Mapping Social Media Networks in Youth Organizing

Michael P. Evans
Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, USA
evansmp2@miamioh.edu

Abstract
New social media provide access to knowledge through the creation of social networks and serve as a means to foster collaboration, enhance communication, and coordinate collective action. Among community-based organizations working on education issues there is a growing social media presence, with many groups now using popular social media like Twitter or Facebook to connect with organization members and the public. This article focuses on one youth organization’s creation of a social media network using Twitter. The author uses social network analysis to identify the actors who constitute the egocentric Twitter connections of Youth Organizing Today (YOT) and the structural properties of this network. By identifying key actors within social media networks youth organizers will be better prepared to maximize the benefits of social media and enhance their ability to influence education policymaking.

Keywords: Youth organizing, community organizing, social media, social network analysis, educational change

Introduction
Social media have played an increasingly important role among activists seeking new means to communicate with both like-minded individuals and the general public. For example, Twitter, a microblogging social media site was used in recent high profile political actions in Wisconsin (to protest revisions to collective bargaining law) and Egypt (anti-government protests against the Mubarak regime) (Kravets, 2011). Among community-based organizations (CBOs) working on education issues there is a growing social media presence, with many groups now using popular web sites like Facebook to connect with their members and the public (McDonald et al., 2011). New social media can provide access to knowledge through the creation of social networks and serve as a means to foster collaboration, enhance communication, and coordinate collective action (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Shirky, 2011). A social media network is a social structure that is made up of actors using online tools to support social interaction (Hansen et al., 2011). There is currently a dearth of empirical research regarding the structure of these networks and their use as an organizing tool. In this article the author first examines the content of tweets (140 character messages) generated by the group Youth Organizing Today (YOT)
to better understand how youth organizers are using Twitter. Next, social network analysis (SNA) is employed to examine the relationships between actors who interact with YOT on Twitter. Based on various SNA measures the findings suggest that YOT does participate in a Twitter based network and that community-based organizations and non-mainstream media outlets hold substantial power within this network. Through mapping the Twitter account of YOT, both organizers and researchers can gain new insights regarding how an understanding of network structure might be leveraged to further support the achievement of organizational goals and the potential of social media as a technological tool that can be used to influence other education stakeholders.

Youth Organizing and Social Media Networks

Over the past twenty years families and students with a desire to influence education policy have increasingly sought out CBOs to support their efforts. Research indicates that community organizing is one effective CBO model that can play an important role in education policymaking by helping to bridge differences between schools and communities (Hands, 2005; Lopez et al., 2005) and by empowering disenfranchised populations through leadership development and capacity building (McLaughlin et al., 2009; Orr, 2007; Warren, 2001). Youth organizing, considered a subset of community organizing, focuses on the development and participation of young people as community change agents. Youth organizing groups can be independent or have some affiliation with an adult organization. The work of youth organizing groups can utilize a youth-led or an intergenerational approach to address a broad range of community issues (Renee, 2011). Social capital, the value of relationships between individuals or organizations, is central to the success of youth organizers (Baum, 2003; Gold et al., 2002; Shirley, 1997, 2002; Warren, 2001). Relationship building provides increased access to knowledge and can generate networks of social support that can be leveraged to influence education policy (Granovetter, 1973). The emergence of social media, with its capacity to create, organize and expand networks, is perceived as a potentially valuable tool for youth organizers (McDonald et al., 2001).

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), “Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (p. 61).” Numerous social media fit within this broad definition including popular sites like YouTube (a video sharing site) and Wikipedia (a user generated encyclopedia). However, the social dimension of social media sites can vary significantly from platform to platform. This is an important consideration for youth organizing groups that are concerned with building relationships in order to generate power. Expanding on the seminal work of boyd and Ellison (2007), Kane and associates (in press) have developed a framework to help differentiate between social media and the creation of social media networks. The authors contend that a social media network must possess four essential characteristics. First, users are able to create their own unique profiles, which can also be shaped by other members and the social media itself. Second, users can both search and protect digital content by using web site settings and search mechanisms. Third, social media must allow individuals and organizations to establish and maintain existing social connections. Fourth, users “can view and traverse their connections and those made by others on the platform” (p.6). A social media network can only be created from social media when these criteria are present. According to the
current examples of social media networks include Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Not all researchers are in agreement that Twitter is a social network. Kwak and colleagues (2010), in a comprehensive quantitative study of the “Twittersphere” (which at the time consisted of 41.7 million users), argue that Twitter lacks some of the known characteristics of human social networks such as high levels of reciprocity (p. 10). While these observations may be valid at the macro level, the possibility of networks occurring within the “Twittersphere” remains at the micro level where users commonly utilize Twitter to communicate with people or organizations who are already a part of their extended social network (boyd & Ellison, 2008). To identify these potential networks researchers must work to identify a set of actors who are connected by a set of ties. Ties can represent a wide variety of connections including, but not limited to kinship, trust, and advice seeking (Borgatti & Foster, 2003). Thus, network structure among common actors can shift and change depending on the sort of tie that it being considered.

