenomenon as it relates to the EDL will be provided with this study.

What is unclear is how or whether this ability to mobilize large numbers of people translates into social media and computer mediated communication participation in extremist environments. While social media and computer mediated communication are viewed as facilitators of democracy, it must also be acknowledged that these same fora provide a semi-secure environment for those who wish to spread messages of hate and violence to like-minded individuals. Therefore, it should be expected that as a result of this self-selection, participation in extremist environments will likely look very different from more popular and socially acceptable movements where media support is expected.

Following the terror attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States and the attacks in London on 7 July 2005, western countries have sought to combat extremist

radicalization by outlawing the public promotion of Jihadist/extremist messages. Additionally, efforts were undertaken by law enforcement and the intelligence community to identify known recruiters in their communities and either arrest or deport these individuals to prevent further terrorist radicalization and recruitment. While these efforts are laudable, the result has been that while these activities have been taken off the street where they were in the full view of law enforcement and intelligence agencies, they have been driven underground onto the largest public forum ever to exist, the Internet. The proliferation of extremist websites, blogs, Facebook pages, and YouTube videos is staggering. Estimates indicate the number of terrorist websites increased during the decade prior to 2008, from just a few hundred to nearly 5,000 (Weimann, 2008). More recently, before they were moved to the al-Qaeda media site, the recently deceased Anwar al Awlaki had hundreds of jihadi videos on YouTube (Burns & Helft, 2010) where he promoted Islamist messages and had a significant influence in radicalizing westerners like Faisal Shahzad (the Time Square Bomber), and Nidal Hasan (The Fort Hood Shooter) toward committing acts of terror. With this proliferation of online activity by extremists on Facebook, YouTube, and numerous websites and blogs referred to as computer mediated communication (CMC); governments are concerned about the nature of these communications and the influence they may have in the radicalization, recruitment, and mobilization process (Weimann, 2008; Hoffman, 2006).

While there is a growing body of research in this area, most of the work published on extremist use of the internet and online radicalization is focused on the media outlet and not on the individual. While there are projects like the Arizona Dark Web Project (Chen, 2012) that examine the content of websites used by terrorists, noticeably missing, and to be explored herein, is any investigation that provides a

statistical analysis of the use of social media and other forms of computer mediated communication by extremist groups and the techniques that are used to promote the groups agenda or narrative. Further, while there has been considerable focus on the number of groups and the number of 'members' in these groups (Chen, 2012; Weimann, 2008), it appears there has also been no investigation into the actual level of participation by individual group members, how this participation may change over time, and if there are externalities that may impact the viability of the group. Finally, while some work has been done on the content richness of extremist websites and user satisfaction with those sites as it relates to other sites without rich content (Chen, 2012); there has been no real analysis of the use of rich content in the development of a group narrative toward radicalization, recruitment and/or mobilization.

This research seeks to provide a more detailed investigation into the true nature of participation in social media and CMC in one of these extreme environments. For legal reasons that will be discussed later, it was decided to focus on an extremist group that was not classified as a terrorist group, but was of significant interest and was very active during the research period. The English Defence League, which is a far right anti-Muslim and anti-immigration group in the United Kingdom, was chosen as the focus for this research as they were an active movement with a consistent and growing presence on Facebook which facilitated the collection of Facebook traffic for analysis. As a fledgling movement in the summer of 2009, the EDL made its Facebook debut with only a few hundred members but quickly grew to have tens of thousands of followers on Facebook and were able to mobilize thousands to their demonstrations throughout the United Kingdom. By early 2011, the EDL boasted a membership of over 60,000 on Facebook and were able to, at times, put approximately 3,000 demonstrators on the ground. This research project focuses on

the collection and analysis of Facebook traffic during a forty five day period that arguably represents the most active phase of recruitment by the EDL, beginning in February 2011. Augmenting this virtual fieldwork and analysis are an analysis of the traditional print media stories associated with the EDL, and observations which were made while conducting on-the-ground fieldwork that involved attending and filming two key EDL demonstrations in February and September 2011. Additionally, data from a secondary collection on the EDL will be examined to support the findings from the analysis of the initial collection.

The overarching goal of this research is to provide a more detailed understanding of the role social media played in the growth of the EDL by examining various aspects of this phenomenon to determine if Facebook can promote recruitment and mobilization (Morozov, 2011; Alterman, 2011; Comunello & Anzera, 2012). Some of the pieces to this puzzle include understanding the role traditional print media played in the characterization of the EDL, how the growth of the Facebook group is tied to increased mobilization, and whether the growth of the EDL's Facebook page is an accurate representation of the overall growth of the movement and exploring the true nature of member participation in this social media outlet. By putting these pieces together, a fuller picture of the EDL and the power of social media will appear.

Approach to the Investigation

It was important that this research not be seen as an ad-hoc combination of observations presented as a thesis on participation in extremist environments online. Therefore, it was decided that a systematic approach to data gathering and analysis would be developed toward examining this phenomenon within the framework of well-established social science theory. While the understanding of online participation and literature in this area is sparse, there is a growing body of this

literature that was useful to understanding the online phenomenon (Caren, et. al., 2012; Wojcieszak, 2012; Ackland & O'Neil, 2011; Wu et al., 2011; Morozov, 2011) in addition to traditional terrorist theories related to radicalization and recruitment (Hoffman, 2006; Weimann, 2008; Nacos, 2007; Wilkinson, 2007; Conway, 2012, Klausen et al., 2012). These approaches were used to examine the online activity of the EDL, the methods that were used by the group administrators or leaders to promote the group agenda/narrative, and the participation of the 'members' within the group.

Data collection was performed through passive covert observation resulting in the collection of 19,312 Facebook administrator posts and member comments on those posts. The material collected was then coded into the variables to be examined by using specialized software, specifically developed for this project, which reduced the coding process from what would have been hundreds of man hours to less than one minute. Details of this effort will be discussed within the methodology chapter. The analysis of the coded data provided findings that were revealing and heretofore undocumented in academic research and literature regarding participation in extremist social media, social media associated with activism, and other CMC environments.

Presentation of Chapters

While this research provides a quantitative analysis of the online phenomenon of the EDL, it would be a mistake to focus only on the numbers. Therefore, the presentation of this research also includes qualitative analysis that provides insight into the media characterization of the EDL as well as observations from within the user traffic to examine how the dialog correlates to the public rhetoric. The compilation of qualitative and quantitative methods and findings allows for the presentation of a more holistic approach to understanding not only the online

phenomenon, but the group which became the focus of this research. Therefore, the following chapters will be provided in support of this approach:

Chapter One begins by examining the literature related to the English Defence League, providing a basis from which to consider the nature of the group and their activities. This will include the EDL's perception of themselves, external perceptions by the media and government, and how academics who have written about the EDL characterize the group. This is followed by a discussion of how extremists use the internet and the literature that addresses what are developing concepts regarding the power of the internet and social media to facilitate activism (Margetts et al., 2013; Morozov, 2011; McCorkindale, 2012; Barnett, 2012). Following this overview, the review moves on to an examination of the social science literature pertaining to the development of an online social identity as a part of this process (Sherif et al., 1988; Spears et al., 2007; Cole, 2012). The most current work on terrorist/extremist radicalization and recruitment in online environments is included to review the key factors/methods that are used promote radicalization (Weimann, 2008; Hoffman, 2006b; Caren, et al. 2012). These would include the development of a consistent group narrative that incorporates a message of victimization and an us-versus-them dynamic that pits the members of the group in an ongoing battle against 'the other'. Next, the literature related to the influence of new media toward the promotion of extremist movements will be examined (Conway & McInerney, 2008; Bartlett & Littler, 2011; Bowman-Grieve, 2009; Breuer, 2012; Goodwin, 2013). This is followed by an examination of literature associated with the use of social media and other CMC by far-right extremists like Stormfront (Bowman-Grieve, 2009; Caren, et al., 2012). Finally, the literature on the EDL will be examined to consider if/how the subject of CMC participation is addressed within these studies and why understanding

the characteristics of social media and CMC within extreme environments is important.

Chapter Two is the examination of the methodological approach that was used to perform the online research, the details of the collection and coding processes including the development of specialized software for the coding of Facebook page captures that was instrumental in compiling the data set that was used for analysis. Integral to this chapter is an explanation of the early trials and tribulations of collecting online content, efforts to automate the collection and coding process, the ramification of collecting and storing user information/data that is identification sensitive, and the considerable efforts that were undertaken to ensure the security of the collection effort and the dataset, and how to mitigate these issues. Finally, the analytical framework is discussed as it relates to the previous theoretical discussion. Included is an extensive examination of the development and use of specialized software that was used to segregate the EDL Facebook collection into usable variables. Additionally, the variables selected and their usefulness to the analytic process are presented.

This chapter is also a journey through the interesting ethical issues that were encountered as a result of doing online collection. Some of the areas that are addressed include the determination of the information to be collected as private or public access, the issue of engaging in passive covert observation while collecting Facebook traffic without informed consent, and insuring compliance with the UK Data Protection Act.

Chapter Three provides an examination of the rise of the English Defence League and the role social media played in these efforts. Additionally, this chapter examines the birth and growth of the EDL, reviews the leadership and organizational structure,

and provides an on the ground view of this group, its message, and how the UK government and law enforcement have had trouble dealing with a growing anti-immigration/anti-Muslim movement that seemed to be gaining mass appeal. It will also chronicle pivotal events that had significant positive and negative impacts on the English Defence League and its members. Also included in this chapter is an accounting of the field work that was conducted on 5 February 2011. This fieldwork proved invaluable to understanding the real world impact of the virtual phenomenon that was being studied. This narrative is useful in understanding much of the activity that takes place online and how much of that online content is targeted toward promoting the offline activities of the group as pre-demonstration mobilization and post demonstration propaganda.

Chapter Four examines the impact of offline and online events on the English Defence League. Central to this exploration is the analysis of a collection of news stories obtained through LexisNexus to consider the characterization of the EDL by traditional media, how the pattern of these new stories correlates with the EDL key events and/or demonstrations, and the effect of pivotal events on the news cycle. Some of the key events examined include the attack in Norway by Anders Breivik, who claimed to have an affiliation with the EDL; the hacking of the EDL Facebook page; and the murder of Lee Rigby. Each of these events had a different but significant impact on the group and their Facebook page/traffic. This chapter also includes a narrative from a second field observation; the 3 September 2011 EDL Demonstration in Tower Hamlets. Finally, this chapter returns to the Lexis/Nexus collection to examine the use of key words and phrases that are used by traditional media in their effort to characterize the EDL as a far-right, anti-Muslim extremist group.

Chapter Five builds on the findings in the previous chapter regarding the characterization of the EDL by traditional media by examining the rhetoric of the EDL membership, as espoused within the group's mission statement, and comparing this to the reality of the comments made within the EDL Facebook page. Using NVivo to perform key word searches of the Facebook collection it was possible to obtain a sampling of comments related to various issues including Muslims, Islam, the Mosque, and other terms associated with the group and their public and private narrative. The results of this exploration offer considerable clarity when one considers how/if the human rights-democratic-inclusive values rhetoric of the EDL leadership is reflected in the comments made by the online members.

Chapter Six covers the findings from the analysis that was performed on the data set developed from the page captures of the EDL's Facebook page. That these findings represent the first of its kind analysis of this type of online traffic cannot be overlooked. The analysis of the Facebook traffic during the collection period provided an understanding of various phenomena that have proven invaluable. Included within the findings are an analysis of the traffic patterns as it relates to administrator and member posts; the relationship between the various categories of administrator posts and the traffic that was generated by those posts; an understanding of the impact of the Uniform Resource Locator links contained within the administrator posts and the member secondary posts; the development of the online narrative by the English Defence League as presented by its Facebook administrators; the use of this social media outlet to create the us-versus-them dynamic that is known to be common in facilitating terrorist/extremist recruitment; an examination of the key words and phrases by members that provides an indicator of acceptance and/or identification with the group narrative; and, most importantly, an analysis of the

actual traffic by the members, during the study period, to determine the real level of participation by the membership. This chapter will also include an examination of a second EDL dataset that was collected due to the original EDL Facebook page being corrupted by a hacking group. This post hack data offers some insight into the impact of the hack on the page as well as those who participate on the EDL's Facebook page.

Chapter Seven will discuss the importance of the findings of this project as they relate to the understanding of the online phenomenon within extreme environments, summarize those findings, and examine an additional case to support the findings within this analysis that can also be applied outside extreme environments. This will include a brief examination of additional data, collected while this work was ongoing, from the Occupy Wall Street Movement from August to November of 2011. The initial findings from these groups help to understand that what is seen within this investigation is not an isolated incident. Additionally, there will be further discussion on the role of traditional mass media as it relates to the formation and promotion of online movements.

Additionally, suggestions for future research in the area of social media and mass movements is discussed within this chapter, including a discussion of the importance of the interdisciplinary approach that was used during this project, and the importance of seeking out and embracing the skills of other researchers and practitioners toward providing a more in-depth understanding than might otherwise be possible. While traditional political scientists and social science scholars have a long history of research and literature to draw from, the development of new media and computer mediated communication provides the opportunity for social science researchers to partner with computer scientists in the development of previously unknown tools and methodologies to explore the importance of this new phenomenon in exciting ways.

This research is truly a testament to what is possible when such an approach is embraced.

The Research Question(s)

As this project was unarguably a venture into somewhat uncharted territory, with no social media theory to test against, it began with a desire to answer several research questions that then evolved over the life of the project and drove this research; questions to which answers were being sought throughout the design, collection, and analytical phases of this research. By utilizing a bottom up, otherwise known as inductive approach, it was possible to ask open ended questions, explore various avenues, and seek meaning from the data that was collected toward providing a narrative based analysis that would help move this burgeoning field forward in the development of theory as it pertains to the impact/role of social media in extremism. By its nature, this type of research offers no causality as to the impact or effectiveness of the EDL's use of social media, but provides considerable insight into the characteristics of this online activity and the true nature of participation within this environment. As this research was being conducted into a new organization and its use of new technology, there were many unknown aspects as they related to the research topic. While there was adjacent theory (for example, social movement theory) there was a relatively small body of scholarly and policy work that spoke directly to this project. In one area, gaining authorization to conduct online research that might include material considered illegal under the Terrorism Acts, this project was on the forefront of helping establish policy (see Appendix 3).

Primarily, the big question was and continues to be, "What are the characteristics of the online communications of the English Defence League, and how do they compare to what has previously been speculated regarding online participation in

extremist social media environments and CMC?” Answering this, and many other questions that will be discussed following, required focusing on the exploratory process to build a solid foundation from which to construct the qualitative analysis and, while driven by data, the resultant narrative findings. Although the project was inductive and findings-led, it operated according to social science strictures in the sense of having a firm research question and being bound by a code of research ethics. First, and not inconsequential, was determining whether this type of investigation would be feasible. Obtaining approval for this research project from the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC), as well as overcoming the legal and ethical challenges that were associated with this research required considerable effort. Primary among these considerations was the need to ensure the anonymity of the users within the study. Once it was determined that this project would be allowed to move forward, the question quickly shifted from ‘can’ to ‘how’. Following UTREC approval, the second question was related to whether it would be possible to collect this online content in such a manner as to facilitate coding and analysis. Once a target group was determined, and this issue was addressed through the establishment of a methodology for the collection of the Facebook traffic of the EDL, the question changed once again.

Faced with the vast amount of traffic that was acquired during the collection period, the challenge to be addressed at this point was the coding of the collection into a viable data set. While this would have traditionally been done using manual methods of data input, the question arose as to the possibility of developing software that could identify the key variables within the electronic collection and code them in such a way as to facilitate a statistical analysis of the online phenomenon. That this effort was successful has far reaching implications for the ability of future researchers

to engage in the investigation of social media generally, and extremist activity in online social networks specifically.

With a viable data set, the research questions now turned to acquiring a basic understanding of the phenomenon with the purpose of providing a foundation that can be built upon in future efforts. As will be discussed later, one of the issues with big data is the inability to seek causality as a result of the size and messiness of the data. But, what is possible with big data is developing an understanding of the relationships that exist within the data. For this project, these relationships proved to be enlightening. The analysis of the EDL Facebook traffic provided answers to questions pertaining to the traffic patterns of the group and how this traffic related to various forms of administrator driven communications; what impact the links contained within the posts have on the traffic generation and whether certain administrator driven content precipitated larger responses than other content; how the group narrative, as expressed by the administrator, is reflected in the comments of the members; and likely the most important question to be asked and answered dealt with the characteristics of individual participation within the group and how that was reflected in not just simple quantities of participation but with the assimilation of the group narrative by different groups of users based upon participation rates. This last question, on its own, offers more insight into the use of social media than has been provided to date in any literature or other research dealing with online social movements including extremist movements that utilize social media.

Undertaking the task of investigating the Facebook traffic of the English Defence League, as a function of the nature of the medium used and the group being studied, began with a set of questions that had to be addressed before the quantitative analysis that became the final product could be considered. As discussed above, there were

multiple areas of inquiry that became a part of this project that are each deserving of mention and coverage as a part of this study. These include the question of whether the collection of the Facebook activity from the EDL Facebook page would be allowed; questions of ethics and legality; and the decision to engage with computer science experts to investigate solutions to these problems. In addition to resolving the issues related to the online collection, there was the decision to perform on-the-ground field work to put a real world face on what had, until that point, been simply a virtual phenomenon. Observing and recording this real world activism provided insights that would not have been available otherwise. These experiences and how they relate to the online phenomenon are important to understanding the findings from the analysis of the data collection and are very important in understanding the need for social media intelligence capabilities.

Finally, the analysis of the collection data was performed in a manner so as to provide understanding rather than seek causality. With the vast amount of information that was collected on so many users, seeking to establish causality would likely have proven fruitless. Instead, the analysis that was performed sought to answer some very important questions regarding the characteristics of the social media phenomenon that is such a large part of the EDL movement. Some of areas of inquiry included:

1. Measuring the traffic patterns between the group administrators and the members.
2. Identifying the various types of messaging used by the EDL in their communications. Are there themes within the collection and if so how do these various themes serve to drive user comments?
3. Understanding the various messaging that was used by the EDL and the appeal

of this messaging to the users as reflected in the measure of their responses.

How is this messaging expressed within the comments of the users, and do the expressions of the users coincide with the lofty rhetoric of the EDL leadership as it relates to human rights, democratic, and inclusive values?

4. Examining the use of links to outside information provided through the Facebook page. This includes links to YouTube videos, news articles, and other content. Do these links figure prominently in the collection? Further, do the administrator posts that contain links garner significantly more traffic than those without? And finally, do certain root links (YouTube, Facebook, etc.) appear more frequently than others?
5. Examining, through content analysis, the primary words that are used by the group administrator and how this messaging translates into usage of these words by the members. Does the administrator messaging influence users equally or is there a concentration of usage among different bodies of users?
6. Understanding the relationship between membership on the EDL Facebook page and actual participation in the online dialogue. Do all members participate in the online dialog or does the participation rate suffer from disinterest as suggested by Morozov (2011)?
7. Measuring the patterns of participation among the various users. Is the user traffic evenly distributed or is the majority of the traffic attributable to a small minority of power users (McCorkindale, 2012)?

It is important to note that the processes that were employed during this research, particularly as they relate to the collection and coding of the data were, at the time, considered by some to be on the cutting edge. Since 2011-12, new application programming interfaces (API's) have been developed to facilitate more substantive

research in social media and other CMC than was commercially available at the time. Even so, the detail of this collection is still beyond what is possible using the current Facebook API. Certainly, the results from these research efforts provide an understanding of online activism and the use of social media by groups seeking to engage in activism that was previously unavailable in published literature. The primary goal of this research was to move toward a more statistical understanding of social media engagement and as such it is hoped that the findings contained herein will not only inform those interested in investigating the characteristics of computer mediated communications, particularly related to extremism or terrorism, and reinforce the notion that the reward in acquired new skills and knowledge is well worth the extra effort.

Chapter One: A Review of Literature Associated with the English Defence League, Online Extremism, and the Impact of Social Media

When considering a literature review it was necessary to include several perspectives that impacted this research. First, was to understand the nature of the English Defence League and how they perceive themselves as a movement and more importantly how they are categorized within the broader literature. Key to this examination was gaining a clearer picture of the EDL as a right-wing or far-right extremist group. As the thrust of this research was the examination of the online activity of the EDL on Facebook, it was also important to examine the various aspects related to online activism, online extremism, and the literature that addresses the use of social media by the EDL.

As will be discussed herein, the internet and social media have arguably changed the way terrorists/extremists communicate, disseminate their ideology, and seek to recruit and mobilize members; and academics continue to seek to understand this new phenomenon (Alterman, 2011; Diani, 2000; Wojcieszak 2009; Harlow & Harp 2012; Ackland & O'Neil 2011; Spier, 2011; Margetts et al., 2013; Tsfati & Weimann, 2002; Conway, 2012; Bowman-Grieve & Conway, 2012, Weimann, 2011; Klausen et al., 2012). What is unclear is the total impact of this new media, and whether the use of the internet and social media has resulted in increased effectiveness and participation in violent extremism or other extremist activity. The rise of the EDL and their use of social media provides an opportunity to consider the impact of their use of social media and how the participation by the “members” might help answer other questions about the group and the way they communicate, particularly as it relates to the issues

the EDL considers important; how they define themselves; and how what they say provides illumination as to their true motive.

The EDL as Extremists

One of the more interesting questions when looking at the English Defence League is trying to decide what they are. Are they a social movement, a political movement, a hate group, right wing extremists, a mash of more than one of these, or something else entirely? The English Defence League suggests that they be viewed as a human rights movement, seeking to be the ‘protectors of Britishness’ in the United Kingdom. And while the rhetoric of the EDL suggests they seek to be a benign force within UK society, a closer look at their motives and actions provides ample evidence to support classifying the EDL as a group that holds very extreme views. The growth of the EDL and the milieu out of which they arose will be covered extensively in Chapter Three, but this section will focus on whether or not the EDL should be considered a right wing extremist group (RWE).

The EDL Mission

The following statement appeared on the EDL Facebook page in February 2011 :

EDL MISSION STATEMENT

*(1) HUMAN RIGHTS: Protecting And Promoting Human Rights
The English Defence League (EDL) is a human rights organisation that exists to protect the inalienable rights of all people to protest against radical Islam’s encroachment into the lives of non Muslims. It also recognises that Muslims themselves are frequently the main victims of some Islamic traditions and practices. The Government should ensure the individual human rights of members of the Muslim community to openly criticise Islamic orthodoxy, to challenge Islamic community leaders without fear of retribution, to receive full equality before the law (including equal rights for Muslim women), and to leave Islam if they see fit and to do so without fear or censure. Muslims have the right to demand reform of their religion to make it more relevant to the needs of the modern world, including the need to fully respect other groups in society without fear of retribution. It calls upon the*

Government to repeal legislation that prevents effective freedom of speech that is essential if the human rights abuses that sometimes manifest themselves around Islam are to be stopped.

The EDL believes that radical Islam has a stranglehold on British Muslims. It keeps them fearful and isolated, especially the women that it encases in the Burqa. It misrepresents their views, stifles freedom of expression, and radicalises their children, whilst continually doing a discredit to those who do wish to peacefully co-exist with their fellow Britons.

(2) DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW: Promoting Democracy And The Rule Of Law By Opposing Sharia

The European Court of Human Rights has declared that “sharia is incompatible with the fundamental principles of democracy”. We have seen in recent years a great deal of accommodation with sharia norms based on the premise that sharia rules can be simply attached to our existing traditions and customs. In reality sharia is an alternative to our legal, political, and social systems. Encouragement of halal food, Islamic courts, and the demand to respect Islam are all aspects of sharia designed to undermine our established way of life on the road to the crystallisation of the full sharia alternative. Sharia law makes a fundamental distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims and the EDL will never allow this sort of iniquitous apartheid system to take root in our country. The EDL will therefore oppose sharia appeasement in all its forms.

(3) PUBLIC EDUCATION: Ensuring That The Public Get A Balanced Picture Of Islam

A central part of the EDL’s mission is public education. The British political and media establishment have, for a long time, been presenting a very sanitised and therefore inaccurate view of Islam shaped by the needs of policy makers rather than the needs of the public. This has acted as a barrier to informed policy making and made the solution of real problems impossible. In pursuing this self defeating and destructive policy, the Government has effectively been acting as the propaganda arm of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The EDL is committed to a campaign of public education to ensure that all aspects of Islam that impact on our society are brought into the open so that they can be debated in an open and honest way. It believes that only by looking at all the facts can society be most effectively and humanly governed. If there are aspects of Muslim tradition that encourage the activities of Islamic radicals and criminals then these need to be properly addressed without fear of accusations of racism or xenophobia. The public must have a more balanced and less sanitised view of Islam that allows it to ensure that decision makers are held to account for their policy making choices,

choices that affect the harmony and security of the nation.

The EDL promotes the understanding of Islam and the implications for non Muslims forced to live alongside it. Islam is not just a religious system but a political and social ideology that seeks to dominate all non-believers and impose a harsh legal system that and rejects the democratic process. It runs counter to all that we hold dear within our British liberal, democracy.

(4) RESPECTING TRADITION: Promoting The Traditions And Culture Of England While At The Same Time Being Open To Embrace The Best That Other Cultures Can Offer

The EDL believes that English Culture has the right to exist and prosper in England. It recognises that culture is not static and that over time natural change takes place and other cultures make contributions that make our culture stronger and more vibrant.

However, this does not give license to policy makers to deliberately undermine our culture and impose non-English cultures on the English people in their own land. If people migrate to this country then they should be expected to respect our culture, its laws, and traditions and not expect their own cultures to be promoted by agencies of the state. The best of their cultures will be absorbed naturally and we will all be united by the enhanced culture that results.

The EDL is therefore keen to draw its support from all races, all faiths, all political and lifestyle persuasions. Under its umbrella all people in England, whatever their background, or origin can stand united in a desire to stop the imposition of the rules of Islam on non believers. In order to ensure the continuity of our culture and its institutions, the EDL stands opposed to the creeping Islamisation of our country because that presents itself as an undemocratic alternative to our cherished way of life.

Our armed forces stand up and risk their lives every day in order to protect our culture and democratic way of life. They, also, are inclusive of all England's diversity and are a shining example of what a people can achieve in unity. The EDL is therefore committed to opposing any and all abuse that our men and women in uniform are subjected to and will campaign for legal remedies to ensure that those working within these important institutions are not exposed to abuse or aggression from within our country.

(5) INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK: Working In Solidarity With Others Around The World

The EDL is keen to join with others who share its values, wherever they are in the world, and from whatever cultural background they derive. It believes that the demand for sharia is global and therefore needs to be tackled at a global as well as national level this demand is never realised. The EDL will therefore have an international outlook

to enhance and strengthen its domestic efforts. (EDL Facebook information, accessed 31 January 2011)

While the EDL views itself as a humanitarian, pro-democracy movement that seeks to promote the rule of law, a more balanced education where it pertains to Muslim extremism, English culture, and a global outlook to combat the growth of sharia law; this rhetoric contrasts sharply with the actions and statements of the members and leaders, as will be documented within this research, and more importantly by academics who have sought to provide understanding about the EDL, their motivations, and the potential influence they might have on the broader socio-political environment in the UK (Allen, 2010; Jackson, 2011; Richards, 2013; Busher, 2013; Alessio & Meredith, 2014; Goodwin, 2013; Bartlett & Littler, 2011; Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun, 2013). Key to this discussion is the characterization of the English Defence League, by the media and elements within the UK government, as a far right extremist group. While this messaging has been consistent, and will be discussed in Chapter Four, the academic literature on the EDL is less definitive in its assessment.

The External Perception of the EDL

From the early days of its formation, and as will be covered in detail in Chapter Four, the EDL has been publically characterized as “facists”, “right-wing thugs”, “hooligans”, “neo-Nazi’s”, and “Islamaphobic”. While the leadership of the EDL sought to combat these characterizations, the media persisted and often the statements and actions of EDL members supported such an image. While the EDL claimed to be a peaceful movement, there were numerous instances of violence associated with EDL meetings and demonstrations (Jackson, 2011). Reports of targeted attacks on minorities and immigrants followed most significant EDL events, and vandalism to Mosques and Islamic schools/study centers were also highlighted. Early media

images captured EDL members raising their arms in the Nazi salute (Booth, Taylor, & Lewis, 2009). These images became so alarming that the EDL leadership went on Facebook to condemn the action and insist that members refrain from such expression in the future and engage in what has become an active campaign to distance themselves from those movements that were seen as representing the extreme far-right (Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun, 2013; Jackson, 2011). Further, in interviews for newspaper and on television, the EDL leadership had to spend a considerable amount of time explaining why they weren't right wing thugs, neo-Nazis's, or an extension of the British Nationalist Party (Jackson, 2011; Alessio & Meredith, 2014; Richards, 2013). Even with all of the protestations from the EDL leadership, the British media's portrayal of the EDL as being a far right extremist group resonated with the much of the public and is exemplified in the following segment:

“ The English Defence League, which started in Luton last year, has become the most significant far-right street movement in the UK since the National Front in the 1970s. A Guardian investigation has identified a number of known rightwing extremists who are taking an interest in the movement – from convicted football hooligans to members of violent rightwing splinter groups” (Taylor, 2010).

The UK government has certainly come to see the EDL as a threat and has indicated they feel they are in fact a right wing extremist group (Solomos, 2013). Prime Minister David Cameron commented on the EDL during Parliament on 11 August 2011:

“The hon. Gentleman speaks not only for his constituents, but, frankly, for the whole House in deprecating the English Defence League and all it stands for. On its attempt to say that it will somehow help to restore order, I have

described some parts of our society as sick, and there is none sicker than the EDL”

(<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110811/debtext/110811-0001.htm#1108117000958>).

In November 2013, the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom hosted the Symposium on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism. During this event, which was conducted under Chatham House Rules, an entire panel dealt with the issue of right wing extremism (RWE) particularly in the UK. Portions of this research dealing with the EDL and their use of Facebook was presented as a part of the programme. What was clear from the panel presentations was that the researchers and the government viewed the EDL and similar groups as right-wing extremists and represented a threat to stability as it related to the Muslim diaspora population in the UK¹. This characterization is reinforced in the print media coverage of the EDL which is discussed in Chapter Four herein.

Interestingly, academic work that examines the EDL provides a more objective, accurate, and substantive characterization of the group. The focus of much of this work is on the stated mission or nature of the group, how their actions and the statements of their members differ from this preferred perception, and whether the EDL actually qualifies as being viewed as a right wing extremist group, are they what some have come to describe as a member of a counter jihadi movement, or even part of a “new far right” (Jackson, 2011; Alessio & Meredith, 2014; Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun, 2013).

¹ 2013 Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism Symposium, Shrivenham, UK. As this event was held under Chatham House rules, specific attribution is not possible.

Defining the EDL

When considering the disposition of the EDL, some look first to their connection, through its leadership with the “traditional reactionary right-wing groups such as the British National Party (BNP) (Treadwell & Garland , 2011, p. 623). Alessia and Meredith (2013) consider this pedigree to be reinforced by the fact that the EDL is supported by “current and former members of other UK extreme right groups including the BNP, the National Front, the Racial Volunteer Force, Blood and Honour, and Combat 18” (p. 116). As such, they consider the EDL as part of a growing tradition of far-right extremism in the UK “with fascist or quasi-fascist tendencies and traits” (Alessio & Meredith, 2013, p.116). Further, they suggest that the self- proclamations of the member should be viewed with extreme caution and more importance be given to the actions and practices of the members which “lend themselves to a more coherently fascist ideology” (p.110).

Goodwin (2012), however, posits that the EDL are not overtly racist but are instead xenophobic. He states that their “immigration-related concerns should not be dismissed as crude racism” (p. 10). He points out that in his survey of EDL members 58% agreed that non-white citizens were just as British as whites and that few of the respondents expressed sentiments of racial superiority (p.10). However, other findings support his xenophobic characterization. When compared to the findings from the general survey, EDL respondents scored higher in several areas that provide insight into such a determination. First, he found that 84% of EDL supporters expected relations between different societal groups to worsen while only 54% of the full sample held these views. Further, 79% of the EDL supporters felt there would be a clash between Muslim and white British citizens compared to 49% of the full sample. Finally, 72% said that it was inevitable that there would be violence between

the two groups while only 46% of the full sample shared this outlook (Goodwin, 2012, p.11). Goodwin (2012) goes on to state that “the seeds of support for counter-jihad groups such as the defence leagues lie among the citizens’ profound concern over immigration, ethnic minorities and their impact on the native group and nation. They feel intensely anxious about these issues and about the future direction of society, and are profoundly pessimistic” (p.14).

Bartlett and Littler (2011) agree that the EDL cannot be viewed one-dimensionally and that “the group is probably best described as a populist movement that contains some extreme right-wing and sometimes Islamophobic elements” (p. 7). This is supported by the findings of their survey where 41% of the EDL members indicated the reason they joined was to oppose Islam. While some of these respondents “directed at all Muslims, others made more nuanced criticisms, condemning ‘political Islam’ and Muslim extremists” (Bartlett & Littler, 2012, p.27). Following this 31% of the respondents indicated their joining the EDL was linked to identity. Within this group of respondents they referred to their love of England and “commitment to preserving traditional national and cultural values, and belief in representing the interests on ‘real’ countrymen” (p.27). Allen (2010) also noted how the EDL talked about “Muslims ‘spreading’ across ‘our country’ whilst referring to the ‘patriotic people’ of the English nation being besieged and overwhelmed” (p. 228). Although he does go on to include the EDL with the BNP, Allen (2010) points out that, as for the far right, whilst they continue to play upon the embedded sense of fear to create, speculate, and exaggerate about the threat of Muslims and Islam, it will be the future direction that will be interesting, not least because of the relative nullification of the BNP compared to the rapid growth of the EDL” (p. 223).

Busher (2012) considers the concept of a culturally defined nationalism as an impetus for activists to engage and articulate “exclusivist group boundaries” that do not “carry with them the kind of public sentiment associated with traditional far right discourses of race” (p.8). By appealing to the perceived threat posed by Muslims and Islam, coupled with their separating themselves from the “Muslim threat” by referring to themselves ‘patriots’ and ‘infidels’, the EDL activists have tapped into “a pervasive and social discourse about a “clash of civilizations” and the threat posed by (militant) Islam to Western national cultures” (Busher, 2012, p.12). But absent the overt racism or perceptions of racial supremacy that is associated with the far-right, can the EDL be legitimately viewed as a far-right extremist group?

It is clear that by disassociating itself from known far-right entities, condemning neo-Nazi and other openly fascist ‘extreme right wing’ groups (Jackson, 2011; Allen, 2010; Goodwin, 2013), the EDL has sought to be viewed as a ‘new far right’ populist group “that genuinely wants to distance itself from a legacy of neo-Nazi extremism” (Jackson, 2011, p.8). Jackson (2011) points out that the ‘new far right’ movement is different from the traditional far right in that it does not engage in illegal activity; promote anti-Semitism or other neo-Nazi themes. The ‘new far right’ then can be seen as a movement that “combines ultra-patriotism with a tendency to present mainstream politics as in a critical state of decay and disorder – themes commonly found in the EDL’s materials” (Jackson, 2011, p. 8). But how different is the message of the new far right from those of the traditional far right? The replacement of anti-Semitism and anti-Afro Caribbean prejudice with “nativist” or culturally racist views toward Muslims seems merely a shift in target, not an overall change in thinking.

The creation of an ultra-patriotic national identity against which the cultural and religious aspects of Muslims and Islam are viewed as the “alien other” provides an

avenue for the new far right to “define a clear, patriotic sense of ‘our way of life’ and evokes a sense of a safe ‘us’ and a dangerous ‘them’” (Jackson, 2011, p. 9). Some of the ways this manifests itself within the messaging of the EDL includes issues related to new Mosque construction or Mosque expansion, the introduction of halal practices in local restaurants and schools, the rape and “sex grooming” of non-Muslim girls/women (Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun, 2013, p.63). While these issues will be covered in more depth in later chapters they provide a glimpse into how the EDL seeks to characterize the broader Muslim community as having a fixed set of cultural and religious values that are “diametrically opposed to those of the national community, as well as being inferior and dangerous (Jackson, 2011, p.9). Jackson (2011) goes on to point out that the Koran is often at the center of these arguments whereby adherence to the Koran, which is a tenet of Islam but viewed by the new far right as “the antithesis of European values”, places the Muslim in a paradigm where they must either reject the Koran or by default they are rejecting the west (p. 9). As such, the EDL’s ‘new far right’ ideology is rooted in this ultra-patriotic sense of nationalism, where Islam is the target and essentially all Muslims are viewed as the dangerous ‘other’. From this perspective, the thin veil of humanitarianism and democratic values that the EDL seeks to hide behind is pierced and they are found to be not dissimilar from the traditional far-right groups in their ideology, the only difference being the target of their animus.

A recent paper published by The International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence, authored by Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens and Hans Brun (2013) examines the EDL within the broader context of what they see as Europe’s Counter-Jihad Movement (ECJM). In their view the EDL is part of an “identifiable pan-European far-right movement that has emerged since the late

2000's" (Meleagrou-Hitchens & Bruns, 2013, p. 1). Central to this movement is the idea of a cultural nationalism that seeks to ensure the survival of 'European culture'. Drawing on much of the literature cited previously herein, and acknowledging the difficulty in categorizing a group such as the EDL and even the broader counter-Jihad movement that espouses a position of democratic and liberal enlightenment, their report shows that the "ECJM's cultural nationalism does indeed manifest itself as a form of far-right extremism in its portrayal of Muslims as a threat to European culture, an "enemy within", and in its proposed, highly illiberal response to this perceived threat" (p. 1). Importantly, the EDL is viewed as the original root of this new European counter-jihad movement that has spread across the continent in the formation of national defence leagues in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, France, and even outside Europe to Australia and the United States. Their assessment is the EDL and the ECJM is "without a doubt" a far right movement that is growing throughout Europe. They also feel that casting this movement as an extreme form of cultural nationalism provides a clearer perspective and "helps to accurately place groups like the EDL within the ranks of Europe's far-right" (Meleagrou-Hitchens & Bruns, 2013, p. 67).

While the literature lacks consensus on whether the EDL is a part of the far right, the new far right, a Muslim hate group or a ultra-nationalist movement, one thing most of the authors agreed on was that the EDL represented a threat to civil society and should be studied and taken seriously (Allen, 2010; Richards, 2013; Alessio & Meredith, 2014; Busher, 2012; Busher 2013; Jackson 2011; Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun 2013). Several also agree that the EDL has used the internet, social media, and more specifically Facebook to its advantage in disseminating its message, mobilizing its members to engage in demonstrations, and promote the position that the growth of

the online membership is representative of broader support within British society (Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun, 2013; Jackson, 2011; Allen, 2011; Bartlett & Littler, 2011). While the EDL has taken advantage of the low cost and high visibility of various internet and social media to build its membership numbers into what is seen as a large virtual army, what is less clear from the literature is just how much impact the online activity of the EDL has on the membership and their willingness to engage beyond that of being keyboard warriors. The collection, segregation, and analysis of the Facebook traffic of the EDL will provide some answers to this central research question.

Extremism in the Age of the Internet

One of the most significant changes to the communication capabilities of various terrorist and other violent extremist movements has been the cost savings and the ability to disseminate information more broadly via the internet (Shirky, 2008, p. 157; Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009, p. 5; Morozov, 2011, p. 189; McGrath, 2011, ; McGrath et al., 2012, p. 241). Moving from emails to blogs to social media, groups engaged in extremist action have embraced these new technologies to recruit and mobilize large groups of people to their cause. Now groups can overcome the impediments to mass communication, and engage in what can be viewed as one-to-many and many-to-many communications (Shirky, 2008, p. 87). It is, however, important to note that this change in communication technology is part of a broader societal change and not unique to the far-right and their use of the internet. Earl and Kimport (2011) argue that “actions that are, in our terminology, ‘more virtual’ better leverage the cost affordance for participants because these actions usually require the least time and effort to complete” (p. 77). But has this ability to communicate more effectively and

at almost no cost actually increased the effectiveness of these groups? This is one of the primary inquiries of this thesis.

Fortunately, there is a growing body of literature that seeks to examine this question. Much of the quantitative work in this area involves using computational studies to test behavioural models related to social media, CMC, and social movements offering algorithmic models for cyber movements (Agarwal et al., 2011, p. 236; Effing et al., 2011). Studies to consider the impact of social media and other CMC have sought to test various theories but provide varied outcomes. Janssen (2011) examined the process of “nudging” users to engage by establishing a behavioural model/simulation to determine who would be the most susceptible to influence. While the simulation provided “some initial results to catalyze action in social networks” it was revealed that the researcher made “simplistic assumptions about the underlying distribution of the attributes of the agents” (Janssen, 2011, p. 8). Janssen went on to acknowledge that performing these tests in large artificial networks brings to light the challenge of testing this model on empirical data (Janssen, 2011, p.8).

It appears that in reality, most groups that seek to utilize social media and other CMC as their primary source of communication for recruitment and mobilization fail (Margetts et al., 2013, p. 1; Morozov, 2011, p. 194). Margetts et al., (2013) examined movements that sought to utilize social media and how the thresholds for joining might determine the success or failure of the movement. In their examination of the petition drives in the UK, they found;

“The collection of transactional data from 8,000 electronic petitions to the UK government shows that 95 per cent fail to attain even the 500 signatures necessary for an official response, a modest criterion for success. Use of the internet for collective action increases the ratio of unsuccessful to successful

collection initiatives. Low start-up costs mean that mobilization that in offline environments would have failed to get off the ground may achieve some sort of presence, but quickly wither away” (Margetts, et al., 2013, p. 1-2).

While this study sought to understand the personality traits and social value orientations that might make one more likely to become a member of a group engaged in an online movement, and they were able to identify a ‘type’ of person that would be more likely to consistently engage in such activity, there was no real measurement of participation. In this regard the question becomes whether membership has meaning?

To consider the value of membership, Morozov (2011) and Spier (2011) cite the example of the popular Facebook cause, Saving the Children of Africa. With over 1.7 million members, the group seems very impressive, however when one considers that the total amount raised in this effort was approximately \$12,000.00, this equals less than one one-hundredth of a penny (US) per person in donations (Morozov, 2011, p. 190). Budish (2013) provides the example of the Save Darfur Coalition Facebook group which achieved a membership of 1,282,339 members that, on average, donated only nine cents each to the cause (Budhish, 2013, p. 750-751). Morozov goes on to question the value of this online phenomenon stating that “if psychologists are right and most people support political causes simply because it makes them feel happier, then it’s quite unfortunate that joining Facebook groups makes them as happy as writing letters to their elected representatives or organizing rallies without triggering any of the effects that might benefit society at large” (Morozov, 2011, p. 190). If this is the case, how effective is this low cost mode of communication? And if the cost of joining a group is so reduced due to the ease of simply clicking join, what do online social movements have to do to get their members to do any work? Interestingly, the

answer to this question is the same for online as well as offline groups; the development of a collective/group.

The Development of an Online Social/Group Identity

It is easy, when considering the interactions of individuals within online groups, to discount them as harmless and “not real”. But, the degree of reality one places on computer mediated communication is dependent upon the experiential view of the participant. Thomas Ploug (2009) offers a rather complex theoretical analysis of this issue by examining several hypotheses of reality and trust in relation to communication between a participant and a virtual ‘patient.’ By questioning the notion of presence or proximity as a necessary requirement for the creation of moral agency, he offers that it is the “belief in the reality of a particular patient” that is central to extending moral concern to the other. Additionally, in interactive situations like chat rooms, the moral requirements that the participant is faced with “will partly be constituted by the particularities of the person to whom they are directed (Ploug, 2009, p. 195).” These two concepts are essential to understanding the impact of extremist chat rooms on the individual participant. If one accepts these premises, as an individual participates in computer mediated communication on extremist web site chat rooms, by the nature of their continued participation they begin to identify with and accept the ‘reality’ of the other and therefore will frame their interactions so as to conform to the moral guidelines that are considered acceptable within the group, even if this morality is one of hate or holy war.

How is it that a medium that offers such an opportunity for anonymity can also facilitate the development of a social identity? And how is it possible, given the radical views of terrorist and extremist groups, that individuals can come to identify with the other members within these computer mediated environments? Addressing

these questions is the Social Identity model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) (Douglas, 2007; Spears, Lee, & Postmes, 2007). This model suggests that the anonymity afforded in computer mediated communications can actually “facilitate the enactment of social identity” (Douglas, 2007, p. 159). In the context of online chat rooms, with closed or in-group audiences, the SIDE model proposes that ‘identifiability’ can be facilitated as a result of engagement with like-minded individuals and can often lead to the “heightened expression of in-group normative views” (Douglas, 2007, p. 159). The development of the group identity then reduces the persons awareness of the self (de-individuation), allowing them to suspend the regulation of their ‘actions’ so as to meet the obligations of participation in the group. This is supported by Cole (2012) when he states, “Continuous exposure to visual and auditory stimuli can cause a person to self-identify with an extremist group’s views. It can even provide the means by which individuals become indoctrinated supporters through financial donations, moral support or technical assistance. It is possible that this process could lead an individual to become an evangelist or even a violent actor” (P.78).

Therefore the internet, while offering a vast array of ideas and a high degree of anonymity, actually allows people to self-select the groups they wish to engage with, socialize in, and begin the process of self-segregation that is key to identifying with the group. Once this identification occurs, “the depersonalizing effects of anonymity are likely to lead to a range of group-related outcomes including heightened group salience, self-stereotyping in group terms, group cohesiveness, and conformity to group norms” (Spears et al., 2007, p. 58).

In an examination of the online activities of the far right extremist group Stormfront (Caren,et al., 2012), the creation of a collective identity was an essential

part of this SMOC, or Social Movement Online Community (p. 68). They point to the consistency of the online-offline white nationalist messaging: “That they are “awakened” to the truth; that an objective analysis of the facts will show they are correct; use of jargon such as “sheeple” (for those whites who conform to dominate political ideology) and ZOG (“Zionist Occupied Government”)” (Caren, et. al., 2012, p. 179). These ideas and others seek to create a distinct identity existing outside mainstream political views, which potentially “increase the collective identity of the members” (p. 188). This virtual community is also a very important support structure for the user, often helping to compensate for the lack of critical mass in any geographic location (Simi & Futrell, 2010, p.97). Geographically isolated, the participants within this virtual community have the opportunity to be part of a larger body of believers.

Wojcieszak (2012) suggests that such a closed loop of identity creates “false consensus”, where continued engagement within an ideologically homogenous group will create the perception that the general public shares in their extremist views (P.529). As online participation increases, extremism increases, “likely due to the informational and normative influences operating within the online groups” (Wojcieszak, 2012, p. 637). These informational and normative influences encourage the individual to modify their opinions in alignment with the expectations and views of those within the group. This effect is potentially enhanced by the anonymity of the interactions which can “minimize the differences among individuals and foster identification within a group, ultimately inciting polarization toward more extreme positions” (Wojcieszak, 2010, p. 641). Within such an environment, informational influence can manifest in the acceptance of other’s arguments as being “valid evidence of reality” (p. 641), regardless of the merit of the content (Sobkowicz &

Sobkowicz, 2012). These anonymous/depersonalized online interactions, according to Wojcieszak (2010), “enhances argument recall and results in more positive argument evaluation” (p. 640). This effect is enhanced when participants in the extremist online environment interact with friends, family, and acquaintances that hold differing views (p. 641).

Enhancement of online group identity with in-groups can also be achieved through the practice of sanctioning anyone whose communications are considered at odds with the ‘ideology’ or purpose of the group. While the anonymity afforded by online communication would seem to deemphasize the effect of online sanctioning, the de-individuation that occurs as a part of identification with the online group actually makes one more susceptible to the influences of the other participants thereby increasing the likelihood of compliance with group norms and attitudes (Sassenberg & Jonas, 2007, p. 283). This is particularly true within terrorist/extremist chat rooms or social media groups where solidarity of thought is essential to maintaining ideological continuity and reinforcing group identity. Visitors to these sites who express views not within the group norm are often chastised to conform to the ideological principles of the in-group with the threat of being ‘locked out’ from further interaction. Research of compliance to group norms due to real or perceived threats of sanctions shows that “recipients of social pressure are quite likely to give in to the demands and express their identity on dimensions that most likely do not lead to sanctions” (Sassenberg & Jonas, 2007, p. 283). But even with the pressure to conform, users do get sanctioned. Caren, Jowers and Gaby (2012), in their research on Stormfront found that 6% of the 6,868,674 posts within the collection were no longer available for reasons that included being deleted by the forum administrator. They go on to suggest that these posts were likely deleted either due to “trolling”

activity (unwelcome/argumentative activity within the strings by non-members or posers), or users violating Stormfront's ban on certain racial epithets or posts that promote violence (P.175).

The Power of the Internet and Social Media

The growth of, and the threat posed by extremist websites, forums, and chat rooms is reflected in the literature as it pertains to the spread of extremist ideology, and fundraising, as well as the communication of operational details, the use as a virtual library of terrorist training manuals that includes instructions for the manufacture of explosive devices, and more recently as a potential recruiting tool in the search for new members (Hoffman, 2006; Nacos, 2007; Weimann, 2011; Conway, 2012, Klausen et al., 2012). While there is agreement among scholars regarding the growing use of the internet by extremist and terrorist groups, the true value of these websites, forums and chat rooms for the purposes of radicalizing and recruiting new members to the cause is a source of debate (Hoffman, 2006; Nacos, 2007; Weimann, 2006; Conway, 2012) and this thesis seeks to add some empirical clarity to this debate. Sageman (2004) states there was “no evidence to suggest that the internet is persuasive enough” to develop allegiances that would support the demands of joining the jihad, and in his sample of 150 al Qaeda members he found no support for internet recruitment (Sageman, 2004, p. 136).

Brigitte Nacos (2008) sees the internet as “the most effective recruiting tool for terrorists and hate groups” (Nacos, 2008, p. 254). Recognizing the transition from “one-directional and text based” communications to interactive platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and others, Weimann (2010) states that “not only can the terrorists promote global paranoia, share messages with sympathizers, and obtain donations, but they can also create more terrorists. The internet has provided

terrorists with a whole new virtual realm to conduct their sinister back-alley transactions” (Weimann, 2010, p. 53). By providing a venue for the spread of their propaganda and chat rooms for like-minded individuals to meet and reinforce their extremist views and create a virtual community, extremist websites have become an important tool in the effort to recruit new members (Nacos, 2008; Smith, 2008; Weimann, 2006; Zelin & Borow, 2013; Hoskins, 2009; Weimann, 2010). The proliferation of extremist online social media as recruitment and training tools has served as a replacement for face-to-face interaction (Blanquart & Cook, 2013). In the United Kingdom’s *Strategy for Countering International Terrorism (Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare)*, the Home Office expressed concern regarding the impact of extremist activity on the internet, stating that “The communication revolution also facilitates a dialogue between organizations and their actual perspective members. That dialogue enables fundraising, recruitment, and some training and operational planning: to a limited extent the internet has superseded the terrorist training camp.” (Prevent Strategy, Home Office, March 2009. p. 41.) This is reflected in the fact that 12% of European 11-17 year olds report having accessed online hate sites, with 20% of the 15-16 year olds within this cohort (Conway, 2012). Violent extremists, therefore, seek to take advantage of these trends and have moved to expand the venues for their content to include social network and sharing sites like Facebook, Bebo, YouTube, and Twitter (Conway, 2012, p.2).

As western counter-terrorism efforts have limited the various person to person avenues for the spread of extremist ideology by outlawing ‘hate-speech’ in public forums, mosques, and in print, as well as identifying and arresting known terrorist recruiters, these communications have been driven underground and the investment by extremist groups in on-line forums and websites, and the level of participation

within these websites, has grown substantially (Weimann, 2010; Conway, 2012; Soriano, 2011; Amichai-Hamburger, 2005). In the United Kingdom, Mohammed Irfan Raja and four accomplices were arrested in 2006 for downloading and sharing extremist material. It was found that the five young men had spent hours online in extremist chat rooms talking to other radicalized youths, and downloading jihadi material including an Al-Qaeda training manual (Casciani, 2007). While some may claim that on-line activity cannot, on its own drive one to engage in jihad (Sageman, 2004, p. 163), others would argue that when an individual purposely seeks out and visits an extremist site he/she is on the road to becoming radicalized (Jenkins, 2007).

The potential danger of online radicalization is highlighted in the United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism (March 2009). Noted within this document is the threat posed by "self-starting networks, or even lone individuals, motivated by an ideology similar to that of Al-Qa'ida, but with no connection to that organization; and terrorist groups that follow a broadly similar ideology as Al Qa'ida but which have their own identity and regional agenda" (p. 9). Further, the document goes on to acknowledge the role and impact of the internet in the "two way dialogue between their organizations and their actual or prospective members...that enables fundraising, recruitment, and some training and operational planning" (p.41). Previous action by far-right/anti-immigration groups and recent calls by extremist Islamists to move out of their password protected chat-rooms and expand onto social network sites like Facebook and Twitter in order to 'appeal to the masses', just as they have used YouTube to spread extremist propaganda, is a disturbing development given the trend of online radicalization seen in recent arrests. Recent cases where it is clear that online participation either contributed to or was

directly responsible for the radicalization and/or mobilization of an individual seem to reinforce the premise that it is possible to become radicalized via online participation.

Online Radicalization

There has considerable debate among scholars regarding the concept of “self-radicalization’ vis-à-vis online engagement with extremist content, and Conway (2012) argues effectively that while “the Internet can play a significant role in violent radicalization processes” there is a need for further research in this area (p.9). This said, there do exist cases where individuals claim that their radicalization and decision to engage in violent extremist activity was facilitated, if not inspired, by their engagement with online extremist content. One person who influenced many individuals online was Anwar al-Awlaki. Born in the United States and having gone to college in the US, Awlaki is believed to have provided spiritual support to two of the 9-11 hijackers (9-11 Commission Report), and has, since fleeing to Yemen, had significant influence in the spread of jihad online and is credited for influencing several individuals toward jihadi activity as a result of his online interactions with them, including the Time Square bomber Faisal Shazzad, and the Christmas Day “underwear bomber” Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (Miller and Hsu, 2010, p. 1). One of the most well-known cases is the Fort Hood Shooter Major Nidal Hassan, who murdered 13 and wounded more than 30 people following his online interactions with Awlaki (Nasaw, 2009). This case is most interesting as Hassan’s transformation took place without having visited any terrorist training facility or traveling to an insurgent area as has been the case with others who were influenced by Awlaki. Others who were moved to commit terrorist acts or provide material support to Al-Qaeda following their interaction with Awlaki include, but are certainly not limited to, Carlos Eduardo Almonte, Mohamed Mahmood Alessa, and Barry Walter Bujol. In

the UK, this phenomenon was thrust to the forefront by the knife attack on 14 May 2010 of a Member of Parliament (MP) Stephen Timms by Roshonara Choudhry.

Following the attack on MP Timms, it was first thought that his attacker was suffering from some mental disorder. However, it was discovered by UK law enforcement that Ms. Choudhry had been driven to commit this attempted murder as a result of having spent hundreds of hours viewing online video sermons by Anwar al-Awlaki. The result of this online activity was the self-radicalization of Ms. Choudhry and the determination that she must kill Mr. Timms for his 2003 vote in favor of UK participation in the war in Iraq (Burns & Helft, 2010, p. 2; Dodd, 2010; Ibrahim, 2010, p. 1). In a November 2010 article titled “The Lesson of Roshonara Choudhry’s Radicalization”, the author Azeem Ibrahim (2010) points out that,

“She was, it transpired, a wannabe Islamic extremist terrorist, who believed her actions were vengeance for her MP’s vote for the Iraq war. She had been motivated by watching online videos of a man she described as a scholar, Anwar al Awlaki, who had also helped motivate, directly or indirectly, the US Army psychiatrist who killed thirteen people, the Nigerian student responsible for the Christmas Day bomb attempt, John Walker Lindh, the man known as the “American Taliban”, and two of the 9-11 hijackers, Khalid al-Midhar and Nawaf al-Hamzi” (Ibrahim, 2010, p. 1).

The impact of Awlaki and his online presence was finally realized and acted upon by the US and UK governments, who requested that YouTube remove over 4,000 of his jihadi videos from their server. It was recognized that individuals were seeking out and watching his extremist sermons and calls to jihad on YouTube and being influenced by them toward becoming self-radicalized. A representative for YouTube, responding to the requests to remove the Awlaki videos, indicated that they violated

the sites policies prohibiting “dangerous or illegal activities such as bomb-making, hate speech, and incitement to commit violent acts,” but that “These are difficult issues and material that is brought to our attention is reviewed carefully. We will continue to remove content that incites violence according to our policies. Material of a purely religious nature will remain on the site “ (Burns & Helft, 2010, p. 1). However, prior to their being removed, the media wing of al-Qaeda, Al-Sahab (Arabic for “The Cloud”), was able to download most of the video’s to their own server, so while they are harder to access, they do still exist and are viewed and shared by Islamist extremists.

