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SOCIAL MEDIA COUNTERPUBLICS AND THE CHIEF BIG FOOT MEMORIAL RIDE

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ABSTRACT

The annual Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride represents the longest continuous example of Lakota memorial and resistance rides in contemporary Lakota activism. First held in 1986, this commemoration of the journey of Chief Big Foot's band of Lakotas and the subsequent Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890 now reaches beyond the confines of the ride itself through the use of social media profiles that serve to both publicize and document the ride. This article seeks to understand the way that photographs from the rides influence the types and amount of engagement it receives on social media. Using a qualitative and quantitative approach, 304 images and their associated engagements from the 2018 ride were analyzed using content analysis and a grounded theory approach. This revealed that certain characteristics gave rise to the construction of a counterpublic around this ride. Findings suggest that both the content of photos and types of authors for posts influenced the number and types of engagements received by certain photographs. Given the relative isolation of many Indigenous communities in the Americas, these findings suggest that certain strategies for social media posts by Indigenous social movements can overcome these barriers to spread their message to a wider audience through strategic use of imagery associated with these movements.

Keywords: Lakota, visual anthropology, activism

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1 INTRODUCTION

Chief Big Foot's band of Mniconjou Lakotas, having surrendered to the will of the United States Army's Seventh Cavalry, found themselves on the morning of December 29, 1890, being disarmed at Wounded Knee Creek on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Possibly seeking revenge for the 1876 defeat of Custer's Seventh Cavalry at the Battle of the Greasy Grass[1], Colonel James W. Forsyth and his troops were convinced that Chief Big Foot's group of nearly four hundred followers were hiding additional weapons throughout their camp. Committed to ridding the entire camp of these weapons, members of the Seventh Cavalry tore through the camp, harassing women and children scattered throughout. During this scuffle, a shot rang out that set into motion a series of events that would forever stamp itself into the lives of Lakota individuals.[2]

The resulting massacre of some 300 hundred Lakota men, women, and children is, for many, a defining moment in United States history as it represents the end of the Indian Wars and the official "closing" of the frontier (Greene & Powers, 2014). In addition to being lauded as the last military conflict against American Indian communities, Wounded Knee was also the place of the first and only recorded photographs of any conflict between the United States government and American Indian communities during the Indian Wars. On December 31, German born photographer, George Trager arrived at Wounded Knee and captured eleven infamous photographs depicting lodgepole skeletons of tipis erected in the camp, the frozen bodies of many victims of the Massacre, and the mass burial of victims by teams of civilians hired by the Seventh Cavalry (Mitchell, 1989). Among the most striking photos of the group is one of the frozen body of Chief Big Foot himself. Claimed to represent the inhumane treatment of all American Indian peoples by the United States government, this image, according to some, continues to be synonymous with the contemporary and historical struggles of these communities (Rickert, 2014).

However, these are not the only depictions of Wounded Knee and its remembrance that have been captured photographically. Since 1986, Lakota individuals have participated in the Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride, a nearly 200-mile-long horse ride that commemorates the journey of Chief Big Foot's band and their eventual deaths at Wounded Knee. In recent years, the publicity of the ride has expanded, likely in part due to the

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[1] The battle is also known by United States military historians as the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

[2] For a complete history of the Wounded Knee Massacre, including events preceding it see Coleman, W. S. (2001). Voices of Wounded Knee. University of Nebraska Press. , Greene, J. A., & Powers, T. (2014). American Carnage: Wounded Knee 1890. University of Oklahoma Press.

widespread notoriety of the No Dakota Access Pipeline movement. Through the use of social media platforms, riders publicize the ride by posting photos throughout the fifteen-day journey. Using social media posts from the 2018 Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride, this manuscript will demonstrate how engagement with these posts allowed for the construction of a Lakota and allied counterpublic where this movement could be made more visible to the general public while creating a space to amplify contemporary concerns in Indigenous communities, Lakota or otherwise. Additionally, based upon these findings, I will suggest potential strategies for Lakota communities and their allies to support efforts to garner support for and to publicize Lakota-led social movements more broadly.