A study of the use of social media in youth organizing is important because digital media and learning literatures have established that a variety of informal learning practices occur in informal, ad hoc online communities (Squire & Giovanetto, 2008; Steinkuehler & Duncan, 2009). In particular, affinity spaces (Duncan, 2010; Gee, 2004; Hayes & Duncan, 2012) afforded by social media have been shown to foster forms of social affiliation, the development of both creative and critical practices, as well as informal instructional scaffolding. And yet, what remains unclear is how the social affiliations and organizing potential of these technologies may shape learning in real-world, impactful contexts. As young adult internet users are significantly more likely to use Twitter than other age ranges (Smith & Rainie, 2010), this research specifically seeks to connect established emphases on digital media and learning with perspectives that can illuminate how youth organizing specifically may be bolstered by the unique social connections and exchanges of social capital that occur using Twitter.

**Methodology**

The study addressed the following research questions:

1) What is the content that is being shared through YOT’s Twitter messages?
2) Does YOT create a social media network via the use of Twitter?
3) If a network does exist, what other individuals or organizations are a part of the network and what is the structure of the relationships between these actors?
4) What is the power of individual actors based on SNA metrics?

For data analysis, the author utilized SNA. This approach is well established within the social sciences and the fields of public health and management (Freeman, 2004; Kilduff & Tsai, 2003; Scott, 2000), but there are limited examples of its application in education research. Some recent exceptions include examinations of teacher networks (Penuel & Riel, 2007), school and district level change strategies (Chrispeels et al., 2008; Daly & Finnigan, 2010; Maroulis & Gomez, 2008), and teacher professional development (Avila de Lima, 2007). SNA focuses on the examination of ties (relationships) between members of groups, corporations, organizations, or other social forms. As previously mentioned ties can be based on a variety of connections: kinship, affiliation, geography, individual perceptions, or
Mapping Social Media Networks

resource procurement. SNA identifies patterns in these ties in order to understand communication patterns and how people or organizations behave based on the opportunities and constraints that a network provides (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Because relationships are central to the work of youth organizers and due to the potential scale of social media networks, SNA is an appropriate methodological approach for this study.

YOT is a well-established youth organizing group with over a decade of experience working on social justice issues. Initially founded as a branch of a larger parent organization that operates on a congregational organizing model, YOT has grown substantially over the past decade and currently employs three dedicated staff members. Their current work is embedded in multiple high schools and their surrounding communities. YOT is a member of several city-wide coalitions and collaboratives and operates with a large degree of autonomy from its parent organization. Youth leadership development and empowerment are the primary focus of the group and campaigns are largely youth-led.

It is important to note that YOT is a pseudonym. In order to protect the identity of YOT, specific campaigns will not be discussed in detail; however, the emphasis of the group’s work is on issues related to education, mentoring, and community safety. Research involving social media is an emerging field and raises several ethical questions that were considered by the author. Working with Miami University’s Office for the Advancement of Research a rationale was developed based on a consideration of the following factors: the limited sensitivity of the online profiles that were examined, the absence of direct interaction with the organization, privacy expectations for users of publicly available social media, vulnerability of the participants, and norms within the discipline. We determined that since the unit of analysis for this study is at the organizational level individuals are less likely to be at risk. There could still be consequences for individuals on the staff within these organizations, but it is no greater than the risk that is already present as an affiliate or spokesperson of an organization. Furthermore, the nature of community organizing work is such that the public is intentionally engaged in dialogue as a means to facilitate social and political change. This entails some degree of risk, but no more than what would reasonably be expected among participants in a democratic society.