The record of arrests and prosecutions in the UK provides further evidence of this phenomenon. In 2006 Aabid Khan was arrested and found in possession of material on computer drives that indicated he was engaged in promoting violent jihad in the UK and in the broader English speaking world via the internet. He was recruiting others and helping to facilitate training trips to Pakistan. He was convicted of three counts of possession of an article for a purpose connected with terrorism (http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecutions/ctd_2008.html). In August 2008 Ishaq Kanmi was arrested for posting to an online pro-jihadi discussion forum where he claimed to have assumed the leadership of Al-Qaeda in Great Britain (AQ-GB). He utilized this forum to promote large scale attacks against the west and the execution of all individuals who opposed this effort. Specifically he named Tony Blair and Gordon Brown as targets for assassination. Following his arrest he pled guilty to belonging to a proscribed organization, inviting support for a proscribed organization (via his

online activities), one count of collection and four counts of dissemination of terrorist material (CPS 2010)².

It is important to note, particularly given the focus of this research, that the practice of promoting violent extremism online is not unique to pro-Islamist/jihadi groups. In June 2009 Police arrested Ian and Nicky Davidson, members of the Aryan Strike Force (ASF). According to the 2010 Counter-Terrorism Division of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) report the ASF was “a neo-Nazi organization that promoted violence against Jews, Muslims, black people, Asians, and anyone associated with the British Government.” The ASF operated a website and it was through the online forum within this site that they offered various ideological and terrorist materials for download. Following their arrest in June 2009, police discovered computer files with bomb making instructions and recovered a jar containing a quantity of ricin large enough to kill nine people. Another case involving the ASF resulted in the arrest and conviction of Michael Heaton and Trevor Hannington as they were found to be posting comments on the forum that promoted hatred of ethnic minorities and solicited murder. Hannington was also found to be in possession of and having had distributed online an instructional video for the making of an improvised flamethrower which he suggested could be used to burn black people (CPS, 2010).

More recently, arrests have been made in connection with individual participation in more traditional social networking fora. In 2011 Phillip Burgess pled guilty to promoting violence on Facebook during the August 2011 riots. He was found to have

² The Counter-Terrorism Division reports from the Crown Prosecution Service were accessed online and have no page numbers. These reports are a list of closed cases for the year of the annual report.

made posts calling for riots on King Street, Manchester which happened later that day and posted offensive racial comments where he suggested “bring in the kkk”, in an effort to incite racial hatred. Similarly Martin Hortshorn was arrested and pled guilty during this same time period of the riots for posting on Facebook his calls for the burning of “paki shops, takeaways, and Islamic Centers” (CPS, 2011).

In the UK, several extremist blogs and social network sites have come under scrutiny by the government and some have been shut down for their extremist activity. The EDL site has been closely monitored and sometimes interrupted because of the pseudo-violent messages it contains, and some groups like Islam4UK and most recently the Muslims Against Crusades have had their groups and their internet sites proscribed by the UK government for their pro-jihadi messages.³ While there have certainly been cases of individuals who become radicalized and driven to commit violent acts, the question still remains as to how influential these online venues are in facilitating this transformation and how much influence these sites have on the broader membership who is participating in these activities. Conway (2012) suggests that caution is called for when considering the direct link between online content, radicalization, and violent extremism; otherwise known as self-radicalization. This is supported by Klausen et al. (2012) in their assessment of YouTube Jihadists when they warn about assumptions of self-radicalization in the cases they present within their study. They state clearly that, “Terrorist actions rarely occur without some personal contact with extremist facilitators” (Klausen et al., 2012, p. 6).

Many scholars agree that extremist websites pose a continuing and growing threat (Hoffman, 2006; Nacos, 2008; Weimann, 2006 & 2010; Smith, 2008; Sageman, 2004;

³ Pursuant to discussions with the ACPO Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit

Klausen et al., 2012, Conway, 2012). These concerns are rooted in observations of the growth of the medium and the increased use of the internet by extremist groups to communicate ideas and information, and the ways they have adapted to new and more interactive fora like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Recently, researchers have begun to consider the nature of the material being presented or the impact these websites have on the participants as reflected in participations and engagement (Caren et al., 2012; Klausen et al., 2012; Bowman-Grieve, 2009) . Are these websites and chat rooms a real threat, providing an opportunity for individuals to self-radicalize toward extremist violence; or are they merely a venue where ‘terrorist or extremist wanna-be’s’ go to spout their bravado and play lip service to the cause?

Slacktivism

While the development of a group identity and the institution of methods to ensure group conformity can work to present a consistent and targeted message, there still exists within online groups a problem that has come to be known as “Slacktivism” (Gladwell, 2010; Budhish, 2013; Morozov, 2011). Morozov (2011) points out that the Internet has driven the cost of online participation to zero (p. 189). As such, “those charmed by the promise of digital activism often have a hard time distinguishing it from “slacktivism”, its more dangerous sibling, which too often leads to civic promiscuity-usually the result of a mad shopping binge in the online identity supermarket that is Facebook—that makes the online activist feel useful and important while having precious little political impact” (Morozov, 2011, p. 190). Budish (2013) suggests that, “One of the strongest criticisms of online activism is that it has primarily led to slacktivism or “arm-chair activism” at the expense of personal sacrifice and result-oriented activism” (p. 750). This is seen often where online

“activists” will respond to a call for direct action by indicating that they are “with you in spirit”. This phenomenon was observed often within the EDL collection.

What is unclear is whether this slacktivist tendency exists in more extremist groups where members self-select into a non-traditional group that is viewed as undesirable to the larger population. Ackland and O’Neil (2011) suggest that direct control over the means of communication will “favor the preeminence of expressive behaviour leading to the formation of collective identity” (p. 187). While their model is not able to quantify this phenomenon, they were able to identify the potential of digitally tracing online activities toward the development of empirical data sets for analysis (Ackland & O’Neil, 2011). This is important as the EDL made a decision to control the dialog on their Facebook page by limiting the amount of time the members were able to communicate with each other outside administrator controlled posts. An examination of use of online social networks in the May 15 Movement in Spain (Borge-Holthoefer et al, 2011) shows that within the twitter network for this movement roughly 10% of the active subjects generated 52% of the total traffic. Further, less than one percent of the “members” received more than 50% of the information posted and that “while the delivery of information is shared by a relatively large number of users that keep the “social temperature” of the movement, most of the information is simply directed towards a few highly connected targets that might not pass the voice any longer (i.e., that are not active spreaders)” (Borge-Holthoefer et al., 2011, p. 5).

This same phenomenon was observed by Berger and Strathearn (2013) in their measuring of influence in extremist online social networks. In their observation of white nationalists on Twitter that included 3,542 users, they found that the majority of influence was “disproportionally concentrated at the top” (p. 39). They found these

findings in line with the 90-9-1 rule “which states that 90 percent of the users in most online social networks are passive, nine percent are somewhat engaged and one percent drives most of the engagement and discussion” (Berger & Strathearn, 2013, P. 39). They found that the top 50 users (1.4%) were responsible for nearly 46% of the influencing activity and the top ten most influential users (0.3% of the users) accounted for 24.8% of the traffic and influenced 3,554 Twitter accounts which comprised followers plus followers of followers (p.39).

Power Users

The Pareto Principle was put forth by Vilfredo Pareto, and dates back to 1906 (Matties, 2012). More commonly known as the 80/20 rule, he described land ownership/wealth in Italy at the turn of the 20th century, where 80% of the land was owned by 20% of the population. Recently it has become a “rule of thumb” in various aspects of business. As such, 80% of the work is done by 20% of the workers, 80% of a business’s revenue comes from 20% of its customers, and 80% of the profit comes from 20% of the sales (it can go on to describe many more aspects where 80% of the effect is generated by 20% of the participants). It seems, according to studies done by Pew Research (Hampton, Goulet, Marlow, & Rainie, 2012), this phenomenon extends to social media as well. In a recent study of Facebook users titled, “Why most Facebook users get more than they give: The effect of Facebook ‘power users’ on everybody else”, Pew states that:

“Our findings suggest that while most Facebook users in our sample were moderately active over a one-month time period, there is a subset of Facebook users who are disproportionately more active. They skew the average. These power users, who, depending on the type of content, account for 20%-30% of Facebook users in our sample (Hampton et al., 2012, p. 12).

These findings are made even stronger when examining the user characteristics within the second most popular social media venue, Twitter.

Researchers at Yahoo!, conducted an analysis of Twitter traffic generated from July 28, 2009 to March 10, 2010 (223 days) which equaled five billion tweets. The researchers chose to examine tweets that contained URLs as they were found to “provide a much richer source of variation than is possible in the typical 140 character tweet providing a data set of 260 million tweets (Wu et al., 2011, p.3). What they determined was:

“Based on this classification, we find a striking concentration of attention on Twitter-roughly 50% of tweets consumed are generated by just 20,000 elite users.” (Wu et al., 2011, p. 1)

And within the conclusions:

“In particular, we find that although audience attention has indeed fragmented among a wider pool of content producers than classic models of mass media, attention remains highly concentrated, where roughly 0.05% of the population accounts for almost half of all posted URLs.” (Wu et al., 2011, p. 9)

These same 20,000 elite users making up just 0.05% of the user population at the time (2011) also attracted nearly 50% of all attention within twitter (Wu et al., 2011. P.5).

This concept is supported by findings from an examination of the French-speaking jihadisphere by Benjamin Ducol (2012). Ducol found that the level of participation/online involvement of the 2,517 registered users observed, was “neither consistent nor homogenous” (p. 58). He goes on to state that those engaged with the online forum “is clearly divided between a huge majority of passive users and a small minority of active users who are nevertheless extremely effective in maintaining a

continuous flow of discussions and dissemination of jihadi content” (Ducol, 2012, p. 59). This phenomenon is also observed in the online activity of right wing extremist groups (Caren et al., 2012).

The Internet, Virtual Communities, and Right Wing Extremism

The English Defence League is certainly not the first group, and will not be the last, to utilize social media as a communication medium in their group’s efforts. The literature on the use of the internet and specifically social media in these efforts, while fairly new, is developing and offers some significant insights as they relate to this project. Some of the first groups to take advantage of social media as an integral part of their messaging were far-right extremist hate groups. However, groups ranging from local political groups to worldwide environmental groups have found that the internet and certainly social media is an efficient and cost effective way to get their message out to the largest audience possible. What is less known, even with the efficiency and cost effectiveness of these communications, is just how effective these efforts actually are. Morozov (2011) suggests that,

“The challenge for anyone analyzing how the Internet may affect the overall effectiveness of political activism is, first, to determine the kind of qualities and activities that are essential to the success of the democratic struggle in a particular country or context and, second, to understand how a particular medium of campaigning or facilitating collective action affects those qualities and activities” (Morozov, 2011, p. 198).

Research in areas of far-right movements has shown that the use of the internet provides a very effective way to develop a virtual community where individuals of like mind can come together and share their thoughts and experiences (Bowman-

Grieve, 2009). In her examination of the online development of virtual communities in the radical right group Stormfront, Lorraine Bowman-Grieve (2009) found,

“from the perspective of the supporter the Internet serves the important function of providing a link with the movement they support; it provides access to information on ideology and goals and has the potential to facilitate involvement either online (by setting up support websites or interacting in the virtual community) or offline. What is central to the creation and maintenance of these discourses of support is that they provide the necessary justification, validation, and encouragement that may in time function as a catalyst for further involvement or action in support of the movement”

(Bowman-Grieve, 2009, p. 996).

As discussed previously, the development of the collective identity in groups engaged in activism is important to the success of a movement that seeks to utilize the internet and/or social media to forward their cause (Della Porta & Diani, 1999; Breuer, 2012). The nature of the communications within the virtual community of the far-right Stormfront movement was found to facilitate the sharing of ideas, experiences, and information in such a way as to be conversational. This is important in how people perceive this interaction, and as has been discussed, can be just as powerful as face to face communications. It is important at this point to consider that Stormfront has members all over the world that come together in this virtual community to engage with fellow “believers”. Again, the power of the virtual community is seen in this interaction where disparate individuals can come together to form a community and develop a shared identity (Bowman-Grieve, 2009, p. 997). Additionally, this virtual community was used to provide and share movement literature, personal accounts of individual involvement in the group, personal

experiences and personal grievances of individual members, and information on activities where participation is encouraged. It is acknowledged that while there are a great many members within this virtual community (over 159,000 in 2009), with five and a half million posts on four hundred and fifty thousand threads, the level of participation varies from limited engagement of new members who are engaged in a period of social learning and “Older members who take the time to contribute, sometimes on a daily basis and on a personal level to the discourses being created online” (Bowman-Grieve, 2009, p. 1005). But how does this online participation translate into real world activism? Magdalena Wojcieszak (2009) examined this question and found:

“Engagement in various political activities increases with increased participation in neo-Nazi and radical environmentalist online discussion groups. Importantly, this relationship persists when controlling for each theoretically crucial confounders as ideological extremism, political discussion, and news media exposure. This relationship is especially pronounced with regard to actions aimed at supporting a given movement”
(Wojcieszak, 2009, p. 576).

However, one area that was not addressed in these examinations of far-right movements is the frequency of participation among the members and just how many users actually engage on a regular basis, and how the membership numbers actually translate into real world activism.

From a recruitment perspective, virtual communities are being seen as key to enhancing recruitment efforts, particularly among extremist or terrorist groups (Hoffman, 2006; Weimann, 2006; Nacos, 2008; Smith, 2008). Within her study Bowman-Grieve (2009) found that social networks are important to the development

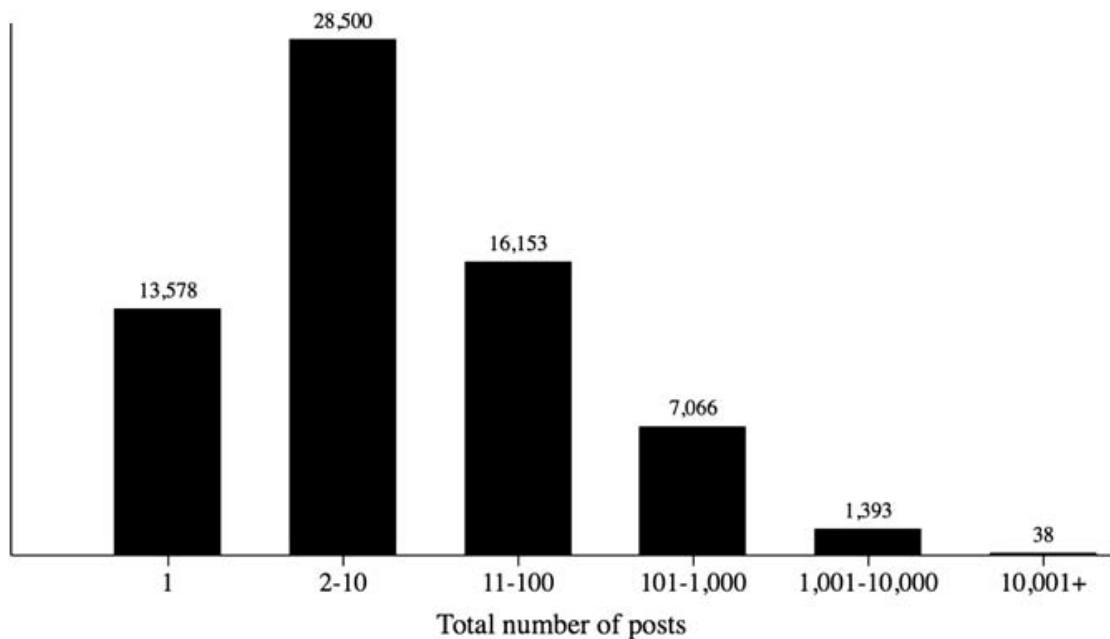
of political socialization, especially when seeking to influence an individual's behavior and desire to engage in activism. Further she goes on to state that "In this respect virtual communities can be seen as important social arenas for the formation of interpersonal bonds, with the potential to contribute to individual involvement processes" (Bowman-Grieve, 2009, p. 1003). She also makes the point that,

"the virtual community of Stormfront is aware of the importance of social networking online, with community members effectively using this online service to make contact with other supporters within their localities, forming both online and offline communities and networks in support of the radical right" (Bowman-Grieve, 2009, p. 1003).

More recently published work on Stormfront by Caren, Jowers and Gaby (2012), offers a more detailed examination of their use of the internet spanning a period of nine years. Their study of Stormfront's online presence, in what they call a Social Movement Online Community (SMOC), seeks to understand various aspects of this online activity to include the use of the SMOC in the development of a collective identity; the broad based participatory nature of the site; the open nature of the SMOC where no membership is required to visit or participate in most of the discussions; the geographic diversity of the users; the questions of online anonymity; and the ability of the SMOC to rapidly expand and contract (p. 187).

Within this study, they collected 6,868,674 posts covering the period from September 11, 2001 to August 6, 2010 (Caren, et al., 2012, p. 174), that span the globe including supporters from "Australia, the Baltics, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, South Africa, and Switzerland" (Daniels, 2009, p. 42). What is unique about this study, beyond the volume of data that was

collected, is the ability to examine user frequency and identify groups of users according to the frequency of participation. The results of this analysis showed that the majority of the users posted fewer than 1,000 times over the 3,252 day collection period (Caren, et al., 2012, p 176). As can be seen in the graph below, out of the 66,507 users whose posts were collected, 65,076 (98%) posted fewer than 1,000 times over the entire 3,252 day collection period. Those 1,431 users who posted over 1,000 times represent 2.16% of all active users. Finally, the group of highest frequency users, posting more than 10,000 times, represents only .06% of the active users. It would appear that this activity is a reflection of the “power user” paradigm discussed previously.



Stormfront Users Grouped by Their Total Number of Posts. Data are Based on the Authors’ Analysis of Site Usage, 2001–2010 (Caren, et al. p.177).

This is of particular interest given the number of visitors to the site (400,000 in 2010) and how it relates to the number of users who actually post to the page and the frequency of those user postings (Caren, et al., p. 175). As stated previously, this study allowed the researchers to examine several aspects of SMOC participation. They found that the Stormfront SMOC did facilitate the development of a collective

identity by being able to receive messages and participate in discussions that support that identity (Caren, et al., p. 179).

Daniels (2009) considers the role of participation in Stormfront.org by pointing out:

“Some may participate actively and be true believers or passionate resisters; others may only lurk and may be supportive, non-supportive, or fall somewhere else on a rubric of possible types of online participation. In general the relationship between the multifaceted dimensions of online participation and active social movement involvement are not widely understood. While the potential exists for a multinational white-pride social movement that organizes across national and geographic boundaries, this potential has thus far been unrealized” (Daniels, 2009, p. 55).

These examples provide an opportunity to examine the growing body of literature on the English Defence League and how the authors perceive the EDL’s utilization of the internet and virtual communities in their efforts to recruit and mobilize members.

The EDL and online extremism

A search for academic articles on the English Defence League revealed a growing body of literature examining various aspects of the group and their cause. Treadwell and Garland (2011) considered the impact of masculinity and marginalization in their consideration of the EDL’s propensity to violence. Chris Allen (2011) offers insights into the EDL and asks whether their efforts are truly in opposition to The Islamification of the United Kingdom or are they actually promoting Islamaphobia. And Jamie Bartlett and Mark Littler (2011) offer a more comprehensive evaluation of the EDL in their paper published by Demos titled “Inside the EDL.” While each of

these papers and others discussed previously offer interesting perspectives on the agenda and actions of the EDL, only two consider the online phenomenon that is seen as an integral part of the EDL's communication and mobilization strategy.

Chris Allen (2011) in his section on *Facebook Friends: building a diverse and multicultural movement*, briefly discusses the use of Facebook by the EDL. While he acknowledges that membership in the EDL Facebook page had reached 85,000 users by April 2011, and goes on to question "whether or not these are all active supporters", he quotes the EDL leader Tommy Robinson who said, "Many if not most of them certainly are: The EDL has 'more activists...than any political party here [in the UK]" (Allen, 2011, p. 286). From here his coverage moves on to the various EDL divisions (both local and issue related) that could be found online and the seemingly "multicultural" nature of the group. However, missing from this coverage is any quantitative analysis of the real nature of this Facebook participation and a legitimate challenge to the claims put forth by Robinson.

The more substantive examination of the EDL performed by Bartlett and Littler (2011) was done using an online survey where they sought respondents on Facebook to answer questions about the EDL and gather demographic data on those individuals who responded to the call for participants. Interestingly, the survey was completed in September 2011 which is important given that the EDL Facebook page was hacked in July 2011, and membership dropped from over 98,000 in July 2011 to 38,200 in September 2011 (Bartlett & Littler, 2011, p. 16). The data for this study was collected in two phases by placing adverts on Facebook at two different times. From 5-11 May they placed 969,592 adverts on Facebook, recruited 674 participants, resulting in the completion of 544 surveys with a final sample size of 502. Similarly from 5-19 September the advert appeared 985,649 times on Facebook, recruiting

1,162 participants, resulting in the completion of 804 surveys (Bartlett & Littler, 2011, p. 33). The final total sample size was then reduced to 1,295 respondents. Unfortunately the only question asked regarding the online activity of these individuals was related to how they engaged in activism where 52% indicated they had participated in online activism in the past six months. And this was only asked of the second sample group where N=804 (Bartlett & Littler, 2011, p. 19).

Their decision to use Facebook is expressed as follows:

“We decided to use Facebook principally because the site is the most popular mode of communication among EDL supporters. The group is one of a growing number of organizations and movements that use their online presence to recruit, organize, and communicate with their own membership, as well as to demonstrate the size of their public pronouncements”(Bartlett & Littler, 2011, p. 34).

Bartlett and Littler (2011) indicate that the online membership in September 2011 was 38,200 users. From this N=38,200, they go on to speculate that the real membership level of the EDL was somewhere between 25,000-35,000 supporters across the UK (p. 16). However, while acknowledging the value of the internet for the development of the group’s identity (p. 18), they do make the equivocation that “the relationship between hardcore members, affiliates, and broader supporters is opaque” (Bartlett and Littler, 2011, p. 14).

The Chatham House briefing paper titled, “The Roots of Extremism: The English Defence League and the Counter Jihad Challenge” by Matthew Goodwin (2013), which examines the issues related to this movement and the associated costs to the government as a consequence of the activities of the group, focuses on the sociological and political concerns regarding the growth of the EDL, but offer no

insights into the use of social media by the EDL or how the government might combat the influence of the EDL within this online environment. The only mention of the EDL and Facebook appears in a single sentence where Goodwin (2013) cites Allen (2011) and his assessment that the EDL had “attracted over 80,000 Facebook followers” (Goodwin, 2013, p. 6).

Research by O’Callaghan et al. (2013) provides an examination of the connectivity found within far-right networks, showing that not only do groups like the EDL use various social media platforms, but that even within these fora there are associations with other far-right groups like the British Freedom Party, the BNP, splinter Infidel groups, and the British Resistance (p.5). While the EDL Facebook node was included in the analysis in connection with other nodes, no specific examination of Facebook activity or traffic was presented. They did observe, however, that the measurement of individual step networks, providing a snapshot of the community at a given time, “tended to exhibit a considerable amount of volatility” and that this may have been a result “in part by data incompleteness” or that “such volatility may be a simple feature of the online extremist presence” (O’Callaghan et al., p. 9).

Finally, the paper by Paul Jackson (2011) titled, *The EDL: Britain’s ‘New Far Right’ Social Movement*, provides the best overview of the EDL’s use of social media in its various forms. Jackson suggests that Facebook has been “crucial to the EDL’s ability to develop scattered anti-Muslim attitudes into a more coherent and sustained movement” (Jackson, 2011, p. 32). However, he does point out that, “Although tens of thousands of people are registered as supporters on Facebook (over 90,000 at the time of writing) this ever-growing figure does not necessarily translate into an ever growing number of supporters attending EDL demonstrations” (Jackson, 2011, p. 32).

While Jackson goes on to provide a rather extensive discussion of the various new media outlets used by the EDL, its local divisions, and affiliate groups, he agrees that Facebook is the primary venue for communications and mobilization. Again, as with the other works on the EDL, there was no traffic collection or analysis performed to delve deeper into the real impact of social media on the EDL movement and its membership.

Conclusion

The growth of the English Defence League since its 'birth' in 2009 has provided opportunities for investigation into the nature of the group and the methods used to motivate and mobilize the membership toward action. While some have little doubt that the EDL is a far-right extremist group (Alessio & Meredith, 2013), others seek to frame the EDL as a xenophobic group focused on issues related to immigration (Goodwin, 2012). At the same time the EDL has sought, through its mission statement and public rhetoric to distance itself from the characterization of the media and government that they are a far-right, neo-Nazi extremists (Jackson, 2011; Allen, 2010; Goodwin, 2013). One of the important issues to be considered within this research is just how the EDL has been portrayed in traditional media and whether the statements made within the social media traffic, which is the focus of this research, support the rhetoric of the group or the perceptions of the media.

The value of social media is one of the primary questions to be considered as a part of this research. Anecdotally, we are led to believe that social media can be a significant driver in activism. However, as we see in the literature, the real power of social media to drive social change (Margetts, et al., 2013), or to promote donations to humanitarian efforts (Morozov, 2011) causes one to question the true value of social media as such a driver. Further, the ability of social media to create a broader

group/social identity comes into question when the nature of online participation and “slactivism” are considered” (Gladwell, 2010; Budhish, 2013; Morozov, 2011).

While the EDL sought to enhance the development of a group identity by controlling the dialog, the literature suggests that such an identity might reside within only a small segment of those who are participating in the online dialogue (Borge-Holthoefer et al., 2011; Berger & Strathearn, 2013; Ducol, 2012).

This research then provides an opportunity to examine the EDL’s use of Facebook as their primary source of communication with its members, and to seek a more granular understanding of this phenomenon. For example, how does the EDL work to develop a collective/group identity within the framework of Facebook, and is this mechanism effective in evincing participation among its members? Does the traffic generated by the EDL administrator and the members reflect the ‘democratic’ and ‘humanitarian’ vision as put forth in their mission statement or do they reflect the far-right, ultra-nationalist sentiments as discussed previously, using Facebook to develop the concept of the Muslim/immigrant population as ‘the evil other’? How does the online activism that takes place on Facebook translate into real world activism when there is a call for demonstrations? Does certain administrator content have a stronger impact on the membership than any other? How is the narrative of the group transmitted by the administrator and how is this reflected in the user dialogue? And, what are the characteristics of participation within the Facebook group and how do they relate to what is already known about online extremist participation? The desire herein is to add to the growing body of knowledge about the English Defence League and how they utilize social media, and more generally understand how the findings of this research fit within the broader context of online extremism.

Chapter Two: Methodology

Introduction

One of the unique aspects of this research was the opportunity to collect, segregate, and analyze the Facebook traffic of the EDL in a way that had not been done previously. While some had examined this phenomenon generally to consider how Facebook was used and the number of members (Allen, 2011; O'Callaghan et al., 2013; Jackson, 2011), others had either administered traditional surveys (Goodwin, 2013) or online surveys to the users through the EDL Facebook page (Bartlett & Littler, 2011) to garner insight into the membership of the EDL. However, what was missing was a systematic collection and analysis of the EDL's Facebook traffic. This is likely due, in no small part, to the lack of automated collection tools to perform a comprehensive collection of the traffic and coding tools to take the bulk traffic and convert it into usable variables for analysis. As will be discussed herein, this research sought to overcome these obstacles to provide a detailed analysis of the Facebook traffic of the EDL during a critical growth cycle that occurred February/March 2011. Additional Facebook traffic was collected following two simultaneous and critical events in May 2011 that will be covered in Chapter Four which had a significant impact on membership and traffic. This allowed for a comparative analysis of the two data sets to examine the impact of these events. Augmenting this virtual field work, that involved daily collection, was on the ground field work that consisted of observing and filming two EDL demonstrations on 5 February 2011 and 3 September 2011, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

The data that was collected and the observations from the demonstrations allows for both a quantitative statistical analysis of user activity and traffic analysis, as well

as a qualitative examination of the EDL, its online and offline activity, their messaging, and how their online efforts translated into real world activism/extremism during this time. Additionally, since the content of the individual posts were collected, it is possible to consider to what degree the “mission statement” of the EDL is reflected in the member comments or whether they are actually an indication of the ultra-nationalist/far right proclivities of the membership. This chapter examines the ethical and security issues that had to be dealt with prior to and during the online collection process, the methods that were used during the collection process, the development of the automated tool that was used to segregate the raw collection into variables, the manual methods that were used to provide additional granularity to the automated segregation, and the importance of the variables to the overall analytic process.

Ethical and Security Challenges

Researching how terrorist/extremist groups utilize online social network sites (SNS) and other forms of computer mediated communication (CMC) to further their radicalization and/or recruitment efforts, it became immediately evident during the research design phase there were substantial ethical and legal issues that would need to be considered and worked through. Having originally developed a collaborative relationship with the Computer Science Department at the University of St. Andrews, the quantity and quality of the data we anticipated would be collected was greatly increased as compared to what would have otherwise been possible using conventional manual or semi-automated collection and coding processes. Unfortunately, due to the implementation by Facebook of a policy forbidding the automated tracking and collection of traffic via web-bots or other automated tracking

devises, the Computer Science Department chose to disengage from this effort thereby putting an end to the possibility of automated data collection and segregation.

The Policy published by Facebook is as follows:

Date of Last Revision: April 15th, 2010

Automated Data Collection Terms

- 1. These terms govern your collection of data from Facebook through automated means, such as through harvesting bots, robots, spiders, or scrapers ("Automated Data Collection"), as well as your use of that data.*
- 2. You will not engage in Automated Data Collection without Facebook's express written permission.*
- 3. By obtaining permission to engage in Automated Data Collection you agree to abide by these Automated Data Collection Terms, which incorporate by reference the Statement of Rights and Responsibilities.*
- 4. You agree that your use of data you collect through Automated Data Collection will be confined solely to search indexing for display on the Internet unless granted separate approval by Facebook for alternative usage and display on the Internet.*
- 5. You agree that you will not sell any data collected through, or derived from data collected through, Automated Data Collection.*
- 6. You agree that you will not transfer data collected through Automated Data Collection in aggregated or bulk form.*
- 7. You agree that you will destroy all data you have collected through Automated Data Collection upon Facebook's written request and that you will certify such destruction under penalty of perjury.*
- 8. You agree that Facebook may revoke any permission granted at anytime for any reason and you agree to immediately cease collection and use of data collected through Automated Data Collection on notice of such revocation.*
- 9. You agree to provide an accounting of all uses of data collected through Automated Data Collection within ten (10) days of your receipt of Facebook's request for such an accounting.*
- 10. You agree that you will not circumvent any measures implemented by Facebook to prevent violations of these terms.*
- 11. You agree that you will not violate the restrictions in any robot exclusion header.*
- 12. You agree that you will only use your own true IP address/useragent identity and will not mask your services under the IP address/useragent string of another service.*
- 13. You agree that you will not transfer any approved IP address or useragent to any party without Facebook's express written consent.*
- 14. You agree that any violation of these terms may result in your immediate ban from all Facebook websites, products and services. You acknowledge and agree that a breach or threatened breach of these terms would cause irreparable injury, that money damages would be an inadequate remedy, and that Facebook shall be entitled to temporary and permanent injunctive relief, without the posting of any bond or other security, to restrain you or anyone acting on your behalf, from such breach or threatened breach. Nothing herein shall be construed as preventing Facebook from pursuing any and all remedies available to it, including the recovery of money damages.*

15. Nothing herein shall be construed to confer any grant to, or license of, any intellectual property rights, whether by estoppel, by implication, or otherwise. (https://www.facebook.com/apps/site_scraping_tos_terms.php)

While it was determined that daily manual collection would be required for the project to move forward, due to the extreme nature of the material being researched there was concern that there was a possibility that much of the content included and stored as a part of this collection, by the letter of the law, might be or become in violation of the UK Data Protection Act and more seriously might be in violation of the 2000 and/or 2006 UK Terrorism Acts. Even though the eventual target for collection was not a designated terrorist group, they were considered to be an extremist right wing group and therefore subject to being proscribed, and if they became violent then possibly deemed a terrorist group. As such, efforts were immediately undertaken to secure a letter authorizing this research to avoid any issues with the Terrorism Acts, which was provided by the ACPO Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (Appendix 3). Further, to conform to the Data Protection Act it was necessary to incorporate into the research design, collection and storage protocols that would ensure compliance with the law and protect the identities of those individuals whose data would be collected as a part of this research. This became even more important when it was determined that this collection would be accomplished utilizing passive covert observation on Facebook.

The Myth of Online Anonymity

The growth in the use of computer mediated communications (CMC) and particularly the use of social network sites like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and others offers a new and unique opportunity for social scientists as well as other researchers to collect vast quantities of data with comparatively minimal cost. When one considers that out of 2.4 billion internet users worldwide (Internet World Stats,

2012) over one billion are members of Facebook (The Associated Press, 2013), it is not surprising that serious research is being done to understand the iterative effect these online social networks, and the groups operating within them, have on the individual user. The quantity and potential quality, as well as the cost effectiveness of data that can be collected on individual users makes it very alluring to collect as much information as possible (Johns et al., 2004; Buchanan, 2004; Amichai-Hamburger, 2005). However, it should be recognized that users of these social network sites and other blogs and chat rooms are not truly anonymous. Increasingly, the amount of profile information as well as the make-up of the individual's social network makes it possible to identify even those who choose to operate using pseudonyms. As an example, most categories of personal information contained within the typical Facebook profile (birth date, political and/or religious affiliations, sex, and sexual orientation) is deemed to be sensitive personal information under EU law (Edwards & Brown, 2009). As users integrate the use of mobile phone devices into their social network experience, identification of individual users becomes even easier.

Depending on the security settings one places on their own Facebook account it is possible for your personal information to be limited to just those individuals who are your 'friends' on Facebook, or everything you have listed under your profile, all your photos, as well as all your posts can be viewed by everyone who is on Facebook if your settings are not changed from the default setting of full access to all members, in order that you might limit access to this information. It is important to note that contained within many individual profiles are name, marital status, family members names, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers. This issue has become of great concern given the revelations of data mining by the UK government and other anti-terrorism efforts across Europe and the United States (Williams, 2012; Satter, 2012, The

Telegraph, 1 April 2012; BBC News, 1 April 2012; Casciani, 2009). Further, profiles also contain the names of all friends, groups that the user likes or belongs to, political and religious affiliations if identified, as well as other personal information a user may have wished to present about themselves. Therefore, given the amount of individual data that might be available, the need to protect the identities of the individual users, particularly given the controversial nature of the material being examined, was deemed vital.

The challenge was to identify that information considered essential to the research project and how this essential data could be collected and stored in a manner insuring adherence to EU and UK law to protect the individuals who would become the subjects of the research. More importantly, as research was being conducted on an extremist group, where informed consent was not practical and would most certainly be counterproductive, the need to protect the identity of the users becomes an important ethical issue, to meet with established academic standards, and address certain security risks for the researcher that could not be ignored and will be discussed herein (Johns et al., 2004; Lee-Treweek & Linkogle, 2000). The following represents some issues that were considered important to the project.

Conducting Passive Covert Observation Online

Given that research into online participation in social networks, particularly in extremist environments, is such a new undertaking, it is not surprising that there is sparse literature to provide guidance in this endeavor. There is, of course, the significant issue that must be addressed when engaging in online research of this nature regarding whether to make ones presence known to the research subjects. For the purpose of this research, the choice to perform covert research was carefully weighed and was addressed prominently in the application for UTREC approval.

The Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Society states:

“There are serious ethical and legal issues in the use of covert research but the use of covert methods may be justified in certain circumstances. For example, difficulties arise when research participants change their behavior because they know they are being studied. Researchers may also face problems when access to spheres of social life is closed to social scientists by powerful or secretive interests (item 31).”

The matter of informed consent was carefully considered and debated during the development of the research design. The literature on Internet Research Ethics offers a diverse range of opinions on the matter. Most authors adhere to the practice of informed consent in participant observation in online environments (Herrera, 1999; Thomas, 1996; Capurro & Pingel, 2002; Walther, 2002). Others point out that identifying one’s self as a researcher and/or seeking informed consent can have negative consequences on the ability to acquire accurate data or may even get you kicked out of the group (Hudson & Bruckman, 2004). Smith (2004) argues that when access to the online group is unrestricted (public) the need for informed consent is mitigated and in groups where the membership is in a constant state of flux, such consent is impractical (Smith, 2004, p. 223). In one case where the researchers’ purpose was known to the group and informed consent was acquired to publish quotes from users, these methods seemed to have a significant impact on the subjects’ activity even leading to what the author describes as “the phenomenon of people who learned the nature of my research set about to deliberately manufacture quotable quotes, something that strengthened my conviction that non-disclosure of my research activity was both justified and necessary” (Reid, 1996, p. 173). Lauder (2003) makes a strong point that “certain social groups, notably extremist political organizations and

new religious movements, require the use of covert methods—although only as a last resort” (Lauder, 2003, p. 188). Given the nature of the medium, Facebook, and the potentially violent nature of the group to be examined, it was decided that informed consent was not practical for several reasons.

First, the extreme nature of the group to be studied made it clear that informed consent would have a negative impact on the continued free flow of dialogue within the group, thereby negating the value of the research. Hudson and Bruckman (2004) found that when attempting to acquire informed consent in online chat rooms by asking the participants to opt out of the study, they were expelled from the group, or otherwise what is known as sanctioned, 72% of the time. When they chose a different approach and asked participants to “opt in” they were still sanctioned 62% of the time. This led them to the conclusion that “individuals in online environments such as chat rooms generally do not approve of being studied without their consent”...and that “the vehement reaction to many in our study indicates they the object to being studied (Hudson & Bruckman, 2004, p. 135).”

The ethical and legal implications of conducting covert research were taken very seriously and involved questioning the status of the participants as real people given the virtual nature of the communications; how one could/would be able to determine if the data collection contained communications from minors; could one actually gain informed consent in a dynamic and continually changing environment; and if we were able to obtain informed consent, would there then be a legal obligation to report any criminal activity or threats of impending criminal activity thus violating the confidentiality of the agreement. After lengthy and careful deliberation it seemed obvious that making our research presence known would be counterproductive to the goals of the project and could not only place the participants at risk of arrest but also

potentially place this researcher at risk of reprisals by the subjects (Amichai-Hamburger, 2005).

Second, and related to the issue of risk, while the daily collection of information was considered to be conducting virtual field work, it was also viewed as conducting fieldwork in a dangerous environment. Becoming known to the subjects within these virtual groups could have exposed this researcher to physical danger in the real world, particularly given that it was decided to conduct on-the-ground field investigation of EDL demonstrations in the UK to examine the real world phenomenon that was a result of the online activities being observed. The literature on conducting research in dangerous places discusses the need to remain covert and the possibility of physical reprisals if the covert researcher is discovered (Lee-Treweek & Linkogle, 2000; Jipson & Litton 2000). While the focus of this literature is related to doing covert participant observation in dangerous environments, the ability of online extremist groups to backtrack and identify those engaged in or monitoring the online activity of the group places any researcher in danger should they be identified and targeted by the group.

Third, given the choice of conducting passive covert observation or passive participant observation, it was decided that there should be no interaction with the subjects within the virtual environment. It must be understood, however, that even though the majority of this research took place in the virtual realm, there was always an understanding that the users within the environment were real people. Reid (1996) provides an example of what can happen when she states, "I believe that to some extent I allowed my own sense of computer mediated detachment from the personal reality of the people behind the MUD characters and communities I was studying" (Reid, 1996, p. 174). As such, the determination was made to conduct passive covert

observation. In this virtual environment it was necessary to establish false identities that would allow access to the target group without making them aware of our intent or being placed at risk. Further, the group would be passively monitored to ensure that there was no iterative effect on the dialogue. Additionally, it was determined that engagement in the ongoing dialogue brought with it increased legal problems and by simply monitoring or lurking (Crystal, 2001) in this environment without participating it would be possible to collect the desired information without risk of violating the law beyond the collection of material which may be deemed in violation of the terrorism act.

Finally, the nature and function of certain virtual environments made it possible to spend a very limited amount of time within that environment on a daily basis in order to collect the needed material. In some environments it is possible, since there is no interaction with the subjects, to access and store 24-36 hours of activity while being in the group for only three to four hours per day. This ability to open and copy archived material is very advantageous as it greatly reduces the online footprint of the covert identity and makes it possible to collect data without risk of being identified and then sanctioned (removed) as a lurker or troll (Amichai-Hamburger, 2005). Once copied it was then possible to fully open the strings of comments to various posts in order to obtain the complete dialogue. Extreme groups are constantly on the lookout for those they consider to be 'unfriendlies' or lurkers. Examination of one extremist group's website/blog (name withheld as group was proscribed by the Office of the Home Secretary), during the investigative part of this research project, revealed that the designated security officer for the group was able to identify trolls/spies within the group and then went on to post the online identities and affiliations of over a dozen

individuals who were then sanctioned from the group (site and information withheld per 2006 UK Terrorism Act and the Data Protection Act).

Ensuring Secure Collection

One additional safeguard that was utilized to ensure the security of these research activities was the use of Tor while engaging in the daily collection process. Tor is an online tool that is available as a free download that allows users to protect themselves from network surveillance and other threats to personal security when participating in online activities.

“Tor protects you by bouncing your communications around a distributed network of relays run by volunteers all around the world; it prevents somebody watching your internet connection from learning what sites you visit, and it prevents the sites you visit from learning your physical location.....Tor was originally designed, implemented, and deployed as a third-generation onion routing project of the Naval Research Laboratory. It was originally developed with the U.S. Navy in mind, for the primary purpose of protecting government communications. Today, it is used every day for a wide variety of purposes by the military, journalists, law enforcement officers, activists, and many others.” (<https://www.torproject.org/>)

Prior to engaging in collection activities it was necessary to engage Tor. Once active it was then possible to access Facebook and the EDL page without concern of being backtracked by the group or others who may have been monitoring the group. This would include not only government entities but also Islamist groups and certain hacking groups who were interested in the identities of those participating in this environment. During the collection process it became clear that members from Islamist groups had infiltrated the EDL page and were working to hack into personal

profiles of EDL members and post their “private” information including real names, addresses, and phone numbers for others to see. Evidence of these activities will be presented and discussed in more detail in later chapters. Therefore, the need for security precautions was justified.

What can be collected—vs.-what should be collected: Data Protection

The impact of this issue became clear when it was revealed that what could be collected greatly exceeded the needs of the project and the more important question to be asked was, more appropriately, what should be collected to achieve the research goals. This is a very important consideration when collecting data in online social network environments. Fortunately academic researchers are often required to submit research proposals to University Ethics Review Committees (UTREC) or an Institutional Review Board (IRB) that seek to ensure that subjects of the study are protected. But does the fact that online users are not ‘identifiable’ because they are using a pseudonym reduce the need to protect the individual users? It is clear that modern data mining applications allow for the collection of vast amounts of individual data, especially when privacy settings on social network sites do not restrict access to personal information. Even when privacy settings are restrictive, some programmes are able to circumvent restrictive settings to access the personal data of the users. *Bots* or *web crawlers* can be placed into an online environment and digitally mine for personal information that would normally be inaccessible to the casual user and provide a fuller perspective on the individual. Fortunately, the UK Data Protection Act (DPA) provides guidance for the collection of what is considered ‘sensitive personal data.’

In this Act “sensitive personal data” means personal data consisting of information as to—

- (a) the racial or ethnic origin of the data subject,*
- (b) his political opinions,*
- (c) his religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature,*
- (d) whether he is a member of a trade union (within the meaning of the [1992 c. 52.] Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992),*
- (e) his physical or mental health or condition,*
- (f) his sexual life,*
- (g) the commission or alleged commission by him of any offence, or*
- (h) any proceedings for any offence committed or alleged to have been committed by him, the disposal of such proceedings or the sentence of any court in such proceedings. (DPA, 1998, p. 6)*

Similar language is also found in Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October, 1995, also known as the Data Protection Directive (DPD, 1995, p. 8).

Therefore, in an environment where it is possible to collect such a vast amount of personal information, the researcher must determine for themselves what they can and should legitimately collect for their research purposes. Clearly, it is possible to collect more than is needed for most studies and it was essential to be sensitive to the rights of those who became unknowing subjects of this research to ensure academic integrity and secure/protect the identities of the individual users. This was accomplished choosing to collect and segregate into variables only the information deemed essential to the research to ensure compliance with the law and ethical guidelines. As such, no specific information on the individual users such as gender, location, race, etc., was collected or included in the dataset.

Protecting identities and information

Central to this discussion is why this data is considered sensitive. Both the DPA and the DPD are clear that ‘personal data’ is that which is “related to an identified or identifiable natural person (DPD, 1995, p. 8), “who can be identified from those data” (DPA, 1998, p. 5). With the guidance of these provisions and the ethical considerations of identity protection due to the use of passive covert observation, it was determined that certain protocols would be implemented to provide the required protection while still allowing for the substantive collection of data within online social network environments. These include:

- Anonymizing user names during the data transformation process
- Only utilizing data determined critical to the project
- Segregating/sanitizing the data into the required variables for individual analysis thereby removing individual identifiers
- Storing data in a way to avoid unintentional and potentially intentional access of the raw and sanitized data by unauthorized persons
- Completing the University’s Data Protection briefing to reinforce the understanding of the responsibilities and limitations
- Insuring destruction of the raw data and the secure long term storage of the sanitized data after the project has been completed.

As research into online participation in extremist social network environments is not conducive to ‘informed consent’, it was determined that these and other protocols, to be discussed later, would be sufficient to protect the identities of users on these sites. These protocols were included in the application for UTREC approval which was reviewed and found to be acceptable.

Ensuring the anonymity of the users was a key component of this research effort. In 2008, research into the Facebook accounts of an entire cohort of college students resulted in the publication of the dataset titled “Tastes, Ties, and Time (T3)” (Lewis et al., 2008). While the researchers felt that “student privacy was assured by converting all names to numerical identifiers and promptly removing or encoding all other information that could be traced back to individual students (Lewis et al., 2008), information contained within the dataset related to the size of the student body and the available majors made identification of the institution relatively easy. Within a few days of this revelation, the names of the research subjects were discovered (Zimmer, 2010). Following this discovery, the data set was taken down. Importantly, this research had been reviewed by Harvard’s Committee on the Use of Human Subjects (Zimmer, 2010, p. 318). Following this incident the principal investigator of the T3 Project responded by saying, “We’re sociologists, not technologists, so a lot of this is new to us” (Zimmer, 2010, p. 316). Zimmer (2010) examines this failure and calls on academics to evaluate their own gaps in understanding the challenges of privacy and data anonymization, and should seek to develop interdisciplinary teams of collaborators to avoid the mistakes made in the T3 research data. He goes on to suggest Institutional Review Boards should become better informed in this areas, and that methods courses, codes of best practices, and research protocols should be updated to consider the unique challenges of engaging in research on the Internet and in social media environments (Zimmer, 2010, p.323).

Access to and storage of data

When considering who should and would have access to the data, it was decided that access to the raw data would be limited to those individuals who were listed as participants in the research project. Subsequently, any additional researchers who

might have a need to come into contact with the data, as additions to the research team, would receive a DPA briefing and acknowledge by signature their understanding of the law. Following the publication of the Facebook restrictions access became limited to this researcher.

Further, the data was stored in such a manner as to prevent unauthorized access and/theft. This included the storage methods mentioned previously in addition to other precautions that may not be so obvious. It is common for researchers to copy data onto disc or portable drives to facilitate working from home or when travelling. These practices significantly increase the risk that the data might be accessed by individuals who are not a part of the research team. Possession of this material, away from the confines of the University places the data at a higher risk of being lost or stolen. Beyond the dissemination of privileged personal information, which would be a violation of the DPA, this became an issue when investigating the use of a new analytic tool called Ayasdi Iris, which promised to provide “Interactive Analysis and Visualization for Complex Data (<http://www.ayasdi.com/>). After some preliminary investigation of the program with another data set not related to this project, and a subsequent discussion with an engineering representative from Ayasdi, it was determined that the online use of the program involved placing the dataset within the Ayasdi Iris program server in order to perform the desired analysis. Since this represented a transmission/transfer of data, and even though I was given many assurances by Ayasdi regarding the security of the data, I determined that this would most certainly have been a violation, and the use of this analytical tool was viewed as incompatible with the ethical and legal guidelines that had been set forth in the research design. In the end, due to the restriction against the automated data collection that would have taken place in St. Andrews, and the resultant manual data

collection; the raw data is held by this researcher on a secure drive and will be destroyed on the completion of this thesis.

While care was taken to protect the identities of the SNS users, one cannot ignore the capability of others to reverse engineer the segregation/sanitation algorithms to access user identity. As such, there was much consideration of the real value vs. danger of retaining a copy of the anonymized raw data beyond the point of its usefulness to the segregation or sanitation process. Additionally, care was needed in post analysis publications and presentations to avoid disseminating ‘sensitive personal data’ for the same reasons. As such, no user strings/comments that may still be publically accessible were used. There are, in addition to these ethical concerns, certain legal considerations that cannot be ignored.

Given the legal and ethical concerns cited, the methodological aspects of this project are important toward establishing that it is possible to perform this type of investigative research and analysis, and provide substantive findings toward understanding the impact of computer mediated communication within online extremist environments. To accomplish this it was necessary to determine which group would be examined; how the raw collection data would be collected and stored; the methods that would be utilized to segregate the data into a format that would facilitate analysis; establish which variables would be most useful in understanding the phenomenon; and ensure the final disposition and destruction of the raw data.

Collection Medium

To ensure access to the information flow for the purposes of collecting as much traffic as possible it was decided to examine groups that were utilizing Facebook as a communication medium. The rapid growth of Facebook in general and the increased presence of extremist groups, and their use of this outlet specifically, made Facebook

an opportune medium for investigation. Monitoring Facebook traffic offered multiple advantages due to the format of the program. The primary reason was that all posts were identified to a specific user. Unlike some environments where there is a stream of comments that may or may not be identifiable to any one user, each post on Facebook is attributed to the user/author. The posts and comments are well organized, dated and time stamped, and access to archived strings is possible due to the nature of the embedded coding found within the posts. While many Facebook groups allow for a free flowing exchange of ideas and comments, in the case of the group which became the target of this collection, the group administrators chose to control the dialogue on their page by only allowing ‘members’ to comment on material that the administrator(s) had posted to the page. This was not the case in the early days of their Facebook presence, but after having been shut down by Facebook on two occasions for material that was deemed unsuitable⁴ (openly promoting racism or violence), the administrators chose to control the dialogue during the majority of the day and only allow open access for primary posting by users on an irregular schedule when they could monitor the posts and sanction anyone who might create problems for the group. Since the settings on the page allowed for the monitoring of the ‘administrator only’ posts with comments, and since it was impossible to know when the administrators would open the page, it was decided to focus only on the administrator posts and comments for the collection. Therefore, all the administrator (primary) posts were collected along with all the member comments to those posts which are characterized as secondary posts. During the collection period the ability to monitor and collect information from the group page was uninterrupted, which was

⁴ Noted during the observation phase.

advantageous given the fate of some of the other groups that had been considered as targets for collection.

The Target Group

The selection of the English Defence League as the target group was guided by several determining factors. The first consideration was the need to have a group that would allow for a consistent and sufficient flow of traffic that would not be interrupted during the study period. During the discussions with the Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit, it became clear that part of their remit was to work actively to remove terrorist websites, blogs, and chat rooms from the internet. As such, there was concern, not only about the legality of the information that might be collected and stored, but also about the viability of having a consistent flow of information to facilitate collection and analysis. To investigate the viability of collecting from known extremist environments online, and to assess the utility of the collection method, there was a three month investigative period which began in August 2010, following receipt of the letter from the Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (CTIRU) which provided protection for these activities. During this three month period, two pro-jihadi groups and two far right groups were monitored and preliminary data was collected to determine the viability of these groups for the larger study. At the end of the three month investigative period all but one group had ceased to have sufficient daily traffic and two had been taken over by spamming attacks that rendered them useless to the normal users, thereby forcing them to abandon the page. These activities were recorded in a log book and the daily collection was stored on a dedicated hard drive that was kept by this researcher.

Since the jihadi inspired groups have since been proscribed by the UK government, it is not possible to provide specific detail regarding the pages where

they were located without violating provisions of the UK Terrorism Act. However, what can be discussed is the nature of the traffic and how the traffic was affected by the efforts of law enforcement and outsiders to shut them down. The first pro-jihadi group, which was an iteration of the previously proscribed group, was itself banned by the UK government in January 2010. Although this group maintained a Facebook page for a short time during the investigative phase, it soon suffered from continued interruptions of service and spam attacks. As has been the practice with these groups, a new iteration, with the same cast of characters arose in late 2010. While this new group, which was itself proscribed in 2012, had a very substantial webpage, they did not have a Facebook page. However, there was a Facebook link/page that claimed alliance with the group. The Muslim Defence League, which portrayed itself as being in service to the Muslim community to combat the influence of the far-right anti-Muslim groups on Facebook, began to grow during the initial investigation period and offered promise for collection until they too became infiltrated by members of the opposition who then took over the page with anti-Muslim posts and spam attacks. At this point it should be mentioned that spam attacks are automated postings of various content that occupies the page of the targeted group making it useless to the users. Typical spam includes thousands of worthless advertisements or pornography postings every day. By the end of the investigation period, the traffic on this page was down to just one or two posts per day on an inconsistent basis.

One of the far right groups, the Scottish Defence League (SDL), which was an offshoot of the larger English Defence League, provided consistent traffic in the early days of the investigative process discussed previously, but the number of members and the amount of daily traffic was deemed insufficient to meet the needs of the study. While the SDL was to be a separate organization from the English Defence League, it

seemed that there was a decision within the larger EDL to make these satellite organizations into divisions of the larger group. The result was the bulk of the daily traffic took place on the main EDL page with only local issues being discussed on the division pages.

The group that offered the most promise, which ultimately became the target group for collection and analysis, was the English Defence League. With a growing membership over the summer and fall of 2010 and increasing daily activity, this group seemed to offer the best opportunity for collecting a sufficient amount of traffic to facilitate the collection and analysis of this computer mediated communication. Beginning 9 August 2010, the recorded number of users who had liked the EDL page was 16,685. By 31 August 2010 the group had grown to 26,616 with daily traffic that indicated a growing enthusiasm for the EDL and the efforts of the group. Following the publicity of EDL leaders traveling to visit New York City on the ninth anniversary of the 9-11 attacks, to protest the proposed building of a new mosque near the site of the World Trade Center attacks, the group gained momentum and by 20 September 2010 had 29,350 'members'. By 1 November 2010 the EDL likes/members numbered 40,372, with growing online activity and announcements of demonstrations and other key news for the membership. The final entry for the ninety day period was on 8 November 2010 with the EDL having acquired 41,564 likes/members on their page. Having made the decision to target the EDL page for collection, the determination of when to start the collection process was made when it was revealed that the EDL would be having a homecoming demonstration on 5 February 2011 as a show of their ability to mobilize their membership and garner media attention for their movement and their agenda. An online check on 23 January 2011 revealed that the number of likes/members on the EDL Facebook page had increased drastically to

69,682 with the majority of the traffic on the page being focused toward the logistics of transportation to and from the demonstration to be held in Luton on 5 February 2011. Interestingly, there was considerable discussion focused on encouraging the members to be respectful of the police and other authorities, and to avoid any confrontations that might be portrayed negatively by the press since it was anticipated that this homecoming would garner world-wide media attention.

Membership

Unlike the restrictions placed on the flow of dialogue within the group, gaining access to the Facebook page of the English Defence League became easier over time. During the preliminary investigative phase of the project, it was necessary to request access to become a member of the EDL Facebook page. This was accomplished by locating the page within the Facebook system by entering English Defence League in the Facebook search engine, and then requesting to ‘Join’ the group. Once the request to join was approved, notification was sent indicating this status and access to the traffic was possible. At some point following the initial phase of investigation the EDL changed its access policy to one where ‘joining’ the group, and gaining access to the traffic and being able to post to the page, only required that one ‘like’ the EDL page. Once this occurred, immediate access was available. This new access policy was in place prior to the formal collection phase and continues to this day. But does ‘liking’ a group presuppose agreement with the group’s goals or narrative? What does it really mean when one clicks ‘Like’ on a Facebook group?

Liking-What does it mean?

“Liking” a group or a specific page on Facebook is viewed differently depending on the context. While some may view this as a simple expression of a passing agreement with an idea, others might view this act as a tacit acceptance of a page or

group and an active expression of an opinion or form of speech. Tina McCorkindale (2011), who researches the use of social media as a public relations and marketing tool has an interesting perspective on the value of ‘likes’. In her view ‘likes’ should not be considered to be a stand-alone measure of the strength of an individual’s tie to any specific social media page or group (McCorkindale, June 28, 2011). She reports the following in her blog posting “Why the Number of Likes and Followers Don’t Matter” (McCorkindale, 2008):

1. *Liking something may not translate into anything of value such as behavior or attitude.*
2. *Word of mouth has been shown to influence “liking” behavior.*
3. *I may “like” you but I won’t want to hear from you.*
4. *Few people visit their “liked” organization without an incentive.*
5. *Followers are not listeners.*

If McCorkindale is correct in her view then users “liking” the EDL Facebook page, or any other extremist page or SNS should have no significance and be of no concern. Morozov (2011) provides support for this position in his evaluation of social media participation in activism where users view “liking” as actual engagement in activism. He goes on to state that “the supposed gains of digital activism are nothing but illusory: Whatever they save through their newly found ability to recruit new members, they lose in trying to make these new members act as a group—and, preferably, without giving in to social loafing” (Morozov, 2011, p. 194). However, a recent court case in the United States expressed a differing opinion regarding the value of a “like” as a form of expression.