1.1 Social Media and the Construction of Counterpublics

Questions related to social media's relationship to activism have been of significant focus for social scientists. Inspired by the mobilization of social media during the Occupy Movement, Arab Spring, and other contemporary social justice movements, scholars have turned their attention to what possible roles social media may play in twenty-first century activism (Allsop, 2016; McCabe & Harris, 2020; Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014). Some scholars suggest that social media has opened a new frontier for social movements to organize coalitions and disseminate information about their positions more broadly, expanding upon earlier uses of digital technology like email lists and websites (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014; Velasquez & LaRose, 2015). Although widely critiqued, some of the earliest scholarship suggests that it merely represents a performative activism that does not transcend keyboards and computer or cell phone screens referred to as "slacktivism" (Allsop, 2016; Gladwell, 2010). However, many scholars take a more middle ground approach that explores how the use of social media becomes integrated into larger social justice efforts that include in-person protest and traditional analog strategies (Allsop, 2016; Onuch, 2015). Further, the implications of the use and interpretation of visual media on online platforms has begun to be explored. Focusing primarily on the role of the "selfie" for understanding ourselves, performing our identities, and interpreting others', scholars have argued that images posted to social media platforms may potentially reproduce and reinforce power structures, specifically related to immigration, in addition to representing the negotiation and practice of identities, such as gender and sexual identities (Carrotte et al., 2017; Chouliaraki, 2017; Hand, 2017).

Moreover, the potential efficacy of using social media platforms as both organizational and novel ways to spread information for marginalized communities is of direct importance to this study. Among LGBT members

of the United States armed forces, for instance, Todd R. Burton found that social media allowed for an approach to LGBT advocacy that interwove both in-person action and social media organizing and community building that followed earlier theoretical frameworks explaining the role of LGBTQ+ organization on Facebook contributing to the repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy (Burton, 2020; Fulton, 2013). Likewise, explorations into the use of social media by Indigenous communities suggests its powerful role for expression of individual and community identities, community cohesion, and transmission of knowledges and philosophical traditions. A review of the literature related to social media use by Indigenous Australian youth reveals that the use of social media has served all of these functions within these communities (Rice et al., 2016). Further, Rice and colleagues suggest that the use of social media for the dissemination of audiovisual media, represents a culturally analogous form of communication and cultural continuity for cultures that rely on visual and oral traditional forms of transmission (2016). Their findings also reflect findings in the Americas, where Indigenous communities have used social media as a means to communicate more intensively, and intentionally, with non-Indigenous communities (Carlson, 2013; Johnson, 2017; Virtanen, 2015). Social media has served as an important means of publicizing contemporary concerns in Indigenous communities including the Idle No More movement (Raynauld et al., 2018; Tupper, 2014), the movement for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Watson, 2018), as well as protests against the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline and the #LandBack movement (Leverston, 2021).

The status of social media platforms as sites of discourse within and between a wide range of communities has been firmly established by this previous research. This suggests that an application of the ideas of publics and counterpublics may prove fruitful for understanding how communities form and interact in the digital sphere. The concept of publics was first proposed by Jürgen Habermas in his book The Social Transformation of the Public Sphere in 1962 (Habermas, 1989). Attempting to explain the power that citizenry has over its government, Habermas argued that a type of discursive space must exist where members of the public can discuss their common affairs. This space, which he deems the "public sphere," is made up of private individuals who come together, in one way or another, to discuss their common concerns and interests (Fraser, 1992). This theoretical framework has been used to explore a variety of circumstances including the role of religion in society, the internet, and ideas of transnational democracy (Bohman, 2004; Mendieta & VanAntwerpen, 2011; Papacharissi, 2002). However, as feminist philosopher Nancy Fraser identifies, this conception of the public is filled with assumptions about who is included in this public sphere, whose affairs are considered "common," and whether or not these publics represent a true move toward democracy (Fraser, 1992).