Data collection for this study involved the use of the software NodeXL. The author used this program to collect and organize data about actors that YOT is connected with on Twitter and to conduct statistical analysis of common SNA measures. The parameters for data collection were set to level 1.5, meaning that Node XL captured data regarding either actors followed by YOT or actors who follow YOT on Twitter. To “follow” means that a user has linked itself to another Twitter user and will receive any messages that are sent from this account. The relationship does not have to be reciprocated, so some connections may be unilateral. At the time of the data collection YOT was connected with 207 actors. Data regarding the existence of relationships between the actors were also collected, meaning that if actor A had a relationship with actors B and C, the program also determined if there was any relationship between B and C. Limiting the parameters of the network to 1.5 kept the focus on immediate relationships for YOT; however, it also excluded data that YOT has access to through tweets that are generated by followers of followers. This is significant since a primary benefit of Twitter is that it can exponentially extend direct relationships. Each actor was coded according to personal or
organizational details culled from the users’ public Twitter profile. Finally, additional data analysis was conducted through the creation of visual representations (sociograms) relating to various aggregate SNA metrics.

Findings
When the data was collected, 207 actors were coded based on their profiles. General categories were identified that captured the essence of the individual actor’s accounts. Actors with similar orientations were coded together; for example, @barackobama and @whitehouse were both coded blue as political entities (Table 1). The coding was intentionally broad (9 categories) to support the creation of visual representations and support further analysis. As we will discuss latter the validity of the coding procedures is largely supported by the clustering of similar actors depicted in Figure 1.

Table 1: Youth Organizing Today Network Actors and Corresponding Colors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Node Type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Accounts</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Mainstream News Source</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Light Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative News Source (Local, Bloggers, Citizen Journalists, etc.)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment Accounts (Comedy, Music, Art)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Lime Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians, Government Agencies, and Partisan Political Groups</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Focused Accounts</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-Based Organizations</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Organizers (Individuals)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Purple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter IT Accounts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to better understand YOT’s social media usage the researcher also collected data regarding the content of the messages that YOT publically shares through Twitter. A random sample of 504 tweets was collected and coded using the qualitative software program Dedoose. The tweets were first categorized based on whether or not communication originated with YOT or if it was being retweeted. A retweet, signified in Twitter by the abbreviation “RT,” is the passing along of content that originated in another user’s account. In the sample 52% of YOT’s tweets were original content and the other 48% were retweets that were passed along to followers.
Mapping Social Media Networks

The coding of the content was an iterative process and five codes emerged that represented the broader purpose of YOT’s tweets. First, 46% of the tweets (n = 232) highlighted news stories of possible interest to YOT’s followers. These news tweets were primarily related to justice and/or youth based issues that the group was trying to address (e.g., college access, school safety, the school-to-prison pipeline). A variation of the “news story” tweet, was a message that included additional commentary from YOT coupled with the link to the news item. For example, they might express their disgust in a tweet linking to a news story about budget cuts for public education. These commentary tweets made up an additional 17.5% of the messages that were sent by YOT. Combined 63.5% of the tweets were related to the sharing of a news item.

Logistical and promotional tweets were the next most common use of Twitter for YOT (17.9%). Attendance for public meetings and rallies were advertised via Twitter and frequently utilized hashtags (#). The hashtag is used in Twitter as a marker that allows other users to seek out tweets relating to a particular topic. For example, #occupy could be included in the text of a tweet and allow other users who are not followers to find all of the tweets related to the Occupy Movement. 13.5% of the messages that YOT sent were honor or recognition tweets and aimed to affirm other users for positive work that they were doing for the community. Finally, 5.2% of the messages were characterized as fact or research tweets. These tweets were generally used in support of a particular organizing issue. As an example, YOT might tweet out graduation statistics coupled with commentary related to a current campaign. These messages differed from news related tweets in that they were not credited or linked to a new organization. These “fact” tweets were frequently sourced by non-profits, advocacy groups, or data derived from the Department of Education. Consistent with the current literature, YOT used Twitter to share news, foster collaboration, enhance communication, and coordinate collective action (Shirky, 2011).