In the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, case number 12-1671(2012), the court ruled that “Facebook provides a convenient and effective way

for millions of voters to express support for the candidates of their choice and become more personally involved in the political process as a result” (Appeal:12-1671, 2012, p. 12). This case revolved around the dismissal by the sitting Sherriff of certain employees from the Hampton County Sherriff’s Department for having “liked” the Facebook page of his opponent during the latest election where he was able to retain his position. After re-election he summarily dismissed those individuals who “liked” his opponent. Such action then prompted the suit which is the focus of this case. The court held that “liking” the page of the opposing candidate was a form of political expression, and was thereby protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution (Appeal: 12-1671, 2012). Interestingly within the amicus brief filed in this case by Facebook it states:

“Liking a Facebook Page (or a non-Facebook website) is speech: it generates verbal statements and communicative imagery in the User’s Profile (or Timeline) Page – i.e., a statement that the user likes a particular Page, accompanied by the Page’s icon – as well as similar statements and imagery in the News Feed of the User’s Friends(p.9)....The use of social networking and other online communities to rally support for political candidates and causes is a contemporary example of quintessential political speech” (Appeal: 12-1671, 2012, 12).

What is important in this case is that for the EDL the number of likes was viewed and highly promoted as being the number of members they had within the group. During the collection period, the efforts to increase the number of likes/members was a primary focus of the EDL leadership and was mentioned often in the posts by the administrators and users to support the view that the popularity of the group was growing, that their anti-Muslim ideas were appealing to the mainstream, and that they

were becoming a force that the government could no longer ignore. Central to this research is the relationship between the number of users/members who liked the EDL page and the actual participation of those users within this environment.

Collection Period

Determining the collection period was important for a number of reasons. First, it was necessary to ensure that an uninterrupted daily collection period of at least thirty days could be accomplished. The importance of a consistent flow of information was necessary to facilitate the multivariate analysis that was expected. Large ‘holes’ in the collection may have missed important information or events that might prove valuable to the findings. The viability of the continued activity of the group was another important consideration. The EDL was experiencing substantial growth following the summer of 2010 and all indications were that the group would continue to grow, allowing for a growing traffic flow. The growth of the group was monitored throughout the fall and winter of 2010 and a collection period was established based upon the growth of the group during the observation period and events that were to take place in early 2011 that seemed to offer the possibility of even more rapid growth and the opportunity to investigate the mobilizing effect of this online activity. Having experienced significant growth over the last half of 2010, with membership rising from 16,685 in August 2010 to over 50,000 in December 2010, the EDL decided to have a demonstration in Luton England on February 5, 2011, using the slogan ‘Back to Where it All Began’ on their Facebook page. This demonstration was to serve as a huge recruitment drive for new membership, create solidarity within the ranks of those who were already members, and to precipitate additional media attention to their cause. The timing and purpose of this demonstration, which was attended by this researcher and discussed in the previous chapter, was pivotal in making the

decision to begin collection immediately prior to this event. Therefore, data collection began on 1 February 2011. Unfortunately, due to embedded viruses in the early posts, the data for the period from 1 February to 4 February was corrupted to the point of being irretrievable. Following this revelation, updated virus protection was installed on the collection computer allowing for an uncorrupted collection set covering 5 February to 22 March 2011.

The Collection of the Raw Data

Facebook, during the collection period, offered a consistent platform that allowed for the uniform collection of traffic. It has become a common practice of Facebook to periodically change the format that is used to ‘enhance the user experience’. The end result for the researcher is that these changes make it difficult to have a consistent flow of information that can be broken down and coded. This becomes even more problematic when computer programs are used to facilitate the automated coding of the collection. Since the format remained the same during the collection process, this was not a problem, however, the collection of supplemental data later in the year revealed a significant change in format and the embedded coding of the data, making coding more difficult and necessitating a major revision to the parsing software.

The method of data collection, given that the automated data collection methods previously described were deemed unfeasible, was to visit the EDL Facebook Page on a daily basis to collect the previous 24 hours of traffic. Using a clean laptop that was Tor enabled, the daily collection was accomplished by logging on to EDL Facebook page, opening the day’s posts and then copying and pasting these posts into a word document which was then saved as a .doc file on the hard drive with the group name and date of collection (e.g. EDL 2-13). Included in the collection were the primary posts of the administrator and the subsequent comments by various ‘members’ of the

EDL. This collection process was used consistently throughout the entire collection period. Following the end of the collection period all the daily files were placed into a single file folder marked EDL Data and then transferred onto a more powerful computer to facilitate opening all the comments to the administrator posts. With this, it was possible to open all the comments in a string following a primary post and create a complete file containing all the traffic for that day.

Security Protocols

As discussed in the previous chapter, there were certain security concerns that had to be addressed to ensure the safety of the researcher and the safety of the data to guard against unintended or intentional access to the data by others. One of the first things done to protect the research effort was the establishment of covert identities, as outlined in the UTREC proposal, which would be used to access Facebook for the purpose of collecting the daily traffic. This involved acquiring an e-mail account on a legitimate e-mail service and then setting up a Facebook account for each of the identities. There were four identities established, as originally set forth in the research design and the Ethics review, for the purpose of conducting the initial screening of groups to determine the target for the final collection. This proved to be a prudent move as two of the four identities were compromised by hacking attempts following the initial investigative phase and had to be abandoned. During the formal collection period only one Facebook user name was utilized and was sufficient for the purposes of this study. This same username was also utilized during the collection of supplemental material later in the year without incident. It should be noted that prior to initiating the investigative portion of the study in 2010, notification was sent to the CTIRU in the United Kingdom to inform them of these user names and e-mail addresses so resources would not be wasted if and/or when they were noticed within

the EDL logon and if concerns were raised. Similarly, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security in the United States were notified, prior to the collection activities, to prevent alarm on their part as well since some of these activities would be taking place on my return to the United States. All of these notification efforts were well received, but responses included an admonition against engaging in any activity that could be interpreted as illegal and included statements clarifying that I was not being provided any blanket immunity should my activities stray into the realm of illegality.

The use of a clean laptop, during the collection process, was important as it provided the opportunity to collect data using a computer that had no identifying tags within its operating systems or other software. Therefore, had there been any attempts to trace the collection activities by any of the potential target groups or others, the most that could be learned was the MAC address of the computer, that had no name(s) associated with it. Such tracking and identification possibilities were further complicated by enabling TOR during the collection process to mask the collection location and then utilizing public Wi-Fi connections to prevent being tracked to a specific internet hub or wireless server that could be associated with this researcher. The MAC or Media Access Control address is a specific identifier to each computer and can become the target of intrusion attacks for the purpose of collecting information on the user, stealing or compromising data, or perpetrating attacks against the targeted unit (Daintith & Wright, 2008).

Following the successful transfer of the data to a portable hard drive, and confirmation that all the data was intact, the raw data was then deleted from the collection laptop, and that computer was subjected to multiple electronic wiping's (erasures) to ensure that the data could not be accessed in the future on this device.

While it is accepted that sophisticated forensic tools, like those used by federal law enforcement and the intelligence community, might provide access to fragmented portions of the data, and the only way to prevent such an event would be the total destruction of the device, it was determined that the erasure efforts were sufficient to prevent inadvertent transmission of, or access to, sensitive raw data by unauthorized individuals which would have been a violation of the Data Protection Act.

The Discovery of Embedded Coding

Following the movement of the raw data onto the new computer, it was necessary to access each day's traffic to then open all the comments, or secondary posts, which had been posted to the primary posts of the administrator. When performing this activity, it was discovered that when opening the document and then clicking on the primary posting to open all the secondary posts, this action opened a new tab/window in which the EDL Facebook page appeared, and opened to that particular post. This finding was significant in that it revealed there was embedded coding within the copied and pasted documents that were essentially hyperlinks to these posts and other content that existed within the EDL Facebook page. Hyperlinks are URL's to other information and are presented within a string of code or text. By 'clicking' on the hyperlink you are directed to a different web page via the new URL.

Additionally, it was found, on reopening the saved posts, that the quantity of secondary posts that were available far exceeded what had initially been collected. Surprisingly, when opening the secondary posts that were associated with the primary posts, the comments that had been made subsequent to the date of collection were now included in the newly accessed comment string. This was significant in that it increased the number of secondary posts/comments that were now available for analysis.

The embedded coding also revealed that each user name had its own numeric identifier within Facebook. So, while the use of a pseudonym might offer some sense of online anonymity, that anonymity was a thin veil that could easily be pierced given the specific identifier contained within the Facebook coding that provided access to the user profile when accessing the hyperlinks found within the embedded code of the pages (to be discussed). Again, given the amount of personal data that is available as a part of the typical Facebook profile, and the ability to track transmissions, the revelation of a specific identification number for each user further complicated matters when it came to protecting the identities of the online users, particularly given the amount of traffic that had been collected and the now increased amount of data that was available. Moving toward the coding of the raw data, effective anonymization of the users became even more important.

The Initial Variable Coding of the Raw Collection

The compilation of the raw collection, which involved opening each post and its corresponding secondary posts, and then copying all this into another file took several weeks. The results, however, were very satisfying as the amount of data that was collected far exceeded expectations and with all the posts and comments now in daily files it would be possible to begin coding. However, before coding could commence it was necessary to determine the variables that would be used and whether the collection contained the information that was needed to perform the desired analysis.

User

The identification of the individual users was essential for several reasons. First, it would facilitate the analysis of the total number of users that were posting to the EDL Facebook page during the collection period. While there were an average of over 75,000 likes that were characterized by the EDL administrators and participants

as representing the membership of the EDL, what was unknown was how many users/members were actually taking the time to comment on the administrator posts to the EDL Facebook page. As with Caren et al. (2011) in their examination of Stormfront user frequency, there are questions as to who is participating and at what level. Issuing the user with an identification number provides the capability to understand just how many of the 75,000 'members' are actually participating. For example, a user analysis was accomplished using the duplication identification function within SPSS. By selecting the user ID's variable, the SPSS program identified duplicate cases and provided the number of actual users who participated in the online dialog. A frequency analysis of the user id numbers then revealed the actual number of times each user posted during the collection period. These and other finding will be provided in detail in Chapter Six.

Second, the user identification coupled with the date stamp allows for a frequency analysis of user activity during the collection period. If one is to understand the impact of the online phenomenon, it only makes sense to examine not only who is participating but how often they participate. By identifying the users by date of post provides the ability to conduct a frequency analysis of the active users.

Understanding how often a user might comment in response to the administrator posts can give an indication of the user's commitment to the group, even if it is only an online representation of that commitment. Clearly someone who posted only once or twice within the collection period should not be viewed as a serious member while others who might post dozens if not hundreds of times should be viewed as having a strong association with the group if not the ideology of the group.

Date

The identification of the date of the post is useful in assisting with frequency analysis and linking posts with what could be viewed as critical or important socio/political events. Within the collection period there were several significant events that seemed to create a greater than normal amount of traffic. These included the arrests of key EDL figures, confrontations with the pro-Islamist Muslims Against Crusades, EDL clashes with law enforcement, and notices of offenses by Muslims/immigrants that the EDL wanted to highlight to create fervor within the group. A traffic analysis by date provides an understanding of the ebb and flow of the group's online activities.

By tagging the secondary posts with the date for the primary posts it became possible to track the virility of any given post within the community. Understanding which primary posts receive the most secondary posts allows for the investigation of whether there is a specific type of content or topic that may solicit more responses than other topics.

The Posts

The primary and secondary posts were selected and included in their entirety to allow for multiple examinations. First was the determination of the emphasis of the post. Was it a pro-EDL post, an anti-Muslim post, anti-government, or other type of post. Second, having the entire post made it possible to perform a key word/phrase analysis using NVivo software to determine the frequency of certain words and phrases that might indicate a certain acceptance of the extremist narrative of the EDL. It was then possible to determine if there were individual users within the group that tended to use these words and phrases more often than others.

The category coding of the primary posts was done manually after the post had been placed into SPSS. Each post was opened and then coded according to the emphasis of the post. This categorization allowed for the measurement of the EDL's administrator emphasis in his messaging as well as being able to assess the impact on the membership as reflected in the number of comments per category of posts. The primary posts were coded as follows:

Pro-EDL. Within this category included all generally pro-EDL posts by the administrator. This included morning welcomes, evening salutations, and primary posts that were designed to speak to the 'patriotism' of the group and the membership. Many of these posts were for the purpose of reinforcing the identity of the group.

EDL Demonstration/Mobilization. This included all administrator posts that were placed on Facebook to promote upcoming demonstrations, mobilize the membership to attend those demonstrations, and even suggest various methods of transportation to facilitate getting to the demonstrations. These primary posts became more prevalent as the dates of the demonstration became eminent and dropped off following the actual demonstration and were replaced by more propaganda posts.

EDL Propaganda. Primary posts that were for propaganda purposes only were placed within this category. These include post demonstration assessments and links to stories or videos about the demonstrations. It also included favorable articles or videos regarding EDL activities, efforts, or actions by local divisions.

Anti-Muslim . Generally anti-Muslim posts were identified within the grouping. This would include issues of immigration, the building of New or larger mosques, the activities of MAC and their efforts to institute Sharia control zones and Islamic Emirates within the UK, and other generally anti-Muslim content.

Muslim Rape. Any primary posts that discussed or highlighted stories about the arrest of Muslims involved in rape were coded into this category including the high profile arrest of larger grooming and Muslim rape gangs. A central theme in these posts is the victimization of non-Muslim women and children by Muslim men.

Muslim Murder. Administrator posts that discussed cases of murder by Muslims were coded into this category. Again, as with Muslim Rape, the focus of these posts was the victimization of non-Muslims by Muslims (mostly men but not in all cases).

Muslim Pedophilia. Primary posts that were focused on incidents of pedophilia committed by Muslims were coded into this category.

Anti-Government. This category contains those posts that were considered to be anti-government in nature. They ranged from feelings of persecution by government forces for their views to sentiments that the government was more in favor of protecting Muslim rights than protecting British values.

Anti-EDL. This category was created to record any anti-EDL posts. There were, however, no primary posts that were anti-EDL in nature, however as will be discussed briefly there were a few anti-EDL URL links within a few secondary posts.

Other/Unknown. Any administrator posts that could not be placed in any of the previous categories was coded into other/unknown.

Following the completion of this coding into a Primary Post Type (**PPT**type) variable, another variable was created collapsing these categories into more generalized condensed categories and placed into the variable labeled

CompressPPTtype.

Pro-EDL (general), Demonstration/Mobilization, and EDL Propaganda were merged and coded as **Pro-EDL**.

Anti-Muslim, Muslim Rape, and Muslim Murder were merged and coded as **Anti-Muslim** .

Anti-Government, Anti-EDL, and Other/Unknown were merged and coded as **Other**.

Likes

Within Facebook groups, the users have the opportunity to not just comment on any given post but may also ‘Like’ a post, or ‘share’ a primary post by the administrator of the page. The number of shares was relatively low and inconsistent and was therefore not noted, however, the number of likes often times far exceeded the number of comments and was therefore chosen as a variable to be examined. “Liking” a post is different from the Page or Group “Like” that was discussed earlier, which was viewed as being the vehicle for the user ‘joining’ the EDL Facebook group. “Liking” a post allows the user to show their support for the item being posted without having to comment on the post, although as previously stated, the “like” itself can be viewed as a form of expression. It was not possible, given the manual collection protocol, to determine who was “liking” these posts, but the recordation of the number of likes for the primary posts does provide an additional measure of popularity of or acceptance of a particular post.

URL Links

The inclusion of URL links within the administrator posts allows for the transmission of large quantities of information with little effort. Many of the URL links are presented to either support the narrative of the EDL, highlight what are deemed to be government policies that are at odds with the goals of the EDL or in rare cases support their cause. These links are also, and for the most part, used to expose behaviour by the Muslim minority that supports the position and the EDL’s characterization of them as ‘the other’. The URL links were further classified/coded

(manually), as were the posts mentioned earlier, as pro EDL, anti-Muslim/immigrant, anti-government, or other following their placement into SPSS. The coding by category of the URL links was done in the same manner as were the primary posts. This designation coupled with the count on secondary posts and “likes” provides insight into which links were most effective in evincing a response from the group to which types of URL links. As with the primary posts the **URLType** variable contained all the varied areas previously listed, and these too were collapsed into the more generalized categories previously noted as **CompressURLType**.

YouTube Links

YouTube links were found primarily within the primary posts and allow the members to have access to and comment on videos that are presented by way of the administrator post. These links ranged from video links showing media interviews with EDL leaders or interviews with UK Islamist leaders to reinforce the negative image of what they deemed to be ‘the enemy’. Additionally, music videos that had been produced as inspirational material for the EDL membership were provided as well as video showing footage of the EDL demonstrations. These demonstration videos included the speeches by EDL leaders, images of the members marching to accentuate the size and power of the group, as well as video portraying the interactions of EDL members with local police to support the contention that the government was acting to suppress the EDL and what they deemed to be ‘patriotic’ acts.

The use of YouTube by extremist and terrorist groups is a growing phenomenon and is seen as a very effective and cost efficient way to spread group ideology and propaganda (Weimann, 2006; Conway & McInerney, 2008). In their analysis of Jihadi videos, Conway and McInerney (2008) examined the categories of jihadi

videos within their collection, the number of ratings these videos received by those who viewed them, the number of views, and the number of comments that were made on each video. Other data that was examined was the age of the users, the geographic location of the users, and the statements made by those who chose to comment on the videos (Conway & McInerney, 2008). While they consider this work to be an “exploratory study to evaluate the feasibility of a larger scale project to explore the support base for political violence amongst the online audience jihadi-promoting video content on YouTube” (Conway & McInerney, 2008, p. 116), it provided the impetus to consider the way YouTube videos were used by the EDL. The EDL made effective use of these videos in supporting the ideology of the group as well as developing the ‘*us vs. them*’ paradigm that is essential when seeking to characterize Muslims and immigrants as “the other”. Analyzing the categories, the number of likes to a particular post that contained a YouTube video, as well as the number of posts/comments on that administrator post allows for an examination of the impact of the video on the group as well as understanding which videos elicited the strongest responses.

Coding the Raw Data

With the variables established, an Excel spreadsheet was developed to begin the process of coding out the captured posts. Beginning with 5 February 2011, the documents were opened and the information that corresponded to each individual variable was cut and pasted into the appropriate cell on the Excel spreadsheet. While the final analysis would be performed in SPSS, the use of Excel for the initial coding is more user friendly and exports easily into SPSS for more in depth analysis. The early efforts at hand coding the data, which was initially estimated at several thousand posts, was laborious and slow. Early coding sessions of eight to ten hours per day

resulted in the coding of approximately 200 lines of data per day (each line was a single post). With the volume of data to be coded, and given the number of errors that seemed to be occurring in the later hours of the sessions, requiring a line by line recheck of the input, it was decided to limit the coding to 100-150 posts per day. This went on for several weeks and after coding 2500 posts, with a minimum number of variables, it became obvious that the time required to code out the large number of posts was much greater than previously estimated.

The Development and Implementation of Coding Software

After discussing the coding issues with a seasoned computer scientist, and considering the presence of the embedded coding that was transferred over from Facebook to the word documents that made up the collection, it was determined that it would be possible to develop software that might automate the coding process. Following this initial discussion I provided a separate data set that contained the same embedded coding to determine if it might be feasible to develop such a program. Being informed that the documents provided sufficient coding to allow for the development of software that could facilitate automated coding of the collection; I commissioned the creation of this software as a tool to be used for the coding of the raw EDL Facebook data that was being held in my possession. While the software designer prefers to remain unnamed due to the aggressive and litigious nature of Facebook, his efforts in the development of the specialized software that allowed for the automated coding of the posts not only made this project humanly possible but enhanced the capabilities of the analysis by ensuring the accuracy of the data coding and expanding the available variables beyond what was originally proposed when being manually encoded. Working closely with this individual reinforced the point that was the early focus of this project; that being the need to develop interdisciplinary

approaches to solving research problems in the realm of cyber/internet research in social science.

To illustrate the complexity of the work that was undertaken to segregate the desired information from the saved documents, the following is a sample of one post from my own personal Facebook feed that contains a single picture. By accessing the source code for this post, which had one 'like' and nineteen comments, it was found to be 80 pages long. The coding below represents only that portion of the source code pertaining to the original post, without the coding for the like or the comments:

```
href="████████████████████" title="Profile"
accesskey="2"><span
class="headerTinymanName">Ted Reynolds</span></a></li><li class="navItem middleItem"><a
href="https://www.facebook.com/find-friends/browser/?ref=tn">Find Friends</a></li><li
class="navItem middleItem" id="navHome"><a href="https://www.facebook.com/?ref=tn_tnmn"
accesskey="1">Home</a></li><li id="navAccount"><a id="navAccountLink"
href="https://www.facebook.com/editaccount.php?ref=mb&drop" rel="toggle" role="button"
aria-haspopup="1" aria-controls="userNavigation" aria-labelledby="userNavigationLabel"><div
class="menuPulldown" id="userNavigationLabel">Account Settings</div></a><ul
class="navigation" id="userNavigation" role="navigation" aria-label="Account Menu"><li><a
class="navSubmenu"
href="/campaign/landing.php?placement=tad&campaign_id=264263327005748&extra_1=auto&a
mp;extra_2=AdvertisingMenu%3ACONTROL">Advertise</a></li><li><a class="navSubmenu"
href="https://www.facebook.com/editaccount.php?ref=mb&drop" accesskey="6">Account
Settings</a></li><li><a class="navSubmenu"
href="https://www.facebook.com/settings/?tab=privacy&ref=mb" accesskey="7">Privacy
Settings</a></li><li><form id="logout_form" method="post" action="/logout.php"
onsubmit="return Event.__inlineSubmit(this,event)"><input type="hidden" name="fb_dtsg"
value="AQASHv27" autocomplete="off" /><input type="hidden" autocomplete="off" name="ref"
value="mb" /><input type="hidden" autocomplete="off" name="h" value="AfcdbHBuHbMfkppy"
/><label class="uiLinkButton navSubmenu"><input type="submit" value="Log Out"
/></label></form></li><li class="menuDivider"></li><li><a class="navSubmenu"
href="https://www.facebook.com/help/?ref=drop" id="navHelpCenter" target="_blank"
ajaxify="https://www.facebook.com/help/ajax/contextual/?page_type=365243976839773"
rel="async"><div class="clearfix"><div class="lfloat">Help</div></div></a></li></ul></li></ul></div></div></div></div></div><div
id="globalContainer" class="uiContextualLayerParent"><div id="content" class="fb_content
clearfix"><div class="UIStandardFrame_Container clearfix"><div
class="UIStandardFrame_Content"><div class="fbxPhoto" id="fbPhotoPageContainer"><div
class="pvm" id="fbPhotoPageHeader"><div class="uiHeader pbs"><div class="clearfix
uiHeaderTop"><div><h2 tabindex="0" class="uiHeaderTitle">Mobile
Uploads</h2></div></div></div><div class="clearfix"><div class="lfloat fsm fwn fcg"><a
href="https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1622654720927.2087611.1073243381&type=1"
>Back to Album</a> · <a href="https://www.facebook.com/ted.reynolds.52?sk=photos">My
Photos</a></div><div class="rfloat fsm fwn fcg"><a class="photoPagePrevNav"
onclick="PhotoPermalink.getInstance().pagerClick(&quot;prev&quot;);"
href="https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=3700732311568&set=a.1622654720927.2087611.
1073243381&type=1&permPage=1">Previous</a> · <a class="photoPageNextNav"
onclick="PhotoPermalink.getInstance().pagerClick(&quot;next&quot;);"
href="https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=3607381497856&set=a.1622654720927.2087611.
1073243381&type=1&permPage=1">Next</a></div></div></div><div
id="fbxPhotoContentContainer"><table class="uiGrid fbPhotoImageStage" cellspacing="0"
cellpadding="0"><tbody><tr><td class="vMid hCent stageContainer"><div id="photoborder"
class="stageWrapper"><div id="imagestage" class="imageStage"></div><div
class="videoStage"></div><div class="photoError fbPhotoPageError"
id="fbPhotoPageError"></div><div class="fbPhotosPhotoTagboxes minPhotoTagboxes
minPhotoTagboxes" id="fbPhotoPageTagBoxes"><div class="tagsWrapper" style="width: 720px;
height: 0;"><div class="fbPhotosPhotoTagboxBase faceBox" style="width: 44px;height:
44px;left: 234px;top: 308px;" id="face:3699611523549"><div class="borderTagBox"><div
class="innerTagBox"><div class="ieContentFix"> </div></div></div><div class="tag"><div
class="tagPointer"><i class="tagArrow img sp_4i4ayo sx_57580d"></i><div
class="tagName"></div></div></div></div></div></div><div class="stageActions"
id="fbPhotoPageStageActions"><div class="fbPhotosPhotoTagboxBase newTagBox hidden_elem"
style=""><div class="borderTagBox"><div class="innerTagBox"><div
class="ieContentFix"> </div></div></div><div class="tag"><div class="tagPointer"><i
class="tagArrow img sp_4i4ayo sx_57580d"></i><div
class="tagName"></div></div></div></div><div class="fbPhotoTagger hidden_elem
photoPermalinkTagger" id="un5mxy_2"><div class="faceBox"><div class="typeaheadWrapper"><div
class="typeaheadContainer"><div class="arrow"><div class="nub"></div></div><div
class="typeaheadBackdrop"><div class="mbs typeaheadLabel">Type any name to tag:</div><div
class="clearfix uiTokenizer uiNormalTokenizer photoTagTokenizer" id="un5mxy_1"><div
class="uiTypeahead photoTagTypeahead" id="un5mxy_3"><div class="wrap"><input type="hidden"
autocomplete="off" class="hiddenInput" /><div class="innerWrap"><input type="text"
```

```
class="inputtext textInput DOMControl_placeholder" name="user_name" placeholder="Type any
name" autocomplete="off" aria-autocomplete="list" aria-expanded="false" aria-invalid="false"
aria-owns="typeahead_list_un5mxy_3" role="textbox" spellcheck="false" id="un5mxy_4"
value="Type any name" aria-label="Type any name"
/></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div></div><div
class="stageTagApproval"><div class="fbPhotoTagApproval"
id="fbPhotoPageTagApproval"></div></div></td></tr><tr><td class="buttonsContainer"><div
class="stageButtons"><div class="fbPhotosPhotoButtons" id="fbPhotoPageButtons"><div
class="separatorBorder"></div><div class="likeCommentGroup fbPhotosPhotoLike lfloat"><span
class="uiButtonGroup like uiButtonGroupOverlay" id="un5mxy_6"><span class="firstItem
uiButtonGroupItem buttonItem"><a class="likeButton uiButton uiButtonOverlay" href="#"
role="button"><span class="uiButtonText">Like</span></a></span><span class="lastItem
uiButtonGroupItem buttonItem"><a class="commentButton uiButton uiButtonOverlay" href="#"
role="button"><span class="uiButtonText">Comment</span></a></span></span><span
class="uiButtonGroup unlike uiButtonGroupOverlay" id="un5mxy_7"><span class="firstItem
uiButtonGroupItem buttonItem"><a class="likeButton uiButton uiButtonOverlay" href="#"
role="button"><span class="uiButtonText">Unlike</span></a></span><span class="lastItem
uiButtonGroupItem buttonItem"><a class="commentButton uiButton uiButtonOverlay" href="#"
role="button"><span class="uiButtonText">Comment</span></a></span></span></div><a
class="fbPhotosPhotoActionsTag tagButton rfloat uiButton uiButtonOverlay" href="#"
role="button"><span class="uiButtonText">Tag Photo</span></a><div class="tagMessage">Click
on the photo to start tagging. <a class="fbPhotosPhotoActionsTag doneTaggingLink"
href="#">Done Tagging</a></div><div class="cropMessage">Drag the corners of the transparent
box above to crop this photo into your profile picture. <a class="fbPhotosPhotoActionsTag
doneCroppingLink" href="#">Done Cropping</a> | <a class="fbPhotosPhotoActionsTag
cancelCroppingLink" href="#">Cancel</a></div></div></td></tr></tbody></table><table
class="uiGrid fbPhotoPageInfo" cellspacing="0" cellpadding="0"><tbody><tr><td class="vTop
fbPhotoUfiCol"><div class="photoUfiContainer"><div class="UIImageBlock clearfix
fbPhotoContributor"><div class="UIImageBlock_Image UIImageBlock_SMALL_Image"
id="fbPhotoPageAuthorPic" tabindex="-1" aria-hidden="true"><a
href="#"></a></div><div class="UIImageBlock_Content
UIImageBlock_SMALL_Content"><div class="fbPhotoContributorName"
id="fbPhotoPageAuthorName"><a href="#"
hovercard="/ajax/hovercard/user.php?id=1073243381">Ted Reynolds</a></div><div
class="fbPhotosPhotoCaption" tabindex="0" aria-live="polite" id="fbPhotoPageCaption"><span
class="hasCaption"><br />Just four more hours and it&#039;s &#039;Chili
Time&#039;.</span></div><div class="fbPhotoTagList hidden_elem"
id="fbPhotoPageTagList"></div><div class="fbPhotoInlineEditor"
id="fbPhotoPageInlineEditor"></div><div class="fbPhotosPhotoFeedback"
```

```
id="fbPhotoPageFeedback"><form rel="async" class="live_3699611323544_131325686911214
commentable_item autoexpand_mode" method="post" action="/ajax/ufi/modify.php" data-
live="&#123;&quot;seq&quot;:2417705&#125;" onsubmit="return
Event.__inlineSubmit(this,event)" id="un5mxy_20"><input type="hidden" name="charset_test"
value="&euro;,&acute;,&Eacute;,,'&#125;" /><input type="hidden" name="fb_dtsg" value="AQASHv27"
autocomplete="off" /><input type="hidden" autocomplete="off" name="feedback_params"
value="&#123;&quot;actor&quot;:&quot;1073243381&quot;,&quot;target_fb_id&quot;:&quot;36996113
23544&quot;,&quot;target_profile_id&quot;:&quot;1073243381&quot;,&quot;type_id&quot;:&quot;7
&quot;,&quot;assoc_obj_id&quot;:&quot;&quot;,&quot;source_app_id&quot;:&quot;0&quot;,&quot;e
xtra_story_params&quot;:&#123;&quot;photo_viewer_version&quot;:&quot;0&quot;&#125;,&quot;con
tent_timestamp&quot;:&quot;1339952715&quot;,&quot;check_hash&quot;:&quot;AQcxFpJjMp3FhOTu&qu
ot;,&quot;source&quot;:&quot;2&quot;&#125;" /><span><span class="UIActionLinks
UIActionLinks_bottom" data-
ft="&#123;&quot;tn&quot;:&quot;=&quot;,&quot;type&quot;:20&#125;"><button class="like_link
stat_elem as_link" title="Like this item" type="submit" name="like" onclick="fc_click(this,
false); return true;" data-
ft="&#123;&quot;tn&quot;:&quot;=&quot;,&quot;type&quot;:22&#125;"><span
class="default_message">Like</span><span class="saving_message">Unlike</span></button>
&#183; <label class="uiLinkButton comment_link" title="Leave a comment"><input data-
ft="&#123;&quot;type&quot;:24,&quot;tn&quot;:&quot;S&quot;&#125;" type="button"
value="Comment" onclick="return fc_click(this);" /></label> &#183; <button class="unsub_link
stat_elem as_link" title="You are currently receiving notifications for this item because
you commented on it." type="submit" name="unsubscribe"><span
class="default_message">Unfollow Post</span><span class="saving_message">Follow
Post</span></button> &#183; <a rel="dialog"
href="#">Share</a>
&#183; <span class="stat_elem"><a class="fbPhotosPhotoEdit" href="#"
ajaxify="/ajax/photos/photo/edit/edit.php?fbid=3699611323544&amp;version=0&amp;mediaType=pho
to" rel="async">Edit</a></span><span class="fbPhotosPhotoDisabledEdit">Edit</span> &#183; <span
id="fbPhotoPageTimestamp"><abbr title="Sunday, June 17, 2012 at 1:05pm" data-
utime="1339952715" class="timestamp livetimestamp">21 hours ago</abbr> near <a
class="fbPhotosImplicitLocLink" href="#">
</a> </span></span></span><ul class="uiList uiUfi
focus_target fbUfi fbUfiNoBorder fbPhotosPhotoUfi" data-
ft="&#123;&quot;type&quot;:30,&quot;tn&quot;:&quot;]&quot;&#125;"><li class="ufiNub
uiListItem uiListVerticalItemBorder"><i></i></li><li class="ufiItem uiUfiLike uiListItem
uiListVerticalItemBorder" data-ft="&#123;&quot;type&quot;:31&#125;"><div class="UIImageBlock
clearfix"><a class="UIImageBlock_Image UIImageBlock_ICON_Image" href="#" tabindex="-1" aria-
hidden="true"><label class="uiUfiLikeIcon" title="Like this item"
```

```
onclick="this.form.like.click();"></label></a><div class="UIImageBlock_Content  
UIImageBlock_ICON_Content"><a5
```

As is evident, there are several ‘hyperlinks’, which appear underlined in blue, within the source code seen above. These hyperlinks provide direct access to specific and specialized information contained within the post when clicked on. For example, when one clicks on <https://www.facebook.com/ted.reynolds.██████████>, a separate tab/window opens that contains 106 pages of code related to my own individual ID number. Yet clicking on https://fbcdn-profile-a.akamaihd.net/hprofile-ak-snc4/273760_██████████_q.jpg allows one to immediately view the profile picture which was in use at the time the post was made, with no attached code. The content/code relating to those who either liked or commented on this post was omitted for the simple reason that the coding for this information which was voluminous and space prohibitive, contained hyperlinks to their own profiles, individual ID numbers and profile pictures which, if presented, would have violated their privacy.

The software that was developed to sift through this massive amount of coding, which came to be called ‘The Parser’, went through several iterations on its way to being able to sift through all the data, locate the pertinent information, and then segregate and format that information into a form that provided the desired variable data. The first iteration proved capable of parsing one single post into the variant categories. Once it was known that the program was able to parse out the desired information into a format that could be transferred into a spreadsheet, the software was modified to meet the demands of the project. The software revision moved from

⁵ Text specific to user profile has been redacted to prevent future hacking.

parsing one single post to an entire days capture, then parsing from a single file into a single text file to multiple files into multiple text files. With every improvement the capabilities of the software made this researcher's job less labor intensive with regard to coding of the raw data. The final iteration for the parsing of the EDL collection, V6.0, was completed in November 2011, and allowed for the parsing of the entire collection.

Interestingly, a technique similar to the one used during this project was recently used by Lewis, Zamith, and Hermida (2013) and described in their paper titled, *Content Analysis in an Era of Big Data: A Hybrid Approach to Computational and Manual Methods*. They point out that "while it is true that computational techniques can be applied to the sampling and coding problems facing content analysis in a sea of too much information, we argue that, in many cases, scholars may be better served with a hybrid approach-one that blends computational and manual methods throughout the content analysis process" (p. 39). They created a Python

based "parser" to identify key content within the 199 megabyte tab-delimited text file (various articles) that comprised the raw data they sought to analyze (p61). The major difference between their efforts and those of this project is that the file they were parsing was already in a tab-delimited file that made the job much easier. Therefore, they were parsing an existing file to search for key words and phrases, which is similar to what was done herein using NVivo. The parser developed as a part of this project took raw files and parsed the bulk collection into variables that were then placed into a tab-delimited file for import into Excel then into SPSS for analysis.

The graphic user interface (GUI, pronounced- *gooey*), as seen in Image 1, and used in most computer applications, allows for a user-friendly experience for those not familiar with the intricacies of the computer coding required to perform the functions of the parser.

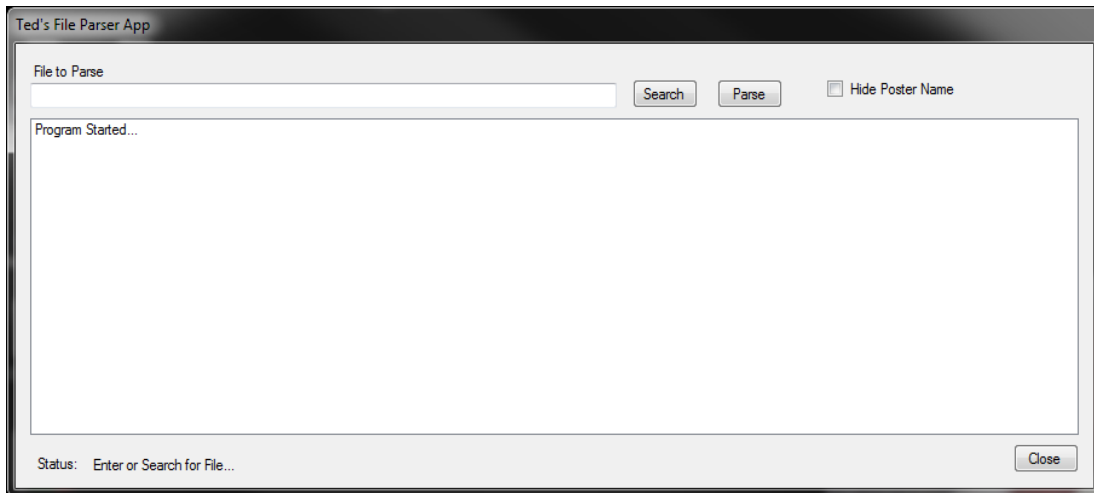


Image 1: Parser, Graphic User Interface

Using the 'search' function in the graphic user interface, and locating the folder labeled EDL XML DATA (Image 2), which contained all the XML files for each day of collection, it was then necessary to 'select all' and then click 'open' to lace all the files into the parser.

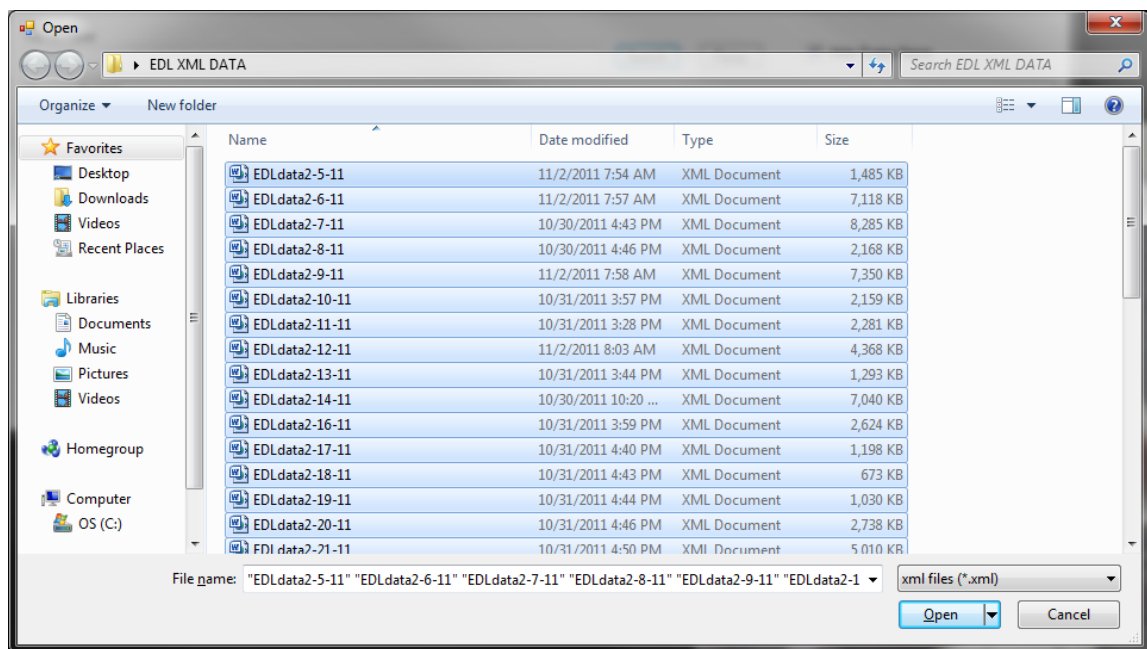


Image 2: Select all files to put into parser

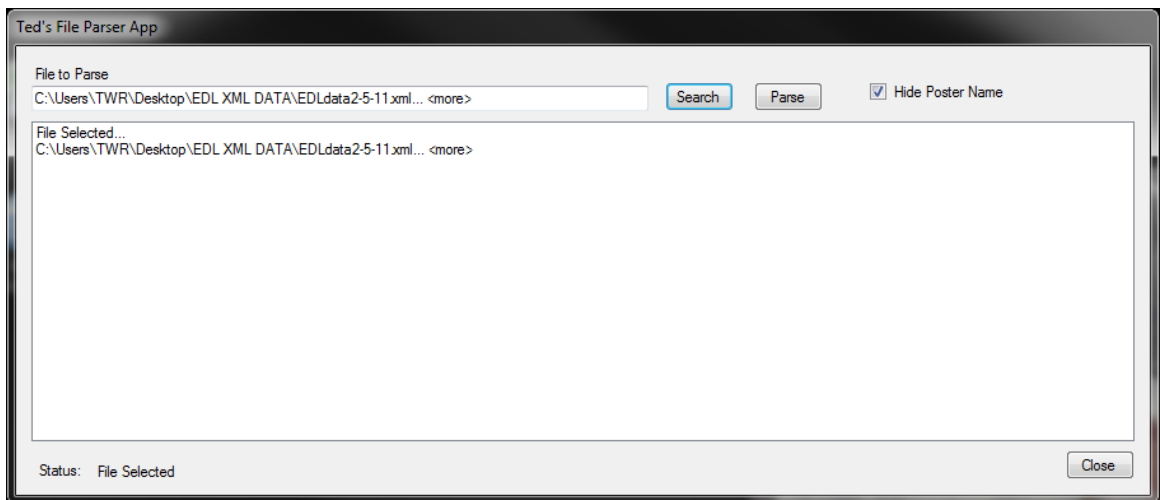


Image 3: All files in parser & hide poster names

Prior to clicking the 'parse' button on the GUI, the 'Hide Poster Name' box was checked to hide the names of the author/user, which provided for the anonymization of all users that are included in the collection being parsed (Image 3).

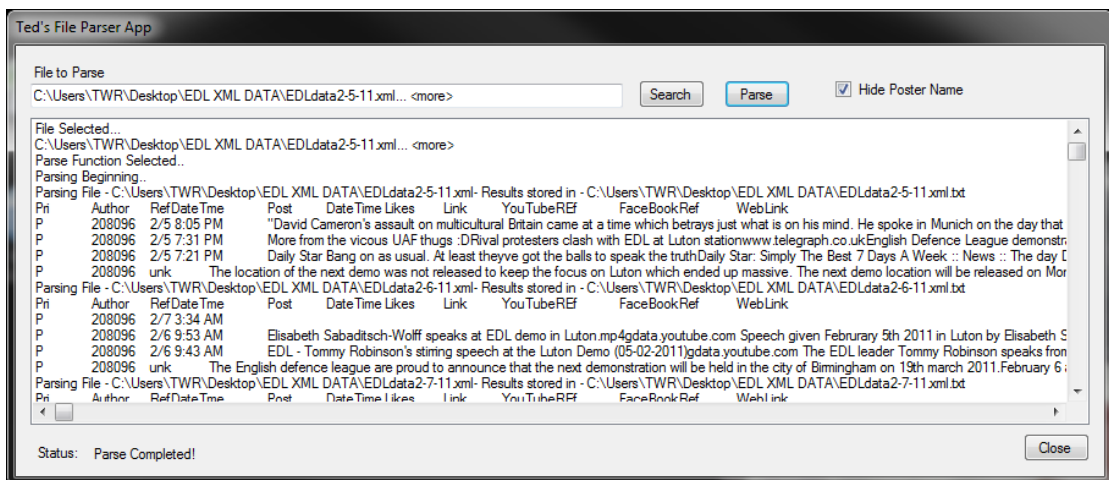


Image 4: Parsing complete, GUI view

Once all the files were in place to be parsed and the tab was checked to hide the names, clicking on 'Parse' provided the view of the GUI seen in Image 4. Clicking the parse button allowed the software to sift through the files, searching for the specified information that would be placed into the variable categories, while at the same time anonymizing the authors/users.

The process, or function, of parsing the data as seen above is explained in the following steps:

Step 1: Data File

The initial data files were captured from HTML pages on Facebook and copied into a Microsoft Word document. In order to separate the data so that it could be parsed, the data was saved to an XML file so that individual fields and attributes would become more tokenized and easily parsed. This was accomplished by opening the original file in the native Word format and saving it as an XML file. An XML, or extensible markup language, file is used when wanting to structure, store, and transport data as opposed to the HTML format which is used to simply display data.

Step 2: File Format

In order to process the raw data files into a form that is suitable for import into a statistical analysis, a custom C++ application (a specific computer coding schema) was developed which processed one or more XML files and generated a Tab Delimited File. Tab delimiting, which places the information into columns and rows, was chosen because it could be easily imported into Excel, and would allow most characters (including commas) to be left intact in the parsed data.

To accomplish the parsing, the software opened the specified XML file and began searching for the occurrence of the start of a text string in the XML file. This was denoted by a “<w:t>” preceding the text. Once found, it would continue parsing the input file until it reached characters that represented the end of the text string in the XML file. This was denoted by a “</w:t>” following the last character of the text string.

Step 3: Identifying Various Components

Once a text string was found, it was reviewed for context relative to the overall body. Since Facebook posts vary in structure and do not always contain the same fields, string values like “Top of Form” at the beginning of a string indicated the beginning of a post. Terms like “Like this.” and “people” at the end were used to denote the likely occurrence of number of likes and/or views. Dates and times were parsed using a custom date parser which interpreted the variable context Facebook posting date field to derive a more precise date/time. So, for example a date string of “April 12, 2011 at 2:02pm” would be converted to “4/12/2011 14:02”. In addition to parsing out items in context such as the poster name, actual post text, postdate and number of likes, the software would search for key words in the post such as “HTTP:”, “HTTPS:”, “YOUTUBE.”, “FACEBOOK.” as key contextual clues to look for a web hyperlink or a link to YouTube or Facebook. If a link was determined, it was placed in the output context.

Step 4: Parsing Into Variables

As the software parsed the file independent of the number of lines, length of post or size of the file, it would construct an output string that contained the core data needed to import into the statistical analysis program. The order of the output parsed data was:

Pri – Whether this was a primary or secondary post. Primary posts are coded as ‘P’ and secondary posts are denoted with ‘S’. All secondary posts appear directly under the primary post to which they are associated.

Author – Author of this post. While the parser is able to provide the actual author/user screen name, a special function was added, per the requirements of the research design, to provide for the anonymization of the users into a numeric value.

This value was not the actual text string of the author, but rather a cypher of the original text that was derived using an algorithmic function $f(x)$ which contains exponential, multiplication and summation components using a prime number as a spreading method. The actual formula for the cypher is withheld to prevent identification of the users.

The purpose of this simple cypher was two-fold. First, it would be highly unlikely that two non-identical strings would yield the same value. Second, it imposes a reasonable level of difficulty such that it could not be easily reverse computed back to the subject string such as with a hash or simple substitution. The goal was to create a one-way cypher that neither inherently contained the number of characters nor the value of those characters. According to Bruce Schneier (1996) in *Applied Cryptography*, a one-way cipher, also called a one-way function, is “relatively easy to compute, but significantly harder to reverse. That is, given x it is easy to compute $f(x)$, but given $f(x)$ it is hard to compute x . In this context, “hard” is defined as something like: It would take millions of years to compute x from $f(x)$, even if all the computers in the world were assigned to the problem” (Schneier, 1996, p. 29). More generally, the difficulty in reverse engineering $f(x)$ is analogous to trying to unscramble eggs. Before scrambling, the individual eggs are easily identifiable, but once scrambled it is impossible to separate the eggs back into their previous state. Even with the advances in computing power since this was written in 1996, the one-way cipher offers a more than reasonable assurance that the user names cannot be easily reverse engineered from the anonymized value $f(x)$ that is used in the data set.

RefDateTime – The date/time of the primary post was parsed to identify the beginning of a string. As all comments to a post are considered to be a part of the

string, this same date/time tag was placed as an identifier for the comments associated with the primary post.

Post – The actual text of the primary and secondary posts was located and copied into the .txt format for placement into the Post cell. It contains the entire post, as written by the author.

DateTime – the date/time of the primary post is noted as is the date/time of the secondary post/comment. This is different from the date/time of the primary post to which they are associated. In some cases the secondary posts or comments occur several days following the initial primary posting by the administrator.

Likes – contains the number of likes for the primary post. While advanced automated data mining may have been able to provide the author of these likes, the manual collection only provided the ability to determine the number of likes per primary post which still offers an opportunity to determine the popularity or virility of an individual primary post.

Link – Indicates whether a URL link exists as the focus of the primary post or within any secondary posts. This was coded 0 for no and 1 for yes.

YouTubeRef – Indicates whether the URL link contained within the post is a YouTube reference. Again, the coding was 0 for no and 1 for yes.

FacebookRef – Indicates whether the URL link contained within the post is a Facebook reference or link.

WebLink – Contains the web link reference/address (URL) when possible. In this one variable the parser was not able to provide 100% of the web links contained within or as a primary focus of the posts.

As stated previously the emphasis identification of the primary posts and the URL links were completed after the automated parsing process was completed into variable identified as, PPType, URLType, CompressPPType, and CompressURLType.

Step 5: The TXT File

A single Tab delimited string record per post was written to a file in a structured format that could be parsed by a database or statistical analysis software. This file was written as a .txt file so that Excel or other files would not assume a particular structure as with XML or Comma Separated Values (CSV) extensions. CSV files allow for the individual pieces of text data to be inserted into individual cells. American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters were used with as much of the original character spacing, context, capitalization, and flow as possible.

Step 6: The Parsed Files

The result, shown in the GUI below, is the parsing of the XML files (completed by the parser in approximately 30 seconds) and the creation of individual .txt files within the EDL XML DATA folder (seen in Image 5) corresponding to each days XML file as well as an EDL_AllData file containing a compilation of all the .txt data from each individual file in a single .txt file which can then be easily imported into an Excel spreadsheet.

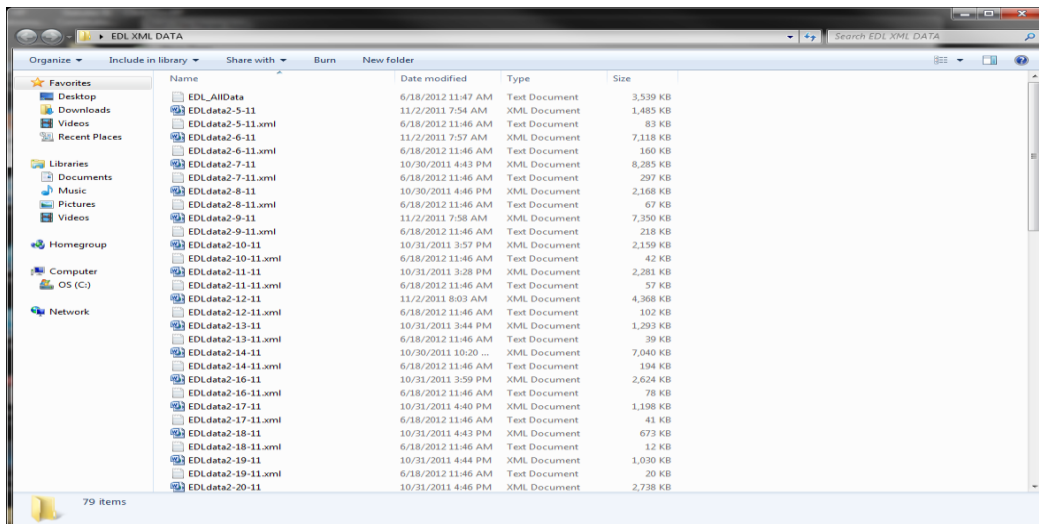


Image 5: Parsed .txt files automatically placed in folder

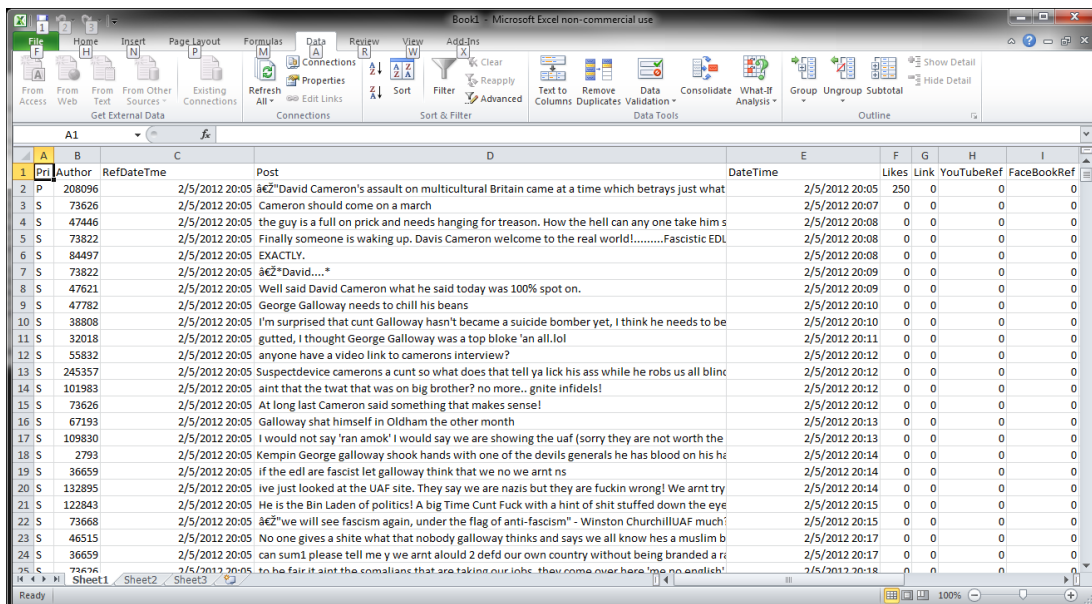


Image 6: EDL_Alldata file imported into Excel

The Excel spreadsheet seen above in Image 6, containing all the information from the EDL_AllData file, required only one modification prior to importation into SPSS. Due to the formatting the parser used in providing the data/time information (all being in one cell in .txt format), it did not transfer into SPSS in a usable way, and required adjustment. Therefore, it was necessary to modify the date/time cell within the Excel document into a simple month/day (mm/dd) format so it could be utilized in SPSS.

While the presentation of the times of the posts offered an additional measure for analysis, it was not significant to the overall project goals and was therefore deemed expendable for the purposes of this analysis. It is important to note that the file containing the original date/time stamp as seen above was saved in the event it became necessary to work through this problem if it was deemed essential in the future. Once the Month/Day issue was resolved, the Excel file was opened in SPSS for analysis. It appears as seen below in Image 7:

URLink	Pri	Author	REFDate	Post	Date	Likes	Link	YouTubeRef	FaceBookRef	URLink
1	P	208096	02/05	David Cameron's assault on multicultural ...	02/05	250	0	0	0	n/a
2	S	73626	02/05	Cameron should come on a march	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
3	S	47446	02/05	the guy is a full on prick and needs hanging fo...	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
4	S	73822	02/05	Finally someone is waking up. Davis Cameron...	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
5	S	84497	02/05	EXACTLY.	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
6	S	73822	02/05	David...	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
7	S	47621	02/05	Well said David Cameron what he said today ...	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
8	S	47782	02/05	George Galloway needs to chill his beans	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
9	S	38808	02/05	I'm surprised that cunt Galloway hasn't becam...	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
10	S	32018	02/05	guttled. I thought George Galloway was a top b...	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
11	S	55832	02/05	anyone have a video link to cameron's interview?	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
12	S	245357	02/05	Suspectdevice cameron's a cunt so what does ...	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
13	S	101983	02/05	aint that the twat that was on big brother? say...	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
14	S	73626	02/05	At long last Cameron said something that ma...	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
15	S	67193	02/05	Galloway shat himself in Oldham the other mo...	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
16	S	109830	02/05	I would not say 'an amok' I would say we are ...	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
17	S	2793	02/05	Kempin George galloway shook hands with on...	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a
18	S	36659	02/05	if the edl are fascist let galloway think that we...	02/05	0	0	0	0	n/a

Image 7: EDL Excel spreadsheet imported into SPSS (the data set)

The results from these efforts were nothing short of astounding. As mentioned earlier, when all the EDL.XML files were placed in The Parser V.6.0, this final version was able to parse the entire forty five day collection into a single data file in less than forty seconds. With the compilation of the daily data files into one singular data file it was then possible to import this into Excel which allowed for its easy importation into SPSS for analysis. Realizing the many hundreds of human-hours this program had saved, it was determined that the software would be shared with anyone within the academic community who wished to perform similar research. Following the completion of this thesis, a copy of the software will be provided on disc to the Department of International Relations as well as the Computer Science Department at

the University of St. Andrews. Additionally, since it became necessary to modify the software to code the supplemental EDL collection from later in 2011 (V7.0), this program will also be included.