Mapping YOT’s Social Media Network

Analysis of connections between YOT and other Twitter actors revealed a diverse social media network consisting of three distinct sub-communities. The findings suggest that community-based organizations and non-mainstream media hold substantial power in YOT’s network based on various SNA measures. This section provides a discussion of these measures and how they might be used to better understand the structure of YOT’s social media network.

Using the NodeXL software, the researcher created clustering coefficients to generate a visual representation of YOT’s connections with other Twitter users (Figure 1). The clustering coefficient identifies the density of the connections for the individual nodes and uses this finding to space out the nodes on a sociogram. Based on these connections a network structure for YOT and the other Twitter users is identified. Nodes that share multiple connections are placed in greater proximity to one another and this technique results in the identification of different sub-communities (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). The network depicted in Figure 1 shows the emergence of three primary clusters within YOT’s social media network. The first cluster, located in the top half of the sociogram is dominated by various news organizations (yellow and light blue nodes), political entities (blue nodes), and CBOs (orange nodes). The second more diffuse cluster on the right consists of groups or individuals working
on education issues (pink nodes) coupled with CBOs. And finally, the third cluster is dominated by individual actors (red nodes) and entertainment accounts (lime green nodes). Based on an examination of the individual accounts it appeared the red nodes represent members of YOT.

The clustering of similar nodes, a phenomenon referred to in SNA as homophily, is a common occurrence as similar actors are likely to have stronger ties (McPherson et al., 2001). However, the overall diversity of the actors and the structure of YOT’s social media network also show the presence of weak ties (Grabowicz et al., 2012). Weak ties are defined as relationships between actors that may be distant or marked by limited interactions (Granovetter, 1973). These ties can provide access to novel sources of knowledge and have the potential to enhance communication by bridging structural holes (Burt, 2005). Both types of relationships are potentially important in social movements where there is a dual objective to solidify a base while simultaneously generating growth and expanding influence (McAdam & Paulsen, 1993). In Figure 1, YOT is the large orange node located in the bottom half of the graphic, central to the individual followers in the third cluster. The size of the orange node is to help the reader identify the location of YOT within the network.

In terms of volume of communication, both traditional (light blue nodes) and alternative news organizations (yellow nodes) dominate YOT’s network (see Figure 2). The size of the nodes in Figure 2 is based on the number of tweets that have been sent from the respective accounts. The result is not surprising since many news organizations send out frequent tweets with links to articles. However, it appears that many of YOT’s followers are not linked to these sources, suggesting the possibility that YOT serves an important role by spreading pertinent news items to these individuals using the retweet
function. Considering the content sampling described above it appears that YOT is taking advantage of this opportunity with 63.5% of the tweets being news oriented.

![Figure 2: Number of Tweets](image)

While the volume of tweets is one indicator of power within a network, placement and connectedness can be equally important. Twitter connections are directed relationships (Kwak et al., 2010). This means that nodes can both follow or be followed by other nodes in the network. To examine relationships SNA considers these bilateral interactions to help establish the degree of centrality of participant nodes. Degree centrality is simply the number of connections to an actor within the network. Degree can serve as a measure of popularity and be an important metric for understanding the network. For example, an actor may be a prolific source of knowledge based on their number of tweets (see Figure 2 above), but have relatively little power within the network because they are not well connected. In-degree centrality measures the number of connections that are directed to an actor, whereas out-degree centrality is the number of connections originating from an actor to others in the network. In Figure 3 and Figure 4 the size of the nodes reflects the level of centrality based on these respective measures.
Within YOT’s network the large media outlets (e.g. *New York Times*) have the highest in-degree measures (see the light blue nodes in Figure 3), but they do not follow other nodes in the network. The same is true for entertainers (lime green) and education focused accounts (pink). In contrast, non-mainstream media outlets (yellow), CBOs (orange) and community organizers (purple) have relatively high in and out degrees of centrality. This indicates an increased potential for these nodes to have bilateral relationships. This is significant because this allows Twitter users to communicate via direct message. The value of direct messaging in Twitter is that conversations can be made private. It can serve as a form of text messaging between network actors and help deepen the relationship by supporting more personal exchanges that are not meant for public consumption. Strategically for youth organizers this means that while they may not be able to effectively connect with a large media outlet they can still get their message out through alternative media options or through well connected CBOs and organizers.
As previously mentioned, central to understanding how a social media network functions is recognition of the positions of its actors. Betweenness centrality is a measure that can used to identify the actors or nodes that serve as “bridges” to other parts of the network (Friedkin, 1991). It is calculated by examining how frequently a node appears on the shortest path between two other nodes (Freeman, 1979). In other words, how likely is it that an actor has the ability to connect two disparate nodes within the network. Actors with high levels of Betweenness often serve as gatekeepers and are less likely to provide redundant knowledge. Again, CBOs (orange) and non-mainstream media outlets (yellow) appear to be influential with 50% of the 20 highest “Betweenness scores” in YOT’s Twitter network (Figure 5). If we consider that CBOs are likely responsible for connecting diverse constituents, their placement in the Twitter network makes a lot of sense. For YOT, fostering relationships with these organizations could be a useful strategy for spreading news, research, and advice through the network.

The identification of nodes with high Betweenness scores can help organizers strategically select the partners who are most likely to enhance capacity building activities. The Betweenness centrality sociogram also demonstrates how isolated the three sub-communities are within YOT’s network. The individual members of YOT, media resources, and education actors are not very well connected. This raises the potential for YOT to bolster its status as a bridge builder within its own network (Grabowicz et al., 2012). The benefit of such a move is that YOT could increase their stakeholder status by building the public perception that they help create and share valuable knowledge.
The final SNA measure considered by the author was eigenvector. Eigenvector is a measure of network power and influence based on “who you know,” determined by assessing a node’s popularity and connections (Bonacich, 1991). The number of connections to other popular nodes determines the eigenvector score for each node. Again the non-mainstream media (yellow) and CBOs (orange) scored high, while the education focused accounts (pink) had relatively low scores (Figure 6). The prominence of individual community organizers (purple) based on eigenvector scores is particularly noteworthy as this is the first measure where they figure prominently in the sociograms of YOT’s network. Of course, given the nature of an organizer’s work it is not surprising that they appear to know the “right” people based on influence within the network. Connecting with these organizers increases the probability that a message will reach the most influential actors in the network and improves the likelihood that important news and research will be effectively spread throughout the network.
Implications for Social Media Usage by Youth Organizers

Twitter provides an opportunity to engage with a broad range of individuals and organizations. This diversity of viewpoints has the potential to broaden the knowledge base of youth organizing groups. There are opportunities to learn from both likeminded actors and from individuals or organizations who organizers might seek to influence in the future. By mapping the Twitter network of YOT, we are able to examine organizational relationships that supplement or extend beyond traditional face-to-face interactions. It is easy to conceive how the use of SNA and a social media network might enhance the traditional power analysis exercise within community organizing. In a power analysis key stakeholders are plotted on a chart according to their level of support for an issue and their decision-making power relative to the topic. Organizers use this chart to plot their strategies for who they need to connect with and consider how they might influence a stakeholder. In this regard social media network maps could be used as an additional organizing tool. Instead of seeking one or two key influential allies to lobby a powerful stakeholder, it could be possible to leverage the power of hundreds of followers. Furthermore specific actors can be targeted and utilized based on their position and power within the network.

Twitter also increases access to knowledge that might otherwise be overlooked by the mainstream media. While the major media outlets generate large quantities of news that may relate to current events and the public positions of education stakeholders, alternative news sources may be more likely to engage directly with youth organizers. Based on SNA measures of centrality and Betweenness it was the alternative news sources that held the most powerful positions within YOT’s social media network.
and these actors have the potential to become powerful allies for organizers as they can be used to help spread underreported facts pertinent to local campaigns. Of course, youth organizers should also be mindful of the viewpoints available via Twitter that have not been included. There is a notable absence of school and district leaders from YOT’s network and relatively few publically elected officials. It is not clear if these individuals are using Twitter, but in the future youth organizing groups may want to consider expanding their network to further increase their knowledge base.