Limitations

As the focus of this research is on understanding the characteristics of the use of Facebook by the EDL, there are limitations that must be acknowledged. First, while the collection of all EDL Facebook traffic during the collection period was possible, it was not possible to capture those posts that were either deleted by the individual user or by the administrator prior to collection. There is evidence within the data to suggest that both of these occurred. Second, it must be noted that the EDL Facebook traffic is only representative of those individuals who represent themselves as ‘members’ of the EDL on Facebook. There was no way, given the legal and practical constraints of the study to confirm whether the active ‘member’ on Facebook were engaged in real-world activism associated with the group. Next, even if those engaged in the online dialogue are truly active members in the real world, the collection of Facebook traffic is only representative of those members who chose to engage in virtual activism and cannot speak to the actions of any members including those on Facebook. The findings and analysis of the EDL Facebook traffic cannot be considered to provide broad findings pertaining to the overall membership of the EDL, but can only be seen as representing the activities and attitudes of those individuals who chose to/not to engage in this social media forum. Finally, as this is a relatively new field of investigation, the tools that were available for the collection and analysis of this traffic were in some cases not available or incompatible with other programs to provide a more in-depth examination of the phenomenon. The creation of the parser solved one problem, but it is hoped that as the field evolves, better tools

will be developed to facilitate greater understanding. Even so, the efforts if this research did produce interesting and valuable findings.

Preliminary Findings

The initial findings were more than had been hoped for. First, the initial transfer of the data into Excel revealed that there were 19,312 primary and secondary posts in the data set for the forty five day collection period. All the posts had date/time stamps and included the posts as well as the number of likes and the indication of a URL link and the segregation of the Facebook and YouTube links. Each primary post was designated with a P and the secondary posts, or comments, were given the designation of S. Each secondary post/comment appeared directly under the primary post to which it was pertaining. Further, the secondary posts were given two separate date stamps. The first indicated the date it was posted, and the second indicates the date of the primary post it is attached to.

The data collection included 19,312 posts which were comprised of 19,073 secondary posts or comments made on 239 primary/administrator posts. The number of comments per post ranged from a low of fourteen to a high of three hundred sixty-one. The number of likes on the primary posts ranged from six likes to nine hundred fifty-three likes on a single post. Interestingly, there were two hundred eighty-eight posts, or only 1.5% of the entire set of posts/comments, that contained a uniform resource locator (URL) link, however, the overall percentage is misleading as fifty-one URL links were found within the two hundred thirty-nine primary/administrator posts, which is a frequency of 21.3 percent, while the remaining two hundred thirty-seven URL links were found within the member comments for a rate of 1.24 percent.

It is important to note that these preliminary findings suggest that it is possible to quantify social media participation in a substantive way. Previous literature on the

use of social media by activist or extremist groups (Jackson, 2011; Bartlett & Littler, 2011; Diani, 2000; Harlow & Harp, 2012; Spier, 2011; Alterman, 2011; Margetts et al., 2013; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Wojcieszak, 2011; Ackland & O'Neil, 2011) have often focused on the characteristics of the individuals who participate, the drivers of that participation, or the links between various online fora. Caren et al. (2012) was one of the few that was able to collect nearly all traffic (with the exception of those entries that had been deleted) where N approach ALL. One of the more significant aspects of this research was the ability to code huge amounts of collection material in an automated fashion providing accuracy and anonymity. The physical collection and subsequent automated parsing of that collection made it possible to delve below the surface of the data in a new way, and the resultant analytical findings surpassed this researcher's expectations. The quantitative analysis, coupled with the qualitative observations and analysis, provides a more holistic view of the EDL than might otherwise been possible had only one method been utilized.

The collection and coding methods as presented allowed for the substantive quantitative analysis of the characteristics of online participation within the EDL Facebook group that is found in Chapter Six. Included in this analysis is an examination of the traffic pattern found within the collection ; what type of primary posts garners the highest responses from the users; the use of URL's within the primary and secondary posts as well as the impact of those URL's on user participation; an analysis of the top key words/phrases used within the collection and a segregation of that information to determine the use of the words most used by the administrator and examining the use of these words by different groups of users; and finally, an examination of the member vs. user question with a frequency analysis that provides one of the most interesting finds of the study.

The qualitative aspects of this research, supporting the quantitative efforts, include the observations made while attending the two EDL demonstrations on 5 February and 3 September 2011 as discussed in the following chapter; the collection of the traditional print media stories printed on the EDL within the UK using LexisNexis, and a qualitative analysis of key words used within those articles, presented in Chapter Four, to examine the media's characterization of the EDL; and an analysis in Chapter Five of the content of the actual posts contained within the original EDL dataset to determine whether the statements made by the users in this online social media platform reflect the lofty goals as presented in the EDL Mission Statement of if they were more in alignment with the characterizations presented by traditional media.

Chapter Three: The Rise of the English Defence League and the Role of Social Media

Since the summer of 2009, the English Defence League (EDL) has sought to influence the dialogue on immigration policy and multicultural issues in what they framed as a battle against the spread of radical Islam. While the beginning of the movement was a manifestation of events that unfolded during that summer, the underlying angst among a segment of the population was already clearly building and only needed the spark that led to the creation of the EDL. Since then, the EDL has sought to use new and traditional media in such a way as to promote their movement, garner broader support, and spread anti-Muslim and anti-immigration propaganda whenever possible in their campaign to return 'Britishness to Britain'. Of particular importance was the use of Facebook to promote the agenda of the EDL. Bartlett & Littler (2011), in their examination of the EDL found that "the high percentage of online activism illustrates how important the internet is to the group's identity" (p. 18). Utilizing the online social networking site Facebook, the EDL was able to eventually claim, in just over two years, a membership of nearly 100,000 'patriots'. This growth was viewed as both spectacular by EDL supporters and very troubling by law enforcement and politicians. The primary concern by law enforcement was the potential for violence such a group represented throughout the country. There was specific concern regarding the impact such an openly anti-Muslim group would have on the Muslim minority in the UK and whether the increasing rhetoric by the EDL would serve to radicalize a larger segment of the Muslim community toward violence

and terrorism.⁶ While the EDL promotes itself as a multi-ethnic group, the inclusion of minorities in the group is a later development in response to the charges of being Islamophobic and racist. The birth of the group tells the story of its dubious lineage and the true nature of the agenda of the English Defence League.

Where and how did the EDL get its start? While some might trace the birth of the EDL to the summer of 2009 in Luton England, such a narrative would be overly simplistic and ignore the socio-political conditions that would allow such a group to form and thrive in a democratic and open society such as the United Kingdom. Understanding the history, leadership, and organizational structure of the EDL is central to understanding their use of Facebook and other computer mediated communication, and the various characteristics of this participation that drive the group and its members.

The National Front – BNP – EDL Nexus

The post-War era roots of the far-right extremist movement in the UK can be traced back to the National Front (NF) which was formed in January 1967 (Ford, 2010; Jackson 2011). The NF was formed out of an ideological tradition of racial nationalism and is characterized as a racist and anti-Semitic movement (Ford, 2010; Solomos, 2013). John Tyndall, who led the NF twice during the 1970's, was committed to biological racism and promoting the idea of Jewish led conspiracies. This is evidenced in the following extract from the political journal *Spearhead* where

⁶ This sentiment was expressed openly in a “Countering Homegrown Terrorism Symposium” at the UK Defence Academy held in Oct 2011. Since the symposium was held under strict Chatham House Rules, I cannot disclose the source of this assessment. My invitation to participate in the symposium was as a result of having facilitated research analysis into the impact of the EDL and the group Muslims Against Crusades on at-risk populations in the UK.

he wrote, “If Britain were to become Jew-clean she would have no nigger neighborhoods to worry about... It is the Jews who are our misfortune: T-h-e J-e-w-s. Do you hear me? THE JEWS” (Ford, 2010, p. 172). Tyndall would eventually go on to form the British National Party (BNP) in 1982 and remain in the leadership position of that party until being ousted by Nick Griffin in 1999. The disintegration of the NF in the 1980’s allowed the BNP to become the prominent voice for and monopolize the political landscape of the extreme far-right movement in the UK (Ford, 2010; Solomos, 2013).

The BNP, since its emergence on the political scene has experienced increased support in total votes and the average percentage of votes in every general election. With record voter performance in 2005, the BNP in Council votes in Barking and Dagenham received over 200,000 votes, winning twelve victories in council elections, making it the second largest party represented in these councils (Ford, 2010, p. 145). In 2009, the BNP continued its record of successes by acquiring nearly one million votes in the European Parliamentary Election “sending the first ever British extreme-right representative to Strasbourg” (Ford, 2010, p. 145). It is important to note that the resurgence of the far-right is not unique to the UK. There has been a growing trend in support of far-right parties that is reflected in the political gains by the French National Front, the Australian Freedom Party, the Flemish Interest in Belgium, the Jobbik Party in Hungary, and the Golden Dawn in Greece (Ford, 2010).

With the rise to BNP leadership by Nick Griffin in October 1999 there remained linkages to the NF. Griffin, who was a former national director for the NF student division in 1978, member of the NF Directorate in 1980, and a NF parliamentary candidate in 1985 (Ford, 2010, p. 174; Solomos, 2013, p. 126), on his rise to power in the BNP sought to modernize the BNP by downplaying its ideological roots of racism

and anti-Semitism, in an attempt to improve the image of the movement. These efforts have been difficult, yet following the attacks of 9-11, he launched the BNP's "Campaign Against Islam" (Ford, 2010 p. 178). Jackson (2011) points out that immediately following the 9-11 attacks, 32% of Britain's deemed Islam to be a threat to Western Liberal Democracy, but by 2006 this had risen to 53% (Jackson, 2011, p. 60-61). The shift of the BNP away from racism and anti-Semitism, in favor of a platform that is anti-Islam/anti-Muslim marks a significant evolutionary shift in far-right extremism in the UK and sets the stage for the rise of the EDL in 2009 (Jackson, 2011; Solomos, 2013).

EDL Leadership

Before examining the growth characteristics of the EDL as a movement and how they utilized social media as a propaganda and mobilization platform, it is important to review some of the key leaders of the English Defence League. The development of the leadership of the EDL is a key part of the development of the online aspect of the group. As the group gained in popularity, so did the leaders that rose to power. As such, the leader(s) had a significant ideological impact on the group and was a central aspect of the Facebook communications.

Paul Ray

Meleagrou-Hitchens and Brun (2013) suggest that the "origins of the British counter-Jihadi movement came in the form of a blog called *Lionheart* run by a British National Party supporter named Paul Ray" (p. 9). Like those who would come after him, Ray is a native to the town of Luton, which is seen as the birthplace of the EDL and the center of gravity for the tensions between the far-right and Muslim extremism. While a proclaimed supporter of the BNP, Ray denied any Nazi or racist views and expressed that he felt the BNP was changing direction under the new leadership of

Nick Griffin (Meleagrou-Hitchens and Brun, 2013). Within his blog, Ray set forth many of the themes that would become the mainstay of the EDL discourse, including the impending pan-Islamic war with the West; the growing concern over the growing Muslim demographic in the UK and the destructive nature of this growth; the complicity of the state run media in hiding what he saw as the degradation of the UK by “illegal immigrants and our Muslim neighbors under the banner of ‘multi-cultural society’” (Meleagrou-Hitchens and Brun, 2013, p. 10); and the economic impact of Muslim immigrants and the burden they represent and the threat they pose to the UK (Kallis, 2013).

While Ray’s online activities brought him some notoriety, his first engagement with an anti-Islam street protest movement, which included the future leader of the EDL Tommy Robinson, was the 13 April 2009 march by some 150 activists organized as the United Peoples of Luton (UPL) (Jackson, 2011, p. 15). The UPL is described as an amalgamation of the football hooligan group United Casuals, and far-right activists including members of the extreme right-wing group Combat-18, led by Ray and Robinson (Jackson, 2011; Meleagrou-Hitchens and Brun, 2013). This march, which was in response to the demonstration by a group of Islamist extremists in Luton on 10 March, was quickly shut down by the police due to lack of permission, but this action did not stop the movement. Another march on 24 May 2009, under the slogan of “Ban the Terrorists”, sought to acknowledge that the terrorists represented but a small minority within the broader Muslim community but the day ended in “running street battles between protestors and police, as well as reports of racially aggravated assaults against South-Asians” (Meleagrou-Hitchens and Brun, 2013, p. 12). Following this, Ray and Robinson formed the EDL in June 2009 as a fusion of the UPL and the football hooligan firms it had been associated with (Richardson,

2013, p. 114; Meleagrou-Hitchens and Brun, 2013, p. 12). By August 2009, Ray had begun to distance himself from the EDL due to the neo-Nazi symbolism that was exhibited during the 8 August 2009 demonstration in Birmingham, and the “infusion of more traditional far right themes, like references to Hitler” (Jackson, 2011, p. 15;). The 8th day of the 8th month is important in Nazi symbolism. The number eight represents the eighth letter of the alphabet ‘H’, therefore the number 88 is symbolic for HH or Heil Hitler (Jackson, 2011, p. 15; Simi & Futrell, 2010, p. 22). Following this, Ray removed himself from active participation in the group and it was at this point that Tommy Robinson emerged as the leader of the EDL (Jackson, 2011; Copsey, 2010).

Tommy Robinson

Stephen Yaxley-Lennon otherwise known as Tommy Robinson, following the exit of Ray, became the leader of the EDL and held that leadership role until October 2013 (Jackson, 2011; Saddique & Quinn, 2013). While he began his involvement by hiding his face behind a mask and using the pseudonym Tommy Robinson in EDL videos (Jackson, 2011, p. 15; Copsey, 2010), once he began showing his face, his true identity was eventually revealed (Copsey, 2010). Beyond any potential security concerns what did Yaxley-Lennon have to hide and why Tommy Robinson?

Beginning with the later question, the name Tommy Robinson does indeed have significance. ‘Tommy Robinson’, the pseudonym used by Yaxley-Lennon is itself a pseudonym that was used by a leader of “Luton’s notorious football firm Men-In-Gear (MIG)” (Jackson, 2011, p. 18). This firm was known to have been involved in anti-Muslim violence since the early 2000’s, and according to Jackson, Yaxley-Lennon was convicted of “leading football fans in violence during an event in Luton in August 2010” (p. 18). Jackson (2011) suggests that Robinsons association with the

football hooligan culture was prominent in the early days of the EDL and their presence has remained consistent. So was the football association with the name 'Tommy Robinson' the only reason Yaxley-Lennon took on this alias, or could there have been another reason?

As to his motivation for using a false identity, it is possible he was hoping to avoid answering questions regarding his association and former membership in the BNP, as well as having previously served twelve months in prison for assaulting an off-duty police officer (Copsey, 2010; Hill, 2013). Interestingly, for someone who led what was deemed a humanitarian organization that sought to forward democratic ideals, Robinson's actions seem to belie these goals. Although his true identity became known, including his previous criminal record, the media identified him as Tommy Robinson when reporting on EDL activities and even as his personal antics were reported, including future arrests, he continued to be identified as Tommy Robinson usually with a side note of his real name. As discussed previously, and will be discussed in future chapters, the arrests and prosecution of Tommy Robinson became something of a rallying point for the EDL. Several prominent cases became issues that drove a considerable amount of activity both off and on-line. Some of these arrests/events include the previously mentioned 2010 football brawl which he was convicted of in 2011, and given a twelve-month community rehabilitation order and banned from football for three years (BBC News, 25 July, 2011); an arrest in November 2010 and eventual conviction for an assault on a member of the group Muslims Against Crusades where Robinson's assault was linked to poppy-burning by Islamist extremists on Armistice Day 2011 (BBC News, 11 May, 2011). As a result of this conviction Robinson was banned from attending EDL demonstrations; a conviction in September 2011 for assaulting another member of the EDL during a

rally in Blackburn in April 2011(BBC News, 29 September, 2011); and on 3 September 2011, Robinson was arrested for violating bail conditions set forth during the poppy burning assault conviction. Robinson was filmed by this researcher dressed in disguise during the 3 September 2011 demonstration in Whitechapel and when he took the stage he removed his hat and fake beard. This prompted his arrest and while being held in jail Robinson initiated a hunger strike in protest for being held as a political prisoner. More recently Robinson was arrested following his attempt to enter the United States using a friend's passport in September 2012. As a result he was convicted in January 2013 and jailed for 10 months (BBC News 7 January, 2013). His latest brush with the law came in January 2014 when he was convicted of two counts of mortgage fraud and sentenced to 18 months in jail (The Guardian, 23 January 2014).

Claiming that while in jail, and reflecting on his actions and those of the EDL, Tommy Robinson decided to leave the EDL and announced in October 2013 that he was joining the Quilliam Foundation seeking to counter Islamist ideology “not with violence but with better, democratic ideas” (Siddique & Quinn, 2013). The Quilliam Foundation, a counter-extremism thinktank, claims to have been involved in the departure from the EDL of Robinson, as well as his cousin and EDL co-founder Kevin Carroll, and will be helping them to understand Islam and provide help in lobbying institutions (Siddique& Quinn, 2013).

Kevin Carroll

Another former BNP supporter, Kevin Carroll has been by Tommy Robinson's side from the beginning of the EDL and has, when needed, stepped into the leadership role when Tommy was “unable” to participate in EDL activities. Considered a “co-leader”, Carroll has kept a much lower profile than Robinson and as such avoided

much of the controversy that surrounded his cousin. Busher (2013) indicates that Carroll was vocal in his characterization of the EDL as non-racist and non-violent and at one point, as reported by an EDL supporter responded to an attack on a Muslim man by yelling at the attackers, “You’re a disgrace! You’re behaving like animals!” (Busher, 2013, p. 78). Beyond acknowledging his position within the EDL and his BNP history, little else is written about Kevin Carroll and his background (Copsey, 2010; Busher 2013; Alessio & Meredith 2014), although Jackson (2011) does remark that “Carroll is a little more circumspect than Yaxley-Lennon. His speeches often contain a clear distinction between Muslims and Islamists, and he is clearly aware of the need to distance the EDL from neo-Nazi groups that attach themselves to its events” (Jackson, 2011, p. 48).

Alan Lake

In contrast to Carroll, there has been considerable focus within the literature on an individual known as the EDL financier, Alan Lake. Lake, a wealthy businessman who made his fortune in the IT industry, is thought to be a major financier of the EDL (Pitchford, 2011, p. 44) There is no evidence of overt racism or anti-Semitism associated with Lake, and it is even suggested that his funding of the EDL was conditional on their distancing themselves from the BNP and that it is possible that he is more aligned with the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) (Pitchford, 2011) although UKIP would not ally itself with the EDL “or any other extremist group” (Copsey, 2010, p. 17). Interestingly Alan Lake is evidently a pseudonym for Alan Ayling (Shifrin, 2012) and it is reported that he was potentially a mentor to Anders Beivik, who murdered 77 people in Norway and claimed to have had contacts within the EDL (Smith, 2011; Fouche, 2011). Lake, who is a proponent of street politics also favors intimidation and violence as methods to achieved goals (Pitchford,

2011). According to Copsey (2010), Lake advocated online efforts for recruitment/mobilization in support of this street action which he felt was necessary stating, “We have to put bodies on the street, writing letters to the *Times* does not do the work” (Copsey, 2010, p. 18). Lake was also the person who suggested that counter-jihadi groups co-opt “floating groups; Sikhs, gays, women – all those groups that might feel threatened by Islam” (Copsey, 2010, p. 18). This inclusive strategy was taken up by the EDL and can be seen in the various divisions that are a part of the organization (Copsey, 2010, Jackson, 2011). Following the revealing of his true identity in 2012 and his association with the EDL, Alan Ayling (AKA-Alan Lake) was suspended from his job with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (Shifrin, 2012).

The Beginning: The Luton Incident

On 10 March 2009, the Royal Anglian Regiment marched through Luton in a



Image 9: Protesters in Luton, 2009

homecoming parade after completing their latest deployment in Iraq (Collins, 2011; Garland & Treadwell, 2010)). This parade was targeted by a pro-Islamist group, Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah, where approximately 20 members

of the group (Image 8 & 9) shouted accusations and held signs characterizing them as being the “Butchers of Basra” and calling for “Anglian Soldiers Go To Hell”

(Jackson, 2011, p. 14; Collins, 2011, p. 5).

Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah was an offshoot of al-Mahajiroun (Jackson, 2011, p. 14), which

had been proscribed or banned by the UK



Image 8: Anti-war protesters in Luton, 2009

government and was led by one of the key proponents for radical Islam in the UK, Andjem Choudary.

This provided the impetus for a violent reaction by those who were looking for a reason to express their feelings toward the Muslim community. The Muslim protesters were attacked by non-Muslim spectators, and even though the Islamist protest was condemned by the broader Muslim community this offered little comfort to those who had already been outraged by this anti-military protest that received national media attention. Following this event, activists like Kevin Carroll, a former member of the BNP, who would become a key leader in the EDL, organized a protest march in Luton for 28 March where the United Peoples of Luton made its debut. This group, which had links to more extreme far-right groups like Combat-18 and the BNP, organized a series of marches throughout the spring of 2009, often engaging in violence against counter protestors and vandalism of Muslim areas and businesses. With the rise of the anti-Muslim movement, the Islamist's escalated their protests over the coming months, which fueled the animosity on both sides into what Paul Jackson (2011) describes as a, "process of tit-for-tat radicalization" where "one community develops a pugnacious stance, which inflames the other, leading to an increase in violence and disorder, in this case, in Luton in the spring of 2009" (Jackson, 2011, p. 15).

By the summer of 2009, the English Defence League had officially formed into a group and was working through new and traditional media to build into a viable social movement. By promoting itself on social media outlets like Facebook, and mobilizing its members via this outlet to engage in public demonstrations which were picked up by traditional media outlets, the EDL was able to engage in a cycle of online recruitment and mobilization that triggered significant mass media attention

that spread their anti-Muslim message to a wider audience (Jackson, 2011; Bartlett & Littler, 2011). The attention given by mass media to the group's use of Facebook only served to draw individuals who were interested into an environment where what could have been perceived as distasteful and/or bigoted attitudes were warmly received and encouraged. The early Facebook page for the EDL required that users request admittance by sending a membership request. This was later changed to a system where simply 'liking' the page gained the Facebook user access to all the content available on the EDL Facebook page, and all EDL posts were then sent to the users Facebook feed. Interestingly, as the restrictions for membership were reduced, the "membership" on the EDL page rose dramatically.

The EDL Online

While the collection and analysis efforts contained within this research were focused on the EDL Facebook account, which is acknowledged as their primary source of contact with their "membership" (Bartlett & Littler, 2011; Copsey, 2013; Jackson 2011), the EDL did utilize other internet and communication technologies (ICT's). Primary among these ICT's was the EDL website where information regarding demonstrations and other future events were placed on the site banner and through their own blog. Through the EDL's association with other organizations, other fora were used to promote the EDL and its events. The Casuals United Blog, of the football 'firm' Casual United, put forth an ultra-patriotic, anti-Muslim message and used text as well as images to promote their anti-Muslim agenda (Jackson, 2011, O'Callahan, et al., 2014). The blog site English Defence League Extra was an unofficial site run by a Birmingham supporter. While the activity on this grassroots site was not as prolific as the Facebook page, with only 32 story postings in May 2011, the discussions were more in-depth and covered issues "notably related to

foreign affairs, critiques of the state, activities of anti-EDL protestors and, of course, on-going EDL campaigns (Jackson, 2011, p. 37). The site Infidels Online, also an unofficial site, was characterized by Jackson (2011) as containing a more violent version of the EDL narrative that openly promoted violence against Muslims. Postings on the Infidel site also mocked the more moderate stance of the EDL regarding its pro-Israeli stance and its positive position regarding the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) community that had its own division within the EDL (Jackson 2011). One of the more effective ICT's used by the EDL was YouTube (Jackson, 2011; Copsey 2010).

The use of mobile devices to “film” demonstrations and other EDL activities and subsequently posting them on YouTube “provided a ‘real time’ element” and helped to develop the online-offline connection with the membership that helped to create an overall sense of community with the disparate EDL community (Jackson, 2011, p.23). YouTube videos were also used effectively within the EDL Facebook page by the Administrator and the users. As will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five, the Facebook collection that was analyzed as a part of this research contained links to 103 YouTube videos, with twenty-eight links posted by the administrator and seventy-five links posted by the users. As discussed in the previous chapter, these YouTube videos were divided into groupings to measure the impact of the video as measured by the number of comments for each that was presented in the primary posts. What was not measured was the number of YouTube videos that were posted by EDL members directly to YouTube during this period. A YouTube search for ‘English Defence League’ conducted on 18 August 2014 showed that there were “about 68,000 results” for this search. When the search parameter was changed to simply ‘EDL’ the results number grew to “about 181,000 results”. A Google search of ‘EDL YouTube’

provided “about 2,940,000 results.” It should be noted that these results also include videos that are anti-EDL. As a comparison, a Google search for ‘David Cameron YouTube’ provided “about 45,600,000 results”, and a search for ‘Justin Bieber YouTube’ indicated “about 104,000,000 results”.

Twitter is another social media platform that is used by members of the EDL. While the use of Twitter was not a part of this research, others have examined the use of Twitter by extreme right groups including the EDL (O’Callahan et al., 2013; O’Callahan et al., 2014). In their examination of EDL Twitter activity, O’Callahan, Green, Conway, Carthy, and Cunningham (2013) found that “peaks in twitting activity by the community accounts may be associated with external events” and found that increases in traffic could be seen “around the times of street demonstrations” (p. 8). Within their research, and as discussed herein, they found that “the online activity of extreme right groups has progressed from the use of dedicated websites to span multiple networks including popular social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube” (O’Callahan, 2013, p. 9).

EDL Organizational Structure

One of the unique aspects of the EDL is the organizational structure they chose to use. While EDL central set the overall agenda for the group, there were many divisions that engaged in local/regional recruiting and organizing (Copsey, 2010; Jackson, 2011). These various divisions, giving the EDL an almost militaristic flavor, were established to provide local support and avenues of communication outside the larger construct of the main EDL website and Facebook page (Copsey, 2010; Jackson, 2011)). These included the regional divisions like the Northwest, East Midlands, East Anglia, Southwest, West London, and South East Central, just to name a few, with particularly strong divisions in West Midlands, Lancashire, Yorkshire, and London

(Copsey, 2010). These regional divisions have their own regional organizers (RO's) and were established in the summer of 2010 to create a cellular EDL that would have a tighter organizational structure. The code of conduct that was established by EDL central was disseminated to and reposted by the divisions on their pages indicating that "all members must adhere to the correct chain of command" (Copsey, 2010, p. 19; Jackson 2011). It states "No member should supersede this chain of command without good reason i.e. their issue is with their division leader or RO it must be obeyed and respected at all time" (Copsey, 2010, p. 19).

Other divisions exist that are considered 'specialized divisions'. They include the EDL Youth Division, the Jewish Division, the Disabled Division, the Women's Division, the Soldier's Division, and the LGBT Division (Copsey, 2010). These specialized division were often highlighted to represent the open-minded nature of the EDL movement and combat the claims that the EDL was in fact a racist, far right movement. The presence of a Sikh Division was used by the EDL to further demonstrate their diversity (Copsey, 2010).

Outside the control of the EDL but certainly in alignment with narrative of the group are the various partner defence leagues that exist within and without the UK. The Welsh Defence League, Scottish Defence League, and the Ulster Defence League were all considered in alignment with the vision of the EDL. It should be noted however, that in 2010 it was revealed that the Welsh Defence League had openly exhibited neo-Nazi sympathies and was subsequently shut down, only to reemerge as the Welsh Casuals (Jackson, 2011, p. 20). These other Defence Leagues were much smaller in terms of membership and impact in their areas of operation. Of note is the fact that as the EDL grew, other European countries began to take up the counter-jihadi mantle and form their own defence leagues. These countries included

Germany, France, Sweden, and Norway and there was even an Australian and an American Defence League (Copsey, 2010; Goodwin, 2013). Notably, within the EDL Facebook traffic that was collected, particularly as demonstrations were approaching, the administrators of these various defence leagues would post to the EDL Facebook page offering support from afar.

Within the EDL, one group that rose to become problematic was Infidels. This splinter faction within the EDL, found the main narrative of the EDL to be too moderate and eventually came into conflict with the main group and separated themselves from the EDL (Jackson, 2011; Busher, 2013). Within the following narrative of the 5 February, 2011 EDL demonstration, which was observed by this researcher, the Infidel Divisions from Bolton and East Anglia are shown to be in attendance and by the end of the day came into conflict with the larger EDL contingent (Busher, 2013).

The Homecoming: Putting a Real World Face on a Virtual Phenomenon⁷

Early page captures in the fall of 2010 showed membership had risen from the initial estimate of 500 members to over 30,000 in September 2010. By January 2011 the membership had risen to over nearly 60,000 users, and on the eve of the “Return to Where it all Began Demonstration” of 5 February 2011 the EDL page showed a membership of over 69,000 and was pushing to break 70,000 before or during the demonstration. This event propelled membership to over 80,000 by April 2011 (Allen, 2011). This demonstration, which had been heralded for months on the EDL

⁷ The narrative included herein is the result of on-the-ground fieldwork conducted on 5 February and 3 September 2011. Academic citations included are in support of those phenomena that were personally experienced. Online information is from observations of Facebook traffic prior to, during, and after the official collection period.

Facebook page and their website, received considerable media attention prior to the event and was covered by mass media outlets from within and without the United Kingdom.

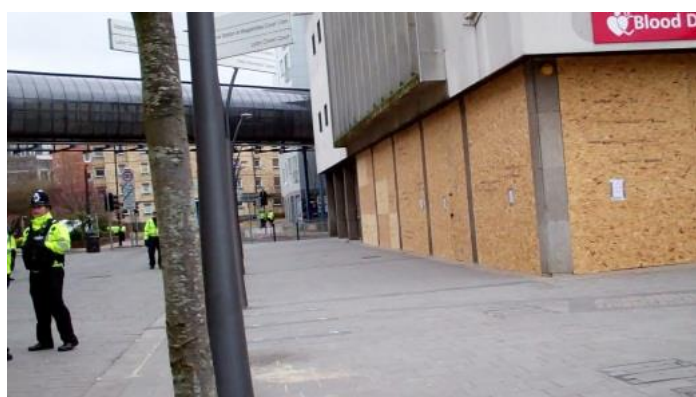
The decision to engage in on-the-ground fieldwork was precipitated by the need to understand the link between the real and virtual worlds of the EDL. Having observed the EDL Facebook page for some months prior to the official collection period, the question that had gone unanswered was how much influence did the Facebook page have on the real world activism of the EDL; how many members would respond to the call for a major demonstration; and what would that participation look like from a street view perspective. The observations made online offered only one side of the coin, and the experiences from the two on-site visits were integral to providing a more holistic view of the phenomenon, particularly as it relates to the online efforts of the EDL to put boots on the ground in the furtherance of their activist efforts. Critically, the second observed demonstration provided the opportunity to see first-hand the impact of the attacks on the EDL, and the repercussions for world events that had placed the EDL under a cloud of suspicion.

On February 5, 2011 the EDL returned to Luton, where it all started, as a demonstration of their ability to mobilize and show the people, the media, and the government, that they should be taken seriously. The event was billed on Facebook as their homecoming, a return to “back where it all began” (Collins, 2011), and considerable effort was made on Facebook to mobilize the members, coordinate internal security, and arrange for transportation to maximize the EDL presence on this day. Having followed the group for months online, it was decided that an ‘on the ground’ look at the EDL was needed to add a real world perspective to this research. As the group was poised to break the 70,000 member mark on Facebook, this

demonstration was viewed by the online membership as a truly national recruiting event, particularly given the media coverage that was expected and was indeed present.

Arriving in Luton the day before the demonstration, what became immediately obvious was the tension and apprehension that gripped the area around the intended demonstration site by the St. Georges Mall and St. Georges Square. Storefronts along the intended march route and around St. Georges Square were boarded up (Image 10) in anticipation of the vandalism that had been hyped in the newspapers and by those opposed to having the EDL in Luton.

Appeals by the Luton council were made to the Home Secretary Theresa May to



ban the EDL from marching and demonstrating in Luton, but she refused to issue such an edict. Journalists in the hotel adjacent to St. Georges

Image 10: Pre-demonstration Luton, 2011

Square were arriving throughout the day and evening in anticipation of covering a rather significant event. Photo journalists were prepared with helmets, and those news journalists who were filming were accompanied by hired security personnel.⁸ Just past midnight on the morning of 5 February, the police had already begun mobilizing for the event. CCTV trucks were brought into St. Georges Square to film the area as a way of providing comparison

⁸ While taking video of the event I was stationed next to a videographer from the BBC whose security officer was a former Special Forces operator from the United States who encouraged me to stay close to them in case things got out of control.

photos to determine if any structures/devices had been brought into the site during the hours just prior to the demonstration.⁹ Truckloads of portable barricades were brought in and placed along the proposed march route and around the demonstration site. As there was a planned counter demonstration by the United Against Fascism group, and there were concerns about attacks by local Muslim youths on the EDL, it was clear that access to the EDL static demonstration site would be limited and great care would be taken to ensure that the EDL and the UAF would remain separated.

As the day dawned, the word had spread throughout the news media and online that the Prime Minister, David Cameron, had spoken the previous evening in Germany on the failure of multiculturalism in the United Kingdom and how it had allowed for the spread of radical Islamic extremism within the UK. He went on to be quoted in *The Guardian* the next morning, “We have failed to provide a vision of society (to young Muslims) to which they feel they want to belong. We have even tolerated segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values” (Wright, 2011). This revelation, on the eve of the Luton march, was viewed by the EDL leadership and its members as a long awaited endorsement by the UK government of the agenda of the English Defence League and the legitimization of their claims regarding the growing influence of radical Islam in the UK. The following post appeared on the EDL Facebook page in the early morning hours of February 5, 2011, prior to the demonstration:

⁹ This was confirmed by one of the Police evidence gatherers just prior to the demonstration. Interestingly, teams of evidence gatherers were operating around the demonstration taking pictures and video of not only the participants but also the observers. One particular team was none too pleased when they found this researcher filming them at their work.

English Defence League (EDL) At long last we are making people listen

Muslims must embrace our British values, David Cameron says



www.telegraph.co.uk

British Muslims must subscribe to mainstream values of freedom and equality, David Cameron will say as he declares that the doctrine of multiculturalism has “failed” and will be abandoned.(EDL Facebook page/no longer available)

Comments from the rank and file of the EDL on this matter included:

“He’s just picking sides, just like everyone else in this country is doing. your either EDL, MDL or UAF. and cameron has realised that if he continues to side with UAF, he will lose alot of money due to our demos and that we will rise up and fuck him in the ass (not meant literally guys)”

“Cameron says: 'Multiculturalism has failed and will be abandoned' (EDL Facebook Page/no longer available)

Groups that fail to promote British values will no longer receive public money or be able to engage with the state. In the papers tomoro - WE'RE WINNING THE REAL BATTLE!

Thanks EDL!” (EDL Facebook page/no longer available)

“So they are all now agreeing with the EDL &BNP, good on you Cameron, its the best thing you have ever said. NS” (EDL Facebook Page/no longer available)

By early morning, the police presence in this area of Luton grew continually to an



Image 11: Luton 5 February 2011, Police preparing for the EDL demonstration

estimated 2000 law enforcement officers by the time of the demonstration (Taylor & Davis, 2011).

Police vans, laden with law enforcement officers began lining the streets (Image 11), preparing to take as many demonstrators as necessary to jail if trouble broke out.

At 10am, access to the Mall from St. Georges Square was closed off by police, as was the rail access to the mall entrance. The route that the EDL would use to march from their rally point to St. Georges Square was now sealed and counter-protestors and agitators were prevented from

accessing this area. Evidence gatherers, as seen in Image 12, stationed on both sides of the street continued taking photos and video of



Image 12: Evidence gatherers at the 2011 Luton Demonstration

the observers as they waited for the EDL marchers to approach the demonstration area.¹⁰ The estimated 2000 members of various law enforcement offices, from Luton and surrounding areas, many dressed in full riot gear, were taking this opportunity to discuss control strategies and establish choke points where the crowd would be herded to facilitate control and apprehension. A determination was made to reveal myself to those in command and determine the

¹⁰ This group of evidence gatherers were not pleased that they were being videoed by me.

closest exit window where I could escape danger and be recognized to avoid



Image 13: Roving mounted police in riot gear

imprisonment in the event the demonstration became unruly.

Mounted units, with horses outfitted in riot gear (Image 13),

spent the morning patrolling the expected route to establish a security presence and ensure there were no breaches in the barricades as a helicopter continually circled overhead. Speaking to some of the officers on the ground at St. Georges Square, it was revealed that the goal (or more accurately hope) for the day was that the EDL would have their demonstration, and everyone could return home safely, without any violence. While the police were certainly mentally prepared for any eventuality, and certainly dressed for such, it was obvious from discussions with different officers that they would be practicing reasonable restraint to avoid precipitating confrontation and violence.

The police presence in Luton was a major source of aggravation to not just the EDL but also to the citizens of Luton. While the EDL questioned the need for such a presence given what they characterized as the ‘peaceful’ nature of their previous demonstrations, Luton’s town leaders bemoaned the estimated 2.5 million Pounds that would be expended to provide law enforcement and security for this one day event. Interestingly, following the EDL’s realization that the individual communities would have to bear such expenses, the message that local governments must bend to the will of the EDL or the group would march on their town became a coercive tactic of the EDL (Jackson, 2011, 24).

As the EDL moved from their rally point at pubs in Luton to the demonstration site at St. Georges Square, they were enveloped by riot police on foot and on

horseback. Being positioned just short of St. Georges Square along the demonstration route provided a good vantage point from which to view the march and then move easily into the static demonstration area to observe the speeches and the crowd. Even before the EDL turned onto the street and began approaching the square, the chants of the demonstrators echoed up and down the otherwise abandoned windswept city center. Slogans specific to the group narrative on Facebook came to life; “E-E-EDL”; “Never Surrender” and “No Surrender”; and rounds of a song to St. George rang out as the group moved closer to the square.



Image 14: The police lead the way in Luton and push back against the forward progress of the EDL

The forward progress of the marchers seemed slow until it was realized there was a cordon of riot police, arms linked, controlling their forward progress to prevent them overrunning the police line (Image 14). Police in full riot gear acted as a speed governor, walking backwards and pushing against the forward momentum of the group. At the same time, other police in riot gear lined both sides of the street, as



Image 15: Police in riot gear line the streets in Luton

seen in Image 15, to constrain the group to the roadway itself and keep the pavement clear for law enforcement and media.

As the estimated 3,000 demonstrators (Jackson 2011; Taylor & Davis, 2011)

marched up the street toward the square, they carried flags, banners, and signs that

reflected many of the sentiments that had been observed in the virtual community. Key among these is the groups association with the flag of St. George and many of the divisions used this flag to identify themselves. At the same time, some of these flags (Image 16) were used to segregate their group from what they viewed as an overly moderate EDL community by identifying themselves as “Infidels” (Jackson, 2011, p.29).

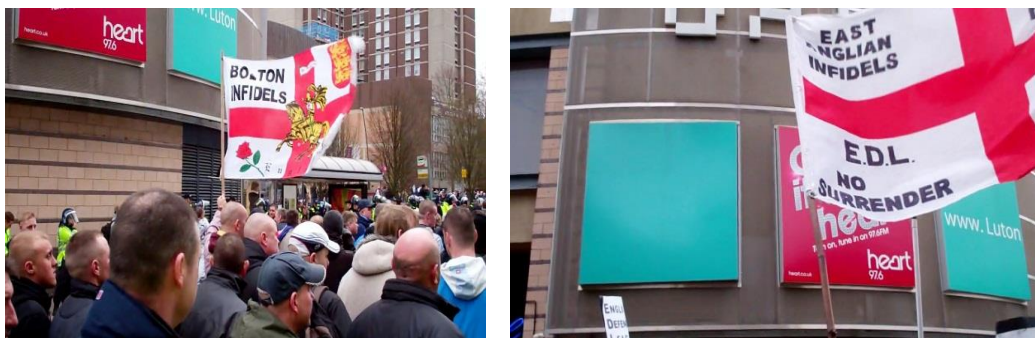


Image 16: The EDL Division flags fly in Luton

These Infidel Divisions were begun out of frustration with the larger EDL group narrative. Led by John Shaw (AKA Snowy), the infidel movement was viewed as a more extreme element within the EDL that often criticized the actions of the larger group and following this demonstration actually engaged in inter-EDL violence when they cornered Robinson and Carroll indicating that they were “dealt with” (Jackson, 2011, p.30). These Infidel divisions have now emerged as their own factions, separate from the leadership of the EDL with their own communication network and structure (Jackson, 2011, Busher, 2013).

Signs, dispersed throughout the march, also reflected the EDL’s anti-Mosque agenda. Some called for the ending of mosque construction while others called for requiring local popular votes prior to construction. This is an issue that appears regularly in the virtual realm as posts address what the EDL perceives as an aggressive agenda by Muslim leaders to build new or expand existing mosques in their communities (Jackson, 2011, p. 24). Several EDL events have been centered on



Image 17: Protest against the mosque
council meetings where these issues will be discussed and ‘outing’ council members who support these construction projects ‘against the wishes of the larger

populatio



Image 18: Protest against mosque construction

population.’ The following photos are a sampling of those signs:

This is the narrative used by the EDL to foment anger regarding the construction of new mosques and further the development of the ‘us vs. them’ dynamic. The EDL places itself as the voice of the people in what they see as the ongoing struggle against the spread of the Islamic influence in Britain.

Other hot button issues that the EDL uses to further its aggressive anti-Muslim agenda are those issues they perceive as being associated with Sharia Law (Jackson, 2011, p. 12). These would include the lack of women’s rights and the practice of honour killing within Muslim families.

Both issues, in addition to other criminal activity which the EDL portrays as being



Image 19: Against Sharia Law

endemic to the Muslim community get considerable attention within the online community and this was also reflected in some of the signs as seen in Images 19 and 20. Issues that get special attention by EDL administrators online are arrests of Muslim men for pedophilia, Muslim on non-Muslim rape, the specific targeting of

non-Muslim girls for sexual grooming and prostitution, and trials involving the murder of non-Muslims by Muslim men. Another issue that received special attention as representing the infiltration of Muslim culture throughout Britain is the proliferation of halal foods in traditionally non-Muslim venues and in the schools (Jackson, 2011, p. 24).



Image 21: Signs against poppy burning, honour killings, Sharia Law, ect....

Throughout the march the chants of E-E-EEDL continued as did their slogan of Never Surrender. One young man (Image 21), not pleased with being videoed, decided to express himself in a more vehement way by approaching the camera and shouting aggressively “NEVER SURRENDER ...NEVER FUCKING SURRENDER!” He was moved along by the police officer who was stationed on the streetside to ensure there was not an escalation of this confrontation.



Image 20: EDL member unhappy with being filmed

On a lighter note, one marcher donning a New York Yankees ball cap (Image 22) was rather pleased at the prospect of being on video and approached the camera with a jovial “heyyy,” which brought a smile to the officers face marching alongside.



Image 22: A jovial demonstrator

One thing that was noticed as being consistent with previous demonstrations, and a matter of public and law enforcement concern, was the practice by many EDL

members of hiding their faces. In much of the early online EDL propoganda, members wore ski masks or balaklava's to hide/protect their identities. Youtube video of recorded statements and previous demonstrations showed members covering their faces in multiple ways. As the demonstrators marched by and into St. Georges Square, this practice was also observed as seen below.



Image 23: The demonstrators hide their faces to avoid the CCTV.

With the prevalence of CCTV in the UK and particularly given the additional 'evidence gathering' in Luton on this day, those individuals with previous issues with law enforcement, or not desiring to be associated as being as part of the EDL, chose to hide their identities (Image 23). It is well known that the police will take pictures of known demonstrators arriving at the train stations, detain them as they disembark at

their destination, and strongly suggest they return home without attending the demonstration.

While it took approximately fifteen minutes for the entire group to proceed into St. Georges Square for the static demonstration, the group was relatively well behaved and there was no trouble with the police during this part of the day. As it became clear that violence was less likely, the word was passed down the line to change from riot helmets to ball caps in an effort to de-escalate tensions and minimize the expectation of violence. The officer shown below (left) is relaying this message to those officers manning the side of the street and shortly thereafter, all the officers had made the change. The comments of the officer were captured on video/audio instructing the officers on the street to “change helmets to ball caps, pass the word down the line (Image 24).”

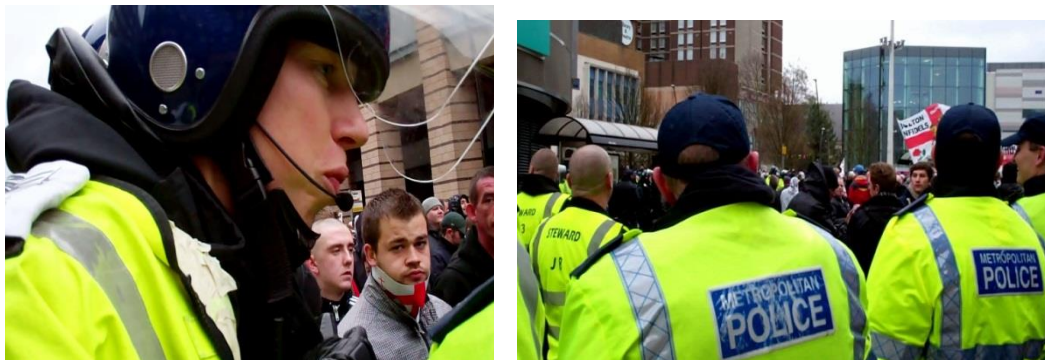


Image 24: Switch to ball caps, pass it down

Not until the group reached St. Georges Square did the police line open up, allowing the marchers to enter the square where a stage and sound equipment had



Image 25: Closing ranks at static demonstration site

those wishing to leave the area were discouraged from doing so. It was observed that

been set up for the static demonstration. At this point, the whole of the police presence enveloped the static site (Image 25). While they allowed the EDL to move about the square while the music and speeches went on,

about half way through the static demonstration a group of younger members decided to leave and were heard to complain that the event was boring and they should go look for some action.

Along with a lineup of speeches by various EDL members including Tommy Robinson and Kevin Carroll, members from other Defence Leagues from around Europe and even the United States were brought up on stage to deliver their own orations in support of the mission of the EDL and in opposition to what they perceived as the unabated spread of radical Islam in the United Kingdom, Western Europe, and the United States. During the speech by Tommy Robinson, he told those in attendance that they were part of a “tidal wave of patriotism” spreading throughout the UK (Taylor & Davis, 2011). It was noted as the group marched into the square, many of the more seasoned members wore yellow vests, identifying themselves as “STEWARDS” as seen in Image 26.



Image 26: EDL Stewards

These individuals, who were viewed as senior EDL members from each division, were acting as a buffer between the other EDL members and the police. Their job, according to one of the senior stewards, was to keep the younger members from doing anything that would cause trouble with the police, presenting a negative image for the EDL (Busher, 2013, p. 77). When questioned, this same individual revealed that much of the mobilization effort for this day’s event had taken place on Facebook. He confirmed that while Facebook is the primary vehicle for reaching the masses and

recruiting new members, the really important communications were not done on Facebook as they were confident their page was being monitored by law enforcement.

This is reflected in a post on the EDL Facebook page the evening prior to the demonstration:

“This is a start people , not enough at the moment,but that will come .We are being listened to, so what we do tomorrow will have a huge bearing on this, Tommy and the rest of the leadership are putting their lives on the line,So all they as...k is that we keep it peaceful.Lets show the world that we arte not the thugs we have been branded as.

ANYONE WHO KICKS OFF WILL BE EJECTED FROM THE MARCH ..BY EDL STEWARDS - CANT HAVE THE EDL NAME RUINED ON A DAY WHEN EVERY PRESS ORGANISATION IS WATCHING”(EDL Facebook, 5 Feb.2011, no longer available)

Interestingly, due to the windy weather, the poor quality of the sound system, and the noise from the still hovering police helicopter, the energy of the group of approximately 3000 demonstrators waned quickly. Those who were not standing by the stage had difficulty hearing what was said and chants rose up from the outer edges of the mass, often times while someone was speaking on stage. Some of the older members on the periphery took time to talk to the police in what seemed to be an effort to assuage the concerns regarding violence and engage in public relations.

At the conclusion of the event, the crowd disbursed to their coaches and the rail station, the police demobilized, and the mall reopened. By evening, the barricades had been removed and traffic in the city center had resumed. Journalists, understanding the implication of the day’s events, and on the heels of the comments by the Prime Minister, frantically packed their gear and made plans to travel to

London to gauge the political response to the day and determine whether the PM's comments represented a shift in the government's position regarding the EDL, since previously Cameron had characterized the EDL and its members as disgusting.

Beginning the morning of 6 February, the impact of the EDL demonstration in Luton was well known. The news of the demonstration had been on the television the night before, and was on the cover of most papers this morning. Even before the demonstration was over, video of the demonstration and speeches appeared on YouTube and continued to proliferate throughout the 6th. Comments on the EDL page reflected their positive view of the previous day's events.

[“English Defence League \(EDL\) 46 coaches 9 minibuses and thousands on the trains and cars at least 6,000 in attendance in Luton today well done to all attendance we will never surrender we will only grow”](#)¹¹

“No trouble and a good thing too. Our numbers will go up after today, NFSE”
“the bbc r full of it the square outside the shopping centre was packed about 5000 strong and well done 2 all the edl well behaved good speech by tommy and full praise to the police thay never hasseled us once as tommy said no surender edl edl”

“I was there and there was definitely 4000+ marching that day.A great day can't wait for the next one!”

“The good thing about all this is the EDL are being moved into a spotlight position in the media. Yesterdays excellent behaviour at the Luton demo will start to show people that we are not thugs or racists, and that we are genuine

¹¹ Estimates of EDL attendance at the demonstration ranged from 1500 in the UK media to 3-4000 by other media sources. The police, when contacted, indicated it is their policy to NOT provide crowd numbers. It is well accepted that 6,000 is an exaggeration.

people wit...h a genuine agenda who are taking a stand against a real threat to our society. This can only be a good thing for us, and will help our numbers swell as the public realise what we believe in, and what our true cause is.”(EDL Facebook page, 6 Feb. 2011, no longer available)

Most notably, the membership numbers on the EDL Facebook page began to skyrocket. By 7 February, just two days after the demonstration, membership on the EDL Facebook page had already reached 74,618 users. By the end of the online collection period on 22 March 2011, membership on the Facebook page of the English Defence League had risen from 69,000 to over 82,000, reaching 85,000 by the beginning of April (Allen, 2011, p. 286), sometimes by thousands per day in the weeks following the demonstration. This rise in membership continued unabated, to reach nearly 100,000 users, until July 22, 2011, when the EDL would be impacted by two events that nearly spelled the end of the EDL as a viable movement.

Conclusion

On the surface, the birth and growth of the English Defence League seems to have been fueled by anti-Muslim sentiment that is rooted in the newer messaging of the BNP, propagated by the early leaders who either had ties to the BNP or held strong anti-Muslim views. The shaping of the group as being an anti-Muslim extremist organization engaging in street politics and online activism is often at odds with the messaging presented in the demonstrations. Further the growth of the Facebook page and the number of members that are presented by the leadership as active fully engaged participants is not supported by their ability to put boots on the ground during demonstrations. Was the public messaging effective at influencing the media’s perception of the EDL? Does the dialog of the Facebook participants reflect the anti0-

extremist agenda as presented by the leadership? And, how do the claims by the leadership of having a vast online army compare with the reality of the user participation? These and other questions will be examined in the following chapters.

Chapter Four: The Impact of Offline and Online Events

On the English Defence League

Introduction

While Facebook may have been a valuable tool for propaganda and mobilization for the English Defence League it would be a mistake to think that by simply controlling this social media platform the EDL could control their destiny. There have been, over the years, several externalities that have had a significant impact on the group as well as its social media platform. From the beginning, the EDL has faced strong opposition from traditional media regarding its agenda and the “peaceful” nature of their actions. News articles in various papers consistently provided negative characterizations of the EDL, its leadership, and membership. These stories were often featured in EDL posts to demonstrate the contentious position being taken by the media, often driving a dialog of victimization at the hands of the media. In addition to the media’s assault on the EDL, there were critical events like the attacks committed by Anders Breivik in Norway that brought increased criticism of the EDL in the media as well as prompting security concerns within the UK as to the potential violent nature of the movement. The online response to this event by the EDL was disrupted when their Facebook page was hacked and the online membership became concerned about the security of medium and the increased security concerns of the government regarding the actions of the group. This chapter will examine these phenomena and how they impacted the English Defence League, its membership, and their use of Facebook.

Traditional Media Characterization of the EDL

One of the interesting aspects of this research was observing the impact of various offline activities and how traditional print media coverage as well as certain events impacted the EDL activity on the ground and the effect they had on the dialog within their Facebook page. There were several events that had considerable influence on the EDL as a group and in one case on their Facebook page which will be discussed herein. This discussion will be supplemented by observations from on-the-ground field work, online observations, and from a collection of traditional print news stories within UK papers related to the English Defence League. While the EDL primarily used Facebook to communicate with its members, the broader population was exposed to the EDL through its street demonstrations but mainly vis-à-vis traditional 'mass media'. To consider the impact of the traditional media coverage on the EDL and its social media campaign, a LexisNexis search was done to obtain all of the news articles written about the English Defence League from 1 August 2009 through 1 August 2014. The results of this search provided 5,885 articles and using the download function within LexisNexis were placed into two formats. First, the metadata were exported into Excel files that could then be imported into SPSS for analysis. This allowed for a frequency analysis of the publishers of the articles and the graphing of the volume of articles over time to consider the relationship between the volume of articles and EDL activity. Second, the articles in their entirety were downloaded into Word Documents to search for key words and phrases to examine how traditional media portrayed the EDL, and how often they mentioned their use of Facebook and other social media within the articles. These two collections were then separated into four separate time periods to coincide with important events to allow for a more granular inspection of the data. These four time periods are as follows:

1 August 2009 through 4 February 2011 - The 4 February date is the eve of the large Luton Demonstration.

5 February 2011 through 22 July 2011 - 22 July is the day before the double blow to the EDL of the Anders Breivik attack and the hack to the EDL Facebook page, which will be discussed in detail following.

23 July 2011 through 22 May 2013 – The 22nd of May is the day before the murder of Lee Rigby by Islamists in Woolwich.

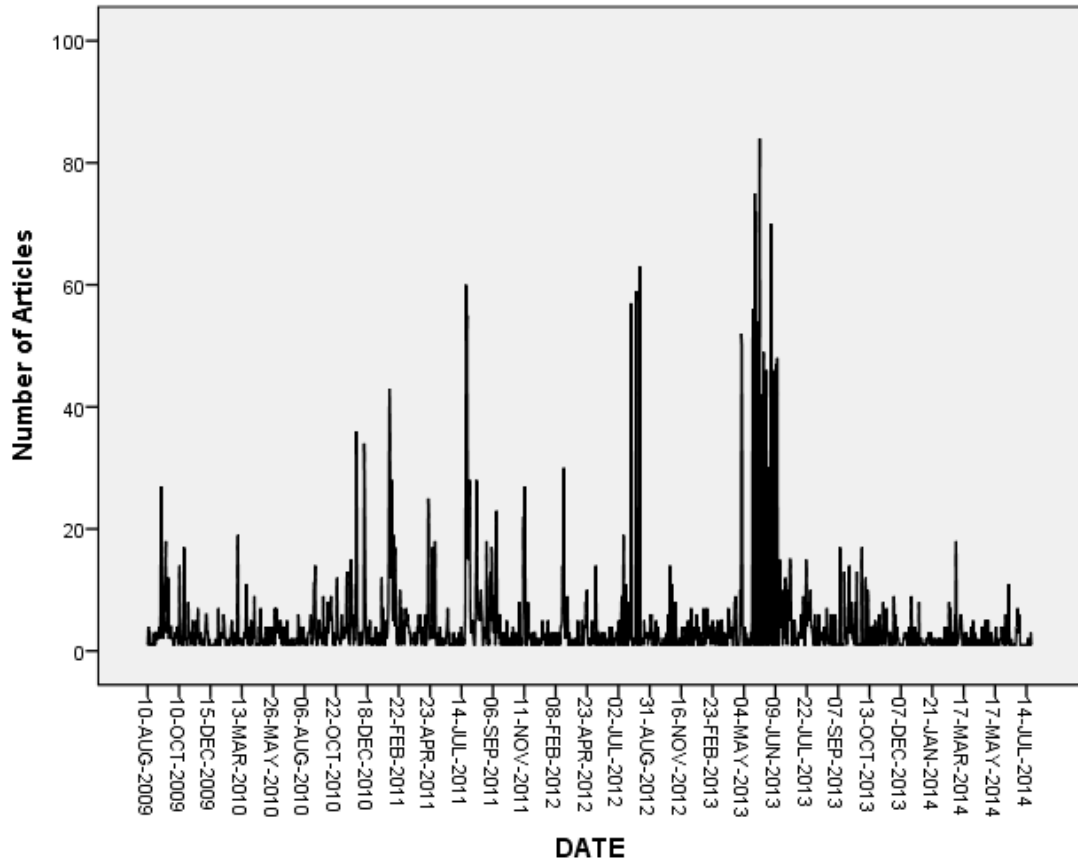
23 May 2013 through 1 August 2014 – This segment includes the news from the Woolwich murder discussed herein and extends through the announcement of the separation of Tommy Robinson and Kevin Carroll from the EDL discussed in the previous chapter.

Traditional Media as a Promotional Tool

As discussed in chapter one, there is considerable debate regarding the power of social media to drive movements (Morozov, 2011; Budish, 2013). One of the interesting questions, particularly following the Arab Spring was the role of traditional media in spreading the news of events to the masses which then draws people to the social media aspect of the movement (Lim, 2012; Alterman, 2011; Comunello & Anzera, 2012). To consider this question the LexisNexis metadata was graphed to provide the frequency of articles and then look to see how this frequency coincides with the schedule of demonstrations held by the EDL. Did the articles precede the demonstration, which could serve to promote the event, or was the rise in frequency found to follow these demonstrations? The graph of the entire search period, seen in Figure 1, shows that there were certainly periods of high frequency, with the volume of articles reaching a crescendo in May/June of 2013. To get a more

precise picture various time periods that are marked by significant events will be examined.

Figure 1: Frequency of Articles on the English Defence League



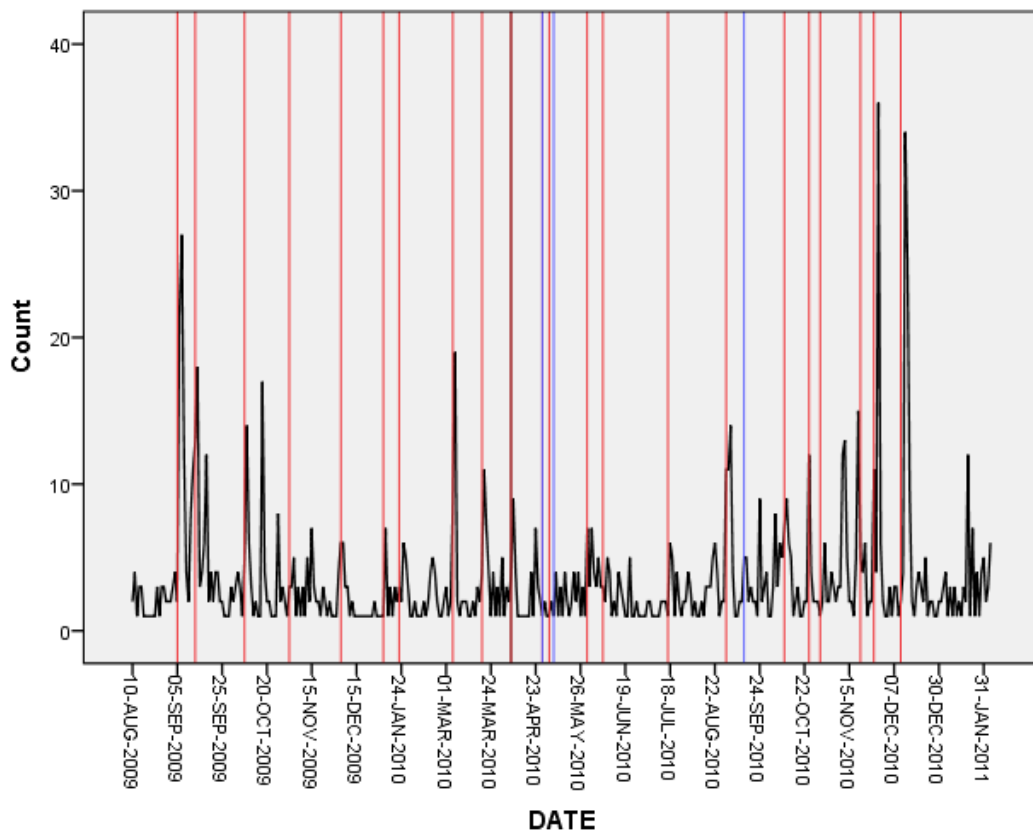
To examine the traffic related to the early demonstrations that predate the collection period of this research, the list of EDL demonstrations compiled by Copsey (2010) was used (p. 27-29). While Copsey (2010) lists all marches including those of EDL affiliates like the Welsh and Scottish Defence Leagues, he lists the first EDL march as occurring on 8 August 2009 and his list extends through 9 October 2010 (Table 1). Additional demonstration dates were taken from articles.

Date	Location	Attendance
8-Aug-09	Birmingham	Unknown
5-Sep-09	Birmingham	100
13-Sep-09	Harrow/London	unknown
10-Oct-09	Manchester	1500
31-Oct-09	Leeds	900
5-Dec-09	Nottingham	500
10-Jan-10	Wooten Bassett	200
23-Jan-10	Stoke-on-Trent	2000
5-Mar-10	London	200
20-Mar-10	Bolton	2000
3-Apr-10	Dudley	2000
27-Apr-10	Blackburn **	27
1-May-10	Aylesbury	800
3-May-10	Dudley **	40
29-May-10	Newcastle	800
5-Jun-10	Cardiff	200
17-Jul-10	Dudley	500
28-Aug-10	Bradford	1000
11-Sep-10	Oldham **	120
12-Sep-10	Nuneaton **	unknown
9-Oct-10	Leicester	1000
25-Oct-10	London	Unknown
30-Oct-10	Amsterdam, Netherlands	60
21-Nov-10	Wolverhampton	100
27-Nov-10	Preston & Nuneaton	1000+/500
11-Dec-10	Peterborough	500
5 Feb 10	Luton	3000
	** Flash demonstrations	

Table 1: List of Demonstrations

The graph for the period that includes these demonstration dates (Figure 2) shows that in nearly all cases the increase in the number of articles per day occurs after the date of the demonstration. The flash demonstrations indicated with blue lines on the graph seem to have had little impact on the article frequency.

Figure 2: Articles 1 Aug. 09 - 4 Feb. 11



This perspective is supported by the frequency analysis of the number of published articles per day in ascending order of date (the full chart appears in Appendix 4). With a few exceptions during this period, the number of articles following the demonstration exceeded the volume preceding it. Table 2 below shows the demonstration dates emboldened within the annotated list of dates contained in Appendix 4. The preceding four days and the four days following the demonstration are also provided to examine the volume of traditional media traffic pertaining to the EDL in relation to the demonstration dates. As can be seen in most cases, in keeping with the graph above most cases indicate that the volume of news articles either follows after the demonstration or on the day of the demonstration. For example, in the four days prior to the demonstration held on 5 September 2009, there were only seven articles published pertaining to the EDL including two on the day of the

demonstration, but a total of sixty-five articles appeared in the four days following the demonstration. The next demonstration on 13 September shows there were twenty-five articles prior to the demonstration, thirteen on the day of, and thirty-one articles in the four day after the demonstration. One important note is there were eleven articles published on the day before the demo, the most articles published on the day before any demonstration within the Copsey (2010) grouping. For many of the dates for the rest of 2009 and into 2010, the media attention following the demonstration was unremarkable, with only a few articles appearing per day. However, the 5 March 2010 demonstration saw a significant increase with six articles preceding, nine on the day, and twenty-two following the day of the demonstration. Similarly the 28 August 2010 demo had only five articles leading up to the date, but had eleven articles on the day of the demonstration and thirty articles in the four days following the demonstration in Bradford. Interestingly, the day preceding the 21 November 2010 demo had fifteen articles, with only five on the day of and thirteen in the four days following. The demonstration on 27 November and 11 December both experienced a huge increase in traffic but with a slight delay. The 27 November demo had eleven articles on the day of the demo, four on the day following, but thirty-six on the second day. Likewise, the 11 December event had two articles on the day, four on the day after, but thirty four on the second day after and twenty five on the third. This can possibly be explained by the fact that the demonstrations were held on Saturday and the news was held until Monday. It should also be noted that on both these dates there were clashes with counterdemonstrators and during the 11 December demo, there was a significant police presence of over 1000 officers to keep the EDL and the counterdemonstrators away from each other (BBC News, 11 December 2011).

Date	Number
28-Aug-09	2
30-Aug-09	2
3-Sep-09	3
4-Sep-09	4
5-Sep-09	2
6-Sep-09	22
7-Sep-09	27
8-Sep-09	12
9-Sep-09	4
10-Sep-09	2
11-Sep-09	8
12-Sep-09	11
13-Sep-09	13
14-Sep-09	18
15-Sep-09	3
16-Sep-09	4
17-Sep-09	6
5-Oct-09	3
7-Oct-09	4
8-Oct-09	3
9-Oct-09	1
10-Oct-09	5
11-Oct-09	14
12-Oct-09	6
13-Oct-09	3
14-Oct-09	1
25-Oct-09	8
26-Oct-09	2
27-Oct-09	3
29-Oct-09	2
30-Oct-09	1
31-Oct-09	3
1-Nov-09	3
2-Nov-09	5
3-Nov-09	1
6-Jan-10	2
7-Jan-10	1

8-Jan-10	1
9-Jan-10	1
10-Jan-10	1
11-Jan-10	7
13-Jan-10	1
14-Jan-10	3
18-Jan-10	1
21-Jan-10	3
22-Jan-10	2
23-Jan-10	3
24-Jan-10	2
25-Jan-10	6
26-Jan-10	5
27-Jan-10	3
1-Mar-10	3
3-Mar-10	1
4-Mar-10	2
5-Mar-10	9
6-Mar-10	19
7-Mar-10	2
9-Mar-10	1
16-Mar-10	1
17-Mar-10	3
19-Mar-10	2
20-Mar-10	4
21-Mar-10	11
22-Mar-10	7
23-Mar-10	4
30-Mar-10	5
31-Mar-10	1
1-Apr-10	3
2-Apr-10	2
3-Apr-10	4
4-Apr-10	9
5-Apr-10	4
6-Apr-10	1
8-Apr-10	1

23-Apr-10	7
24-Apr-10	3
26-Apr-10	2
27-Apr-10	1
29-Apr-10	2
30-Apr-10	1
1-May-10	1
2-May-10	2
3-May-10	1
4-May-10	4
5-May-10	1
6-May-10	3
9-May-10	1
25-May-10	4
26-May-10	1
27-May-10	3
28-May-10	1
29-May-10	7
30-May-10	3
31-May-10	7
1-Jun-10	4
2-Jun-10	3
3-Jun-10	5
4-Jun-10	3
5-Jun-10	3
6-Jun-10	2
7-Jun-10	5
8-Jun-10	4
11-Jun-10	1
13-Jul-10	2
14-Jul-10	2
16-Jul-10	2
17-Jul-10	1
18-Jul-10	6
19-Jul-10	5
20-Jul-10	1
21-Jul-10	4

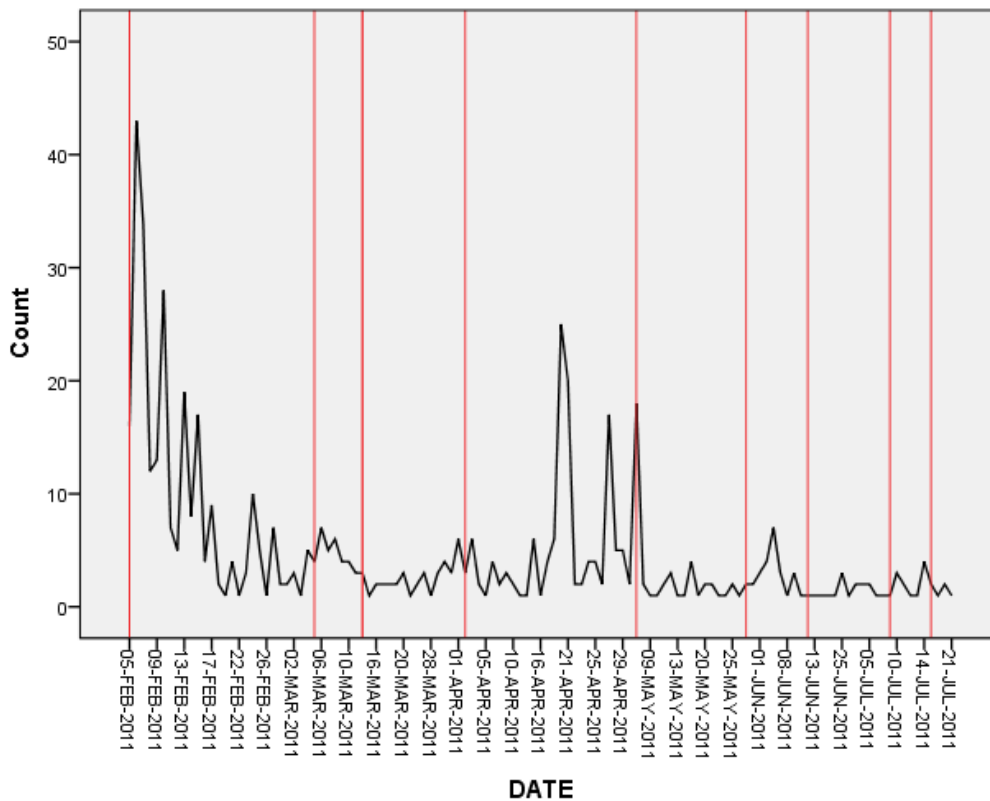
24-Aug-10	1
25-Aug-10	2
26-Aug-10	2
28-Aug-10	11
29-Aug-10	11
30-Aug-10	14
31-Aug-10	4
1-Sep-10	1
8-Sep-10	2
12-Sep-10	5
13-Sep-10	5
14-Sep-10	2
15-Sep-10	3
5-Oct-10	8
6-Oct-10	3
7-Oct-10	6
8-Oct-10	5
9-Oct-10	7
10-Oct-10	9
11-Oct-10	6
12-Oct-10	5
13-Oct-10	1
21-Oct-10	1
22-Oct-10	2
23-Oct-10	2
25-Oct-10	12
26-Oct-10	4
27-Oct-10	2
28-Oct-10	2
29-Oct-10	2
30-Oct-10	1
31-Oct-10	2
1-Nov-10	6
2-Nov-10	2
3-Nov-10	2
20-Nov-10	15
17-Nov-10	1
19-Nov-10	5

21-Nov-10	5
22-Nov-10	4
23-Nov-10	6
24-Nov-10	1
25-Nov-10	2
26-Nov-10	2
27-Nov-10	11
28-Nov-10	4
29-Nov-10	36
30-Nov-10	6
1-Dec-10	2
7-Dec-10	3
8-Dec-10	3
9-Dec-10	1
11-Dec-10	2
12-Dec-10	4
13-Dec-10	34
14-Dec-10	25
15-Dec-10	9

Table 2: Number of articles per day

The traffic graph for the period beginning with the day of the 5 February Demonstration and ending the day before the Breivik attack (Figure 3) shows a significant and sustained increase in traffic following the Luton demonstration with sixteen articles on the day of the demonstration and one hundred-two articles in the four days following the demonstration that as discussed previously, was attended by approximately 2500-3000 EDL members which essentially shut down the area around St. Georges Square in Luton and attracted over 2500 police officers. In the ten days following the demo there were 186 articles published about the English Defence League.

Figure 3: Article frequency 5 Feb. 11-22 July 11

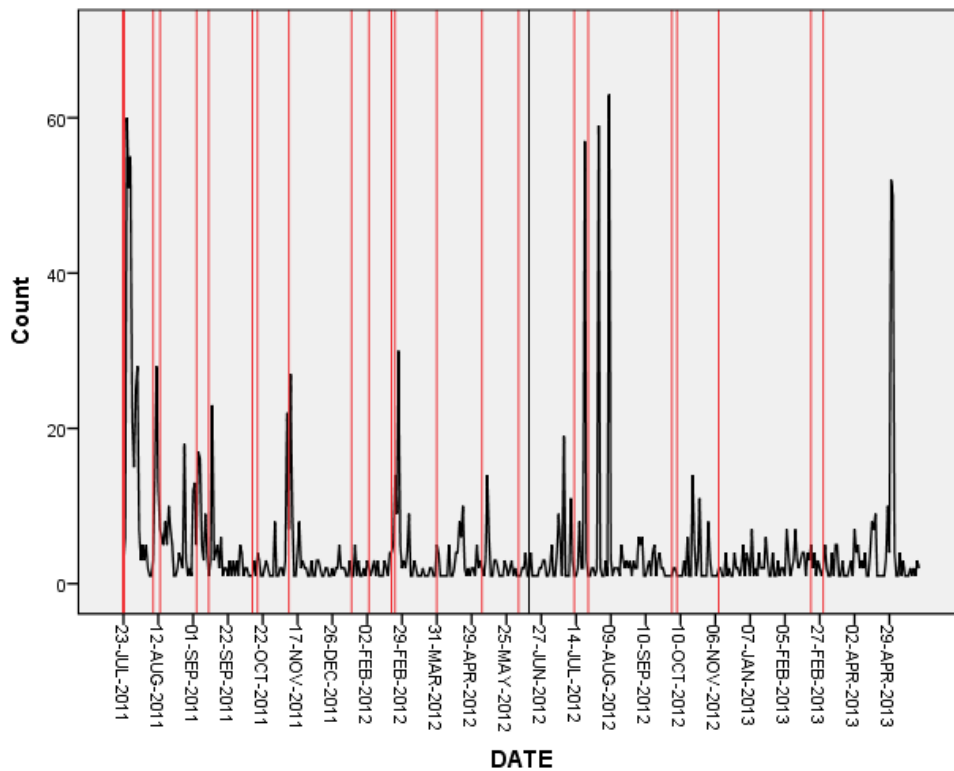


The spike in traffic seen on 21 April-29 April is related to the Royal Wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton where the Islamist group Muslims Against

Crusades (MAC) was vowing to disrupt the wedding with protests and the EDL was seeking to mount counter-protests on the day of the wedding. The slight increase on 7-8 May is related to the EDL counterdemonstration where they clashed with MAC members honoring Osama bin Laden with a “funeral service” (The Mirror, 7 May, 2011).

The following graph (Figure 4) depicts the frequency of print news articles for the period following the Anders Breivik attack in Norway which also coincided with the hacking of the EDL Facebook page. Both events are discussed in detail herein, but it is interesting to note the increased frequency of articles following these two event, although this increase was very likely driven by the Breivik attack and his supposed connection to the EDL, but also of note is the number of demonstrations by the EDL during this period and impact they had on the traditional news volume associated with the EDL.

Figure 4: Article frequency 23 July 11- 21 May 13



Anders Beivik, the Oslo Attacks, and the Connections to the EDL

On 22 July 2011 Anders Breivik, a self-proclaimed crusader against the spread of Islamic influence in Norway, murdered 76 people in Oslo in what he proclaimed in his manifesto as “a Pre-emptive war to rid Europe of Marxists, Muslims, and multiculturalists—even if it took to 2083 (Syson, 2011).” His two prong attack included detonating fertilizer bombs in the government area of Oslo, killing eight and wounding thirty, and then traveling to a Labour Party youth camp on Utoya Island, dressed as a police officer, where he systematically murdered 68 people and wounded another 67 with multiple firearms.¹² Most concerning to British authorities were his claims of having been involved with the English Defence League. Breivik claimed to be Facebook friends with more than 600 EDL members, had attended at least one demonstration where Geert Wilders had spoken, and had met privately with members of the EDL leadership while he was in the UK (Jackson, 2011, p. 47; 4News, 2011). Further, Breivik claimed to have supplied the EDL with anti-Muslim ideological material. His purported ties to the EDL were covered within the reportage by traditional media and is reflected in the number of articles that were published following the event. During the first few days following the attack there were only a few articles that mentioned the EDL (eight in all), but by 25 July that number had risen to sixty following the revelation that there may be EDL ties to Breivik. Between

¹² This attack was discussed among some senior law enforcement attending the Countering Home Grown Terrorism symposium in October 2011, and how Breivik’s wearing of a police uniform facilitated his ability to kill and wound so many people. In a situation where shots are being fired, an individual in a police uniform would represent safety and people naturally ran toward the person that would become their executioner.

25 July and 31 July there were a total of two hundred fifty-five articles published pertaining to the EDL in which Anders Beivik was named 1,976 times.

Following this horrendous attack, the EDL leadership rushed to distance itself from Breivik and his attacks by denying any direct involvement with him and condemning his attacks.

The EDL Facebook page issued a statement regarding Breivik:

'We can categorically state that there has never been any official contact between him and the EDL, our Facebook page had 100,000 supporters and receives tens of thousands of comments each day. And there is no evidence that Breivik was ever one of those 100,000 supporters.

Even so, anyone who expresses any extremist beliefs of any kind, be it white supremacist, Christian fundamentalist or Islamic extremists, they all get banned from the site.'(Dolan, 2011)

While this was the official statement, when interviewed, Tommy Robinson (Stephen Yaxley-Lennon) expressed concern about how others could be inspired by these actions to commit similar atrocities "within five years" if they felt their concerns were not being legitimately addressed (Dolan, 2011). Given the level of concern regarding the loss of life in Norway and the potential for violence as a result of these attacks, could such a comment be viewed as a veiled threat?

The investigation into the claims by Breivik that he was friends with dozens if not hundreds of EDL members seems to have had some legitimacy. Some members, who were interviewed by the media, acknowledged that they had been friended by Breivik and saw his content on the EDL Facebook page. Following the attacks some even praised his actions:

“One said: ‘This man is no terrorist, he is a soldier in the war against Islam. God bless him.’” In this same article the financier for the EDL, Alan Lake, was quoted as saying, *“As far as I’m concerned I’d be happy to execute people who try to spread Sharia Law.”* (Dolan, 2011, p.)

Whatever the extent of Breivik’s contacts with the English Defence League; his actions on that day had a significant impact on the EDL and its Facebook participants (Jackson, 2011, 63). Additionally, the British government was forced to re-assess their perception of the far right as a threat and begin to consider how their actions could actually increase the possibility of additional Islamic radicalization. As it turned out, the Breivik attack and other events of the day had a very chilling effect on the general membership of the EDL which seems to have caused the group to diminish significantly.

The Loss of Trust and the Fracturing of the EDL


On the day of the Oslo attacks, the Facebook page of the English Defence League suffered a fatal hack that resulted in the groups’ page being taken down, and for the first time since they opened their page, the EDL were unable to recover their Facebook page. Interestingly, while the Breivik attack and his alleged links to the EDL were reported with great zeal, the hacking of the EDL Facebook page received absolutely no media attention during the days and weeks that followed the hack. The result of the hack was that the nearly 100,000 users who had ‘liked’ or joined the page were left with nowhere to go on Facebook to learn what was going on regarding EDL activities. As accusations of complicity with Breivik and how he had been inspired to commit his acts of terror by engaging in dialogue with the EDL on their FB page were proliferating in the media, the EDL Facebook users had to rely on the official EDL website for information regarding the Facebook hack and the status of their primary

mode of communication. By the next day the EDL had opened another page on Facebook, but there were many unanswered questions about how such an attack could happen, had the names of the users been compromised, and whether the government was involved in the shutdown of their page. Within a few days it was made clear to the members that the old page was “lost forever” and they would have to rebuild their membership numbers. However, following the heinous attacks in Norway, and the perception of Breivik’s association with the EDL, the group struggled to recover its prior prominence on Facebook (Jackson, 2011). Were the concerns about the security of the site legitimate? Was the UK government monitoring the EDL Facebook page and gathering intelligence on the users? To consider these questions, it is necessary to understand who hacked the FB page of the EDL, and then examine the impact these events had on the group.

The Z Company Hacking Crew

Within hours of the Oslo attacks, a group known as Z Company Hacking Crew (ZHC) hacked and took control of the Facebook page of the English Defence League (Bosserman, 2011). This was not the first time the page had been hacked by ZHC, but it proved to be a fatal hack that could not be resolved by Facebook Administrators. ZHC, which is a pro-Islamist hacking group based in Pakistan has been responsible for hacking the Facebook pages and websites of hundreds of groups who have a pro-western/anti-Islamist agenda. As mentioned, this hack received no media attention and searches for ZHC, the Z Company Hacking Crew, or even the word hack produced no results from within the traditional media articles during this period. On the day they took over the Facebook page of the EDL they boasted by placing posts on the page and antagonizing those members who chose to engage the “new administrators” about their actions.

Examples include:

-  [English Defence League \(EDL\)](#) Hack dedicated to our beloved Andy Cox
-ZHC
-Barmy Army
-TeMp0ison
-St trinians
- [English Defence League \(EDL\)](#) Edl founder pricey is a peado....Steven Lennon we know was in your computer u dirty little animal! How fucking dare u talk about some man many centuries ago being a peado wen you fucking sell your kids naked pics u lowlife scum! No wonder you attract people like pricey!

Following these and other taunts, ZHC began posting the screen names as well as real names of EDL members, their addresses and phone numbers.¹³ Posts by other outsiders on the day of the hack included:

- haha edl cant even defend there own facebook page
- What idiot of the EDL admin let these Anti-English Multi culti left wing pricks take over this page lol
- these american bastards really do piss me off, they call us Muslim brothers and sisters terrorists but dont realise what they do. Thank you hacking bro for showing me the stuff about aafia...its made me feel the need of killing these mofos as thats what they try getting out of us, i hope america simply sinks with all the bastards in their including some of these dumb british people :)

¹³ To comply with the UK Data Protection Act, these posts cannot be presented.

- *LOL bare pussyhole edl scum licking ass so they so they don't get rushed by there fellow skin heads.. All ya lots can do is act bad on facebook u don't get out ya yards ur too busy cleaning the dishes ir drinkin piss down the pub and ur acting thugish on a facebook group!*¹⁴

As a result of this cyber-attack, the English Defence League was forced to upgrade its internet security and open a new page on Facebook. However, following the attacks and the revelation that the EDL page had been so badly compromised, and the comments by the UK government that they were concerned about the actions of the EDL and their links to Breivik, the membership numbers on the new Facebook page were a fraction of what they had been and these members were concerned about the security of their information and identities. A sampling of the posts following the establishment of the new page provide a glimpse of this trepidation:

- *Make Sure You Guys Changed Your Passwords And Stuff Like That, Change It Like Every 2 Weeks So You'll Be Safer, So You Wont Be Hacked Like The Original EDL Page.*
- *(Name withheld) I think the problem with the ease of hacking lies with facebook. Facebook is easily hacked. All we can do yo help is make sure email addy on fb profiles is not linked to your fb or anything else, and set long passwords of mixed characters. Change all passwords regularly too and dont have duplicate passwords.*
- *just been banned from main page trying to redirect people, they are banning members by the second*
- *The banter page has been mass reported couple weeks ago but its still running with ZHC profile. I know it was mass reported because I was one the people they outed on the wall, all of us outed reported it. I am starting to think ZHC have some kind of link with Facebook because they are getting away with too much and its taking so long to get them shut down.*
- *Go onto the page 'ZHC NEWS'. It is them that hacked the other page. Lets mass report their pages, but DO NOT enter into an argument with them and DO NOT post anything on any of their groups, they will get your I.P address if you do..... you can work out the rest.*

¹⁴ These comments were captured while the EDL FB page was under the control of the pro-Islamist ZCompany Hacking Crew. Apologies for the language but it provides the flavor that is integral to understanding the ongoing dialogue between the opposing groups.

- *Facebook security is quite lax, it also doesn't help when one of the hackers is a data analyst for Facebook*
- *How do we know if we get hacked again.. and personal details spreaded over mdl's wall*
- *Can we have an explanation of how you were hacked, maybe to protect our own facebook sites?*
- *if people leave there numbers and adresses then its themselves to blame for not having proper security and they have closed the page down now it will be a good thing whats the point of having 100k members and 2000 go demos*
- *It can't be a good think if they are putting up peoples names addresses and phone numbers. (Excerpts from posts collected 22-23 July 2011 on post-hack EDL page/no longer available)*

While some of those who 'rejoined' chided those who stayed away as "armchair activists" and "keyboard soldiers", one of the questions that will be examined in this research is to what degree was the nearly 100,000 member number accurate? Does liking a Facebook page really make you a full member and an adherent to the ideology or narrative of the group? And finally, could such an event and the loss of so many 'members' on the primary source of propaganda and recruitment actually cause the group to lose momentum and begin to falter?

Following this series of events, the EDL Facebook page has been shut down numerous times by Facebook administrators for inflammatory speech. Having initially recovered around 20,000 members following the Breivik attacks and the ZHC hack, the latest iteration of the EDL homepage on Facebook, as of May 2013 has roughly 21,000 members. This inability to communicate effectively and consistently was also demonstrated in its ability to mobilize its members to demonstrate with a significant show of force.

The Shadow of the EDL, September 2011

On September 3, 2011, the EDL marched into Tower Hamlets in East London in what had been billed as their most provocative event to date. Since July 2011, Tommy Robinson had been banned from participating in EDL demonstrations as a

bail condition for charges stemming from a physical altercation with Muslim protestors who had been burning poppies during a Remembrance Day event (Jackson, 2011). The concern from within the predominately Muslim East London community was that there would be civil unrest and that such an event would precipitate a violent confrontation between the EDL and the radical Islamist group Muslims Against Crusades (MAC) who would eventually be proscribed by the Home Secretary Theresa May in November 2011 for glorifying terrorism (Casciani, 2011). The Tower Hamlets Council appealed to Theresa May to ban the EDL from marching saying that “something must be done to prevent this demonstration” (Dominiczak, 2011) While May, would not ban the EDL from having a static demonstration, an order was issued banning all marches in Tower Hamlets (BBC, 26 August 2011). It is important to note that this demonstration took place just following the August 2011 riots that occurred in and around London. After observing online the difficulties the EDL was having with the dissemination of its message and its significant loss of membership, it was decided that another trip to the UK for further fieldwork was needed to observe the real world impact of the virtual neutering of the EDL. As it turned out, this day provided the opportunity to observe not just the EDL demonstration but also the MAC counterdemonstration that had been scheduled for earlier on 3 September off Whitechapel in front of the East London Mosque.

Arriving in Tower Hamlets the morning of 3 September 2011, it was clear by the growing police presence throughout the morning that there was significant concern about clashes between these two groups. Tube stations in the area had been shut down and there was a cordon of police encircling this area of Tower Hamlets. Later it was learned that a second cordon was established around the area where the EDL were expected to arrive and demonstrate. The counterdemonstration in Whitechapel

was actually somewhat festive, with music and food and was attended by an estimated 1,500 people (Jackson, 2011, p. 73).

While the streets were lined with signs protesting the EDL and their movement, the only ‘march’ in Tower Hamlets was about two dozen men who were walking with the Mayor of Tower Hamlets up and down the street, a few of them carried signs (Image 27) comparing the EDL to the BNP, and one (Image 28) comparing Tommy Robinson to Anders Breivik, stating “Different Faces Same Hatred....Racist EDL Not Welcome Here.” As the morning went on, the police sealed off the Whitechapel area



Image 27: EDL and the BNP



Image 28: Equating Tommy Robinson to Anders Breivik

of Tower Hamlets to prevent anyone leaving and engaging with the EDL who were about to arrive a few blocks away. While leaving this area and getting to the rally point for the EDL demonstration proved difficult, it was not impossible. After zigzagging several blocks away from Whitechapel, where the police presence was minimized, I was able to talk my way past a few junior officers to get to the area where the EDL were expected to arrive and demonstrate.

The EDL arrived in hired coaches and although marches had been banned by the Home Secretary (BBC, 26 August 2011) they were made to walk from the busses to their pre-designated static demonstration site. Stationed along this path, it was possible to observe this entrance which was, to say the least, much less intimidating than what was experienced in February. Where the march in Luton in February 2011 had involved 3-4,000 members, it was obvious the EDL had only managed to muster an estimated 1,000 members for this trip (Jackson, 2011, p. 73). As they marched in,

it was a much more subdued group walking along in groups of four to ten with big gaps in between (Image 29). This rather casual procession went on for about ten-fifteen minutes until all had reached the static demonstration site.



**Image 29: Tower Hamlets Demonstration
September 2011**



Image 30: Banners on a day when signs were banned

While there were proscriptions against marching with signs for this day, some of the EDL members carried homemade collapsible signs to express their views (Image 30).

Even though Tommy Robinson (Lennon) has been banned from participating in



**Image 31: Tommy Robinson in disguise
(black coat and hat with phony beard)**

any overt EDL activity, he was captured covertly entering the demonstration site dressed in disguise (Image 31). Following the demonstration, a YouTube video showed Robinson climbing on stage in costume and then revealing himself to the EDL crowd to a huge roar and applause.

It was also learned that he was arrested following his speech for violation of his bail conditions and was to be held in jail pending trial.¹⁵

The demonstration was conducted without large scale violence, and although there were 60 arrests associated with this static demonstration (Jackson, 2011, p. 73), eventually the EDL members were escorted by law enforcement away from Tower Hamlets and to their waiting coaches.



Image 32: The police escort from the demonstration site to the carriages

As the police covered the removal of the EDL on foot and horseback (Image 32), what was noticeably missing was the riot gear that was prevalent in Luton. Most of the officers wore their regular hats and walked at a leisurely pace alongside the demonstrators (Image 32). As they walked through the streets, observers were heard

¹⁵ Having arrived the day before the demonstration, I had been contacted by the CTIRU and was asked to meet with a research group who was working on an analysis of potential radicalization within at-risk communities. While the major concern was Islamist radicalization I was asked about my work on the EDL and how they operated, and pointed out that UK law enforcement had, in the eyes of the EDL membership, made Tommy Robinson (Lennon) a ‘Robin Hood’ type figure and my suggestion was to minimize the stature of the EDL leader and treat him as you would any other criminal. Following his arrest on 3 September, Lennon went on a hunger strike and a petition was made to Amnesty International to intercede on his behalf claiming he was being held as a political prisoner. Learning of this I reminded my UK colleagues of our discussion and how keeping him in jail was a tactical mistake. While I doubt my input had any influence, Mr. Lennon was released a few days later with orders to report to court at a later date.

to shout both for and against the EDL and their movement. Many shouted approval to the police for getting the EDL members out of their area.



Image 33: The EDL march across Tower Bridge

Surprisingly, one action by the police that seemed a major mistake was having parked the EDL busses on the other side of the river, which required the EDL to march across Tower Bridge (Image 33). This

was viewed by the EDL as a major coup and was used in EDL online propaganda for days afterward. It was clear, however, that the EDL had been severely diminished by the events of the summer and even with the march across a national monument, they were unable to regain any traction online or in future demonstrations. While the EDL continued in its efforts to regain momentum, concerns by the UK government of an Oslo type attack in the UK, and the public's concern of being targeted for investigation if they associated themselves with the EDL have had the effect of rendering the movement to a shadow of its former self. The diminished status of the EDL was also reflected in the media coverage of the event. For all of the fervor over going into Tower Hamlets, the media response leading up to the demonstration, with twenty-five articles in the two days before the demo, was short lived with only five articles on the day of, thirty-three articles in the two days after, then eight in the next two days. Following this series of events, the coverage of the EDL was limited to post demonstration articles that became fewer over time. There were within the collection two spikes that are anomalies due to the repeated posting of single articles on 1 and 8 August 2012. At the time it was felt that the marginalization of the EDL

would continue barring any significant events or additional Islamist attacks in the UK or Europe that would serve to foment greater anti-Muslim sentiment.

The Death of Lee Rigby and the Re-Birth of the EDL

Following the death of Lee Rigby, and the publication on YouTube of the video taken of one of the murderers proclaiming this act in the name of Allah, the outcry by the British people and particularly by the EDL was immediate and loud. As recounted earlier, at the time of this murder, the EDL had roughly 21,600 members on their Facebook page. This greatly diminished membership was due to blowback from the Anders Breivik attack, the ZHC hack in 2011, and continued efforts by UK law enforcement to marginalize the EDL and highlight the criminal activities of its members and leadership. Yet, these efforts were no match for the emotional response to the murder of Lee Rigby on 22 May 2013.

As a result of this gruesome murder, and the subsequent news coverage of the event, membership in the English Defence League's Facebook page skyrocketed. While the EDL began 22 May 2013 with just over 21,600 likes, by the end of the day, with many posts pertaining to the murder, the EDL had over 60,000 likes on their page. At one point during the evening they added over 10,000 likes in two hours. By noon the next day, 23 May, the 'likes' hit over 81,000 and by the end of the day were at 91,000. This increase in membership continued unabated and by 1840GMT on 24 May the EDL had over 111,000 likes/members on their Facebook page. When one considers that this was just 48 hours after the event, the increase of over 89,000 likes represents a growth rate at that time of over 1,800 members per hour, 30 members per minute, an astounding one new "like" every two seconds. This increase in likes would continue and on 25 May the group exceeded 122,000 members, increasing their membership by over 100,000 new members in just over three days. However, this

rate of increase proved unsustainable and within a week had begun to wane dramatically to just a few thousand new members per week. A new feature on Facebook supplies a graph of group participation over a specific time period and accessing this on 17 July 2013 provided the following information, as seen in Table 3, regarding the increased number of likes.

From	To	Number of new 'likes'
10 June 2013	16 June 2013	4,888
17 June 2013	23 June 2013	3,141
24 June 2013	30 June 2013	2,284
1 July 2013	7 July 2013	1,341
8 July 2013	14 July 2013	1,923
	Total new members in five weeks	13,577

Table 3: Increase in EDL likes leading up to 17 July 2013

And on 17 July 2013 the total number of likes on the EDL Facebook page was 151,310.

While the increase in membership is significant, what is not known is whether the same participation rates and user rates are reflected in this new phase of the EDL's social media drive. What is known is that as a result of this event, and the subsequently increased interest in the EDL, they were able to mobilize what they estimated as 7,000 demonstrators to march in Newcastle on 25 May 2013. Interestingly, news reports of the march estimated the EDL participation at several hundred to no more than 1,500. After viewing YouTube videos of this demonstration it is clear that the media and law enforcement underestimated the size of the crowd while the EDL certainly exaggerating the impact they had on that day. What was demonstrably different about this demonstration versus the Luton demonstration in February 2011 was that the police were not initially geared up in anticipation of violence. While the mounted police and their horses (4-5) were wearing riot gear, those officers walking along with the demonstrators were not. Given that the

demonstration was in response to the attack on a member of the UK military and in his honour, did the police feel there was no need for such attire? This is unknown.

Currently, the EDL (17 July 2013) is planning another large demonstration in Birmingham for 20 July and as can be seen on the banner in Image 34, which appears at the top of the EDL Facebook page, the mobilization efforts are in full swing.

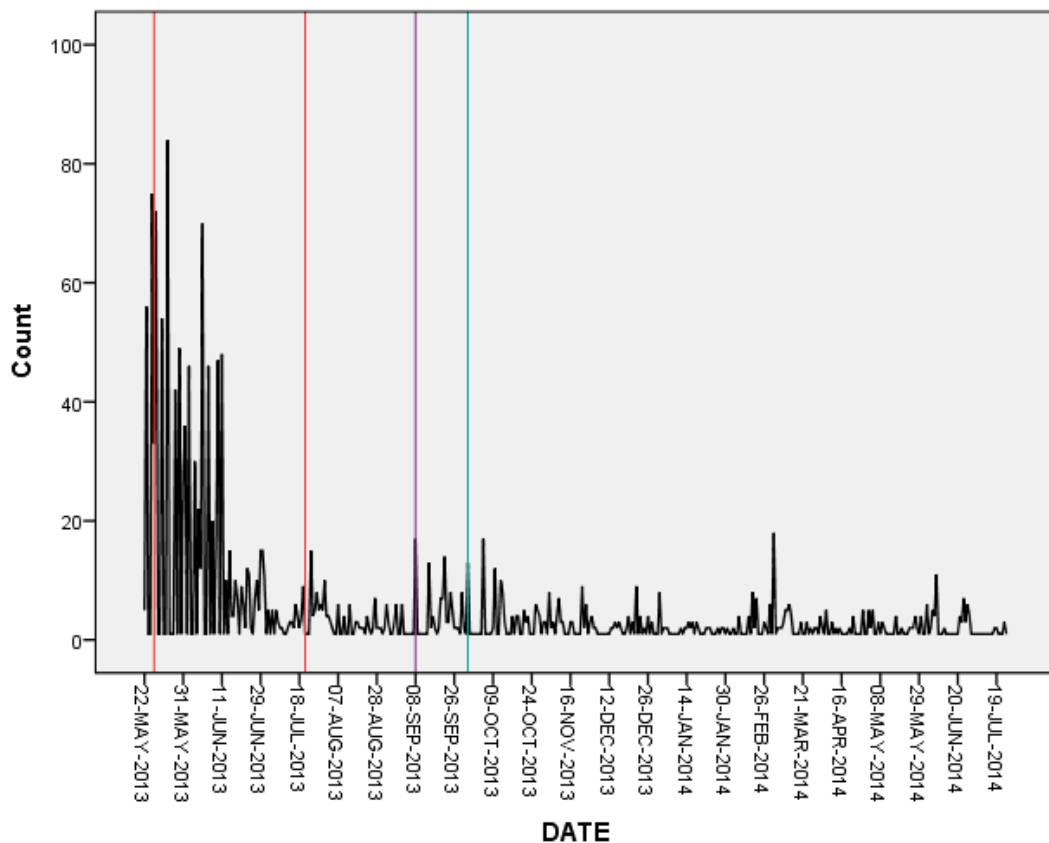


Image 34: EDL Banner for Birmingham Demonstration 20 July 2013

The increase in news articles pertaining to the EDL following this event was the most significant increase seen during the entire period observed. Figure 5 below, shows that following the murder of Lee Rigby there was a large and extensive increase in the volume of news articles affiliated with the EDL. In the days following this event there were fifty-eight articles on 23 May, seventy-five articles on 24 May, thirty three articles on 25 May (when there was an EDL demonstration in Newcastle-upon-Tyne), and seventy-two articles on the day following the demonstration. In the twenty days that followed this murder, there were nine hundred seven articles related to the EDL and its activities published in the UK in which Lee Rigby was mentioned 1,158 times. The English Defence League was referenced 1,078 times in articles that covered the angry response of the EDL members to this murder, the rallies they held, and the growth of their Facebook membership. Within these few days there were 108 references to the EDL Facebook page. It is significant to note that with 5,885 articles

in the 1,827 days within the search period, these 907 articles represent 15% of the overall volume of news article associated with the EDL in a time period of just twenty days or just .01% of the overall time. While it is impossible to establish at this time any correlation between the increase in news articles with the increase in membership to the EDL, it does point to the possibility that traditional media exposure could have an impact on, or be a driver for, social media participation by the broader audience. It certainly provides exposure to a large cohort than what might otherwise be possible via word-of-mouth.

Figure 5: Article frequency 22 May 13- 1 Aug. 14



After the Rigby murder, the remaining EDL activity garnered only tepid media attention. As can be seen above, the 20 July demonstration created a minimal spike in traffic. The arrest of Tommy Robinson on 8 September created a small spike for a few days, and Tommy’s announcement on 8 October that he was leaving the EDL to

join the Quilliam Group generated just seventeen articles on 9 October, twelve on the 10th, ten on the 11th and it dropped off sharply after this. With the exit of Robinson and Carroll from the EDL, there again comes the question of the long-term viability of the EDL as a movement and whether future events might precipitate a resurgence of the group.

Key Words and Phrases in Traditional Media

As discussed briefly in the previous section, the use of certain key words or phrases by traditional media provides some understanding as to how they perceive and/or characterize the EDL. The discussion in the literature review focused mainly on the academic perspective and characterization of the EDL, but it would be a mistake to not consider the role of traditional media in this area as well. This practice is supported in communications literature as it relates to the characterization of certain groups within traditional media. Schemer (2012) suggests that media characterization can influence stereotypical attitudes. Alimi (2007), considered the positive aspects of media coverage and offers that “When media coverage goes as far as to adopt the particular frame a social movement is attempting to promote, the sense of opportunity may possibly be amplified” (p. 74). However, Dines (2013) determined that during the Italian refuse crisis in 2008, the British Press (specifically the Guardian and the Independent), “persistently and incorrectly singled out the Camorra as a principal culprit for the breakdown of the household waste disposal system” (p. 409). He contends that these news outlets ignored the Italian governments’ findings that the problem was due to “corporate malpractice and institutional complicity” and instead sought to place the blame squarely on organized crime and specifically Camorra (Dines, 2013, p. 409).

With a collection of the 5,885 news articles mentioned previously, it is possible to examine how the EDL is presented within the mass media articles. This analysis was performed by compiling all of the articles within one document then using the ‘find’ function to provide a count of each word or phrase contained within the entire set of articles/stories. While the original intent was to examine how often these articles referred to Facebook or social media, it was decided to expand this to include a list of words that could provide insight into how the EDL was portrayed to the people of the UK through traditional print media articles. The list found in Table 4 examines first the use of words or phrases that are associated with various social media fora. Within the articles, the mention of social media or social networking was eclipsed by

Word/Phrase	Count
EDL	14,663
Facebook	980
social networking	114
social media	317
Twitter	540
YouTube	251

Table 4: Word search for mentions of EDL and social media

references to Twitter and Facebook. The Twitter references were sometimes pertaining to individuals associated with the EDL who had posted offensive messages on Twitter (Evening Gazette, 5 July 2014; Daily Star Sunday, 20 April 2014), or contact information for the author of the article.

The YouTube references varied greatly with over seventy articles discussing the YouTube video of the murder of Lee Rigby; discussions of YouTube videos explaining why people convert to Islam or videos sympathetic to the jihad; pointing out that there are YouTube videos promoting the EDL, their demonstrations, and their narrative; and in the overall context of the use of various social media by various ‘extremists’ groups.

The much larger use of Facebook includes many discussion of the EDL's use of Facebook as their main communication forum where they announce demonstrations, facilitate discussions, and make major announcements impacting the group or its leadership. While the analytical tool being used did not allow for the measurement of the context in which each of these words was used, visual observation of the matches did confirm a subset within each grouping that was not directly linked to the EDL, although the references did occur within an article related to the EDL. Future efforts might make it possible to examine these articles in more detail as a separate project. The main point to be taken away from these observations is that traditional media did highlight the EDL's use of social media, and mentioned Facebook more times than Twitter and YouTube combined. Additional research could include a survey of EDL participants to determine how they learned of the EDL and whether their engagement with the EDL Facebook page was facilitated by its mention in traditional media. It is interesting to consider how the characterization of the EDL by traditional media might have driven those who identified with this characterization to the group.

The Print Media's Portrayal of the EDL

In an effort to follow up on the discussion within the literature review pertaining to the characterization of the EDL as being far-right, racist, or neo-Nazi, a separate word/phrase search was conducted to examine how traditional media sought to portray the EDL by either directly referencing or inferring by association that they were other than the 'humanitarian' organization the EDL claimed to be. Table 5 provides the results of the various searches that were done on the 5,885 articles related to the English Defence League. As can be seen the use of non-favorable words or phrases far outnumbers the use of humanitarian. More interesting is the fact

that the eleven uses of humanitarian were in no way associated with the EDL, but used to describe humanitarian efforts in Gaza three times, Islamic law/values four times, and one time each pertaining to the meaning behind the wearing of the poppy, the NATO intervention in Libya, Tony Blair's intervention in Kosovo and Sierra Leone, and humanitarian efforts following the flood in Pakistan. None of the matches for 'humanitarian' were associated with the EDL or its claim of being a humanitarian organization as put forth in their mission statement.

While the traditional media chose to ignore the humanitarian claims of the EDL, they did not seem to restrain themselves in their characterization of the EDL as being a far-right, right-wing, racist, extremist organization, just to name a few of the words and phrases that were found within the news stories. As can be seen below, the use of what can be considered negative characterizations words and phrases outnumbered even the mention of the EDL within the articles. As seen in Table 5, the EDL was mentioned 14,663 times, yet the various characterizations of the group occurred 16,150 times. Interestingly, some of these words/phrases were found in conjunction with each other to add impact (e.g. far-right extremist group, right-wing hate group, etc.). In addition, there were many instances where the EDL was linked to other groups that are known to be far-right extremist like the BNP (1,708 references), the National Front (321 references), and Combat 18 (63 references). As discussed in the previous chapter, the EDL association with various 'football firms' can be seen in the characterization of them as thugs and hooligans.

Descriptive/Associative references	
humanitarian	11
far-right	3,318
right-wing	1,394
neo-Nazi	297
extreme	918
extremist	3,584
racist	2,442
anti-Muslim	1,084
anti-Islamist	114
counter jihadi	12
anti-immigrant	87
thugs	483
hooligans	284
hate group	41
BNP	1,708
National Front	321
Combat 18	63
Total	16,161

Table 5: Word search for descriptive/associative references

From this list of words and phrases it is clear that the print media was not an objective bystander in its reporting on the EDL. While it is not the intent of this analysis to suggest that the EDL is what they claim to be, it seems clear that while traditional media provided the EDL with a considerable amount of exposure through their reporting, the characterization of the group throughout the period observed was certainly less than favorable. This realization again forces the question of whether this characterization played any part in the type of people that might subsequently have been drawn to the EDL. Further, might these articles have served as a sort of outreach to those individuals who embraced some of the characteristics the media put upon the EDL and through them discovered kindred spirits for their far-right/right-wing/anti-Muslim sentiments? As mentioned previously, a survey of EDL members might help to understand this phenomenon more fully.

Following this examination of the traditional media reporting on the EDL it is clear that as the group grew in size, the number of articles per incident increased. Further, it is also evident that print media had no affinity for the EDL and this is reflected in their characterization of the EDL and their efforts to associate the EDL with known far-right groups. How much impact this had on the public has yet to be measured. However, by examining the posts of the EDL administrator and the comments by the users, it is possible to examine whether these characterizations are reflected in the online dialog of the EDL members, which might provide supporting evidence for the claims of traditional media.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, it would be a mistake to only consider the EDL's Facebook activity and not consider the impact of other online as well as offline phenomenon that impacted the groups use of Facebook and the group as a whole. The empirical material presented herein suggests that the majority of the media coverage of the EDL was in response to EDL action and other events related to the EDL like the Breivik attack. It is notable that the spikes in the number of news articles occur, for the most part, immediately following demonstrations. Following the large demonstration in Luton, and the spike in the number of articles published following the demo, it appears that the print media became less interested in the group until the Breivik attack when the number of articles per day spiked to its highest point to day and leading up to the Royal Wedding where the EDL and MAC were potentially set to clash.

The impact of the offline events is also significant in that they not only impacted the EDL's recruitment efforts, but that two separate events had such opposite impact. The Breivik attack in Norway brought increased scrutiny by the UK security services

as well as the press, which had a deleterious effect on their membership. Coupled with the online hack of the EDL Facebook page by the Z Company Hacking Crew and the personal security concerns that arose within the membership as a result of this event, it seemed the EDL might have been finished as a movement. However, the death of Lee Rigby created a flood of new members to the EDL at a rate that had not been seen in the history of the group. The rebirth of the EDL following this horrific event and the growth in membership on their Facebook page, as well as the other events presented, speaks to the role external events can have on a movement.

The role of traditional print media in framing the publics' perception of the EDL and reporting their use of Facebook as their preferred method of communication is difficult to measure without more specific survey data. However, it was possible to show that the UK print media did highlight the use of Facebook by the EDL by mentioning it 980 times within the set of articles. Further, the word search conducted on the articles found that print media favored a negative characterization of the EDL as being far-right (3,318 times), right-wing (1,394 times), extremist (3,584 times), and racist (2,442 time). While these news articles offered no empirical support for these characterizations, the following chapter will examine the words used by the members of the EDL contained in the Facebook posts found in the original collection, to determine whether the media's portrayal of the group is a mischaracterization of if the terms used to describe the group are well earned.

Chapter Five: The EDL Rhetoric vs. Reality

It is clear that the English Defence League has a vested interest in seeking to counter the message put forth by traditional media and its other detractors regarding the motivations of the EDL and the attitudes of its members. As seen in the previous chapter, traditional print media has, whether wittingly or not, characterized the EDL as a far-right, neo-Nazi, extremist, thuggish bunch of hooligans (Taylor, 2010). However, this is in direct conflict with the mission statement put forth by the EDL on their Facebook Page, their own website, and by the leadership of the EDL when interviewed by the media (Jackson, 2011; Alessio & Meredith, 2014, Richards, 2013). This chapter will consider some of the broad ideas put forth in the EDL's mission statement and compare them to the ideas espoused by the administrator and members within the Facebook collection that was acquired as a part of this research. While the EDL sought to position itself, through its mission statement, as an inclusive human rights group wishing to promote democracy and the rule of law, respecting traditions and being open to embracing the best of what other cultures have to offer, wishing to have an open debate about Islam and its impact on society; an examination of key aspects of the dialog within the Facebook communications provides an opportunity to determine whether these postings are in alignment with the lofty rhetoric put forth by the EDL leadership.

To accomplish this analysis, the Excel spreadsheet with the Facebook collection from 5 February 2011-28 March 2011 was modified to contain only the row reference number, the primary or secondary post designation, the discrete user number assigned by the parsing software anonymizing function, the date of the post, and the post/comment in its entirety. This Excel file was then imported into NVivo where

text searches were performed for certain key words and phrases that were significant to understanding how/whether the administrator and member posts reflected the public narrative put forth by the EDL membership. While it is recognized that a comprehensive discourse analysis could, in itself, become a full research project, it is hoped that this initial qualitative effort might provide some illumination.

It should be noted at this time that while the previous discussion of the data protection act would suggest that providing full comments or string of comments could be a problem, given the fact that these Facebook posts were lost and irretrievable as a result of the Z Company Hacking Crews attack on the EDL Facebook page and are only available due to the collection efforts as a part of this study, it is practically impossible for anyone to be identified as a result of the inclusion of these comments/posts. This user identification is made even less probable due to the anonymization efforts provided by the one-way cypher when parsing the data. As a final security measure, any user names that might occur within the posts/comments will be redacted and posting dates will not be included. The posts/comments that follow within this chapter are presented without any correction or editing other than previously listed. Therefore all errors in punctuation, spelling, and diction appear as they were in their original form, as do the expletives contained within the comments. It should be noted that the most offensive comments were not included.

A Review of the Mission Statement

There are several concepts within the EDL's mission statement that will be examined as a part of this analysis. The EDL's claim of inclusiveness, the desire to promote human rights, democratic values, the rule of law, and respecting tradition seem quite benign. However, on examination of those statements there is within them

an inherent anti-Muslim tint that is critical of Islamic law, traditions, and what they see as the growing influence or the “Islamisation of our country because that presents itself as an undemocratic alternative to our cherished way of life” (EDL mission statement, EDL Facebook page, accessed 31 January 2011, see Appendix 5)). Within the EDL Facebook collection there were only twelve references to the mission statement, all provided within secondary posts, which means they were not issued by the Facebook page administrator. Most of the comments simply implored the users within the current stream to read the mission statement. A few went further.

User 63378 - sling your hook [REDACTED], your a troll with a made up name coming on here trying to stir up trouble, we don't want your leftie, anti everything except common sense, holier than thou type on here, read the mission statement to find out what the EDL represents and then click on unlike on the way out please

User 63378- you need to get out more mate, my girlfriend is of Indian descent and a lot of my friends are in mixed black and white marriages, my mom and dad are from Dublin but i am a proud Englishman and happily get along with EVERYONE i have no problem... with the ethnicity of anybody, i'm as proud of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] as i am of any other proud Englishmen, i love the Gurkhas they are a credit to the British army, in Birmingham where i live the main pubs and clubs are mixed with white, black, hindu, sikhs. chinese etc etc and more the fun for it, i along with EVERYBODY that has read and supported the EDL mission statement am against political Islam and the non compatibility it has with western FREE democracy, now go and have a wash you anti globalist UAF troll

User 47096 - EDL... I dont see how the above fits in with the EDL mission statement. Youre not going anywhere with material like this. Let's have some

serious debating and counter argument. This is embarrassing. Lets get out of the playground and into the real world before we gain the impotent and objectionable reputation that the BNP carries around its neck like a noose

As for the EDL being a human rights organization, an NVivo text search for human rights revealed there were 65 references to human rights within the collection. On closer examination most had nothing to do with the human rights agenda as stated in the EDL mission statement.

User 63497 - they talk about their human rights being affected by the march . what happened to the rights of our troops that marched through our town on there home coming ?. and as for the UAF, when has it been wrong to love the country you was born and breed in ?.