Summary and Conclusion

Gladwell (2010) has cautioned that while social media are proven as an effective tool for increasing activist participation, it has yet to be established as an effective means for generating action. The low-risk nature of online activism makes it easy for people to make weak commitments to various causes. Perhaps Gladwell’s broader message to justice workers and activists is that social media will never replace the core work of relationship building that is so central to grassroots organizing. For organizers it will always be necessary to build power by knocking on doors and forging relationships with other community members through one-on-ones or house meetings. Yet, social media can be used to enhance the effectiveness of organizing work by serving as a supplementary means of communication. Prior research suggests that activists use social media to foster collaboration, enhance communication, and coordinate collective action (McDonald et al., 2011). This study both confirms these findings and expands upon the research by providing new insights regarding the structure of social media networks.

YOT was able to use Twitter to create a diverse network of individuals and organizations with the potential to become collaborators. As Gajda (2004) notes, there are a wide range of collaborative behaviors and there is no standard requirement for frequency of contact or even the presence of shared objectives that are necessary in order to create an alliance (2004). Within YOT’s Twitter network the presence of other CBOs and activist groups from different parts of the city and in some cases different parts of the United States are examples of what Granovetter (1973) refers to as weak ties. These actors can become critical sources of new research or policy initiatives that might not otherwise be available in a more homogenous network (McPherson et al., 2001). In addition, there was some evidence of Tweeting behaviors (e.g. the presence of recognition tweets) that might help foster future collaborations with other local stakeholders.

Twitter also served as an additional form of communication for YOT. In particular, it was a means to spread pertinent news items related to campaign issues. For members of YOT the Twitter account helped keep individuals up to date on the latest campaign developments and activities. The sociograms suggest that YOT members are not directly connected with many alternative media sources, politicians, educational stakeholders, or other CBOs. Thus, the preponderance of news related tweets and retweets are critically important for helping to keep members informed about campaign issues. Perhaps this is also another way in which CBOs can serve as intermediaries between structures of power and community members (Lopez et al., 2005). Of course, a social media account can become a significant responsibility for organizers, as recent literature suggests that youth are increasingly relying on social media during times of crisis (Westerman et al., 2013). While this study used the organization as the unit
Mapping Social Media Networks

of analysis, further research is needed to identify specifically how individual members of YOT interact with and utilize social media networks to inform their personal participation in youth organizing.

Finally, YOT also used Twitter to help coordinate activities and events, but this did not appear to be a primary function of the social media network in comparison to some of the other activities like sharing and commenting on the news. This is somewhat surprising considering the media’s depiction of pervasive Twitter use as a means for coordination in contemporary social movements. The central difference might be that Twitter use in these broader social movements is more common because the participants are less likely to know one another. Although network structures related to collective action are highly contextual (Gould, 1993), numerous studies have indicated that while strong interpersonal ties are important at the individual level and aid recruitment, weak ties help facilitate the diffusion of broader social movements (McAdam & Paulsen, 1993; Polletta, 1998). The implication for youth organizers is that Twitter may play an increasingly important role as a coordinating tool as campaigns scale up beyond the local to the state or national level.

There are several limitations to this study. Since the research focused on the Twitter network of only one youth organizing group we cannot make generalizations based on the findings described above. In addition, data collection was limited to 1.5 levels removed from YOT and thus provides only a snapshot of the broader social network that is available via Twitter. Despite these limitations both youth organizers and educational researchers can learn a great deal from the social media network created by YOT. This study makes a timely contribution to the field of grassroots, youth and community organizing given the emerging role of social media as a means for organizing collective action. It suggests that Twitter can serve as a valuable tool for youth organizing groups and that SNA can be used to determine if networks are formed and to better understand their structure. By using structural knowledge of social media networks, organizers can strategically target actors within the network to more effectively share news and research. Through the identification of these key actors within social media networks organizers can maximize the benefits of social media in order to impact education policy.

References


Daly, A. J., & Finnigan, K. (2010). The ebb and flow of social network ties between district leaders under


Mapping Social Media Networks

Annual Review of Sociology, 27, 415-444.


Biography

Michael Evans is Assistant Professor of Family, School and Community Connections in the College of Education, Health & Society at Miami University (Oxford, OH). He holds a joint appointment in the Departments of Educational Leadership, Teacher Education, and Family Studies & Social Work. He earned a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. His research interests include family, school and community relationships and the use of grassroots organizing strategies as an education change strategy.