User 135464 - Rob apparently there was some people there but was nowt to do with radical muslims, just sounds like human rights campaigning do-gooders from amnesty international showing support for the Egyptian protestors.

User 99442 - the freedom and human rights must dominate this world not the ugly islam and muslims the criminals. what are england waiting for ? all the world will suffer of islamic religion, finish them or kick them out, they are minority but like the concer illeness they will be the majority, beleive me they will be majority, where is the england government ?????

User 66038 - that scum should be strung up fuck there human rights

This is a sample of the comments pertaining to human rights that had no association with human rights and the EDL mission statement. There were, however, two comments within the 65 references to human rights that did mention the human rights agenda of the EDL.

User 87528 - EDL-Marching forth for equality, human rights and to protect young girls from vile, selfish dirty nonces! United we stand in the face of a common and dangerous enemy! NO SURRENDER!!!

User 208096 - Because we are a peaceful protest human rights group. If civil war happens, it would be down to muslim radicals trying to wipe us out

Another area that was examined was the democratic ideal espoused within the EDL mission statement. A search for the term 'democratic' provided twenty-six references that ranged from the desire to protect the democratic way of life in the UK to comments where the user is pointing out the desire of Muslims to destroy democracy.

User 45871 - could'nt agree more ian !!! we will never surrender our democratic life too ANYONE bring it on !!!!!!!

User 24129 - ██████████ We're not "extreme right wing". The EDL and Islam is nothing to do with left/right wing democratic politics, other than one wants to uphold democracy, and the other wants to replace it.

User 38115 - soooooo..... they admit they will never fully integrate? wtf!?!?! how did we let 2.3mil muslims onto this tiny island in the first place..... Did noone check up on their cultural beliefs and assess their communities suitability to live in... a western democratic and free society?Thanks liberal hippy ideology from the 60's - you might have fun then but you've left your descendants with one hell of a mess to clean up.

User 60928 - why should any muslim complain? sharia is anti democratic and America is a democracy therefore sharia has no place in america. america is christian and they observe a single tier system founded on christian values and

freedom of will and expression so the guy was right what does sharia have to do with oklahoma? or America? simple question which answers its self NS

User 44387 - Islam isn't a religion it is an insidious barbaric idea to destroy western democratic ideals & subjugate the masses to a climate of constant fear in the name of a murdering molester called allah, make women third class citizens and put the globe back to the dark ages...in short if these islamic maniacs got their way It'll make Pol Pot look like mother Teresa.

While in public statements the EDL leadership argued they were not anti-Muslim but were against radical Islam, the dialog from within the Facebook posts suggests there is a strong anti-Muslim sentiment running through the group that is not in alignment with the more moderate public statements of the leadership.

Attitudes toward Muslims and Islam

Within the EDL Facebook collection there were 1065 references to Muslims and 915 references to Islam. While there were some comments that were neutral in nature there was a significant sample that did not reflect the inclusive aspiration of the EDL mission statements nor did they distinguish between the Islamic extremists, which they view as the threat, from the larger body of Muslims in the UK. Below is a sampling of these posts taken from within the Facebook collection.

Muslims

Within the NVivo search for the term 'Muslims' there were some comments that were not inflammatory. For example user 101304, engaged in a discussion of whether Muslims are compelled to follow British law states:

██████, *i do follow British Law. Islam instructs ALL muslims they MUST follow the law of the land wherever they live.*

This user goes on to state within the same string:

█ i am Muslim/English/British, all are as equal and important to me. I cannot have one without the other. My faith defines me as a person, my nation is what has made me who i am (environment). There certainly i no conflict for me as a bri...tish asian muslim, and i can safely say 99.9% of the muslims i know feel the same. Those who say there is a conflict are people who put words onto our mouths, so called "analysts/thinkers" etc.

Users 101304's comments are not well received. This unwillingness to engage in a useful dialog is seen in the very next comment.

User 294484- I dont even want to read any more of his comments, another muslim going to the blocked list. goodbye █

But even when threatened with being blocked User 101304 is not dissuaded and, after several disparaging remarks by other users, continues to make the point regarding the obligation of Muslims to follow the law.

User 101304 - █ Shariah Law is Koranic law/regulations etc. One of those that the EDL need to take note is the major one which states muslims MUST follow the laws of the land wherever they live, even if its not a Muslim state. A true muslim in the UK will follow UK law as this is what Islam instructs

The response to this users comment is typical within the collection. When a user seeks to have a reasoned discussion, or is making their comments are not in alignment with the group narrative, they are vilified and other users call for their removal.

Fortunately, this string was captured before user 101304 was removed and these posts were lost.

To provide a glimpse into the attitudes toward Muslims contained within the EDL posts, the following comments were chosen from the 1065 referenced obtained as a part of the NVivo search.

User 90755 - fuck the muslims edl our streets

User 46053- this country is gonna look pretty empty when we throw all the muslims out

User 23534 - Well they've not lost as much credibility as the Muslims ever had to start with, bunch of misogynistic fascists and all who support em

User 46515 - Its all muslims and islam thats invading and taking over mother England not to mention unlimited immigrants from the poxy Eu ! 48% of British would vote for a far right party if image was right says alot the rest will awake and we will have civil war !

User 24465 - muslims should live in muslim countries ans christians in christian countries

User 56112 - Muslims are low life's and should be treated as such

User 88739 - How am I Racist lol I only hate Muslims x

As can be seen in the previous comments, there is among the members little distinction between moderate and extremist Muslims. Of more concern are comments that go beyond simply expressing anti-Muslim sentiment to suggesting more aggressive action like deportation of all Muslims. Following is a sample of some of those comments:

User 46053 - am i the only one thats getting sick and tired of these people? deport them, they dont want to live in peace like the jews buddist hindus ect.. they want to take over the uk!

User 75089 - Close em down and deport the lot this is our land love it or leave it!!!! Bollocks to the flip flop mob

User 65814 - now fucking deport em..

User 54796 - Life is cheap for them sorts who just board planes and set themselves off like giant fireworks... Deport the lot of them and let them blow each other up in their own country. The trouble with britain is, it has got alot to say about what happens everywhere else in the world but can't open it's mouth when anything kicks off here!!

User 65093 - Why do we have to put up with scrounging , charity case immigrants who only want to blow us all up? DEPORT!

And at times there are those who suggest even more aggressive and even violent action be taken.

User 45738- If you have twelve muslims standing up to their necks in concrete, what do you have?Not enough fucking concrete!

User 39130 - We need to start building camps for these muslims

User 55027 - for media: say it as muslim not asian! go EDL, kick all muslims out of the country!

User 80388 - Waste them

User 67739 - Kill all muslims in uk

pregnant,children,grandads,nans,mothers,fathers etc just. Fuck them off

User 67830 - I say "Kill Them All, Let God Sort Them Out!" and I dont mean Allah...

User 104020 - please some1 kill this fucker. js shoot the cunt when he arrives . fuk sharia law. NFSE

User 24465 - wipe these fuckers off the face of the earth!!!!

Further demonstrating the anti-Muslim sentiment of some of the EDL members was their use of the disparaging term 'muzzies'. While this reference was only found 19 times within the collection, it further demonstrates that racism does exist within the EDL membership.

User 37534 - [REDACTED] your on the wrong page you need mdl { muzzies don't listen } leave our great land

User 46718 - Think im going to commit a crime here in aus so i can get shipped to England and come fuck some muzzies up

User 45703 - do any muzzies know the word.....respect...

User 64974 - I'm watching, the fucking dirty muzzies

User 54712 - The muzzies have forgotten one major thing...we have not only a highly trained,organized military, but also ordinary citizenry is also veteran soldiers...all of us! We also have atomic weapons and will not hesitate to use them if need be.

User 54369 - we would smash the muzzies in a war but mass imigration has allowed the enemy behind our lines not saying all of them are bad to be pc but a good few and thats the worry.leftist ideolgy has created us a nasty rat problem we need to cure in our own garden

User 80969 - Time for us all to stand together and get it done.....armed with as much pig grease as we can find..it can be put in all sorts of everyday products.....you could saturate England with the stuff....the muzzies would leave or be dammed.

The last comment by user 80969 containing a reference to 'pig grease' is another disparaging narrative found throughout the collection and will be discussed further within this chapter.

Islam

References specifically to Islam within the collection were also found to be in high frequency. The NVivo search for 'Islam' provided 915 references. The sample provided below once again suggests there is little distinction between radical and moderate Islam in the eyes of these EDL Facebook users.

User 47782 - The Islam issue has to be looked at like a mountain of termites destroying Britain an the world. These fanatics will fight and die to destroy you an your country. They must be met head on.....an deported. Neville Chamberlain is best known f...or his appeasement philosophy on foreign policy. It appears the ghost of Chamberlain is guiding domestic policy along with this outrageous immigration policy in Britain & America. Is there no National Security issue with so many potential terrorist living in our countries? Britain & America should admit our immigration policy is flawed an began mass deportation.Send them back HOME • to practice their religion an third world life style. An never try to rescue another Muslim Country from the Grips of Islam. • This middle eastern filth must be washed from the streets of Britain..the sooner the better No Surrender.good going EDL.

User 44506 - islam is NOT a religion, it's the political system dedicated to re-establishing the Islamic Empire. The clearly stated goal of Islam is to overthrow, undermine, or alter all existing non-Muslim governments and to replace them with Islamic g...overnment (Caliphate) under an Islamic leader (Caliph) .Teaching Islam is the same as advocating overthrow of the UK government. Islam is not a religion it is a political movement dedicated to restoring the form of government that Mohammed established before he was assassinated by a fed-up wife and

before the Ottoman Turk Empire collapsed. As such, all mosques should be closed immediately permanently banned from existence and operation, recognizing that mosques are no more places of worship than were Ottoman Turk military garrisons.

User 56112 - Islam is the devil's greatest accomplishment

User 25564 - Islam has no respect just hatred toward everyone other than what they want. Islam means to submit, well I ay gonna submit, they can try but the only response from me will be NS NFSE!

User 53648 - Islam is a much bigger threat to europe that hitler ever was.

User 46760 - It seems people are waking up, becoming aware of the threat islam poses to us all, well done the EDL for raising the awareness..I've noticed in Tommy's recent speeches the confidence he's gained..he's far more eloquent, informed..keep it up boys..this is our country, always will be..

User 54621 - Proud to british fuck islam god save the queen

User 54250 - He ain't dangerous to me...i am a freedom loving Englishman..Islam has no place in Europe..my ancestral bloodline built the heritage,culture and language of my great and beloved England..twas not the efforts of Muslims..i shall die by the sword before i surrender..god bless mother England.

User 56112 - Islam is a cancer,WW3 is the answer.

User 55349 - Islam is a CULT NO BETTER WORD FOR IT. Allah is Satan and Muslims are his slaves

User 45332 - Islam is a poison, a cult of hatred and lies, our politicians need to learn the truth and do the right thing, and that is to repatriate every last moslem!

User 55027 - we have knew muslims won't be patriotic, THEY NEVeR be patriotic, because they serve on one nation, named islam. KICK them all OUT!

User 137312 - I hope everyone had a good day and got home safely, well done kuffars, Death to Islam! NFSE!

User 38374 - No more islam in my country

These comments show that there is no distinction among these members between the minority of extremist Muslims and all other Muslims. The lack of basic understanding of the religion is demonstrated in the broad call for the extermination of all Muslims. Further, there is no recognition of those Muslims who have integrated into British society and consider themselves to be just as British as anyone else. These generalizations feed into the development of the 'evil other' as a part of the us-vs-them narrative that runs throughout the EDL Facebook page and is demonstrated by these comments.

Religious Practices

One of the religious practices mentioned in the EDL mission statement is the halal tradition within Islam. The EDL considers the push by the Muslim minority to have halal food served in schools and available in markets and prepared food stores to be an invasion of Islamic tradition into British society (EDL mission statement, EDL Facebook page, accessed 31 January 2011). Halal, in this context, refers to meat which is considered religiously acceptable for consumption and has been prepared (butchered) in keeping with religious tradition. For example pork is not considered halal and is therefore not consumed by Muslims. Within the Facebook collection there are 116 references to 'halal'. These comments presented are a sampling of the attitudes reflected within this search.

User 25802 - Sainsburys asda tesco ect ect all sell halal meat also KFC. this is barbaric and there Is no place in England for this . These poor animals are in pain this needs to be banned sick bastards

User 55055 - ■■■ our livestock is stunned before being dispatched,also the animals are very aware of their surroundings and are extremely stressed before slaughter.most halal slaughter houses are not exactly concerned in the welfare of the animal prior t...o slaughter to say the least.dont get me wrong im sure cruelty happens over here in some of ours,but i would say that the vast majority are strenously regulated.people dont realise that HALAL is just an anagram for ALLAH,so its allah meat,allah food.we as christians are not allowed to eat religeously slaughtered meat of any description,but yet our govt is allowing it to be force fed to us and our children.the two biggest weapons in their arsenal are " HALAL FOOD" and the "CRY OF PERSECUTION" IN ISLAMIFYING OUR NATION.NFSE

User 67739 - Halal meat is sick they will all grow up to b the same with these sharia courts fuck them all off I just give a fuck about this country get rid of em all b4 its too late

User 67347 - BAN THAT FILTHY HALAL MEAT NOW. SICK CRUEL BASTARDS.

As discussed in the literature review, the topic of halal foods is one of the hot-button issues used by the EDL and other anti-Muslim groups to create antipathy toward the Muslim minority. Interestingly, while there are distinctions between halal and kosher foods, the slaughtering process, which seems to be the focus of the animous about halal food within these posts, is the same. However, the EDL wraps the issue of halal food into the broader concept of what they see is the growing influence of Muslim tradition into British society.

Perceptions of Mosques

Another of the topics central to the EDL movement is the role of the mosques in the radical Islamist movement. Again, while the rhetoric is focused on combating Muslim extremists and their influence within the mosques, the open dialog on Facebook is very different. Within the EDL collection the predominant theme is one where the mosque is seen as a threat that is often times facilitated by the government. This section will examine a selection of the 232 references located in the search for 'mosque'. These comments pertain to mosque construction and expansion, the government's support of the mosque, the perception of activities that take place within the mosque, and comments that relate to the users desire to desecrate mosques or potential mosque sites.

Mosque Construction

Another of the reoccurring themes of the EDL is the threat posed by the growing number of mosques in the UK. This is reflected in the signs carried at demonstrations, as seen in the photos of the Luton demonstration presented earlier, and within the posts on the Facebook page. The EDL has even gone so far as to stage demonstrations to oppose future mosque construction and expansion and the comments below are a sample of this dialog.

User 86541 – Its ok for them to build mosques here but you just try and build a church in there country they would kill you

User 39116 – for [REDACTED]. I have worked and paid taxes all my life and am fucked off at the fact it goes to building mosques and paying for jobless unwashed UAF scum and giving hand outs for people that hate this country.

User 64806 – In Luton a building which was used for TA training was to be sold by the council and turned into affordable housing for Lutonians. Instead the

council sold it to the Muslims to be converted to a mosque, for Â£1m cheaper than it was if sold for affordable housing.

User 23618 – makes me sick man,i have only liked edl today,i am with it all the way,i got stabbed by pakis in 203nglish203am town centre a few years ago,i have tried to see the good in these people but there is none,my 203nglish203 fought for the freedom in this... country!where is the freedom in smallheath 203nglish203am where there are 'no white' zones!they are taught hatred towards the west at every chance,but they dont mind taking our benifits and building mosques here!ive had enough of it!

User 57386 – Ban all Mosque's in the uk. They close down are youth and sports clubs etc so kids have to hang round on streets. Yet they build Mosques with tax payers money

User 37534 – ████████ nothing wrong with most muslims you just need to live by our laws no burkas no peados no more mosques

User 46508 – Everyone who can get to Green Lane, Dagenham next Saturday 12th feb should if you oppose the building of a mosque & sharia law centre by proven extremists!Some involved in the poppy burning in London on the 11th Nov shouting abuse & spitting at our homecoming soldiers in Barking! NEVER SURRENDER

User 45689 – Just to let you know the Preston demo was a success, the Mega Mosque that was to be built has been rejected...way hey ;) NS

User 45934 - @ ████████ there's a static demo about a mosque being built

User 30842 – People in my town of 203nglish203 are outraged of plans to build this mosque,it must not happen !!!!!!!

User 42805 – protest against the new mosque, meet in eva hart, then onto green lane about now, stay safe everyone there 😊

Government Support of Mosques

Hot button issues for the EDL also include the government support that is given to assist with mosque construction. Whether it be preferential treatment in the purchasing of government buildings or the governments funding of new mosques, the EDL members of Facebook have strong opinions.

User 77784 – 1400 MOSQUES in Britain, and 100s of ISLAMIC schools? ALL paid for by YOU the British taxpayer! We literally funding the enemy within.

WAKE UP PEOPLE!

User 57386 – Ban all Mosque 's in the uk. They close down are youth and sports clubs etc so kids have to hang round on streets. Yet they build Mosques with tax payers money

User 55958 – Northampton! Its off the M1! A very large town in the uk, bigger than some cities! As the npton div and snipers will tell you that the council are giving millions to mosque projects when making record cuts! Not to mention the mosque 's are not wanted by anyone, they have deliberty chosen problem and sensitive areas for these monstrous things! (run down high crime areas and old people areas)

User 37765 – Im from Scotland and way i c it is if they do that and dont want 2integrate with us then why the hell r they staying n this country. Go bk 2their own country and live happy. I hated that programme. Why is it they get 2build mosque 's n our c...ountry. We would 'nt get 2 build a church in any country they come from. The goverment 's not going 2do anything as usual. We need to stand up for our country and whatever it is we believe in. Its not right

User 46774 – how come that local councils and governments are willing to pay for /and towards a mosque being built but won't pay towards the upkeep of our churches

Activities within Mosques

During the collection period there was a series of posts pertaining to the abuse of children within the mosques and religious schools affiliated with the mosques. This news was met with strong condemnation by EDL members on Facebook and precipitates many comments.

User 208096 – Peace, love and tolerance currently being beaten into children at a mosque near you.

The above post is interesting as it was provided by the administrator as a primary post.

User 93849 – English law should apply in the Mosque. When can child abuse be tolerated, never, the mosques need supervised at least to prevent this

User 54677 – Channel 4 s dispatches Monday at 8, extremist teachers exposed, secret filming reveals pupils as young as 6 being beaten and taught extremist islam, religion of peace my arse, ns

User 31493 – what got me was they have there own law in the mosque well hang on there in bloody 205nglish we have laws that state you cannot harm a child its called child 205ngli they should be locked up not covered up FACT!

User 46592 – Those kids r being fucking brainwashed. They looked like a load of monkeys sat around in a circle hitting one another. British law doesn't even cover the mosque, there legally allowed to hit as long as they don't leave a mark. Wtf. If I was one of those kids that bearded prick wud be sparcos.

User 65506 – Al-taqiyya and dissimulation are words used for a practice of Muslims blatantly lying to non-Muslims. The officials of this mosque blatantly lied to the schools inspectorate about child abuse (physical and mental) until they were exposed by this documentary. They'll probably blame America, Britain and Israel lol!

User 24934 – i think the whole point is , these children are being brought up and taught by people with extreme views , beaten and brainwashed , these very children are going to be adults soon and its terrifying that they are being taught to hate non-mu...slims , that any non-muslim is the enemy , its a problem that goes a lot deeper than a few kids getting a smack in a mosque its the hatred and segregation thats instilled within these places

User 37569 - @ [REDACTED], i'm from s-on-t & the scumbag your talking about was a iman & was sentenced a few wks back for rape and sexual assaults on young boys at his mosque but is back in the papers now because he is up on charges for sexual 206nglish206am on female prison staff. Should just string him up instead of wasting tax payers money keeping him in jail!!!

User 208096 (the administrator with another primary post) – Islamic HATE conference happening this Sat in Birmingham (public building) & then this Sunday in the East London Mosque. Some hate preachers who would be banned from the UK are being beamed in on live TV. For London; contact <http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/> to complain. These preachers in most cases are known to us as extreamists who speak about dominating the uk & calling for muslims to rise up against non-believers

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â€Ž”Indeed Allah does not snatch away knowledge from the servants but he takes away knowledge by taking away the scholars – until when there is no scholar remaining the people take Ignorant ones as heads, so they are asked and give verdict

Desecration of Sites and People

One of the more distasteful narratives found within the EDL Facebook collection deals with the desire to desecrate religious sites and people with pigs blood or some other pork product. This is directly related to one of the tenets of Islam where the consumption of pork is prohibited. There were, within the collection, 163 references found to the search for pig, pork, or bacon. Below is a small sampling of these comments.

User 45787 – LISTEN TO THIS !! Ive just read that the people of a town in spain found a way to stop the planned 207nglish207am207n of a mosque in their area by burying a pig on the proposed site then making sure the media knew about it. Islamic rules forbid mosques being built on” Pig soiled ground “ and so the project was cancelled !! Sounds like a plan..

User 74025 – bury a dead pig – or 10 – at the construction site

User 64176 – yeah [REDACTED], we should start burying pigs on future mosque land

*User 56378 – i think we should all send some food to the 207nglish207am mosque so the can have a sandwich on us polite understand stiff upperlip 207nglish A
GREAT BIG VAN FULL OF FUCKING BACON*

User 80969 – Time for us all to stand together and get it donearmed with as much pig grease as we can find..it can be put in all sorts of everyday

products.....you could saturate England with the stuff....the muzzies would leave or be dammed

User 24976 – [REDACTED]. Rot in hell smothered in bacon and glisten in pork fat

User 81725 – HOW WOULD THEY FEEL IF WE CAUGHT THEM AND LET PIGS BLOOD INTO DRIP INTO THEIR WOUNDS ? COME ON GUYS ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS WAIT HE WILL SHOW HIS UGLY FACE AGAIN SOMEWHERE THEM CAN THE PEOPLE WHO WANT TO HELP THEM WHO LIVE IN DAGENHAM NOT DIG A GRAVE AND SLAUGHTER A PIG IN IT AT NIGHT AND LEAVE IT TILL ALL THE MUSLIMS SEE IT THEY WONT BUILD A MOSQUE THERE THEN

As stated previously, these comments show the propensity among the EDL members on Facebook to lash out at all Muslims. These comments not only show an overall disdain for the Muslim faith, they also demonstrate the willingness to engage in what could be seen as hate crimes in their efforts to prevent the building of a mosque or to desecrate a site or person. How different is this from painting a swastika on the side of a synagogue?

EDL Response to Media Characterization

In the previous chapter there was an examination of the characterization of the EDL by traditional media. As seen, there is considerable evidence to support the idea that traditional media did seek to frame the EDL as a far-right, , neo-Nazi group. Within the Facebook collection there were 127 references matching the search for Nazi, far-right, and neo-Nazi. Within these comments are protestations that the EDL is not a far-right or Nazi group but are instead freedom fighters as well as those who embrace the far-right nationalist moniker.

User 62930 - *facist,nazi who?i was in Luton today,i did not see one bit of trouble from any member of the EDL.we had apeacefull demo,we are not racist one bit.i loved too see our black brothers,sisters in luton today.AND DONT FORGET THEY ARE FIGHTING FOR OUR FREEDOM NOW IN AFGAN,GOD BLESS THEM,AND WE WILL NEVER SURRENDER*

User 65660 - *fukin callin us nazis [REDACTED]? my grandad went to war against them sick bstardsyour just a yellow bellied poofa that probably wears mummys dresses whilst daddy/uncle joe gives you your pocket money for being a good little girl ... every saturday .Thats if you have a dad u THICK BASTARD dnt you dare call me nazi cos i would chuck you in gas chamber given a chance ...;-)*

User 160797 - *I am sick of having labels, racist, far-right, now I am a retard cos I am an atheist. Anymore labels people want to chuck @ me. Only when people can't win an argument do the labels get thrown @ ya, be a sport, when u are losing or have lost an argument stop the labels. I aint racist, I aint a nazi, I aint right- winged n I certainly aint a retard.*

User 44198 - *I personally do not care how this government or the previous labels me. I know what I am, a very proud and patriotic Englishman/Briton who is bloody proud of his heritage and nation and wants to fight for its ways and beliefs. If they want ...to label me as a racist/Nazi for believing this, then I say, yes I am. They will not change my love for this land by name calling and branding me. Bring it on you marxists, PC, Eurosivelling,Islam appeasing cowards your downfall is upon the horizon, the Lion is hungry again.*

User 115164 - *Fellow Crusaders - Please remember we are not an anti Muslim Group, we are against the islamification of our great country and the sharia law that extremists want to see rooted in England. Let us serve EDL with honour,*

integrity and above all without racism. That way EDL will gain power and strength and not get seen as just some other far right hatred group. Remember the worlds media are focused on EDL.

User 208096 (administrator in a secondary post)- New EDL News Item Press Release: The EDL Is A Human Rights Organisation Press Release: The EDL Is A Human Rights Organisation Press Release - For Immediate Distribution EDL Leadership 21st March 2011 Attachment 300 Please note: the English Defence League (EDL) is not now, nor has it ever been a "Far Right" organisation. The EDL welcomes all colours, creeds, religions, sexualities... and anyone who believes in the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. In the past many media outlets have dubbed the EDL "Far Right" without providing any significant See More Source: EDL News March 21 at 3:57pm

User 30450 - Nice one, when we get the media to drop the 'racist, far right and hooligan' descriptions of the EDL and realise we are just standing up for this country, our support will grow more and more into the main stream.... When people realise it is not racist to love your country and want to protect our way of life, they will support us in their thousands EDL NSE.

One user actually posted the contents of a letter in that was in response to statements made by a local councilor following a demonstration in Reading.

User 133448 - Hello, Could you enlighten me on the comments you representative made after the EDL protest in your town on the 19 March. He called the EDL racist, Does he actually know what a racist is. How can a group that has many different races as me...mbers be racist. They have Muslims, Jews, Indians, Africans and many other races. They are opposed to extreme actions by any other race against the democracy of the United Kingdom. Also they are against radical

Islam starting to dominate this country. Do you and your colleges really want Sharia Law is so you would soon be out of a job. It's people like your representative that is allowing this to fester. Please tell me how you have come to the decision that the EDL are racist. Or is it that to attempt to cry down the strength that this group are achieving. I would like an answer but I doubt that you will.

Dear [REDACTED] Thank you for your enquiry. I have passed your e-mail on to The Corporate Projects Manager. I have asked them to respond to you directly. Please be advised that the department will endeavour to respond to your query within 5 working days. Your original correspondence is quoted below. Please note that to protect your personal details they have been removed from the quoted text.

Regards Customer Service Advisor (10073) Call Centre Reading Borough Council

This effort was supported by another member in the next comment:

User 54775 - I am so happy this has finally been settled in a such a manner. I have always argued that how can a non-political group, whose membership spans the political spectrum be described as far right.

EDL Deals with Trolls

Within the EDL Facebook Collection, as with many controversial online social networks, there are those who participate as antagonists. These individuals, known as trolls, are often a source of frustration for the members and can serve to disrupt the narrative that the administrator is trying to set forth. As such, there are often calls by the users to remove or block these users from the EDL Facebook page. Once blocked/removed, the content from the troll is no longer available. While some members question the 'democratic' nature of blocking these participants, there are

those who find them amusing and mock their efforts. There were 51 references to trolls in the EDL Facebook collection.

User 160797 - Trolls out in force again today I see, yawn yawn yawn, its gettin rather tedious don't u think?

User 158662 - reported [REDACTED] and other clowns trolls nfse

User 145096 - lets just ignore [REDACTED] people, lets not show face to trolls on this post . its not right. let the admins deal with em

User 96803 - Don't dignify the trolls comments with a response...If they can't show humanity when a young life is lost (regardless of their difference in views) then it says more about them than it does the EDL...We're better than that, rise above their... hate fuelled, taunts and callousness. it just shows they don't belong in a civilized society.R.I.P To the young lad who so tragically lost his life today. I'm sure he's gone to a better place. God give his family strength and comfort at this terrible time...AMEN!

User 38542 - The trolls must work for the bbc. Dirty hairy little posh pricks

User 160797 - Do trolls really believe we have the slightest interest in what they've got to say? Do they not know their comments are not wanted on this page. Doh.

User 53564 - Now lets stop biting with the trolls and get ready to be taken serious.

EDL not far right but human right. By the grace of god. NS

Conclusion

While in public the EDL professes to be a group that promotes human rights, democracy, and inclusion, it seems clear from the examples provided herein that the comments made by the membership on Facebook, which is in no way a private venue, does not reflect the benevolent rhetoric of the leadership. Quite the opposite, the

comments seen previously show that racism and strong anti-Muslim sentiment do exist within the Facebook membership of the English Defence League. A review of the comments included in this chapter shows that there were few user duplications within the examples, suggesting this broadly anti-Muslim and what some might call racist sentiment is not centralized with only a few users but is more distributed within the Facebook collection than the EDL leadership might like to be known.

The comments of the Facebook members show that, for the most part, they make no distinction between the Muslim minority in the UK and the extremist Muslims to whom they claim to be opposed. The blatantly anti-Muslim comments and the characterization of Islam as a religion of the devil and of hate seek to perpetuate the idea that all Muslims are the enemy and are clearly not in keeping with the ideas set forth in the EDL mission statement. The number of malevolent comments was not only illuminating but also quite disturbing when one considers that they were made by so many different members.

Future hopes are that with more advanced tools to perform sentiment analysis on the strings contained within this collection, it will be possible to provide a more granular picture of the narratives contained within this collection and/or future collections. The insight provided vis-a-vis the brief discourse analysis within the last two chapters has helped to see how the EDL is publically portrayed by the government and the media, how the EDL seeks to portray itself, and how the statements of the members who participate in the Facebook group are/are not a reflection of these various characterizations. This material is further reinforced by the findings of the primary focus of this research which was the collection and analysis of the Facebook traffic to understand the patterns of traffic, the influence of certain topics on user traffic, and the understanding of user frequency within the collection.

Chapter Six: Findings and Analysis

As the English Defence League grew out of its humble yet violent beginnings in Luton the summer of 2009, the decision to ‘go public’ on Facebook was instrumental to the growth of the group. This venue served multiple purposes as it was at the same time a communications vehicle, a propaganda machine, recruitment and a mobilization tool. As their presence on Facebook grew, so did the size of their demonstrations and the amount of traditional media coverage given to the group and its leaders. By the time this research collection began in February 2011, the group boasted nearly 60,000 members on Facebook and Tommy Robinson was being interviewed regularly on radio and television and quoted within print media. The demonstration held in Luton on February 5, 2011 was arguably the largest showing by the EDL to date with an estimated three thousand participants, and as it turned out, the largest they were able to mobilize in the coming years. This seems counterintuitive given the growth of membership on Facebook following the Luton demonstration, which quickly reached 80,000, and the real push by the EDL leaders to legitimize their movement by pointing to the rapidly increasing number of members on Facebook and the media exposure they were getting as a result of that growth. However, even with all their efforts to present the EDL as a grass-roots movement that represented the ideals of the British people, they failed in subsequent demonstrations to put boots on the ground in any significant quantity, always falling far short of what had been accomplished in Luton, which resulted in diminishing media coverage and the return of the EDL to the margins of society. Given the rapid growth of the membership on Facebook it seems odd that the EDL would be unable to increase their showing at future demonstrations given the media attention they garnered in Luton. However, putting aside the ZHC hack and the fallout from the

Breivik attack which all occurred following the collection period, when one begins to look closely at the collection of Facebook traffic following the Luton demonstration, patterns begin to emerge that provide an explanation for this phenomenon and eventually shows that out of the many there are truly only just the few.

Having shown that it is possible to collect and segregate for analysis the Facebook traffic of the EDL, the findings and analysis provided within this chapter seek to address the research questions presented previously pertaining to understanding the characteristics of the online communications of the English Defence League on Facebook to determine how these findings compare to the speculation regarding online participation in extremist social media environments. The areas investigated include measuring the traffic patterns between the group administrators and the members; identifying and understanding the impact on traffic of various types of messaging used by the EDL on their Facebook page; measuring the response to the various types of messaging presented by the administrator; examining the use of URL links within the posts and understanding the impact these various links have on the overall traffic and determining whether certain root links (YouTube, Facebook, etc.) appear more frequently than other links; and most importantly, understanding the relationship between being a 'member' of the EDL Facebook group and being an active participant in the online dialog, and understanding the characteristics of this social media traffic to determine the distribution of activity among the active members.

Traffic patterns

The analysis of traffic during the collection period is facilitated in several ways. First, as discussed previously, all posts are coded 'P' for primary posts and 'S' for secondary posts or comments. By coding all the secondary posts separately it is

possible to determine how many comments or secondary posts are associated with each primary post. Secondly, the dates are coded in two ways; the primary posts are coded with the date of the primary post and all comments or secondary posts associated with that primary post are identified with that same date to show its association to the primary post; a second date variable provides the actual date that each secondary post/comment was made to provide an indication of the frequency of posts over time. Using these variables it is possible to gain significant insight into the traffic patterns as well as the importance of certain posts to the daily traffic.

The general breakdown of the data collection (Table 6) shows that the 19,312 primary and secondary posts that were collected during the forty-five day collection period is comprised of 239 primary posts, or 1.2 percent of the overall traffic; and 19,073 secondary posts which accounts for the remaining 98.8 percent, with an average of 80 comments or secondary posts per primary post.

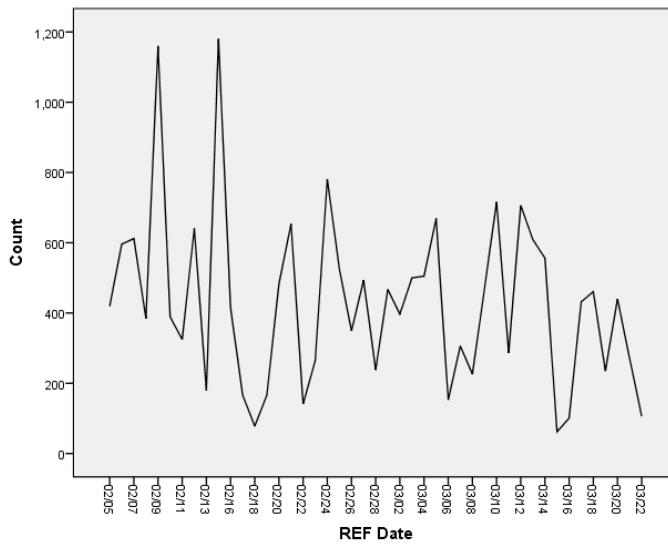
Posts	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Primary	239	1.2	1.2	1.2
Secondary	19073	98.8	98.8	100
Total	19312	100	100	

Table 6: Post frequency

Daily Traffic Analysis

As can be seen in the graph contained in Figure 6, the volume of the traffic during the collection period varied greatly from day to day. The days with the highest volume of traffic were 9 and 14 February with 1152 comments on eight primary posts and 1166 comments on fourteen primary posts respectively.

Figure 6: Post Frequency Graph



The traffic analysis table below (Table 7) shows that the 9 February traffic averaged 144 comments per post and the 14 February traffic averaged 83.29 comments per primary post. While the primary posts on those days generated the most daily traffic, on average they were not equal to the individual primary posts that generated the most individual traffic. On 8 February two primary posts generated 382 comments for an average of 191 comments per post. 5 March had 666 comments on three primary posts for an average of 222 comments per post, and the highest comment per post average was on 27 February when two primary posts generated 492 comments for an average of 246 secondary comments per primary post. But what accounts for these high traffic days and how does one explain the high volume of traffic per primary post experienced on the days cited?

Date	Primary	Secondary	Total	Average
5-Feb	4	415	419	103.75
6-Feb	4	592	596	148.00
7-Feb	5	607	612	121.40
8-Feb	2	382	384	191.00
9-Feb	8	1152	1160	144.00
10-Feb	6	383	389	63.83
11-Feb	7	318	325	45.43
12-Feb	9	632	641	70.22
13-Feb	2	178	180	89.00

Date	Primary	Secondary	Total	Average
14-Feb	14	1166	1180	83.29
16-Feb	5	410	415	82.00
17-Feb	3	163	166	54.33
18-Feb	2	76	78	38.00
19-Feb	4	162	166	40.50
20-Feb	9	474	483	52.67
21-Feb	8	646	654	80.75
22-Feb	1	140	141	140.00
23-Feb	5	259	264	51.80
24-Feb	11	770	781	70.00
25-Feb	7	517	524	73.86
26-Feb	3	346	349	115.33
27-Feb	2	492	494	246.00
28-Feb	3	235	238	78.33
4-Mar	9	496	505	55.11
5-Mar	3	666	669	222.00
6-Mar	3	150	153	50.00
7-Mar	3	303	306	101.00
8-Mar	4	222	226	55.50
9-Mar	4	465	469	116.25
10-Mar	10	706	716	70.60
11-Mar	6	280	286	46.67
12-Mar	5	701	706	140.20
1			60	
3-Mar	9	600	9	66.67
1			55	
4-Mar	8	548	6	68.50
1				
5-Mar	1	61	62	61.00
1			10	
6-Mar	1	100	1	100.00
1			43	
7-Mar	4	428	2	107.00
1			46	
8-Mar	7	454	1	64.86
1			23	
9-Mar	5	230	5	46.00
2			44	
0-Mar	7	433	0	61.86
2			27	
1-Mar	5	266	1	53.20
2			10	
2-Mar	1	105	6	105.00
Totals	239	19073	19312	79.80

Table 7: Daily Traffic Chart

Relationship between types of posts and high frequency participation

As discussed in the methodology chapter, an additional variable was created and the posts and URL links were categorized for more specific analysis. All 239 primary posts, which included 48 with URL links, as well as the 235 secondary posts/comments that contained URL's were coded into the following categories: Pro-EDL; EDL Demonstration/Mobilization; EDL Propaganda; Anti-Muslim; Muslim Murder; Muslim Rape; Muslim Pedophilia; Anti-EDL; Anti-Government; and Other/Unknown. An additional compressed variable was also created containing only three categories; Pro-EDL, Anti-Muslim, and Other/Unknown. The coding of these variables allowed for a more specific investigation into the impact of any specific type of primary post on the overall traffic generation. An examination of the types of posts on any given day provides some insight into what type of primary posts would generate the traffic seen on the days that experienced a significant spike in traffic. Further, how does this compare with those primary posts that had the highest per post average of comments?

On 9 February there were eight primary posts that generated 1152 comments. These eight primary posts can be characterized generally as being comprised of six pro-EDL posts and two anti-Muslim posts. More specifically these can be broken down further to see that the six pro-EDL posts were made up of one generally pro-EDL post, two posts that pertained to demonstration/mobilization, and three posts that were deemed to be propaganda. The two anti-Muslim posts were comprised of one generally anti-Muslim post and one post that pertained to Muslim rape where a 14 year old Muslim girl was raped by her 40 year old cousin. The primary posts for 9 February were further examined to discover the specific traffic among these posts on that day.

The traffic on the 14 February posts which had fourteen primary posts, generating 1166 secondary posts/comments was generally broken into six pro-EDL posts and eight anti-Muslim posts. The pro-EDL posts were made up of one generally pro-EDL post, three demonstration/mobilization posts, and two EDL propaganda posts. The eight anti-Muslim posts were all generally anti-Muslim posts. The chart specific to these two days (Table 8) shows that the traffic per post varied from nineteen comments on an anti-Muslim post on 14 February to 334 comments on a pro-EDL post on 9 February. The top two high volume traffic days:

	Comments	Pro-EDL	Anti-Muslim	Other
9-Feb	31	1	0	
	97	1	0	
	102	1	0	
	106	0	1	
	144	0	1	
	151	1	0	
	187	1	0	
	334	1	0	
Total	1152	6	2	
14-Feb	19	0	1	
	41	0	1	
	55	1	1	
	58	1	0	
	59	1	0	
	60	0	1	
	66	1	0	
	70	0	1	
	104	0	1	
	105	0	1	
	125	1	0	
	126	0	1	
	223	1	0	
Total	1166	6	8	

Table 8: Chart of High Volume Traffic

Specifically, the pro-EDL post on 9 February that generated 334 comments was a demonstration/mobilization post announcing that a particular demonstration in Birmingham had been postponed due to conflicts with “football fixtures” scheduled for

the same date. The comments that followed dealt mainly with this decision and the desire to have demonstrations in other towns/regions.

The top three posts on 14 February generated 125, 126, and 223 comments with two categorized generally as pro-EDL and one as anti-Muslim. The specific nature of these posts is as follows: the post with 125 comments was determined to be EDL propaganda that was focused on a link to an article on Geert Wilders, a very prominent anti-Muslim figure in Europe; the post with 126 comments was an anti-Muslim post that was disparaging against Muslim's by questioning who had a "fistful of beard". Finally, the post with 223 comments was viewed as propaganda since it called for members to register and participate on the new EDL website.

The days with the highest average of comment per post mentioned earlier, 27 February and 5 March show varied results. On 27 February there were two posts with 209 and 283 comments respectively. Each of these was generally anti-Muslim and specifically the post with 209 comments challenged the concept of "moderate Muslims" in the UK, and the post with 283 comments centered on the issue of Muslims burning poppies on Remembrance Day.

The traffic on 5 March was made up of three posts with 88, 287, and 291 comments. These three posts were all pro-EDL with the 88 comment post being a propaganda post that was a thank you to those who participated in the Rochdale demonstration, and the posts with 287 and 291 comment were demonstration/mobilization posts that sought to promote the upcoming Rochdale demonstration.

Primary Post Type

As outlined previously, in the aggregate data the primary posts can be divided into three main/general categories; Pro-EDL, Anti-Muslim, and Other (Table 9). Of the

239 primary posts within the data set, 153 or 64.0 percent are Pro-EDL posts, 68 posts or 28.5% are Anti-Muslim in nature, and the remaining 18 posts (7.5%) are classified as other. It is clear that the majority of the primary posts were for the purpose of supporting the EDL mission/narrative. However, that 28.5% of the primary posts were dedicated to anti-Muslim content should be considered as significant given the need to develop and demonize Muslims as “the other” or the “foreign devil” (Hoffer, 1965; Zimbardo, 2007; Jackson, 2011).

Breakdown of primary posts

Given that the collection period was during a period of rapid membership growth, it is important to understand the specific nature of these primary posts to gain insight into what the EDL leadership considered most important to promote the EDL presence on Facebook.

Compressed Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pro-EDL	153	64	64
Anti-Muslim	68	28.5	28.5
Other	18	7.5	7.5
Total	239	100	100

Table 9: Compressed Categories of Primary Posts

An examination of all 239 primary posts, as seen in Table 10, of the 64% of primary posts that were generally pro-EDL in nature, 47 posts or 19.7% were of a general nature, 55 posts or 23% related to demonstration/mobilization, and 21.3% or 51 posts served as propaganda. Among the remaining posts 28.6% of the primary posts were anti-Muslim in nature with 24.3% being generally anti-Muslim, Muslim Rape and Muslim Murder were both at 1.3% with 3 posts each, and Muslim pedophilia had four posts for 1.7%. Finally the 11 Anti-government posts accounted for 4.6% of the primary posts and 7 posts that were categorized as other/unknown made up the remaining 2.9% of the primary posts.

Distribution of Primary Posts	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pro-EDL	47	19.7	19.7
Demonstration/Mobilization	55	23	42.7
EDL Propaganda	51	21.3	64
	153	64	
Anti-Muslim	58	24.3	88.3
Muslim Rape	3	1.3	89.5
Muslim Murder	3	1.3	90.8
Muslim Pedophilia	4	1.7	92.5
	68	28.6	
Anti-Government	11	4.6	97.1
Other/Unknown	7	2.9	100
	18	7.5	
Total	239	100	

Table 10: Distribution of Primary Posts by Category

Given that each of these primary posts has a string of secondary posts/comments following it, how then is this distribution represented in the secondary posts/comments?

Breakdown of Comments

Even though the data set contains the number of secondary posts/comments associated with each primary post, the 19,073 secondary posts/comments were not coded by category. While it should be understood that there are likely a few argumentative comments within some strings, it is unlikely that they would prove significant to the overall finding or understanding of the traffic generated by any particular type of post. Further, it should be noted that during the collection process it was noticed that counter narrative content was often either removed by the administrator or deleted by the user. This is evidenced by references made by users to individuals who have made argumentative comments but that user's name no longer appears in the string.

The general purpose of this analysis is to determine the overall traffic generated by each type of primary post. Therefore, by performing a case summary within SPSS

it was possible to determine how many comments existed within the strings pertaining to each category. As seen in Table 11, the distribution of pro-EDL and anti-Muslim comments are, by percentage, very similar to those seen among the primary posts. One small difference is that the percentage of pro-EDL comments is just over three percent lower than the percentage of pro-EDL primary posts, and the anti-Muslim comments are nearly three percent higher by volume than that of the primary posts.

What does this mean?

Distribution of Comments	Count	Percent
Pro-EDL	3108	16.30%
Demonstration/Mobilization	3758	19.70%
EDL Propaganda	4724	24.77%
TOTAL	11590	60.77%
Anti-Muslim	5274	27.65%
Muslim Rape	244	1.28%
Muslim Murder	245	1.28%
Muslim Pedophilia	178	0.93%
TOTAL	5941	31.15%
Anti-Government	1023	5.36%
Other/Unknown	519	2.72%
TOTAL	1542	8.08%

Table 11: Distribution of comments per category

Since we know the categories of each primary post, as well as the number of secondary posts/comments associated with each primary post, it is then possible to determine the average number of comments per primary post for each category.

Table 12 shows the average number of comments per post per category range from a low of 66.13 comments per post to a high of 93.0 comments per primary post.

Categories	Comments	Primary Posts	Comments per Post
Pro-EDL	3108	47	66.13
Demonstration/Mobilization	3758	55	68.33
EDL Propaganda	4724	51	92.63
Category Total	11590	153	75.75
Anti-Muslim	5274	58	90.93
Muslim Rape	244	3	81.33
Muslim Murder	245	3	81.67
Muslim Pedophilia	178	4	44.50
Category Total	5941	68	87.37
Anti-Government	1023	11	93.00
Other/Unknown	519	7	74.14
Category Total	1542	18	85.67

Table 12: Breakdown of comments per post by category

A more detailed examination shows that while the pro-EDL posts generated an average of 66.13 comments per post the anti-Muslim posts precipitated a much higher 90.93 comments per post. While the highest average of 93.0 was for the anti-government posts, these limited number of posts and comments accounted for only 4.6 % and 5.36% of the overall traffic. It is interesting to note however the amount of traffic that was generated by the anti-government primary posts. This is an area that would certainly be worthy of further examination in a longer term study given the EDL's attitude toward what they perceive as the UK government's role as apologists for and facilitators of the "Islamists" within "their" country (Ford, 2010).

Most importantly, an examination of the aggregate quantities is very revealing. Even though the pro-EDL primary posts far outnumber the anti-Muslim Primary posts by 125% (153/68), the number of pro-EDL secondary posts/comments (11,590) is only 95% higher than the 5,941 anti-Muslim comments. This is further reflected in the average number of secondary posts/comments per primary post. While the pro-EDL posts, in the aggregate, generated 75.75 comments per post, the anti-Muslim posts generated a higher 87.37 comments per primary post. Clearly, in the aggregate

data, the anti-Muslim posts seemed to create more fervor among the users than did the pro-EDL posts. Even though this is an interesting finding, it is overshadowed by the sheer volume of pro-EDL traffic and that the EDL propaganda category outpaced the specific anti-Muslim category 92.63% to 90.93%. An examination of the remaining anti-Muslim categories shows that the primary posts related to rape, murder, and pedophilia are used effectively by the EDL to generate anti-Muslim sentiment. This is evidenced by the high volume of comments per primary post, particularly in the cases of murder and rape, the visceral language, and the high frequency of expletives found within these comments. By highlighting the stories related to rapes, murders, and pedophilia committed by Muslims in the United Kingdom, the EDL seems to be working effectively to characterize the Muslims as ‘the foreign devil’, and the comments contained within these posts indicate that the users certainly consider them less than human by calling the Muslims, “dirty animals”, “sick filthy dogs”, “dirty bloody scumbags”, and many other epithets that use much stronger language. Again, these serve as facilitators toward the development of Muslims as ‘the other’ and the us-vs.-them paradigm (Hoffer, 1951; Zimbardo, 2007).

Further, as seen in the previous chapter, within these comments are repeated calls for reprisals against Muslims that range from demands for harsh prosecution and deportation, to calls for violence that include one user’s desire to “hang the bastards!” One cannot help but consider the impact of such anti-Muslim sentiment and violent language, and what influence it may have had in instances of violence against Muslims in the UK and further whether it may have influenced Anders Breivik toward committing his violent attacks in Norway, particularly given his admission of being heavily involved with the EDL and their Facebook page users (Collins, 2011; Hughes, 2011). Investigation into what the real impact exposure to this type of

extremist and violent content has on the individual user is another area to be considered for future research.

The role of URL links

Uniform Resource Locator links allow the administrator to provide the members easy access to traditional media stories that appear online and YouTube videos with the intent of forwarding a particular position. A frequency analysis of the variable ‘link’ shows that there are 288 URL links within the data set (Table 13).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	19024	99.0	99.0	99.0
	1	288	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	19312	100.0	100.0	

Table 13: Frequency of URL links

As discussed in the methodology chapter, all the parser was able to identify was the existence of a URL link within the post and create a variable that coded no link as ‘0’ and the presence of a link was coded as ‘1’.

While one might think that the URL links would be used primarily by the administrator, a breakdown of the links (Table 14) shows that only 51 URL links were found in the primary posts while the remaining 237 URL links were contained within the secondary posts/comments.

		Link		Total
		no	yes	
Pri	P	191	51	239
	S	18838	237	19073
Total		19029	288	19312

Table 14: Distribution of URL links

It can be expected that the URL links are provided to further the narrative of the group. As such, it is important to understand just what type of narrative is being forwarded within these links. To perform this analysis, the links were located within the data set and coded according to the categories as previously described and now

seen in the graph below. While the coding of the URL links was performed to place them into specific categories, these categories were also collapsed to provide a general understanding of the flavor of the URL links in the aggregate. The URL link compressed chart (Table 15) shows that of the 288 links, 116 (41%) were generally Pro-EDL in nature, 100 links (36%) were Anti-Muslim, and 67 links (23%) were other than the previous two. But how is this reflected in the more specific breakdown of categories and between the primary posts and the secondary posts/comments?

URLTypeComp	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pro-EDL	118	41	41
Anti-Muslim	103	35.8	76.7
Other	67	23.3	100
Total	288	100	

Table 15: URL type by compressed category

The breakdown of the URL links, seen in Table 16, shows that out of the 51 URL links within the primary posts, 28 were primarily pro-EDL in nature with the majority related to demonstration/mobilization and propaganda, while the 19 anti-Muslim links were mostly made up of generally anti-Muslim links.

URL Type	Pro EDL	Demo Mobilization	EDL Propaganda	Anti-Muslim	Muslim Rape	Muslim Murder	Anti-Gov't	Anti-EDL	Other Unknown	TOTALS
Primary Posts	6	10	12	17	1	1	4	0	0	51
Secondary Posts	17	40	33	78	0	6	15	9	39	237
Total	23	50	45	95	1	7	19	9	39	288

Table 16: Breakdown of URL links in all categories

It is important to note that the number of URL links in the primary posts in each category is exceeded by the number of URL links in secondary posts, with the single exception of Muslim rape. Additionally, the anti-EDL links are found within the body of secondary post/comment link with no corresponding primary post link, which is to be expected.

URLtype	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Pro EDL	23	8	8	8
Demonstration/Mobilization	50	17.4	17.4	25.3
EDL Propaganda	45	15.6	15.6	41
Anti-Muslim	95	33	33	74
Muslim Rape	1	0.3	0.3	74.3
Muslim Murder	7	2.4	2.4	76.7
Anti-Government	19	6.6	6.6	83.3
Anti-EDL	9	3.1	3.1	86.5
Other/Unknown	39	13.5	13.5	100
Total	288	100	100	

Table 17: Aggregate examination of all URL links

An examination in the aggregate of the URL links by category (Table 17), which includes the primary and secondary posts containing these links, shows that the highest volume category was the Anti-Muslim (33.0%), followed by demonstration /mobilization (17.4%), and then EDL Propaganda (15.6%). Collectively, these three categories account for nearly two thirds (66.0%) of all the URL links contained within the data set. But how are these, and the other link categories, reflected in the traffic?

Since the URL links contained within the secondary posts do not have any comments associated within them, it is only possible to examine the traffic generated by the primary posts that contain URL links. As seen in Table 18, the primarily pro-EDL links generated in total 2,001 secondary posts with the EDL propaganda category topping the list with 12 URL links generating 1,089 secondary posts for an average of 90.75 comments per link. The aggregated anti-Muslim posts with 19 links generated 1,326 secondary posts with the anti-Muslim links generating 72.47 comments per link with 1,232 comments on 17 URL links.

URL Comments Per Category	Comments	# of links	Average per link
Pro-EDL	464	6	77.34
Demonstration/mobilization	448	10	44.80
EDL Propaganda	1089	12	90.75
Category total	2001	28	71.47
Anti-Muslim	1232	17	72.47
Muslim Rape	50	1	50.00
Muslim Murder	44	1	44.00
Muslim Pedophilia	0	0	0.00
Category total	1326	19	69.79
Antigovernment	233	4	58.25
Other/Unknown	0	0	0.00
Category total	233	4	58.25
TOTALS	3560	51	69.81

Table 18: Comments per primary post with URL link

The Relationship of URL links and periods of heavy traffic

Using the URL link graph in Figure 7, which shows the volume of traffic along the time line of the collection period, it is easy to see that the spikes in URL link traffic closely correspond to the spikes in traffic seen in the graph in Figure 8, showing the overall traffic analysis.

Figure 7: Traffic analysis with URL type compressed

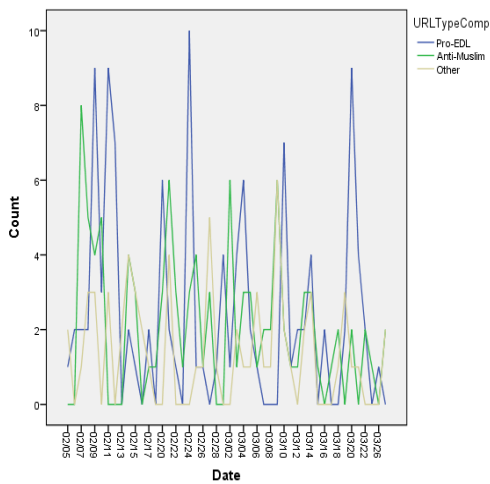
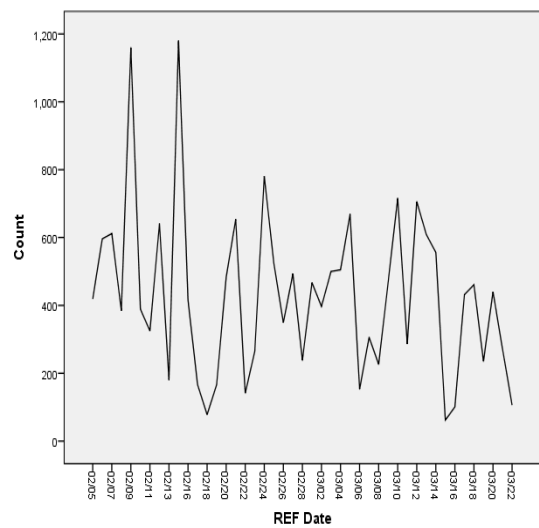


Figure 8: Overall daily traffic graph



The power of the URL

One of the main questions pertaining to the URL links contained within the primary posts is just how influential they are. An examination of the top twenty primary posts reveals that four of these posts contained URL's. In fact the primary post with the second highest number of comments per post contained a URL. Table 19 provides the breakdown of the top twenty primary posts by number of comments and at the bottom the top five primary posts with URL links. As discussed previously the primary post with the most comments (334) was an announcement by the EDL administrator that the Birmingham demonstration had been postponed and it did not contain a URL.

User 208096 - The English Defence League has decided to postpone the Birmingham demonstration due to certain football fixtures clashing on the same dates, we will be giving a new date for it soon and will issue a new demonstration for March 19th after discussions by the leadership. (E)

The primary post that contained the second highest number of comments also did not contain a URL and called for the EDL to engage more actively in the political process of the UK. The highest URL primary post, with 294 comments, was an anti-Muslim post that highlighted the recent attacks by Muslims on innocent non-Muslims where four "Whitechapel men slashed a teachers face for teaching other religions to Muslim girls" and included a link to a Daily Mail article on the incident.

User 208096 - Radical Hate Muslims show us all the religion of peace... They attack an innocent teacher, just doing his job. The tough guys attacked 4-1, yet still needed weapons. The scum are all from East London, one of which is from hate central - Whitechapel! (H)4 men slashed teacher's face 'for teaching other religions to Muslim girls' www.dailymail.co.uk RE teacher Gary Smith

was ambushed by the men as he walked along a road in Mile End, East

London. It is believed the gang had made two earlier attempts to get at him.

The second highest URL linked primary post had 275 comments and contained a YouTube video dealing with the re-arrest of Tommy Robinson on a section 4 public order offense related to the poppy-burning incident.

User 208096 - Today on March 1st at 15.00hrs Tommy Robinson has been re-arrested on a section 4 public order offence concerning the Poppy burning incident.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_5cWwuqk5E&playnext=1&list=PLF91829307C01530F

Tommy was trying to stop hate speech at the time because the British police were to afraid to act on behalf of the British public, please see here

[http://englishdefenceleague.org/content.php?236-The-Trial-of-the-Poppy-](http://englishdefenceleague.org/content.php?236-The-Trial-of-the-Poppy-Burners)

Burners Today on March 1st at 15.00hrs Tommy Robinson has been re-arrested on a section 4 public order offence concerning the Poppy burning incident. Scotland Yard Police drove to Luton police station and charged Tommy with a section 4 public order offence and he is to appear before Magistrates on March 10th (Location to follow)

PP Type	# of comments	Pro-EDL	Demonstration-Mobilization	EDL Propaganda	Anti-Muslim
	334	0	1	0	0
	319	1	0	0	0
	*294	0	0	0	1
	291	0	0	1	0
	287	0	1	0	0
	283	0	0	0	1
	280	0	0	0	0
	278	0	0	1	1
	*275	0	0	1	0
	261	0	0	0	1
	245	0	0	1	0
	234	0	0	1	0
	223	0	1	0	0
	*222	0	0	1	0
	209	0	0	0	1
	191	0	2	0	0
	*187	0	0	1	0
	*186	0	0	1	0
	181	0	0	0	1
	174	0	0	0	1
Totals	3951	1	5	8	7

Table 19: Top 20 primary posts by category

Impact of URL links on traffic

While the top twenty primary posts, shown above in Table 19, contain four posts (20%) with URL's more generally, of the 239 primary posts 51 or 22% of primary posts contained URL links, generating 3560 comments or 19% of the overall user traffic excluding administrator posts. At first look this might indicate that the URL links had little impact on the overall traffic generation. However, one must consider the overall traffic within the data set and how this compares with the traffic generated by the URL links. As discussed earlier, there are 239 primary posts that generated 19,073 secondary posts/comments for an average of 79.81 comments per post. Within the dataset, there are 191 primary posts that do not have a URL links within the primary posts that generated 16,023 comments for an average of 99.61 comments

per post. But when we examine the 48 primary posts that do contain URL links we find that they generated 3050 secondary posts/comments for an average of 63.55 comments per post.

Number of comments	Number of posts	Percent of primary posts	Average posts/comment	Percentage of traffic
19073	239	100.00	79.81	100
15513	188	0.79	82.52	0.81
3560	51	0.22	69.81	0.19

Table 20: Analysis of posts per comment with/without URL links

As seen in the Table 20, while the 188 secondary posts that do not have URL links representing 79% of the primary posts generate 81% of the overall traffic, the remaining 22% of the primary posts that do contain URL links only generate 19% of the traffic and even fall below the average of posts for comment for the entire data set. Therefore, while there is considerable traffic associated with the primary posts that contain URL links, it cannot be said that they have any more impact on the traffic generation than any other post contained within the body of primary posts. However, further examination of this phenomenon is warranted in the future given that 25% of the high traffic posts did contain URL's.

Various URL's

When considering the development of the parser it was determined that one feature would be the inclusion of the root URL for each link (e.g. YouTube.com, Facebook.com, etc.). As such, it was possible to examine how many times each root address appeared within the URL links. As seen below in Table 21, within the 239 primary posts there were 188 posts with no links accounting for 78.7% of the primary posts. However, within the fifty-one posts that did have links 10%, or 24 links were YouTube videos supplied by the administrator followed by seven links to other Facebook content. Table 21 also shows that there were 14 links to news outlets like the BBC, the Daily Star, the Guardian and others.

URL's in Primary Posts	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No links	188	78.7	78.7	78.7
WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	24	10	10	88.7
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM	7	2.9	2.9	91.6
WWW.BBC.CO.UK	5	2.1	2.1	93.7
WWW.DAILYSTAR.CO.UK	3	1.3	1.3	95
WWW.APOSTATESOFISLAM.COM	2	0.8	0.8	95.8
WWW.GUARDIAN.CO.UK	2	0.8	0.8	96.7
WWW.THESUN.CO.UK	2	0.8	0.8	97.5
WWW.EXPRESS.CO.UK	1	0.4	0.4	97.9
WWW.MEMRI.ORG	1	0.4	0.4	98.3
WWW.SPIKED-ONLINE.COM	1	0.4	0.4	98.7
WWW.THEFIRSTPOST.CO.UK	1	0.4	0.4	99.2
WWW.TOWERHAMLETS.GOV.UK	1	0.4	0.4	99.6
WWW.TPUC.ORG	1	0.4	0.4	100
Total	239	100	100	

Table 21: URL's Within Primary Posts

The traffic generated by these links varies and can be seen in Table 22. While the YouTube videos overall generated the most traffic with twenty-four links resulting in 1631 comments, the most impactful URL's were links to news articles. The two posts from the Guardian resulted in 272 comments with an average of 136.0 comments per post. The first Guardian link on 7 February was focused on the hundreds of thousands of pounds that were being withdrawn from Muslim groups by PM David Cameron generating 50 comments. The second Guardian post on 27 February, receiving 222 comments, had the headline, "Searchlight poll finds huge support for far right 'if they gave up violence'" (<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/feb/27/support-poll-support-far-right>).

URL's in Primary Posts	Frequency	Number of Comments	Average per post	Percent of URL Comments
No links	188			
WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	24	1631	68.0	45.81%
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM	7	286	41.0	8.03%
WWW.BBC.CO.UK	5	312	63.0	8.76%
WWW.DAILYSTAR.CO.UK	3	366	122.0	10.28%
WWW.APOSTATESOFISLAM.COM	2	77	38.5	2.16%
WWW.GUARDIAN.CO.UK	2	272	136.0	7.64%
WWW.THESUN.CO.UK	2	246	123.0	6.91%
WWW.EXPRESS.CO.UK	1	42	42.0	1.18%
WWW.MEMRI.ORG	1	65	65.0	1.83%
WWW.SPIKED-ONLINE.COM	1	63	63.0	1.77%
WWW.THEFIRSTPOST.CO.UK	1	23	23.0	0.65%
WWW.TOWERHAMLETS.GOV.UK	1	79	79.0	2.22%
WWW.TPUC.ORG	1	98	98.0	2.75%
Total	239	3560	70.0	100.00%

Table 22: Comments by URL Type

Table 23, seen below contains the comment frequency for each URL link presented from highest to lowest.

Date	Source Link	Number of Comments
6-Feb	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	319
1-Mar	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	275
26-Feb	WWW.GUARDIAN.CO.UK	222
9-Feb	WWW.DAILYSTAR.CO.UK	187
7-Feb	WWW.THESUN.CO.UK	186
22-Feb	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	140
7-Feb	WWW.DAILYSTAR.CO.UK	122
7-Mar	WWW.BBC.CO.UK	122
10-Mar	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	116
25-Feb	WWW.TPUC.ORG	98
9-Feb	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	97
13-Mar	WWW.BBC.CO.UK	95
13-Mar	WWW.FACEBOOK.COM	94
21-Feb	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	86
18-Mar	WWW.TOWERHAMLETS.GOV.UK	79
20-Mar	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	70
20-Feb	WWW.MEMRI.ORG	65
14-Mar	WWW.SPIKED-ONLINE.COM	63
9-Mar	WWW.THESUN.CO.UK	60
8-Mar	WWW.DAILYSTAR.CO.UK	57

Date	Source Link	Number of Comments
2-Mar	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	50
7-Feb	WWW.GUARDIAN.CO.UK	50
21-Feb	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	46
20-Mar	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	45
3-Mar	WWW.BBC.CO.UK	44
19-Feb	WWW.APOSTATESOFISLAM.COM	44
21-Mar	WWW.EXPRESS.CO.UK	42
4-Mar	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	38
25-Feb	WWW.FACEBOOK.COM	38
9-Mar	WWW.FACEBOOK.COM	37
3-Mar	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	36
20-Feb	WWW.FACEBOOK.COM	36
20-Feb	WWW.APOSTATESOFISLAM.COM	33
9-Feb	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	31
10-Feb	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	31
1-Mar	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	31
20-Mar	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	31
11-Feb	WWW.BBC.CO.UK	30
28-Feb	WWW.FACEBOOK.COM	29
10-Feb	WWW.FACEBOOK.COM	28
4-Mar	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	27
4-Mar	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	26
10-Mar	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	25
24-Feb	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	24
13-Mar	WWW.FACEBOOK.COM	24
11-Feb	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	23
20-Feb	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	23
24-Feb	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	23
21-Feb	WWW.THEFIRSTPOST.CO.UK	23
24-Feb	WWW.BBC.CO.UK	21
11-Feb	WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	18

Table 23: Comments per URL Link

As discussed previously, there are a total of 288 posts/comments in the collection that contain URL's, 51 within primary posts and 237 within the secondary posts. Table 24 provides an abridged list that examines those URL's that appear at least two times within data set. The entire list can be seen in Appendix 5. Again, YouTube videos top the list with 96 links followed closely by Facebook links appearing 87 times within the collection. With the YouTube and Facebook links representing 0.5% each

of all traffic, combined they make up 1% of all posts within the dataset. Again, the links to the news outlets appear prominently in the list of URL's.

URL's in entire data set	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Posts with no link	19024	98.5
WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	96	99
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM	87	99.5
WWW.BBC.CO.UK	21	99.6
WWW.GUARDIAN.CO.UK	5	99.6
WWW.CHANNEL4.COM	4	99.6
WWW.DAILYMAIL.CO.UK	4	99.6
WWW.DAILYSTAR.CO.UK	3	99.6
WWW.THESUN.CO.UK	3	99.7
WWW.ANIMALAID.ORG.UK	2	99.7
WWW.APOSTATESOFISLAM.COM	2	99.7
WWW.FLICKR.COM	2	99.7
WWW.ISRAELNATIONALNEWS.COM	2	99.7
WWW.TELEGRAPH.CO.UK	2	99.7
WWW.THERELIGIONOFPEACE.COM	2	99.7
WWW.THISISDEVON.CO.UK	2	99.7
All others links	51	100.0

Table 24: Abridged List of URL's in Collection

Analysis of YouTube Links

Examination of the YouTube links found within the EDL collection shows that there were a total of 96 YouTube videos identified within the primary and secondary posts. Of these, twenty-four were posted by the administrator and seventy-two were included in the user comments/secondary posts (Table 25).

YouTube Videos	No	Yes	Total
Primary Post	215	24	239
Secondary Post	19001	72	19073
Totals	19216	96	19312

Table 25: YouTube Video's Primary or Secondary

Using the category identification of the URL links, it was discovered that thirty-six of the YouTube videos were generally Pro-EDL in nature, thirty-one were Anti-Muslim, and twenty-nine were in the other category (Table 26).

YouTube Videos	
Pro-EDL	36
Anti-Muslim	31
Other	29
Total	96

Table 26: Compressed Categories of YouTube Videos

More specifically, as can be seen in Table 27 below, the majority of the YouTube videos in the general Compressed Pro-EDL category contain twelve Pro-EDL videos and Twenty EDL Propaganda videos, while the compressed Anti-Muslim category was primarily Anti-Muslim in nature with thirty-one videos, only one video in the Muslim Rape category, and three in the Muslim Murder category. Interestingly there were ten videos that were anti-Government in nature, four that were Anti-EDL, and fifteen videos that were in the other/unknown group mostly due inactive links.

YouTube Categories for all YouTube Links	Number of videos
Pro EDL	11
Demonstration/Mobilization	5
EDL Propaganda	20
Anti-Muslim	27
Muslim Rape	1
Muslim Murder	3
Anti-Government	10
Anti-EDL	4
Other/Unknown	15
Total	96

Table 27: Number of YouTube videos per Category

Within the twenty- four primary posts that contained YouTube Videos, the number of comments per post varied greatly. Table 28 provides the results of the analysis of those videos contained within these primary posts; how many videos were in each category, the total number of comments for each category and the average number of comments per primary post that contained a YouTube video. This analysis shows that the videos which were generally Pro-EDL in nature received the highest number of posts on average per video with 434 comments on five YouTube links with an average of 86.80 comments per video. While the Anti-Government video nearly

matched that number with 86.00 comments, there was only one video. Given the restrictions on correlating these finding with individual usage as was done by Conway and McInerney (2008), this analysis does seem to indicate that the YouTube videos do generate significant traffic, nearly matching the 69.81 comments per post for all primary posts that contain URL links.

YouTube Category for videos in Primary Posts	Number of Videos	Number of Comments	Average per video
Pro EDL	5	434	86.80
Demonstration/Mobilization	4	107	26.75
EDL Propaganda	10	745	74.50
Anti-Muslim	3	209	69.67
Muslim Rape	1	50	50.00
Anti-Government	1	86	86.00
Totals	24	1631	67.96

Table 28: Number of comments per Primary post with YouTube Video

Content analysis

Performing a content analysis of the primary and secondary posts serves multiple purposes. First it provides a glimpse into the words that are used by the administrator and users in high frequency. Second, it allows for an examination of how the most frequently used words by the administrator in the primary posts are reflected in the content of the secondary posts/comments. Using NVivo10, it was possible to perform this analysis by segregating the dataset in SPSS into separate primary and secondary post datasets and then importing those into NVivo as separate files. Utilizing the word frequency analysis tool, and setting the parameters to look for the top twenty five words with three or more letters including root words, then blocking connecting words (e.g. and, then, if...), the software provided the desired list. Below (Image 34) is a word tag that reflects the words with the highest frequency among the primary posts. The size of the words is a visual reflection of the prominence of the word within the list which can be seen in the tag cloud below. As is obvious, EDL was the most used word with a frequency of 126 within the 239 primary posts. This is

followed by Defence (65), English (64), and League (64), which is a reflection of the number of times the administrator made reference to the English Defence League. Moving down the list some of the most interesting words that were used frequently by the administrator are Muslim and Islam; British; Demonstration; Country; and Tommy. While this list of frequently used words provides an understanding of the direction the administrator hoped to move the dialog within the EDL Facebook group, what is most important is how these efforts are reflected in the dialog of the user secondary posts/comments.



Image 35: Primary post word cloud-

As seen in Image 35, the tag cloud of the secondary posts/comments shows that EDL is also the most commonly used word in the secondary posts with a frequency of 2,879. Analyzing the top twenty five words used in the secondary posts/comments as compared to the primary posts (as seen in Table 29), we can see that the use of Muslims or Islams which was seen a combined 81 times in the primary posts appears 3,453 in the secondary posts. What is interesting in these numbers is that while the use of EDL by the administrator in the primary posts was used 126 times, the 2,879 times it is used in the secondary posts represents a ratio of primary to secondary posts using EDL of 1to23. However, the use of Muslim/Islam by the administrator 81 times is seen in the secondary posts 3,453 times, with a ratio of 1 to 43.

backs britishness coming **country's** days demos



englands english fucks good got **islams**

knows laws living **muslims'** never

peoples racists rights taking **thinks** timing
tommy

Image 36: Secondary post word cloud

Other words/terms that had significant ratios are country, 1to72; English/British with a ratio of 1to23; and finally Tommy, which refers to Tommy Robinson, with a ratio of 1 to 28. But why is this important?

Primary Posts		Secondary Posts	
Word	Count	Word	Count
edl	126	edl	2879
defence	65	muslims'	2172
english	64	peoples	2020
league	64	country's	1883
news	51	islams	1281
muslim	44	fuck's	1038
march	39	good	1016
islamic	37	coming	889
british	35	timing	880
watch	35	letting	862
day	33	rights	830
protest	29	english	810
demonstration	29	tommy	807
police	29	living	771
tommy	29	englands	753
law	28	back's	704
poppy	28	taking	696
london	27	never	688
country	26	britishness	682
demo	25	days	678
people	24	racists	667
forces	23	laws	622
local	20	demos	611
members	19	going	599
year	19	scums	595

Table 29: Key word frequency analysis

Content analysis to determine association with the EDL narrative

The understanding that there are, within the primary and secondary posts, several words that are most frequently used within both, does not really tell the entire story as it relates to the acceptance of what can be considered the group narrative by the users. If we can accept that the most frequently used words by the administrator in some way represents the narrative of the group, it should then be possible to examine different categories of users to determine the general virility of that messaging within the body of users. To accomplish this analysis, the body of users was subdivided into three groups; first is the body of low frequency users; second is the high frequency users; and lastly is the top ten users within the entire group of users. The designation of low and high frequency was determined by considering any user who posted an average of once per day or higher within the 45 day collection period would be viewed as a high frequency user. Anyone posting less than once per day, on average, during the collection period would be considered a low frequency user. With this understanding, and after performing a frequency analysis of the user traffic, it was determined that there were thirty three high frequency users and 4,065 low frequency users. The top ten users were then separated from the body of high frequency users due to the wide range of user frequency even among the high frequency users with the number one user posting 348 times and the number 33 user posting only 45 times during the collection period. Each of these user groups were segregated into separate data sets and those files were placed into NVivo for analysis.

The first analysis was to examine the average frequency per user within each category of the top 25 words used in each category of user. As can be expected, and as seen below, the average word usage frequency per user is significantly higher as the body of users gets smaller. As an example, the most commonly used word/phrase,

EDL, is used an average of 0.60 times per user within the low frequency user set of 4,065 users, and an average of 12.48 times within the body of 33 high frequency users, while the top ten users had an average usage of EDL of 19 times per user. Similar increases in the average frequency of word usage per user is seen from low to high to top ten users. But, does the difference in the volume of users account for this variation? Do these findings actually mean that the higher frequency users are using these words in a higher proportion than the low frequency users, particularly given that the word lists do not match from one user set to the other?

Low Frequency Users (4065)			High Frequency users (33)			Top 10 High Frequency Users		
Word	Count	Average per user	Word	Count	Average per user	Word	Count	Average per user
edl	2467	0.6069	edl	412	12.4848	edl	190	19.00
muslims	1792	0.4408	muslims	380	11.5152	people	188	18.80
country	1692	0.4162	peoples	379	11.4848	muslims	138	13.80
peoples	1641	0.4037	islam	197	5.9697	racists	91	9.10
islam	1084	0.2667	country	191	5.7879	country	86	8.60
fucks	930	0.2288	coming	160	4.8485	demos	80	8.00
good	882	0.2170	racists	153	4.6364	time	74	7.40
letting	772	0.1899	times	152	4.6061	coming	73	7.30
coming	730	0.1796	rights	134	4.0606	comments	65	6.50
english	729	0.1793	demos	134	4.0606	page	65	6.50
timing	728	0.1791	good	134	4.0606	thing	60	6.00
tommy	712	0.1752	taking	129	3.9091	posts	60	6.00
rights	696	0.1712	comments	128	3.8788	reading	60	6.00
englands	693	0.1705	living	117	3.5455	taking	59	5.90
living	654	0.1609	day	115	3.4848	day	58	5.80
backs	608	0.1496	reads	113	3.4242	uaf	58	5.80
britishness	594	0.1461	thing	110	3.3333	islam	55	5.50
never	589	0.1449	fucks	108	3.2727	good	53	5.30
taking	567	0.1395	even	100	3.0303	rights	53	5.30
days	563	0.1385	page	100	3.0303	february	50	5.00
laws	538	0.1323	posts	100	3.0303	admins	49	4.90
scums	535	0.1316	never	99	3.0000	even	49	4.90
surrender	526	0.1294	uaf	98	2.9697	never	46	4.60
stands	517	0.1272	backs	96	2.9091	john	45	4.50
racists	514	0.1264	tommy	95	2.8788	live	44	4.40

Table 30: Key word usage by hi/low frequency users

Top shared words:

To make this determination it was necessary to examine the commonly used words within each subset of users (see Table 30). One exception to this list is that the word ‘demo’ did not appear in the low frequency user set as it fell below the number of commonly used words within this set. However given that the entire secondary post set contained 611 uses, it was simply a matter of subtracting the 134 uses within the high frequency group to arrive at a low frequency usage of 477. As can be seen in Table 31, those words that are commonly used within each subset, including the commonly used words used within the primary posts show similar percentages as seen in Table 30.

	Primary Posts	Secondary Posts		Low frequency users		High frequency users		Top 10 users	
Word	Count	Count	Average per user	Count	average per user	Count	Average per user	Count	Average per user
EDL	126	2879	0.70	2467	0.61	412	12.48	190	19
Muslim	44	2172	0.53	1792	0.44	380	11.52	138	13.8
Islam	37	1281	0.31	1084	0.27	197	5.97	55	5.5
People	24	2020	0.49	1641	0.40	379	11.48	188	18.8
Country	26	1883	0.46	1692	0.42	191	5.79	86	8.6
British	35	810	0.20	729	0.18	0	0.00	0	0
Tommy	29	807	0.20	712	0.18	95	2.88	0	0
Demo's	29	611	0.15	477	0.12	134	4.06	80	8

Table 31: Common word usage

However, when one moves beyond just examining the average use of these words per user and considers the representation of each user group in the total set of secondary users, this increase in average usage becomes more interesting.

As shown in the chart below, the percentage of usage of the low frequency users, who make up 99.2% of all users, does not reflect the power of having more members within this cohort. In every category the percentage of usage of the most commonly used words does not equal the percentage of users within the cohort. Conversely, the

percentage of use by the high and highest frequency users is many times greater than the numbers they represent within the entire cohort of users.

Word	All Secondary Posts	Low frequency users (99.2% of users)		High frequency users (0.81% of users)		Top 10 users (0.25% of users)	
	Frequency	Frequency	percentage of use	Frequency	percentage of use	Frequency	percentage of use
EDL	2879	2467	85.7%	412	14.3%	190	6.6%
Muslim	2172	1792	82.5%	380	17.5%	138	6.4%
Islam	1281	1084	84.6%	197	15.4%	55	4.3%
People	2020	1641	81.2%	379	18.8%	188	9.3%
Country	1883	1692	89.9%	191	10.1%	86	4.6%
British	810	729	90.0%	81	10.0%	23	2.8%
Tommy	807	712	88.2%	95	11.8%	27	3.4%
Demo's	611	477	78.1%	134	21.9%	80	13.1%

Table 32: Users vs. usages

While the high frequency users account for less than one percent (.81%) of all users, they account for 14.3% of the use of the phrase EDL, 17.5% of the word Muslim, and 21.9% of the usage for Demo's. Even more impressive is impact of the top ten users. Making up only one quarter of one percent of the users (10/4098), these users account for 6.6% of the use of the phrase EDL, 6.4% of the word Muslim, and 13.1% of the usage for Demo's. As can be seen in Table 32, this high percentage of word usage in relation to the size of the high frequency and top ten cohorts is consistent down the list of commonly used words.

Membership vs. Participation

Continuing with the discussion from the previous chapter of what really constitutes membership as it relates to someone 'liking' a Facebook page, it is important to understand just how powerful or weak the relationship is between 'liking' as it relates to the individual members willingness to participate in the online dialog of the group. Membership, as discussed in the literature review, does not necessarily and quite often does not equal identification to the level of active participation (Berger & Strathearn, 2013; Hampton et al., 2012; Wu et al., 2011). To

understand how membership relates to participation within the EDL Facebook group, what was needed first was to understand how many individual users actually posted to the EDL page during the collection period and compare that to the average number of members during the collection period. As stated previously the average number of members during the collection period was 75,000. To determine the total number of users who actually took the time to post to the page during the collection period the list of authors who generated the 19,312 posts during the collection period was analyzed using SPSS to identify duplicate cases. From this analysis it was found that the 19,312 posts were generated by 4,099 discrete users or 5.46% of the members, with 15,213 duplicate cases (Table 33)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Duplicate Case	15213	78.8	78.8	78.8
	Primary Case	4099	21.2	21.2	100.0
	Total	19312	100.0	100.0	

Table 33: Number of users

Therefore, what is revealed is that out of the 75,000 likes/members of the EDL Facebook page only 4,099, or 5.46% of the “members”, participated in the online dialog accounting for 21.2 percent of the overall first time traffic during the collection period. The remaining 78.8 percent of the traffic was generated by repeat postings to the page by those within this 4099 cohort. This is significant given the messaging from the administrators regarding the importance of the growing number of members on Facebook and the characterization of those members as a cohesive unit. This analysis would support the hypothesis that ‘liking’ a page does not necessarily equal adherence to the group ideology to the point of overcoming the obstacles to actually engaging in activism even when that participation is as easy as ‘typing’ a post onto a Facebook page. What is most significant about this finding is that it goes beyond the

anecdotal discussion of the power of the individual participants engaged in social media and provides a statistical understanding of the true nature of participation.

However, simply stating that the number of actual participants is significantly less than the number of members, as indicated by the number of likes, presumes that these active users participated at equal levels. Given what is known about how individuals participate at different levels for a variety of reasons, it is only prudent that further analysis of these active users be done to further examine user frequency as well as factors that might influence participation.

Identifying “True Believers”

When examining the collection of EDL posts taken from February 5 through March 28 2010, it is easy to be impressed by the volume of traffic, 19,312 posts; and while it is a small percentage of the “membership, even the 4,099 users who took the time to post to the page during this period seem to have generated a lot of traffic. On the surface the social media phenomenon, particularly in the case of the EDL, looks successful in attracting membership and creating a cadre of “believers” to the cause. But this does not tell the whole story as it relates to the ability of social media to promote activist participation. To determine the true effectiveness of this phenomenon the user/author data was further analyzed to examine the frequency of each user’s participation within the collection period. The results of this analysis (Table 34) showed that User 208096, who was the administrator for the group, had the highest number of posts at 483 or 2.5% of the total number of posts. Of these, 239 were the primary posts for the group and the remaining 244 were secondary posts/comments. This was followed by User 160797 with 348 posts accounting for 1.8% and then User 19460 with 255 posts for 1.3%. Overall the top ten users in the frequency analysis, as shown below, accounted for 9.8% of the traffic. This is

significant given that these top ten users represent 0.25% of the overall users who posted to the EDL Facebook page, and only .0133% of the members/likes.

USERS	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
208096	483	2.5	2.5	2.5
160797	348	1.8	1.8	4.3
19460	255	1.3	1.3	5.6
30079	198	1.0	1.0	6.6
30786	124	.6	.6	7.3
24304	110	.6	.6	7.9
159446	103	.5	.5	8.4
29484	91	.5	.5	8.9
46389	91	.5	.5	9.3
43519	85	.4	.4	9.8
45787	82	.4	.4	10.2
31969	77	.4	.4	10.6
63721	75	.4	.4	11.0
53823	72	.4	.4	11.4
130319	71	.4	.4	11.7
74186	68	.4	.4	12.1
30723	67	.3	.3	12.4
39746	65	.3	.3	12.8
96803	63	.3	.3	13.1
47621	62	.3	.3	13.4
64162	62	.3	.3	13.7
17948	61	.3	.3	14.0
118881	58	.3	.3	14.3
99701	57	.3	.3	14.6
109172	56	.3	.3	14.9
54313	55	.3	.3	15.2
37534	54	.3	.3	15.5
45871	53	.3	.3	15.8
78099	53	.3	.3	16.0
212443	52	.3	.3	16.3
63378	51	.3	.3	16.6
65093	50	.3	.3	16.8
130046	45	.2	.2	17.1
30450	44	.2	.2	17.3

Table 34: High frequency users

As you can see, the user frequency begins to drop off rather quickly and continues to the point where you find that the average user frequency drops off to an average of less than once per day during the forty five day collection period after the thirty-third user. What is significant is that these thirty three users represent less than 1% (.0081) of those users who posted to the EDL Facebook page, but they generated 3,297 secondary posts/comments for a total of 17.3% of the overall member traffic. But this is only a very small part of the overall picture. When considering this rapid decrease

in user frequency with so many users yet to make up the remaining 92.7% of the traffic, it is necessary to examine the user frequency from the perspective of how many of the remaining users posted any given number of times. This analysis required that the entire user analysis seen partially above be copied into a separate dataset and a frequency analysis be performed on the 'frequency variable' to determine how many users posted any given number of times. These results, as seen below, are very revealing.

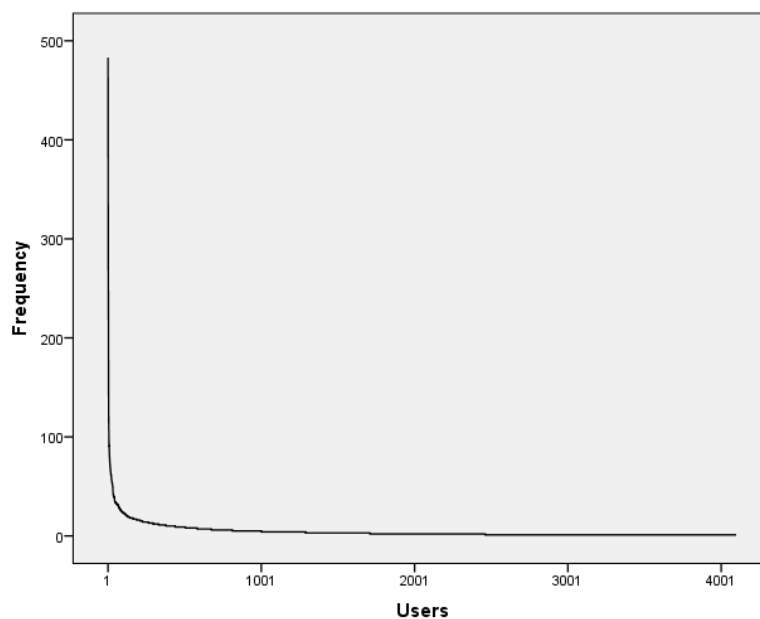
Examining the frequency of postings shows that of the 4099 users (including the administrator in Table 35), 1,683 or fully 40% of the users only posted once to the EDL Facebook page during the 45 day collection period, accounting for 8.5% of the overall traffic; 752 users or 18.3% posted at least twice; and 420 or 10.2% of the users posted three times during the 45 day collection period. Cumulatively, the 2,810 users that posted three or fewer times make up 68.6 percent of the users with 22.8% of all postings, and those who posted ten times or less accounted for 6.84% or 9,783 posts submitted by 3,720 (90.8%) of the users who posted to the EDL Facebook page during the collection period. The obverse side of the traffic coin shows a very different pattern.

Frequency of Postings	Number of users	Percent of users	Valid Percent of users	Cum. % of users	Frequency of Postings	Number of users	Percent of users	Valid Percent of users	Cum. % of users
1	1638	40.0	40.0	40.0	91	2	.0	.0	99.3
2	752	18.3	18.3	58.3	103	1	.0	.0	99.3
3	420	10.2	10.2	68.6	110	1	.0	.0	99.3
4	287	7.0	7.0	75.6	124	1	.0	.0	99.4
5	189	4.6	4.6	80.2	198	1	.0	.0	99.4
6	138	3.4	3.4	83.5	255	1	.0	.0	99.4
7	94	2.3	2.3	85.8	348	1	.0	.0	99.4
8	76	1.9	1.9	87.7	36	1	.0	.0	99.5
9	66	1.6	1.6	89.3	44	1	.0	.0	99.5
10	60	1.5	1.5	90.8	45	1	.0	.0	99.5
11	48	1.2	1.2	91.9	483	1	.0	.0	99.5
12	37	.9	.9	92.8	50	1	.0	.0	99.6
14	37	.9	.9	93.7	51	1	.0	.0	99.6
13	30	.7	.7	94.5	52	1	.0	.0	99.6
16	25	.6	.6	95.1	54	1	.0	.0	99.6
17	23	.6	.6	95.6	55	1	.0	.0	99.7
18	20	.5	.5	96.1	56	1	.0	.0	99.7
15	16	.4	.4	96.5	57	1	.0	.0	99.7
19	11	.3	.3	96.8	58	1	.0	.0	99.7
20	9	.2	.2	97.0	61	1	.0	.0	99.8
23	9	.2	.2	97.2	63	1	.0	.0	99.8
21	8	.2	.2	97.4	65	1	.0	.0	99.8
25	8	.2	.2	97.6	67	1	.0	.0	99.8
32	8	.2	.2	97.8	68	1	.0	.0	99.9
22	7	.2	.2	98.0	71	1	.0	.0	99.9
24	6	.1	.1	98.1	72	1	.0	.0	99.9
34	6	.1	.1	98.3	75	1	.0	.0	99.9
26	4	.1	.1	98.4	77	1	.0	.0	100.0
27	4	.1	.1	98.5	82	1	.0	.0	100.0
28	4	.1	.1	98.6	85	1	.0	.0	100.0
31	4	.1	.1	98.7	TOTAL	4099	100.0	100.0	
33	4	.1	.1	98.8					
40	4	.1	.1	98.9					
30	3	.1	.1	98.9					
39	3	.1	.1	99.0					
29	2	.0	.0	99.0					
35	2	.0	.0	99.1					
42	2	.0	.0	99.1					
53	2	.0	.0	99.2					
62	2	.0	.0	99.2					

Table 35: Posting frequency with number of users

The findings from this analysis are truly staggering when considering the expectations of the power of social media as a vehicle for social change and mass mobilization. The results show that the EDL traffic is made up primarily of very infrequent users during the collection period. The visualization of user frequency is facilitated by the creation of a graph which displays the value of each user's frequency. As seen in Figure 9, the frequency curve drops off severely in keeping with the frequencies seen in the previous chart.

Figure 9: User frequency graph



The high number of low frequency users, as seen above, supports the hypothesis that while there is considerable traffic associated with the EDL Facebook page during the collection period, that traffic does not represent a growing cadre of “true believers” who support the EDL in any way beyond casually liking the page. Further, it shows that the impact of the small percentage of “members” who chose to post to the page and generate the majority of the 19,312 posts that make up the collection is not what it appears. What it does show is a very small group of high frequency users who are responsible for generating a considerable portion of the traffic. This

realization, coupled with the findings of the disproportionate frequency of word usage by the small cohort of high frequency users, demonstrates that the message and the image of the EDL was being driven by only a few users, and that this group depended on the tacit association of the much larger cohort of low frequency users to create the perception of a group much more widely accepted and powerful than they really were/are. This is further reinforced by the fact that only 4099 users took the time to post to the page out of the 75,000 (+/-) members, meaning that over 70,000 of those who took the time to ‘like’ the EDL Facebook page as a way of showing solidarity with the group, were not actively involved in any way within the online dialog of the group. Yet, during this period of rapid growth, the leadership of the EDL was eager to point to the number of ‘likes’ as a unit of measure indicating the power and growth of the group.

EDL Post Hack Collection

On 22 July 2011, due to the previously mentioned attack on the EDL Facebook page by the Z Company Hacking Crew (ZHC), the EDL was forced to open a new Facebook Page. Following this devastating hack, the group struggled to rebuild and continues to this day to work to rise to the level they had previously. As of 21 May 2013, the new EDL page had only been able to recover 21,628 of the nearly 100,000 “members” as reflected in the number of likes that appear on the post-hack EDL Facebook page. It was determined that it might be interesting to consider the impact of this hack on the group following this project. Therefore, collection of data on the new page began on 22 July 2011 and was terminated on 5 November 2011 with the same protocols as used previously. The raw data was parsed using the latest version of the parser (V7.0) and the parsed tab-delimited file was placed into Excel then imported into SPSS for preliminary analysis.

The findings from the preliminary analysis of the Post-hack EDL data are very interesting. The number of “members” during the collection period went from a few hundred at the start of the new page to just over 13,000 by the end of the collection period. Even the latest figure represents a loss of 77% of the previous “members” as reflected in the number of likes to the page. The traffic during the 107 day collection period consists of 28,213 total posts made up of 763 primary posts and 27,450 secondary posts. The total number of users, including the administrator was 3,997 users. This is significant as the number of actual users who participated in the online dialog is significantly higher as a percentage of members as was seen in the original EDL dataset. This could be viewed as a function of only the most devoted members having returned to the group following the Breivik attack and the ZHC hack, but this is only conjecture as it should be expected that some users would have changed their user name following the event. Given that user information was being posted by the ZHC, and law enforcement was scrutinizing the EDL heavily following the Breivik attack, changing ones user name seems a reasonable if not prudent response.

An examination of the high frequency users from the pre and post hack EDL pages provides some illumination of the effect the hack had on “power user” traffic. By segregating the high frequency users from the two pages into a separate data set and placing the user ID numbers into Excel, it was possible to utilize the “find” function to determine the correlation between the two sets of high frequency users. As seen below, the EDL post-hack high frequency traffic analysis shows many “new members” that were not found in the original data set. The term “new member” is so identified as it is impossible to determine if these are in fact new members or old members who have simply changed their user names without engaging in more detailed data mining which would most certainly violate the Data Protection Act.

High Frequency post hack Users	Number of postings	Number of postings in Original dataset
*59213	743	0
192416	555	0
56112	207	13
153104	177	0
30555	171	20
47866	167	6
53823 **	131	72 **
38878	130	4
30576	127	1
39312	120	7
30758	119	0
54180	114	0
54215	112	11
37163	110	0
108836	110	0
37534 **	107	54 **
* Administrator		
**Appeared in HF User list in Original data		

Table 36: Post-hack high frequency users

As can be seen in the chart above (Table 36), out of the sixteen high frequency users in the post hack data set who posted at least once per day in the 107 day collection period, only two users (Users 37534 and 53823) appeared in the original list of thirty three high frequency users. Also, seven (44%) of the new high frequency user numbers do not appear at all within the original high frequency user list. Of note are the users who were low frequency users in the original collection who became high frequency users in the post hack collection. For example, user 30576's participation increased from once during the original collection period to 127 times in the post hack collection. This phenomenon of increased participation is repeated for each user whose number appeared in the original data.

Examining the original list of high frequency users provides further enlightenment into the comparison of the two collections. The chart in Table 37 includes the list of high frequency users from the original forty five day collection period. Immediately,

one can see that that the administrator (user 208096) does not appear in the post hack collection, which is a reflection of the post hack administrator (user 59213) not appearing in the original data collection. Unless the administrator of the group actually changed following the ZHC hack, it clearly indicates that the user name of the administrator was changed in some way. Of the original thirty three high frequency users, nine user numbers (28%) do not appear within the post hack collection. Further, with the exception of users 53823 and 37534 (6% of original high frequency users), none of the other users within the original high frequency group appear as high frequency users within the post hack data. Clearly, while some of the original high frequency users continued to engage (e.g. 30786, 45787, 30723, and 63378), only one user who does not appear as a high frequency user in the post hack data actually increased his/her participation. User 65093 posted fifty times in the original set, but increased participation during the post hack collection to ninety one posts. With the exception of these three users (53823, 37534, 65093), the remaining thirty high frequency users from the original data set either do not appear in the post hack data or significantly reduced their level of participation. In keeping with the research design, it was not possible to examine the actual user name for comparison without examining the raw data, which would certainly have been a violation of the Data Protection Act. However, it would be interesting to determine if these missing users simply changed their user names or decided to disassociate themselves with the group all together.

High Frequency users Original Data	Number of postings	Number of postings Post Hack Data
* 208096	483	0
160797	348	0
19460	255	6
30079	198	0
30786	124	67
24304	110	16
159446	103	20
29484	91	8
46389	91	6
43519	85	5
45787	82	68
31969	77	0
63721	75	60
53823**	72	131**
130319	71	1
74186	68	0
30723	67	47
39746	65	0
96803	63	6
47621	62	47
64162	62	4
17948	61	0
118881	58	0
99701	57	38
109172	56	0
54313	55	2
37534	54	107**
45871	53	39
78099	53	0
212443	52	1
63378	51	47
65093	50	91
130046	45	8
30450	44	24

* Administrator

**Appear as HF users in post hack

Table 37: Pre vs. post hack high frequency user analysis

To consider the number of user numbers that appeared within both groups it was necessary to isolate the user ID numbers from each, combine them into one variable, and then run the “identify duplicate cases” function in SPSS. The result from this analysis, as seen in Table 38, is that when the list of 4,098 user numbers (excluding the administrator) in the original group is added to the list of 3,997 user numbers from the post-hack collection, the combined 8,095 user numbers contain 1,775 duplicate cases.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Duplicate Case	1775	21.9	21.9	21.9
Primary Case	6320	78.1	78.1	100
Total	8095	100	100	

Table 38: Combined EDL pre/post hack search for duplicate users

Therefore, within the post-hack group, 1,775 user numbers also appear in the original collection data, and there are 2,222 new user ID numbers. Again, it is not possible to determine whether these are previous users who simply changed their user name, or actual new users without violating the conditions of the research design and the Data Protection Act.

Post Hack User Participation

As with the original collection data, the analysis of the post hack collection shows that there are a small number of high frequency users. As we saw in the original collection, the 4099 users who participated in the dialog contained thirty three high frequency users who posted at least once per day during the collection period. Using these same criteria, the post hack collection, which spans 107 days, contains only sixteen high frequency users (Table 39). As compared to the original high frequency users who comprised 0.81% of the users yet accounted for 17.3% of the traffic, the sixteen post hack high frequency users seen below make up only 0.40% of all users and are responsible for 3200 of the 28,213 posts or 11.3% of all traffic.

User	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
59213	743	2.6	2.6
192416	555	2	4.6
56112	207	0.7	5.3
153104	177	0.6	6
30555	171	0.6	6.6
47866	167	0.6	7.2
53823	131	0.5	7.6
38878	130	0.5	8.1
30576	127	0.5	8.5
39312	120	0.4	9
30758	119	0.4	9.4
54180	114	0.4	9.8
54215	112	0.4	10.2
37163	110	0.4	10.6
108836	110	0.4	11
37534	107	0.4	11.3

Table 39: EDL post-hack high frequency users

Post Hack User Frequency

The user participation pattern of the post hack EDL Facebook group is much the same as was seen in the original collection group; a small number of high frequency users and many lower frequency users. While the percentages found in the post hack group are slightly less, the user frequency is still very similar to that of the original collection data.

# of postings	# of Users	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	1304	32.6	32.6
2	596	14.9	47.5
3	392	9.8	57.3
4	320	8	65.3
5	222	5.6	70.9
6	156	3.9	74.8
7	147	3.7	78.5
8	76	1.9	80.4
9	78	2	82.3
10	78	2	84.3
11	60	1.5	85.8
12	55	1.4	87.2
13	37	0.9	88.1
14	42	1.1	89.1
15	32	0.8	89.9
16	40	1	90.9
17	22	0.6	91.5
18	35	0.9	92.4
19	27	0.7	93
20	17	0.4	93.5
21	8	0.2	93.7
22	17	0.4	94.1
23	13	0.3	94.4
24	21	0.5	94.9
25	10	0.3	95.2

Table 40: Post hack frequency analysis (low frequency users to 95%)

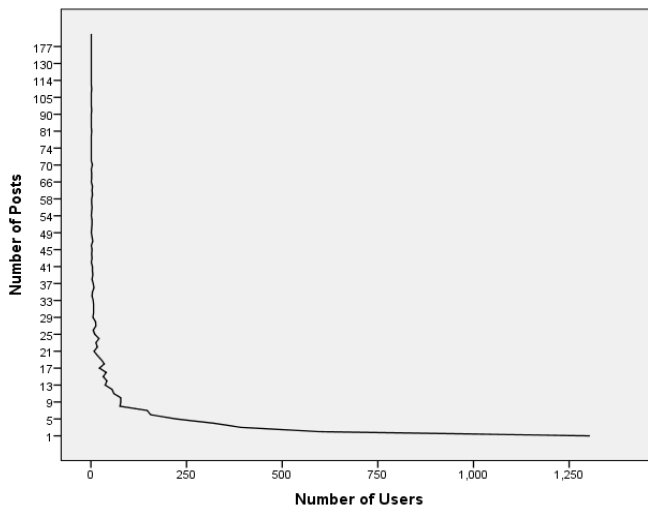
As seen in the Table 40, 1304 users, or 32.6 percent of the users only posted once to the post hack EDL Facebook page accounting for 4.61% of all post hack traffic, as compared to 40% of the users in the original data set who posted once making up 8.5% of all traffic.

Frequency comparison	Number of Users	User	% of	Number of Users		% of
Number of postings	original data	percent	Traffic	post hack	percent	Traffic
Once	1683	40.00%	8.5%	1304	32.60%	4.60%
Twice	752	18.30%		596	14.90%	
Three times	420	10.20%		392	9.80%	
Three times or less	2810	68.60%	22.80%	2292	57.40%	13.00%
Ten times or less	3720	90.80%	50.70%	3369	84.30%	35.90%

Table 41: EDL pre/post hack low frequency user analysis

Table 41 provides the results of a comparative analysis of the impact the very lowest frequency users in the post hack group had on the overall traffic as compared to the users in the original EDL Facebook collection. As you can see, the percentages of low frequency users as well as the percentage of traffic generated by those lowest frequency users is significantly less in the post hack EDL group than was found in the original collection.

Figure 10: EDL post hack user frequency graph



Even though the percentages vary from one data set to the other, it is important to note that the user frequency graph in Figure 10 appears to be very similar to the original user frequency graph. The sharp decline in user frequency seen above, in the post hack EDL traffic, is nearly identical to that seen in the original data set. It would be interesting to perform a more detailed comparative analysis of these two data sets

including analysis of URL's, and the various categories of posts as described in the previous chapter.

Conclusion

The opportunity to collect, segregate, and analyze the Facebook traffic of the English Defence League has, in the end, provided much more understanding than was first expected. Initially, the effort was undertaken simply to see if it was possible to perform these tasks in a meaningful way. Then, as the research evolved, the ability to gain deeper insight into the EDL, the characteristics of the group and their use of Facebook became possible. As seen in the data analysis presented herein, the characteristics of the EDL Facebook traffic have provided some interesting findings.

First, it was shown that while the pro-EDL primary posts were presented at over twice the frequency as the anti-Muslim posts (153:68), and the aggregate number of posts per category were again nearly twice as many for the pro-EDL as for anti-Muslim (11,590:5,941), it was shown that the anti-Muslim posts generated more comments per post from the members with the average number of comments per anti-Muslim post reaching 87.37 while the pro-EDL posts only generated 75.75 comments per post.

Second, the presence of the URL links within the primary posts and comments provided insight into the types of links that were being provided by not only the administrator but also within the comments of the users/members. Of note was the fact that while the number pro-EDL administrator posts were nearly double those of the anti-Muslim posts, the URL's contained within the administrator posts were nearly evenly divided with 118 pro-EDL links and 108 anti-Muslims links. The number of comments per URL post is also very close with the pro-EDL links

generating 71.47 comments per URL post and the anti-Muslim URL posts generating 69.79 comments per post. The analysis of the URL's found within the primary and secondary posts showed there was a high percentage of YouTube video links within the URL collection with 96 YouTube links found in the 288 posts/comments that containing a link. This represents 34% of all URL links contained within the dataset. Further, within the primary posts, YouTube links were found in 24 of the 51 links, for a total of 47%, of all URL posts provided by the administrator.

Next, supporting and adding to the findings from previous chapter where the actual dialog of the EDL members was examined, an NVivo search for the most frequently used words provided insight into the use of these key words by the administrator and the users. As was seen, the use of these key words by the high frequency users was disproportionate to the usage by the low frequency users. This finding provides a base from which further research can be done to consider the influence of the administrator driven narrative on the user and how the user might adapt this narrative over time and whether the use of key words/phrases by the member is an indication of an acceptance of the group narrative. While this study, as a result of the Data Protection Act does not allow for the assessment of each user use of these key words, future collection and analysis might prove fruitful in this area.

Fourth, examination of the pre and post hack collections showed that external events did have an influence on the activity of the EDL Facebook page. The overall loss of membership was significant as was the change in traffic patterns. Many of the high frequency users from the pre-hack collection no longer appeared as high frequency users in the post hack collection, and some low frequency users were somehow driven to increase their participation and became high frequency users in the post-hack group. It is also telling that out of the 3,997 users in the post-hack

group, only 1,775 or 45% were found in the pre-hack user list. As stated previously, it is impossible given the constraints of this study to determine if any of these “new users” are simply old users who have changed their user names, but even if this is the case, the fact that such a change was considered necessary is significant. Further, the impact of the murder of Lee Rigby had the opposite effect with membership exploding. While data collection was not performed other than the increase in membership as noted earlier, it is clear that externalities do play a role in social media membership and traffic.

Finally, this study showed that membership in the EDL Facebook page should not be viewed as an indicator of the power of this social media outlet. It was shown that out of the average 75,000 ‘members’ that liked the EDL page, only 4,099 users took the time to post anything to the page. Further, it was shown that the activity among these 4,099 active users was in no way equally distributed with 40% of the users only posting once to the page, never to return within the 45 day collection period and only a very small number of users (33) participating at a high rate. As a result of the frequency analysis performed on this collection, the myth associated with the growth and power of EDL Facebook page has been debunked.

As in the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, the curtain is now drawn back on the EDL. As with the Great and Powerful Oz, whose public image as a larger than life apparition that had supernatural powers, the EDL wished to be seen as a far reaching and powerful grass roots Anti-Muslim anti-immigration movement in the United Kingdom that was experiencing phenomenal growth within the collection period. However, after drawing back the curtain, the perceived size of the EDL membership and the large amount of traffic that was generated on their Facebook page during the collection period, is now seen for what it is. Just like the exposed Wizard of Oz, the

illusion of a growing nationwide movement called the English Defence League can now be seen metaphorically as nothing more than a small man pushing buttons and pulling levers in an attempt to exert influence and power where there really was and is none.

Chapter Seven: Discussion and Additional Support

Throughout this research project the goal has been to build understanding about the English Defence League and their use of Facebook as the primary mode of communication within the group. Additionally, other areas were examined to consider the history, leadership, and organizational structure of the group; how traditional media covered and characterized the EDL; and whether the comments contained within the Facebook traffic were more in line with the media characterizations or with the lofty rhetoric of the EDL Mission Statement. These investigations showed that the English Defence League and its leadership do have previous connections to far-right groups and that the characterizations in traditional print media have sought to perpetuate this image, even after the EDL sought to reject all ties to far-right/neo-Nazi extremists. Examination of the content of the Facebook traffic, as presented in Chapter Five, supports in many ways the media claims that the EDL is not a human rights group supporting democratic values and inclusiveness. The frequency of what could be considered ‘hate speech’, and the fact that these comments were not deleted by the administrator and the users who posted these comments were not sanctioned or removed from the group supports the perception that these comments are a reflection of the broader anti-Muslim/anti-immigrant narrative that exists within the EDL. With all their claims of being against extremist Islam, the dialog within the Facebook group suggests there are many members who hold far-right extremist views within the EDL. While these findings were, in themselves interesting, the more significant findings came about as a result of the quantitative analysis of the EDL Facebook dataset.

Over the last several years there has been much speculation regarding the characteristics of participation in extremist/terrorist social media environments and

whether it represents an existential threat to national security. It has even been suggested that visiting such a site for the first time put the user on the track to radicalization (Weimann, 2006). Further, governments have considered the threat of this type of activity within online environments to be “too big” to tackle given the vast amount of data to be collected and analyzed. The sheer volume of membership in these online environments brought forward concerns about being able to analyze this vast amount of data and creating the storage capacity needed to save “evidence.” The research on the EDL Facebook page and the findings contained herein offer some tangible answers to what were previously either unanswered questions or unsubstantiated speculation.

The findings of this research provide the understanding that the membership number, as a reflection of ‘likes’ is not an accurate representation of the body of users who actually take the time to participate in the online dialog. The EDL membership, during the collection period rose to over 80,000 yet only 4099 users actually took the time to post to the EDL Facebook page. Using the average of 75,000 users during the collection period, the 4099 users who decided to participate in the EDL dialog represent less than 6.0% of all users. Yet even with this number of users who decided to engage, the data analysis shows it would be difficult to make a generalized statement that this participation would lead to some sort of radicalization toward or identification with the EDL narrative (Bartlett & Littler, 2011). When one considers that 40% of all users only posted once to the EDL Facebook page, it would be very difficult indeed to consider these individuals as being ‘true believers.’ As we see from the data, the body of individuals who could be considered to be fully engaged, as a function of their daily participation, is indeed quite small. If the metric for fully engaged participation is an average of one post per day during the collection period,

we now know that this cohort is made up of only 0.81% of the active users or 33 individual users. Even if this metric is extended to an average of once every other day, or at least 23 posts during the collection period, the cohort is only expanded to 49 individual users or 1.2% of all users. Clearly, the majority of the traffic generated during the collection period seems to have been posted by casual users who cannot be considered, based on their participation, ‘true believers’. This assessment is reinforced by the understanding that the small percentage of high volume users (0.81% of participants) generated a disproportionate amount of traffic (17.1%) during the collection period. This assessment is reinforced by the content analysis conducted in relation to the use of key words by the administrator and how this was reflected in the dialog of the users.

As seen in the key word analysis of the content, this same group of thirty three high frequency users, representing 0.81% of all active users, accounted for between 10.0%-18.8% of the use of these most frequently used words by the administrator. This disproportionate use of these high frequency words can be considered as representing an identification with and acceptance of the extremist narrative of the English Defence League.

While the use of Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) by the administrator did not represent a majority presence in the primary posts, the amount of traffic they generated and the ability to categorize and examine these links proved fruitful. First, it was interesting to note how the increase in URL linked traffic corresponded closely with the spikes in overall traffic within the data set. Second, the number of URL links that were devoted to characterizing and reporting negative stories on the Muslim “other” or “foreign devil” were, in the aggregate, fully 36.0% of all links contained within the primary posts. That these 19 primary posts, representing 8.0% of all

primary posts, generated over 1326 secondary posts/comments by the users, and accounted for 7.0% of all traffic is of great interest. It will be interesting, in the future, to consider how many of the high frequency users were engaged in this negative identity development. The remaining URL links, associated broadly with forwarding the identity of the EDL were not only more numerous, but seemed to be more impactful on the dialog.

Of the fifty-one primary posts that contained URL links, twenty eight included pro-EDL URL links. These twenty eight posts represent 11.8% of all the primary posts and they generated 2001 secondary posts/comments which represents 11% of all secondary posts/comments. That these pro-EDL URL linked posts generate 51% more traffic than the anti-Muslim URL linked posts shows the pro-EDL linked message resonated more strongly with the body of active users. However, the overall body of primary posts reveals a slightly different picture. As seen in the analysis, of the 239 primary posts, 153 were pro-EDL, 68 were anti-Muslim, and 18 were related to other topics. And while the traffic generated by the pro-EDL posts far exceeded that of the anti-Muslim posts (11590:5941), the average number of comments per post were over ten points higher for anti-Muslim posts. That the body of primary posts that were focused on anti-Muslim issues generated such a large volume of traffic again speaks to the effectiveness in creating and perpetuating the idea of the Muslim “other.” The creation of “the other” in online environments, particularly within social media is another area of interest for future exploration which will be of great value when considering how to counter the development of the us-vs.-them paradigm integral to any extremist/terrorist narrative (Horgan, 2005; Sageman, 2004; Weimann, 2006).

More generally, but no less interesting, is the frequency of the various root URL's. Of the fifty-one URL's found within the primary posts, there were twenty-four YouTube links which account for 47% of all links and 10.1% of all primary posts. Further, the YouTube videos contained within these twenty-four posts generated 1631 user comments or 8.5% of all traffic. The YouTube links found within the entire data set account for 33.4% of all links contained within the primary and secondary posts. Also of note are the eighty-seven Facebook links found within the collection and the links to various news outlets. Within the Primary posts there were fourteen links to news sites making up 27% of the URL's contained within the primary posts generating 1,261 comments and accounting for 35.5% of all URL generated comments and 6.6% of all user traffic.

These and other findings were made possible as a result of the collection, segregation, and analysis efforts made as a part of this research. The answers to the broader questions presented in the introduction are as follows:

First, this research shows it is possible to conduct in-depth analysis of social media traffic in extremist online environments. Often times, the reasoning for not engaging in this level of investigation was that the data was just too big and there were insufficient tools to collect and code the data in a way that might provide meaningful findings. Second, this research effectively addressed the concerns regarding protecting the privacy of the individual user, particularly when informed consent was neither possible nor practical. The inclusion of the one way cipher within the parsing package allowed for the anonymization of all users with 100% consistency, and a level of assurance that the individual user numbers could not be reverse engineered to determine the actual user name without considerable effort. Such a reverse engineering capability would typically only be available to a large

government intelligence agency. This anonymization facilitated a more detailed analysis of the data since privacy concerns related to academic standards to protect the research subject and the Data Protection Act were mitigated. While care was still taken to avoid the inclusion of actual user names in conjunction with specific content to prevent any inadvertent identification, being able to understand the individual participation rates using the discrete user number has proven invaluable. The security of the users was further enhanced by the fact that, as a result of the ZHC hack, all Facebook data was lost when the page was shut down. Finally, the raw dataset, which is the only known record of the EDL Facebook traffic during the initial collection period and during the hack, which contains the actual user names, will be destroyed following the completion and defence of this thesis.

This research has sought to provide a deeper statistical understanding of the online phenomenon, examining more granular issues than what has previously been published within this field of study.

- *Simply visiting an extremist site or social media page was the beginning step to radicalization.* Now we know this is likely not true. This is evidenced by the 94% of users within the EDL Facebook group that ‘liked’ the EDL page but chose to not post even once to the page, and further, that 40% of the users who actually took the time to participate in the online dialog only posted once during the 45 day collection period.
- *The assumption that liking a Facebook page was equal to active membership in the group is now shown to be inaccurate.* Again, less than 6% of all those who ‘liked’ the page took time to post within the 45 day collection period for the EDL. This is supported by findings from a study of Occupy Wall Street which will be reviewed herein.

- *The groups were made up of thousands of active users who engaged in constant dialog within these environments has also been shown to be incorrect.* The analysis shows that while there were thousands of users who participated in the online dialog, the number of active users is significantly smaller than had been previously anticipated. The number of users who participated on average once per day (33 users) represented 0.81% of all users who chose to participate by posting to the page. The value of this participation is diminished even further when considered as a percentage of all “members.” The 0.81% becomes 0.05% (0.0005) of the 75,000 “members”.
- *The use of Uniform Resource Locators is seen as a primary vehicle for projecting the group narrative.* This analysis does not provide a definitive answer to this question. While the majority of the posts did not contain URL’s, they were found in 20% of the primary posts. And while the 239 primary posts generated on average 79.8 secondary comments per post, the anti-Muslim posts with URL’s averaged 72.47 comments per post, the pro-EDL URL posts generated 77.34 posts per comment and the EDL propaganda URL posts averaged 90.75 comments per post, while all other URL categories generated far fewer comments per post. The preponderance of YouTube videos within the URL collection is seen as significant and certainly an area deserving of future attention.

There were, as a result of this research project, three important developments; first, was the ability to obtain permission from elements within the UK government to allow this research to move forward when it was thought the collection might potentially include terrorist material. Second, was the development of the specialized software for the parsing and coding of this large dataset. And third, and certainly most

importantly, was the development of a statistically driven understanding of participation within this computer mediated communication.

The development of the specialized software argues strongly for the consideration of interdisciplinary partnerships to facilitate greater understanding of new phenomenon that are beyond the capabilities of any one field of study. That this post graduate project sought to engage in the collection of such a large body of data was a monumental task for a single researcher. The success of the research was only made possible, with the limited human resources and time available, through the conceptualization and creation of the specialized parser to identify and code the desired content within the collection of EDL Facebook posts. The functionality and reliability of such a tool far exceeds that of any human being. Just considering the time it would have taken to code out each of the posts manually was reduced from many months to a mere forty seconds speaks not only to the time saving capabilities of such tools, but also to the ability for researchers to collect, code, and analyze data in a timely manner so they might present their findings while the issue is still relevant. Imagine the impact on any extremist/terrorist movement when it is revealed that they are not what they wish everyone to believe them to be. That this process can now be completed in months instead of years makes it even more effective. The software development has made possible the most important finding of the project; the realization of a quantitative determination regarding participation in this and other online environments.

It is hoped the findings from this research will promote questions regarding how and what we think about online participation and the effectiveness of social media as an avenue for the growth of grass-roots or extremist movements. That less than 6% of the average number of users who claimed to be members of the group, by virtue of

liking the EDL Facebook page, actually took any time to post to the page shows the weakness of the vehicle. Further, that such a small percentage of users (0.81%) were actively and regularly involved in the ongoing dialog reveals that the body of true believers within this online social network was infinitely smaller than the administrator was projecting and traditional media was reporting. As mentioned earlier, in the much cited study published by DEMOS, Bartlett and Littler (2011) state, “We estimate the total size of the active membership (in the EDL) to be between 25,000-35,000 people (p. 4).” It is important to note that this estimate is following the Anders Breivik attack in Oslo and the substantial setback as a result of the EDL Facebook page being hacked by the Z-Company Hacking Crew. They found that “Much of the group’s discourse is online, and events are organized and advertised primarily through Facebook and the EDL’s own forum (Bartlett & Littler, 2011, p. 14).” They do go on however to point out that “The relationship between hardcore members, affiliates, and broader supporters is opaque (14).” Following their own data collection on Facebook participation, Bartlett and Littler (2011) state that, “The high percentage of online activism illustrates how important the internet is to the group’s identity (p. 18).” The new understanding, as a result of this project, will hopefully generate further research into how this participation and interaction might or might not facilitate the development of an online identity or narrative that could lead to radicalization toward and identification with an extremist/terrorist agenda. Such understanding should be useful in government efforts to counter terrorism and/or violent extremism by separating the casual users within an extremist CMC environment from those who have the potential to become violent as a result of this identification phenomenon. But the importance of these findings is also dependent on

determining whether the various findings as a result of this research are unique to the EDL or if they can be found in other groups as well.

Examining Occupy Wall Street

The nexus of traditional and new media

One of the interesting findings from investigating the Occupy Wall Street movement, that offers an avenue for future investigation for the EDL, was a preliminary examination of the traffic generation in the first several weeks of the Occupy movement. As the movement began in mid-August, they struggled to generate momentum within the larger audience. This all changed on 1 October 2011. During the OWS occupation of and protest on the Brooklyn Bridge on 1 October 2011, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) decided to show up in force and break up the protest. In doing so, 700 protesters were arrested by the NYPD and the traditional media picked up the story as it was occurring and it became the top news story of the day (Image 37).



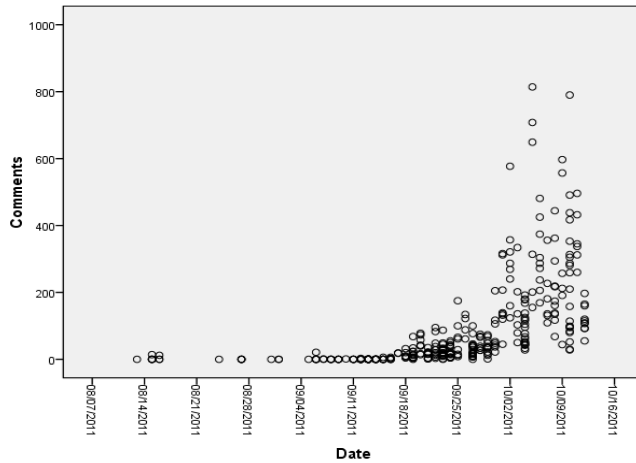
Over 700 protesters arrested on October 1, 2011 while occupying the Brooklyn Bridge...prompting traditional media coverage.



Image 37: The arrest of 700 Occupy Wall Street protesters on 2 October 2011

The impact on the OWS Facebook page was immediate. By the next day the traffic generation jumped considerably as did the membership numbers. First, the number of primary posts by the administrator increased significantly. Second, the

Figure 11: OWS comments per post 8 August-16 October 2011

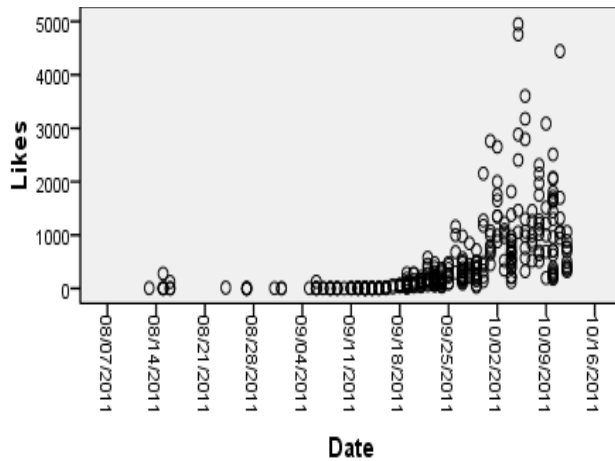


number of secondary posts/comments per post went from dozens per day to several hundred per day per primary post (Figure 11).

Third, and even more impressive, the number of likes per post rose from a few posts

that received a moderate number of likes to many posts getting two thousand likes and some to nearly five thousand likes (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Frequency of likes, Occupy Wall Street, 7/8-12/10/2011



During this same early collection period, it was found that of the 342 primary posts 243 (71.1%) contained URL links. The significance of this phenomenon is undetermined as this data has yet to be examined in the detail

similar to that of the EDL data. The Occupy Wall Street data does, however, bring to the forefront the question of just how important traditional media is to the potential growth of any movement that seeks to use new media as its primary venue for recruitment and mobilization.

Progressing through the fall and early winter of 2011 the Occupy Wall Street movement was gaining momentum and claiming to be a force for social and political change within the United States. As with the EDL, Occupy Wall Street (OWS) made extensive use of Facebook for their communications with the members and for disseminating propaganda to facilitate recruitment and mobilization efforts. During this period from 15 August to 15 November 2011, the entire body of administrator generated primary posts and affiliated secondary posts/comments on their Facebook page were collected in the same manner as was described previously with the EDL. Again, since Facebook had gone through some format changes since the original EDL traffic was collected, the V7.0 parser was used to account for these changes. Using the V7.0 parser, the OWS raw data was parsed and the data set was created.

During the collection period, the average membership, as reflected in the number of likes for the group, was 250,000 +/- users. The number of ‘members’ rose rapidly from August to mid-November to exceed 350,000 by the end of the collection period with the majority of the ‘likes’ taking place in the first sixty days of the collection period. The data set, once parsed and placed into SPSS, was subjected to some of the same analysis as was the EDL data. The preliminary findings are as follows:

- The total number of posts within the data set was 80,003 primary and secondary posts (Table 42).
- These posts were generated by 12,793 different users (Table 42).

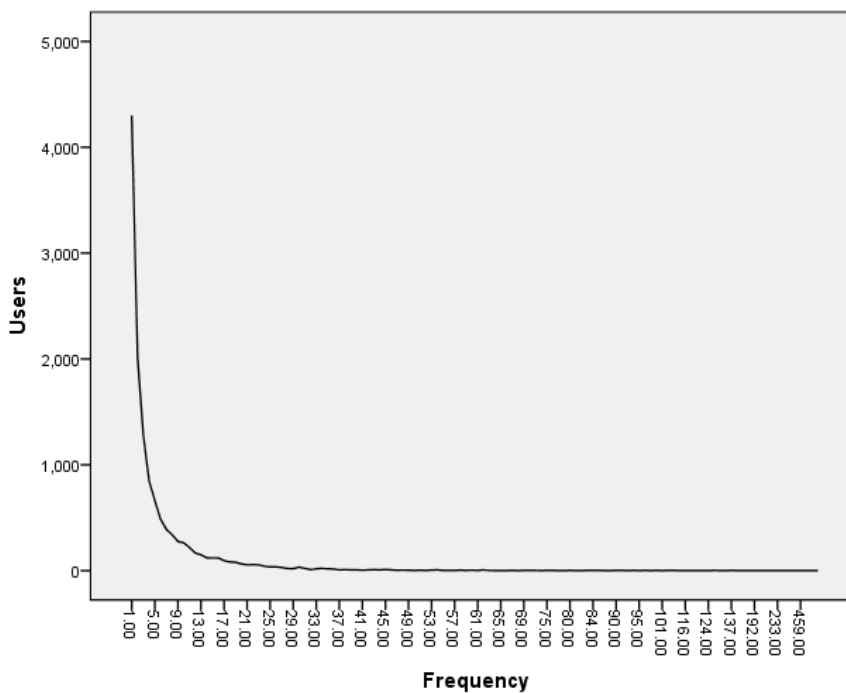
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Duplicate Case	67210	84.0	84.0	84.0
	Primary Case	12793	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	80003	100.0	100.0	

Table 42: Occupy Wall Street Post Analysis

- The percentage of active users as it relates to the number of ‘members’ is 5.0%. The EDL active users represented 5.56% of the ‘membership’.

- There were 594 primary posts by the administrator and 79,409 secondary posts/comments from the users.
- Within this traffic there were 3,567 posts (4.5% of the total) with URL links within the text. Of these 43 (1.2% of those posts with links) were provided by the administrator, and 3524 (98.8% of those posts with links) were included in the secondary posts/comments.
- The frequency graph for the Occupy Wall Street data, as seen in Figure 13, is almost identical to that seen with the original EDL data and the post hack EDL data.

Figure 13: Occupy Wall Street User Frequency Graph



- There were 4300 users who only posted once to the page accounting for 33.6% of all active users and 5.4% of the overall traffic.
- Of the 12,795 users, 11,515 or 90% posted 14 times or fewer and accounted for 50.5% of all traffic.

- The number of high frequency users that posted on an average of once per day during the 90 day collection period was forty-four. They represented 0.4% of the users and accounted for 9.1% of the overall traffic of the group
- The top ten users represented 0.08% of the 12,793 users and accounted for 4.2% of the overall traffic.

Recent articles on social media participation provide some support for these findings, although even the findings presented regarding Twitter and Facebook participation rates are considerably higher than what was seen with the EDL and OWS (Barnett 2011; Barnett, 2012).

The Pareto Principle

The Pareto Principle, was put forth by Vilfredo Pareto, and dates back to 1906 (Matties, 2012). More commonly known as the 80/20 rule, Pareto described land ownership/wealth in Italy at the turn of the 20th century, where 80% of the land was owned by 20% of the population. More recently it has become a “rule of thumb” in various aspects of business whereby it is postulated that 80% of the work is done by 20% of the workers, 80% of a business’s revenue comes from 20% of its customers, and 80% of the profit comes from 20% of the sales (it can go on to describe many more aspects where 80% of the effect is generated by 20% of the participants). It seems, according to studies done by Pew Research (Hampton, Goulet, Marlow, & Rainie, 2012), this phenomenon extends to social media as well. In a recent study of Facebook users titled, “Why most Facebook users get more than they give: The effect of Facebook ‘power users’ on everybody else”, Pew states that:

“Our findings suggest that while most Facebook users in our sample were moderately active over a one-month time period, there is a subset of Facebook users who are disproportionately more active. They skew the average. These

power users, who, depending on the type of content, account for 20%-30% of Facebook users in our sample.(Hampton et al., 2012, p. 12)

These findings are made even stronger when examining the user characteristics within the second most popular social media venue, Twitter.

Researchers at Yahoo!, conducted an analysis of Twitter traffic generated from July 28, 2009 to March 10, 2010 (223 days) which equaled five billion tweets. The researchers chose to examine tweets that contained URLs as they were found to “provide a much richer source of variation than is possible in the typical 140 character tweet providing a data set of 260 million tweets (Wu et al., 2011, p.3). What they determined was:

“Based on this classification, we find a striking concentration of attention on Twitter-roughly 50% of tweets consumed are generated by just 20,000 elite users.” (Wu et al., 2011, p. 1)

And within the conclusions:

In particular, we find that although audience attention has indeed fragmented among a wider pool of content producers than classic models of mass media, attention remains highly concentrated, where roughly 0.05% of the population accounts for almost half of all posted URLs.” (Wu et al., 2011, p. 9)

But are these findings, and the Pareto Principle, reflected in the analysis of the EDL data?

Examining the frequency data on the EDL Facebook page during the 45 day collection period we find that 80% or 3,286 users accounted for 34% of all user traffic (6495 comments). The remaining 20% or 813 users accounted for 12,817 posts which is 66% of all traffic. While it seems that the 80/20 phenomenon is more like 66/34, this simple analysis does not tell the real story. Digging further, it is important to note

that the thirty three high frequency users mentioned in the last chapter, who made up only 0.81% of all users (less than one percent), generated 17.1 percent of all traffic. As a result, out of the data set of 19,312 posts, the 3,297 that were posted by the 33 high frequency users (0.81%) actually represents 25.8% of the user traffic generated by the top 20% of users that accounted for 66% of all traffic (3,297/12,817). With this, it seems fair to say that even within the 20% that produce the majority of the traffic (66%), particularly in the case of the EDL, there exists an even smaller body of ‘high power users’ that are driving the dialog.

Conclusion

It is clear that the findings of this research contradict the anecdotal speculation on participation in online environments particularly where extremists/terrorists are involved; speculation that seems to exaggerate the size of the group and impact of these communications on the ‘members’. This realization suggests that it is much less difficult to collect and analyze such activity than has been believed until now. Additionally, it has been shown that interdisciplinary efforts are valuable when seeking to solve what are perceived as difficult research problems. The decision to seek a software solution to the monumental task of sorting and coding the various collections proved invaluable for several reasons.

First, was the time savings that were realized by using the automated parser. The months that were saved by using the parsing software as opposed to hand coding the data was magnified by being able to utilize this same technology on the supplemental data sets that were used herein to substantiate the primary findings of this research. Second, the automated parser allowed for an expansion of the number of variables that could have been coded by hand. The original coding plan was to have user, primary/secondary post, date, and presence of URL variables. The parser allowed for

the identification of other data that was placed in variables as well as the inclusion of the entire posts in a variable for preliminary content analysis. Third, and very importantly, the reliability of the parser far exceeded the capability of a human coder. The software does not fatigue, make transposition errors, or misidentify items for coding. This reliability is so important when dealing with such a large data set. Finally, the realization that such a tool can be developed for research specific use serves as a challenge for other researchers to consider what might be possible if they consider the research design without the traditional limitations and reach out to colleagues in other disciplines to get answers to what are become increasingly hard research questions.

The practical outcome of this research and supplemental investigations, and the resultant US Patent number 8,838,834 titled *Threat Identification and Mitigation in Computer Mediated Communication, Including Online Social Network Environments*, has proven to be of great interest to various entities both in the United States and the United Kingdom. As an academic, this researcher is cognizant of the need to avoid any appearance of being a tool of any government agency or office. However, given the current threats posed by violent extremists, any knowledge that might help in countering these threats seems appropriate. There is, in fact, a strong desire to seek answers through substantive research to help solve problems related to extremist and terrorist participation in social media and other computer mediated communications, particularly when such activity might lead to violence. While this may be distasteful to some academic purists, the actions of terrorists and extremists who continue to target and kill innocent men, women, and children, only reinforces the need to seek those answers and find the much needed solutions.

Following the attacks of 9/11, 7/7, and now the rise of the Islamic State, the security paradigm has changed and with the advent of social media and other computer mediated communication, the need to understand and the ability to identify threats within these environments should be considered a priority. As research in this area advances, the hopes are twofold. First, that it will result in a broader understanding of the online phenomenon where it relates to extremist and terrorist participation in CMC environments toward the goal of combating this activity and identifying the threats that exist within them to more effectively provide for the safety and security of the country. And secondly, that by refining the techniques used in this research we will be able to improve the success rate of interdiction, and raise the opportunity cost of being an extremist or terrorist such that the cost of extremist/terrorist participation will become too high due to the increased probability of being identified. With this, the handle on the faucet of extremist radicalization/participation will begin to close and the flow of extremists and terrorists will be diminished to the point that such activity will become like drops in a bucket, toward eventual extinction. This is a lofty goal to be sure, but it is certainly one worthy of diligence and persistence.

Future Research and Final Thoughts

Clearly, as suggested earlier, the efforts put forth and the lessons learned as a result of this research project provide many additional avenues for future research on the existing dataset as well as on similar data that has been and will be collected. As presented herein, the Occupy Wall Street data, which is considerably larger than the EDL set, provides an exceptional opportunity to investigate additional trends in social media associated with political or grass roots movements. Further, prior to engaging in extensive analysis of this data, the findings from the EDL research regarding word

usage, URL usage, and user frequency will be reviewed and used to make modifications to the parser. The potential for having the parser ‘look for’ the key words and phrases, automatically categorize the URL links, and examine patterns within the user traffic is certainly worth pursuing. That these ‘look for’ variables could then be included within the data set as a result of the automated parsing process will even further reduce the time needed to move from collection to analysis. This capability would be most useful as the data sets get larger, as was seen with the OWS set with over 80,000 posts.

Word frequency coupled with user frequency.

Further development of parsing and/or analytic capabilities will be investigated to combine the word frequency analysis with individual user frequency of these words to facilitate a more accurate reflection of “who is saying what”. While this project sought purposefully to avoid individual analysis to ensure compliance with the research design as presented in the UTREC application and the UK Data Protection Act, being able to anonymize the users in a way that prevents the reverse engineering of the user names will allow for more individualized analysis toward developing a deeper understanding of the characteristics of individual participation within these online environments. If one can accept that the use of key words and phrases is an indicator of radicalization or acceptance of the group narrative, understanding how this process develops over time could be invaluable. Following this trend, identifying those times when key words or phrases are used more often will allow for the investigation of any content or potential facilitators the individual was exposed to within the CMC stream that may be precipitating this reaction by the user. The most important characteristic of this participation will be the evaluation of participation over time. Again, while this project purposefully avoided analyzing individual

characteristics of participation other than a gross number of posts, it is an area that is of considerable interest and will become a focus of further investigative efforts on the EDL, OWS, and future datasets. An important component of this analysis will be to search for key content or exposure that might help explain increases in participation over time and look for catalysts that might explain this increased participation. Such findings might help explain how group identities are developed in CMC environments and if there are any shared characteristics among the users that might make them susceptible to this phenomenon.

Within this same context, it will be important to understand the influence of the high frequency users in the development of this narrative. Is this development the exclusive purview of the administrator or are there other users who can be identified as facilitators of this narrative? This analysis will also be useful toward understanding the development of the group identity and the demonization of “the other” within the CMC stream. These analyses are crucial to gauging the impact of the online content, which content has the largest and most consistent response, and what influence these phenomena have on the individual user/member toward identification with the extremist narrative and potential engagement in extremist activity or violent extremism.

Full stream investigation

Groups where primary posts are provided by users other than the group administrator are of considerable interest. In social media or other CMC groups where non-administrator users are allowed to provide primary posts, the opportunity to further understand the dynamic of the group is presented. Such a group will also allow for a more in-depth development of social network analysis. By examining which users provide the most impactful primary posts, as measured by the number of

comments to those posts, and then evaluating which users participate in these strings will enhance the understanding of this area of research. This analysis is possible using the existing parsing software. Once the data set is coded, social network tools can be used to develop more specialized data sets for network analysis which can then be tied with other variables including word usage and participation over time. Understanding how the users interact with each other will assist in identifying facilitators within the group dynamic.

Understanding the role of traditional media

As discussed previously, there is good anecdotal evidence to support the idea that online social movements like the EDL, OWS, and the Arab Spring were facilitated by traditional media. Further, there exists a question as to whether these movements would have been able to gather the huge number of online supporters without traditional media bringing the movement into millions of households via radio, print, and television. This seems an interesting avenue for further investigation and would require a much longer study that would involve not only movements that seem to resonate with the public, but also groups that fail to acquire any traction due to the lack of traditional media coverage or that fall out of favor due to waning coverage.

To accomplish this task, a formal research design will be needed including a budget to support the research team, the development of new research tools, and to conduct the investigation, analysis, and complete the final report. It is likely that this project could include a broader goal to administer a questionnaire during national efforts in the United States or the European Union to measure individual participation in online movements and what role traditional media and new media played in facilitating that initial engagement.

Reading the Jihadi's mail and/or mind

One of the primary hopes for the future is to gain access to the social media or CMC traffic of an existing terrorist group for analysis. Being based in the United States, the previously discussed concerns over the UK Terrorism Acts are mitigated and by informing Federal agencies of these activities, this research can be done without fear of arrest or prosecution. Beginning in the fall of 2013 this researcher was provided access to translated Jihadi CMC traffic via a subscription to the Site Intelligence Group's 'Jihadi Threat Monitoring Service'. Access to this information has solidified the need for a collection and analysis protocol to understand this CMC traffic. While the research design is still being developed, the intent is to examine jihadi communication just prior to and for a period following the dates of significant drone or air strikes by the United States on al Qaeda and its affiliates. There is great speculation as to the real impact of these attacks on the psyche of the various jihadi movements and this research will provide insight into how these attacks are perceived. Additionally, it will be important to understand how the jihadis are using these attacks and their CMC communications to highlight collateral damage (the death of innocent civilians) to build or maintain indigenous support for their efforts. This researcher is unaware of any published work in this area and hopes to begin collection toward both a qualitative and quantitative analysis of this phenomenon following the completion of this thesis.

Final thoughts

Coming full circle, it is important to consider whether the questions first posited in this project have been answered and what do they tell us about the value of social media when engaging in collective action or political activism. Certainly, it has been shown that it was indeed possible to conduct this research in a responsible and legal

way. The collection and presentation protocols allowed for the protection of the identities of the research subjects and the engagement with the CTIRU allowed the project to move forward without any substantive legal concerns. And the analysis of the EDL, the subsequent post hack, and OWS online collections provided findings that will hopefully facilitate further research into social media as a driver and potential force-multiplier of extremist action.

What became evident from the research is that the problem of activism vs. slacktivism is alive and well in the offline activities of the EDL, and even more so within the virtual realm. That only 5.5% of the members took the time to participate in the online dialog supports the idea that many feel that simply clicking “Like” is engaging in activism (Morozov, 2011; Shirky, 2008). Further, that only thirty-three users, 0.87% of those who actually posted to the page, could be viewed as what Hoffer (1951) calls “true believers” supports the ideas set forth by scholars that the online phenomenon provides weak ties due to the ease with which members can/cannot participate without repercussions (Morozov, 2011; Shirky, 2008). The use of URL links and YouTube videos was found to be of interest with certain categories of videos generating significant traffic, and the analysis of the various categories of posts showed an organized effort to promote the agenda of the group and characterize Muslims as the other or the foreign devil.

The ability to recreate the findings of this research with other data was essential to the validity of this work. The observations made regarding participation within the Occupy Wall Street group, which was nearly three times larger than the EDL were significant. With a member participation rate of approximately 5.5%, which mirrors that of the EDL, there is support for the idea that social media, and particularly Facebook, may not be the powerhouse for activism that some have suggested. This

analysis where N=all has provided the quantitative analysis that is much needed in this field and provides substance to the anecdotal evidence regarding Facebook participation that has been provided in the literature previously.

The analysis of social media and other big data is a growing field of research and it is hoped that this paper will be seen as an early example of responsible practices. In this vein, future efforts will involve working to develop interdisciplinary projects between social science and computer science/engineering that will enhance the analytical capabilities of the research while continuing to protect the individual user who becomes the subject of this research. One of the fascinating outcomes of this project has been realizing the capabilities of software products that are specifically designed to facilitate social science research, when working in concert with computer scientists. This interdisciplinary effort is a benefit, not only to the social scientist, but this researcher has found that the computer scientists benefit greatly when they are exposed to social science concepts and begin to think outside the box of *0's and 1's* (binary code) and work to incorporate some of these lessons learned into the design of these new tools. Likewise, it was found that engaging with computer scientists can be useful in the future when considering the development of new research designs and analytic tools. Particularly in the area of countering extremism and terrorism, given the use of social media and other CMC's by these groups, the collaborative efforts of social scientists and computer scientists will likely prove invaluable. Further, as social media and other CMC come to permeate various aspects of our lives, the ability to understand the impact of those communications on the individual areas of interest and the research subjects becomes more important.

With this in mind, the need to be diligent in the protection of individual civil liberties cannot be lost. From user identity protection to understanding the demands

academic investigation in the area of social media places on the researcher; continued work is needed in this area. An examination of marketing research in the area of social media makes one very aware of what type of data mining is possible outside the academic realm and research subjects should be protected when academics engage in this type of investigation. This issue becomes more difficult when studying extremist or terrorist groups. As this research has shown, simply being a ‘member’, by virtue of liking a page, does not seem to make one an active member. Care should be taken when seeking to identify ‘members’ of an extremist group as one should not mistake infrequent participation for active engagement and identification. When anonymization can be guaranteed, this type of investigation into extremist activity in CMC environments can be useful toward identifying the patterns of participation and engagement that lead to extremist activity and violent extremism and in doing so facilitate protecting the public good and enhancing both individual and national security.

As this thesis was being finalized, terrorist acts by the Islamist State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) including the beheading of a British aid worker, and the knowledge that there were hundreds of UK citizens who had traveled to Iraq and Syria to fight with ISIS prompted Prime Minister Cameron to speak about the need for tougher anti-terror laws in the shadow of the ISIS threat to the homeland specifically and more generally the threat posed by extremism. In his comments to Parliament on 1 September 2014 he stated:

“As I’ve said all along, this is not a knee-jerk response or sweeping, blanket changes that would be ineffective,” he said. “It’s not about just new powers,

but about how we tackle extremism in all forms. ... We will in the end defeat this extremism.”(FoxNews.com, 1 September 2014)

One wonders if his comments were pertaining only to Islamist extremism or if tackling “extremism in all forms” will extend to the far-right extremism that is personified by the English Defence League.

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Appendix 1 - UTREC Approval



University of St Andrews

International Relations School Ethics Committee

14 February 2010
Ted Reynolds

Ethics Reference No: <i>Please quote this ref on all correspondence</i>	IR 6129
Project Title:	Understanding Vulnerabilities to Extremism in the UK and the Influence of the Internet
Researchers Name(s):	Teddy Reynolds, Dr. Tristan Henderson and Dr. Saleem Bhatti, Department of Computer Science, University of St. Andrews.
Supervisor(s):	Roger MacGinty

Thank you for submitting your application which was considered at the <name> School Ethics Committee meeting on the <date>. The following documents were reviewed:

- | | | |
|----|--|----------|
| 1. | Ethical Application Form | 27/01/10 |
| 2. | Participant Information Sheet | n/a |
| 3. | Consent Form | n/a |
| 4. | Debriefing Form | n/a |
| 5. | External Permissions | n/a |
| 6. | Letters to Parents/Children/Headteacher etc... | n/a |
| 7. | Questionnaires | n/a |
| 8. | Enhanced Disclosure Scotland and Equivalent | n/a |
- (as necessary)

The University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC) approves this study from an ethical point of view. Please note that where approval is given by a School Ethics Committee that committee is part of UTREC and is delegated to act for UTREC.

Approval is given for three years. Projects, which have not commenced within two years of original approval, must be re-submitted to your School Ethics Committee.

You must inform your School Ethics Committee when the research has been completed. If you are unable to complete your research within the 3 three year validation period, you will be required to write to your School Ethics Committee and to UTREC (where approval was given by UTREC) to request an extension or you will need to re-apply.

Any serious adverse events or significant change which occurs in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration, must be reported immediately to the School Ethics Committee, and an Ethical Amendment Form submitted where appropriate.

Approval is given on the understanding that the 'Guidelines for Ethical Research Practice' (<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/UTRECguidelines%20Feb%2008.pdf>) are adhered to.

Yours sincerely

Dr. J.S. Murer
Convenor of the School Ethics Committee

Appendix 2 - EDL Mission Statement

EDL MISSION STATEMENT

(1) HUMAN RIGHTS: Protecting And Promoting Human Rights

The English Defence League (EDL) is a human rights organisation that exists to protect the inalienable rights of all people to protest against radical Islam's encroachment into the lives of non Muslims. It also recognises that Muslims themselves are frequently the main victims of some Islamic traditions and practices. The Government should ensure the individual human rights of members of the Muslim community to openly criticise Islamic orthodoxy, to challenge Islamic community leaders without fear of retribution, to receive full equality before the law (including equal rights for Muslim women), and to leave Islam if they see fit and to do so without fear or censure. Muslims have the right to demand reform of their religion to make it more relevant to the needs of the modern world, including the need to fully respect other groups in society without fear of retribution. It calls upon the Government to repeal legislation that prevents effective freedom of speech that is essential if the human rights abuses that sometimes manifest themselves around Islam are to be stopped.

The EDL believes that radical Islam has a stranglehold on British Muslims. It keeps them fearful and isolated, especially the women that it encases in the Burqa. It misrepresents their views, stifles freedom of expression, and radicalises their children, whilst continually doing a discredit to those who do wish to peacefully co-exist with their fellow Britons.

(2) DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW: Promoting Democracy And The Rule Of Law By Opposing Sharia

The European Court of Human Rights has declared that "sharia is incompatible with the fundamental principles of democracy". We have seen in recent years a great deal of accommodation with sharia norms based on the premise that sharia rules can be simply attached to our existing traditions and customs. In reality sharia is an alternative to our legal, political, and social systems. Encouragement of halal food, Islamic courts, and the demand to respect Islam are all aspects of sharia designed to undermine our established way of life on the road to the crystallisation of the full sharia alternative. Sharia law makes a fundamental distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims and the EDL will never allow this sort of iniquitous apartheid system to take root in our country. The EDL will therefore oppose sharia appeasement in all its forms.

(3) PUBLIC EDUCATION: Ensuring That The Public Get A Balanced Picture Of Islam

A central part of the EDL's mission is public education. The British political and media establishment have, for a long time, been presenting a very sanitised and therefore inaccurate view of Islam shaped by the needs of policy makers rather than the needs of the public. This has acted as a barrier to informed policy making and made the solution of real problems impossible. In pursuing this self defeating and destructive policy, the Government has effectively been acting as the propaganda arm of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The EDL is committed to a campaign of public education to ensure that all aspects of Islam that impact on our society are brought into the open so that they can be debated in an open and honest way. It believes that only by looking at all the facts can society be most effectively and humanly governed. If there are aspects of Muslim tradition that encourage the activities of Islamic radicals and criminals then these need to be properly addressed without fear of accusations of racism or xenophobia. The public must have a more balanced and less sanitised view of Islam that allows it to ensure that decision makers are held to account for their policy making choices, choices that affect the harmony and security of the nation.

The EDL promotes the understanding of Islam and the implications for non Muslims forced to live alongside it. Islam is not just a religious system but a political and social ideology that seeks to dominate all non-believers and impose a harsh legal system that and rejects the democratic process. It runs counter to all that we hold dear within our British liberal, democracy.

(4) RESPECTING TRADITION: Promoting The Traditions And Culture Of England While At The Same Time Being Open To Embrace The Best That Other Cultures Can Offer

The EDL believes that English Culture has the right to exist and prosper in England. It

recognises that culture is not static and that over time natural change takes place and other cultures make contributions that make our culture stronger and more vibrant. However, this does not give license to policy makers to deliberately undermine our culture and impose non-English cultures on the English people in their own land. If people migrate to this country then they should be expected to respect our culture, its laws, and traditions and not expect their own cultures to be promoted by agencies of the state. The best of their cultures will be absorbed naturally and we will all be united by the enhanced culture that results.

The EDL is therefore keen to draw its support from all races, all faiths, all political and lifestyle persuasions. Under its umbrella all people in England, whatever their background, or origin can stand united in a desire to stop the imposition of the rules of Islam on non believers. In order to ensure the continuity of our culture and its institutions, the EDL stands opposed to the creeping Islamisation of our country because that presents itself as an undemocratic alternative to our cherished way of life.

Our armed forces stand up and risk their lives every day in order to protect our culture and democratic way of life. They, also, are inclusive of all England's diversity and are a shining example of what a people can achieve in unity. The EDL is therefore committed to opposing any and all abuse that our men and women in uniform are subjected to and will campaign for legal remedies to ensure that those working within these important institutions are not exposed to abuse or aggression from within our country.

*(5) INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK: Working In Solidarity With Others Around The World
The EDL is keen to join with others who share its values, wherever they are in the world, and from whatever cultural background they derive. It believes that the demand for sharia is global and therefore needs to be tackled at a global as well as national level this demand is never realised. The EDL will therefore have an international outlook to enhance and strengthen its domestic efforts.¹⁶*

¹⁶ EDL Facebook information, accessed 31 January 2011.

Appendix 3 - Authorization Letter From ACPO/CTIRU



Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland

10 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0NN.
Tel: (020) 7084 8993/Fax (020) 7084 8841
Mob: 07738 648 712
Email: jayne.snelgrove@acpo.pnn.police.uk
Website: www.acpo.police.uk

Head of the Counter Terrorism Internet referral Unit
Detective Chief Inspector Jayne Snelgrove

Date 7th June 2010

Mr Ted Reynolds
Department of International Relations
University of St. Andrews

Dear Mr Reynolds,

It was good to meet with you recently and to discuss in more detail the nature of your research. The subject of the research for your PHD – ‘The collection and analysis of Facebook and Twitter activity associated with extremist groups to understand the potential radicalising effects of these social networking sites’ is of significant interest not only to myself and my team but will undoubtedly prove useful for the development of future strategy in this area.

If my understanding is correct you are seeking to extract current and historical activity from Facebook and Twitter using computer specialists. Once the collection period is complete you will analyse posts on these social networking sites associated with extreme Islamist as well as far right ant-immigrant / anti- Muslim extremist groups. The aim is to understand the influence that sites associated with extremist groups have on individual participants and whether this influence is a result of social interaction online or a more systematic progression related to exposure to supplemental online content linked with comments posted on Facebook and Twitter.

As discussed this is a significant piece of research that will increase our understanding of the radicalisation process, particularly how it can occur on-line. As Head of the Counter Terrorism Internet referral unit I am keen to be a beneficiary of this work and am pleased to support the work by yourself and your team as part of St Andrew’s University. However as we also discussed this research has its difficulties and it is important that you and your team take every precaution to ensure you do not fall foul of UK Terrorism Law.

Your research overview provided to me on 14th May clearly demonstrates that you and your team are aware of the legality of the research that you are considering and the overview actually quotes the Terrorism Act (TACT) 2006 with respect to the possession and dissemination of terrorist publications. You have sensibly engaged with UK Police via me to ensure that your research is understood and that those agencies working in this area are informed of your work which I will ensure takes place. I would recommend that you also make sure you are fully cognisant of the Terrorism Act 2000 and I would particularly refer you to Sec 57 & 58 that relate to the possession of articles connected to acts of terrorism and the collection or making a record of information of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism or to possess a document of record of this type.

After reading your research proposal which includes a detailed description as to how you are going to collect, analyse and dispose of the data from these extremists sites I am satisfied that as long as you and your team, which includes the research team from the Computer Science Department headed by Professor Saleem Bhatti and Dr. Tristan Henderson, and your supervisors Dr. Roger MacGinty and Dr. Jeffrey Murer, remain within these parameters that you will not be in breach of the Law. Although I am not able to give an assurance that you would not be prosecuted if a breach of the Terrorism Act was considered to have taken place by you or your team. However UK law enforcement is in the business of reducing the risk to the UK from Terrorism and where the use of Terrorism legislation is necessary it would be for that purpose. We are not seeking to prosecute those undertaking legitimate research projects that are likely to assist our efforts in the longer term.

You should however also bear in mind when you share the findings, the possibility of contravening Sec 1 & 2 of TACT 2006 as these offences may be committed if an individual is shown to have been reckless – this is where someone is aware of the risk but takes it unreasonably. You should therefore consider ways to measure any risks associated with presenting or sharing your findings.

I hope that both our teams can benefit from a mutually supportive relationship over the period of your research and that this will also build on an already strong relationship that UK CT policing has with St Andrews. If I can be of anymore assistance please let me know and I look forward to working with you over the forth coming months.

Good luck with the project

Yours sincerely

Jayne Snelgrove

Cc:

Assistant Chief Constable John Wright, ACPO National Coordinator Prevent

Dr. Roger MacGinty, Department of International Relation St Andrew's University

Appendix 4 – Articles per day

Date	Frequency				
10-AUG-2009	2	25-SEP-2009	2	16-NOV-2009	3
11-AUG-2009	4	26-SEP-2009	1	17-NOV-2009	2
12-AUG-2009	1	27-SEP-2009	1	19-NOV-2009	2
13-AUG-2009	3	28-SEP-2009	1	21-NOV-2009	1
14-AUG-2009	3	29-SEP-2009	3	23-NOV-2009	3
15-AUG-2009	1	04-OCT-2009	2	25-NOV-2009	2
16-AUG-2009	1	05-OCT-2009	3	26-NOV-2009	1
17-AUG-2009	1	07-OCT-2009	4	27-NOV-2009	2
18-AUG-2009	1	08-OCT-2009	3	28-NOV-2009	1
20-AUG-2009	1	09-OCT-2009	1	01-DEC-2009	1
21-AUG-2009	1	10-OCT-2009	5	02-DEC-2009	1
22-AUG-2009	3	11-OCT-2009	14	03-DEC-2009	4
23-AUG-2009	1	12-OCT-2009	6	05-DEC-2009	6
24-AUG-2009	3	13-OCT-2009	3	06-DEC-2009	6
26-AUG-2009	3	14-OCT-2009	1	07-DEC-2009	3
27-AUG-2009	2	15-OCT-2009	2	09-DEC-2009	3
28-AUG-2009	2	16-OCT-2009	1	12-DEC-2009	1
30-AUG-2009	2	17-OCT-2009	1	13-DEC-2009	2
03-SEP-2009	3	18-OCT-2009	17	14-DEC-2009	1
04-SEP-2009	4	19-OCT-2009	4	15-DEC-2009	1
05-SEP-2009	2	20-OCT-2009	2	16-DEC-2009	1
06-SEP-2009	22	21-OCT-2009	2	19-DEC-2009	1
07-SEP-2009	27	22-OCT-2009	1	20-DEC-2009	1
08-SEP-2009	12	23-OCT-2009	1	22-DEC-2009	1
09-SEP-2009	4	24-OCT-2009	1	30-DEC-2009	1
10-SEP-2009	2	25-OCT-2009	8	02-JAN-2010	1
11-SEP-2009	8	26-OCT-2009	2	04-JAN-2010	1
12-SEP-2009	11	27-OCT-2009	3	06-JAN-2010	2
13-SEP-2009	13	29-OCT-2009	2	07-JAN-2010	1
14-SEP-2009	18	30-OCT-2009	1	08-JAN-2010	1
15-SEP-2009	3	31-OCT-2009	3	09-JAN-2010	1
16-SEP-2009	4	01-NOV-2009	3	10-JAN-2010	1
17-SEP-2009	6	02-NOV-2009	5	11-JAN-2010	7
18-SEP-2009	12	03-NOV-2009	1	13-JAN-2010	1
19-SEP-2009	2	04-NOV-2009	3	14-JAN-2010	3
20-SEP-2009	4	05-NOV-2009	1	18-JAN-2010	1
21-SEP-2009	2	08-NOV-2009	3	21-JAN-2010	3
22-SEP-2009	4	09-NOV-2009	1	22-JAN-2010	2
23-SEP-2009	4	13-NOV-2009	5	23-JAN-2010	3
24-SEP-2009	2	14-NOV-2009	2	24-JAN-2010	2
		15-NOV-2009	7	25-JAN-2010	6

26-JAN-2010	5
27-JAN-2010	3
28-JAN-2010	1
29-JAN-2010	1
30-JAN-2010	2
04-FEB-2010	1
05-FEB-2010	1
09-FEB-2010	1
10-FEB-2010	2
11-FEB-2010	1
17-FEB-2010	2
18-FEB-2010	4
19-FEB-2010	5
20-FEB-2010	4
21-FEB-2010	2
23-FEB-2010	1
25-FEB-2010	1
27-FEB-2010	2
01-MAR-2010	3
03-MAR-2010	1
04-MAR-2010	2
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06-MAR-2010	19
07-MAR-2010	2
09-MAR-2010	1
10-MAR-2010	2
11-MAR-2010	2
12-MAR-2010	2
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14-MAR-2010	1
15-MAR-2010	2
16-MAR-2010	1
17-MAR-2010	3
19-MAR-2010	2
20-MAR-2010	4
21-MAR-2010	11
22-MAR-2010	7
23-MAR-2010	4
24-MAR-2010	1
25-MAR-2010	4
26-MAR-2010	1
28-MAR-2010	3
29-MAR-2010	1
30-MAR-2010	5
31-MAR-2010	1

01-APR-2010	3
02-APR-2010	2
03-APR-2010	4
04-APR-2010	9
05-APR-2010	4
06-APR-2010	1
08-APR-2010	1
09-APR-2010	1
11-APR-2010	1
13-APR-2010	1
14-APR-2010	1
18-APR-2010	4
22-APR-2010	1
23-APR-2010	7
24-APR-2010	3
26-APR-2010	2
27-APR-2010	1
29-APR-2010	2
30-APR-2010	1
01-MAY-2010	1
02-MAY-2010	2
03-MAY-2010	1
04-MAY-2010	4
05-MAY-2010	1
06-MAY-2010	3
09-MAY-2010	1
15-MAY-2010	4
16-MAY-2010	2
18-MAY-2010	1
19-MAY-2010	2
20-MAY-2010	4
24-MAY-2010	2
25-MAY-2010	4
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29-MAY-2010	7
30-MAY-2010	3
31-MAY-2010	7
01-JUN-2010	4
02-JUN-2010	3
03-JUN-2010	5
04-JUN-2010	3
05-JUN-2010	3
06-JUN-2010	2

07-JUN-2010	5
08-JUN-2010	4
11-JUN-2010	1
12-JUN-2010	2
13-JUN-2010	1
16-JUN-2010	4
17-JUN-2010	3
18-JUN-2010	2
19-JUN-2010	1
20-JUN-2010	1
21-JUN-2010	5
22-JUN-2010	1
23-JUN-2010	1
24-JUN-2010	2
25-JUN-2010	1
26-JUN-2010	1
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07-JUL-2010	1
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10-JUL-2010	1
11-JUL-2010	1
13-JUL-2010	2
14-JUL-2010	2
16-JUL-2010	2
17-JUL-2010	1
18-JUL-2010	6
19-JUL-2010	5
20-JUL-2010	1
21-JUL-2010	4
22-JUL-2010	2
23-JUL-2010	1
26-JUL-2010	2
28-JUL-2010	2
29-JUL-2010	4
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06-AUG-2010	1
07-AUG-2010	2
09-AUG-2010	1
10-AUG-2010	1
13-AUG-2010	2
17-AUG-2010	1
18-AUG-2010	3

19-AUG-2010	3
20-AUG-2010	3
21-AUG-2010	5
22-AUG-2010	6
23-AUG-2010	4
24-AUG-2010	1
25-AUG-2010	2
26-AUG-2010	2
28-AUG-2010	11
29-AUG-2010	11
30-AUG-2010	14
31-AUG-2010	4
01-SEP-2010	1
03-SEP-2010	1
05-SEP-2010	2
08-SEP-2010	2
12-SEP-2010	5
13-SEP-2010	5
14-SEP-2010	2
15-SEP-2010	3
17-SEP-2010	2
19-SEP-2010	2
23-SEP-2010	1
24-SEP-2010	9
25-SEP-2010	2
27-SEP-2010	3
29-SEP-2010	4
30-SEP-2010	1
03-OCT-2010	1
04-OCT-2010	3
05-OCT-2010	8
06-OCT-2010	3
07-OCT-2010	6
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11-OCT-2010	6
12-OCT-2010	5
13-OCT-2010	1
15-OCT-2010	2
16-OCT-2010	3
19-OCT-2010	1
21-OCT-2010	1
22-OCT-2010	2

23-OCT-2010	2
25-OCT-2010	12
26-OCT-2010	4
27-OCT-2010	2
28-OCT-2010	2
29-OCT-2010	2
30-OCT-2010	1
31-OCT-2010	2
01-NOV-2010	6
02-NOV-2010	2
03-NOV-2010	2
04-NOV-2010	4
05-NOV-2010	3
09-NOV-2010	2
10-NOV-2010	3
11-NOV-2010	3
12-NOV-2010	12
13-NOV-2010	13
14-NOV-2010	5
15-NOV-2010	2
16-NOV-2010	2
17-NOV-2010	1
19-NOV-2010	5
20-NOV-2010	15
21-NOV-2010	5
22-NOV-2010	4
23-NOV-2010	6
24-NOV-2010	1
25-NOV-2010	2
26-NOV-2010	2
27-NOV-2010	11
28-NOV-2010	4
29-NOV-2010	36
30-NOV-2010	6
01-DEC-2010	2
03-DEC-2010	1
04-DEC-2010	1
05-DEC-2010	3
06-DEC-2010	1
07-DEC-2010	3
08-DEC-2010	3
09-DEC-2010	1
11-DEC-2010	2
12-DEC-2010	4

13-DEC-2010	34
14-DEC-2010	25
15-DEC-2010	9
16-DEC-2010	2
17-DEC-2010	1
18-DEC-2010	3
19-DEC-2010	4
20-DEC-2010	3
22-DEC-2010	2
23-DEC-2010	5
24-DEC-2010	1
26-DEC-2010	2
27-DEC-2010	2
28-DEC-2010	1
29-DEC-2010	1
30-DEC-2010	2
02-JAN-2011	2
04-JAN-2011	3
05-JAN-2011	4
06-JAN-2011	1
08-JAN-2011	3
09-JAN-2011	1
10-JAN-2011	3
11-JAN-2011	1
12-JAN-2011	2
14-JAN-2011	1
15-JAN-2011	3
16-JAN-2011	2
19-JAN-2011	12
20-JAN-2011	1
21-JAN-2011	7
22-JAN-2011	1
23-JAN-2011	4
24-JAN-2011	1
26-JAN-2011	4
31-JAN-2011	5
02-FEB-2011	2
03-FEB-2011	3
04-FEB-2011	6
Total	1321

Appendix 5 – EDL Mission Statement

EDL MISSION STATEMENT

(1) HUMAN RIGHTS: Protecting And Promoting Human Rights

The English Defence League (EDL) is a human rights organisation that exists to protect the inalienable rights of all people to protest against radical Islam's encroachment into the lives of non Muslims. It also recognises that Muslims themselves are frequently the main victims of some Islamic traditions and practices. The Government should ensure the individual human rights of members of the Muslim community to openly criticise Islamic orthodoxy, to challenge Islamic community leaders without fear of retribution, to receive full equality before the law (including equal rights for Muslim women), and to leave Islam if they see fit and to do so without fear or censure. Muslims have the right to demand reform of their religion to make it more relevant to the needs of the modern world, including the need to fully respect other groups in society without fear of retribution. It calls upon the Government to repeal legislation that prevents effective freedom of speech that is essential if the human rights abuses that sometimes manifest themselves around Islam are to be stopped.

The EDL believes that radical Islam has a stranglehold on British Muslims. It keeps them fearful and isolated, especially the women that it encases in the Burqa. It misrepresents their views, stifles freedom of expression, and radicalises their children, whilst continually doing a discredit to those who do wish to peacefully co-exist with their fellow Britons.

(2) DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW: Promoting Democracy And The Rule Of Law By Opposing Sharia

The European Court of Human Rights has declared that "sharia is incompatible with the fundamental principles of democracy". We have seen in recent years a great deal of accommodation with sharia norms based on the premise that sharia rules can be simply attached to our existing traditions and customs. In reality sharia is an alternative to our legal, political, and social systems. Encouragement of halal food, Islamic courts, and the demand to respect Islam are all aspects of sharia designed to undermine our established way of life on the road to the crystallisation of the full sharia alternative. Sharia law makes a fundamental distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims and the EDL will never allow this sort of iniquitous apartheid system to take root in our country. The EDL will therefore oppose sharia appeasement in all its forms.

(3) PUBLIC EDUCATION: Ensuring That The Public Get A Balanced Picture Of Islam

A central part of the EDL's mission is public education. The British political and media establishment have, for a long time, been presenting a very sanitised and therefore inaccurate view of Islam shaped by the needs of policy makers rather than

the needs of the public. This has acted as a barrier to informed policy making and made the solution of real problems impossible. In pursuing this self defeating and destructive policy, the Government has effectively been acting as the propaganda arm of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The EDL is committed to a campaign of public education to ensure that all aspects of Islam that impact on our society are brought into the open so that they can be debated in an open and honest way. It believes that only by looking at all the facts can society be most effectively and humanly governed. If there are aspects of Muslim tradition that encourage the activities of Islamic radicals and criminals then these need to be properly addressed without fear of accusations of racism or xenophobia. The public must have a more balanced and less sanitised view of Islam that allows it to ensure that decision makers are held to account for their policy making choices, choices that affect the harmony and security of the nation.

The EDL promotes the understanding of Islam and the implications for non Muslims forced to live alongside it. Islam is not just a religious system but a political and social ideology that seeks to dominate all non-believers and impose a harsh legal system that and rejects the democratic process. It runs counter to all that we hold dear within our British liberal, democracy.

(4) RESPECTING TRADITION: Promoting The Traditions And Culture Of England While At The Same Time Being Open To Embrace The Best That Other Cultures Can Offer

The EDL believes that English Culture has the right to exist and prosper in England. It recognises that culture is not static and that over time natural change takes place and other cultures make contributions that make our culture stronger and more vibrant. However, this does not give license to policy makers to deliberately undermine our culture and impose non-English cultures on the English people in their own land. If people migrate to this country then they should be expected to respect our culture, its laws, and traditions and not expect their own cultures to be promoted by agencies of the state. The best of their cultures will be absorbed naturally and we will all be united by the enhanced culture that results.

The EDL is therefore keen to draw its support from all races, all faiths, all political and lifestyle persuasions. Under its umbrella all people in England, whatever their background, or origin can stand united in a desire to stop the imposition of the rules of Islam on non believers. In order to ensure the continuity of our culture and its institutions, the EDL stands opposed to the creeping Islamisation of our country because that presents itself as an undemocratic alternative to our cherished way of life.

Our armed forces stand up and risk their lives every day in order to protect our culture and democratic way of life. They, also, are inclusive of all England's diversity and are a shining example of what a people can achieve in unity. The EDL is therefore committed to opposing any and all abuse that our men and women in uniform are subjected to and will campaign for legal remedies to ensure that those working within these important institutions are not exposed to abuse or aggression from within our country.

(5) INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK: Working In Solidarity With Others Around The World

The EDL is keen to join with others who share its values, wherever they are in the world, and from whatever cultural background they derive. It believes that the demand for sharia is global and therefore needs to be tackled at a global as well as national level this demand is never realised. The EDL will therefore have an international outlook to enhance and strengthen its domestic efforts.

Appendix 6 – List of URL Links in Data Set

URL links in entire dataset	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Posts with no link	19024	98.5	98.5	98.5
WWW.YOUTUBE.COM	96	0.5	0.5	99
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM	87	0.5	0.5	99.5
WWW.BBC.CO.UK	21	0.1	0.1	99.6
WWW.GUARDIAN.CO.UK	5	0	0	99.6
WWW.CHANNEL4.COM	4	0	0	99.6
WWW.DAILYMAIL.CO.UK	4	0	0	99.6
WWW.DAILYSTAR.CO.UK	3	0	0	99.6
WWW.THESUN.CO.UK	3	0	0	99.7
WWW.ANIMALAID.ORG.UK	2	0	0	99.7
WWW.APOSTATESOFISLAM.COM	2	0	0	99.7
WWW.FLICKR.COM	2	0	0	99.7
WWW.ISRAELNATIONALNEWS.COM	2	0	0	99.7
WWW.TELEGRAPH.CO.UK	2	0	0	99.7
WWW.THERELIGIONOFPEACE.COM	2	0	0	99.7
WWW.THISISDEVON.CO.UK	2	0	0	99.7
WWW.1001INVENTIONS.COM	1	0	0	99.7
WWW.AOLNEWS.COM	1	0	0	99.7
WWW.ASIAONE.COM	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.AXCIS.CO.UK	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.BIRMINGHAMMAIL.NET	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.BIRMINGHAMPOST.NET	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.CHEATSGURU.COM	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.CITY-JOURNAL.ORG	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.COVERITLIVE.COM	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.DISABILITYSECRETS.COM	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.EADT.CO.UK	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.EBAUMSWORLD.COM	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.EDP24.CO.UK	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.ENGLISHFORUMS.COM	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.EXPRESS.CO.UK	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.FAITHFREEDOM.ORG	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.FEARANDHOPE.ORG.UK	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.FRIENDSSHELTER.COMWE	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.GETREADING.CO.UK	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.GOOGLE.CO.UK	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.INTERNATIONALFREEPRESSOCIETY.ORG	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.IPETITIONS.COM	1	0	0	99.8
WWW.ISLAM-INSIDE.CO.UK	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.JPOST.COM	1	0	0	99.9

WWW.JUSTGIVING.COM	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.LANCASHIRETELEGRAPH.CO.UK	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.LAWFULREBELLION.ORG.UK	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.LIBERTARIANREPUBLICAN.NET	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.LIVELEAK.COM	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.LYNNNEWS.CO.UK	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.MARKSQUOTES.COM	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.MARYLANDTHURSDAYMEETING.COM	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.MEATRADENEWSAILY.CO.UK	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.MEMRI.ORG	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.MUSLIMSAGAINSTCRUSADES.COM	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.OXFORDMAIL.CO.UK	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.POINTDEBASCULECANADA.CA	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.PRESSTV.IR	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.REFUGEECOUNCIL.ORG.UK	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.SHOEBAT.COM	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.SOCIALISTWORKER.CO.UK	1	0	0	99.9
WWW.SPIKED-ONLINE.COM	1	0	0	100
WWW.STANDUPAMERICANOW.ORG	1	0	0	100
WWW.THEBLAZE.COM IN AMERICA:HTTP:	1	0	0	100
WWW.THEFIRSTPOST.CO.UK	1	0	0	100
WWW.THEJAKARTAPOST.COM	1	0	0	100
WWW.TIME.COM	1	0	0	100
WWW.TOWERHAMLETS.GOV.UK	1	0	0	100
WWW.TPUC.ORG	1	0	0	100
WWW.WBIR.COM	1	0	0	100
WWW.WESTERNYOUTH.ORG	1	0	0	100
Total	19312	100	100	