To account for these assumptions, she argues for the expansion of the concept of a single unifying public to include a multiplicity of publics. Fraser contends that publics in the Habermasian sense fail to account for inequalities present in non-egalitarian societies. In these instances, the interests of dominant groups will always subsume those of subaltern groups, she argues. These social inequalities prevent public discourse from truly representing all members of the larger citizenry. In order to recognize the possibility for marginalized groups to have spaces where they can deliberate "among themselves about their needs, objectives, and strategies," she argues for the existence of these spaces as "counterpublics" (Fraser, 1992). The potential for the application of these concepts to understand communities formed on social media are far-reaching. Social media platforms easily constitute clear examples of both publics and counterpublics. Made up of disparate users who can organize themselves based on common interests and pursuits (through Facebook pages/groups, Twitter hashtags, etc.), in many ways social media platforms are inseparable from these concepts.

In the context of understanding social movements, particularly those organized by minority groups, the concept of counterpublics is also particularly useful. Analysis of the social media responses by African Americans in the wake of the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri specifically linked this response to the construction of a counterpublic focused on subverting mainstream media representations of racialized bodies (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015). Further study of the #Ferguson movement has also used this framework to help recognize how emerging counterpublics form and are organized (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2016). To date, this framework has yet to be used to understand the networks surrounding contemporary American Indian social movements, including the Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride.

1.2 The Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride

The Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride was first established to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Wounded Knee Massacre and to return the remains of Zintkala Nuni, an infant survivor of the Massacre, to the Wounded Knee Cemetery (Pesantubbee, 2006). Resistance rides such as the Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride are becoming increasingly popular as a culturally specific mode of protest in Lakota communities. These rides, events in which individuals ride horses to a set location of historical or cultural significance, are not necessarily a new phenomenon, but are typically reserved for the memorial of events like the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890 and the Dakota 38+2 Hanging of 1862 (Byrd et al., 2006; Pesantubbee, 2006). However, in recent years this method of resistance has

been employed in a variety of other contexts including the exercise of treaty rights on the 150th anniversary of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, in protest of Leonard Peltier's continued incarceration, in solidarity with Kanaka Maoli kiai'i (Native Hawaiian Mauna Kea protectors), and the establishment of the Oceti Sakowin camp during the No Dakota Access Pipeline resistance movement (Goeckner et al., 2020; Hopper, 2018; Taylor, 2018).

However, the Chief Big Foot Ride remains the longest continuously practiced example with its 33rd annual ride being held in December of 2019. Planned as a series of five original rides (one in each of the years from 1986-1990), the ride has continued to the present and grown to include over 200 riders during some years. Stepping off on December 15, the riders begin their journey by commemorating the assassination of Chief Sitting Bull at the site of his cabin near the Grand River on the Standing Rock Sioux Nation. The ride continues through a series of eleven camps that span the entire Cheyenne River Sioux Nation, off-reservation territories, Badlands National Park, and the Oglala Sioux Nation (see fig. 1). Ridership cuts across demographic groups in multiple Lakota communities including young children through community elders and participants from the three reservation communities through which the Ride passes. Furthermore, youth participation in the Ride has been encouraged through the creation of The Future Generations Teen Photojournalism Project. Started in 2006, this project seeks to provide Lakota youth with an opportunity, equipment, and training to capture their own photos of the Ride (Frank, 2015). In addition to a website, the project manages a Facebook page that posts photos taken throughout the Ride which served as one of the central pages for data collection.

Additionally, riders pass through sites of Lakota historical, spiritual, and cultural significant in addition to the site of Chief Sitting Bull's cabin. These locations include Green Grass (the location where the White Buffalo Calf Pipe[3] is kept), through "Big Foot Pass" in the Badlands, and the Wounded Knee Massacre site and cemetery. Additionally, throughout the ride various Lakota ceremonies are orchestrated including pipe ceremonies and daily prayer ceremonies with Lakota singers.

[3] For a discussion explaining the oral traditional evidence supporting the significance of the White Buffalo Calf Pipe, see Goeckner, R. (2018). *"These Types of Sites Are Really Hard to Find": Lakota Oral Tradition and Resistance Against the Dakota Access Pipeline* University of Kansas].

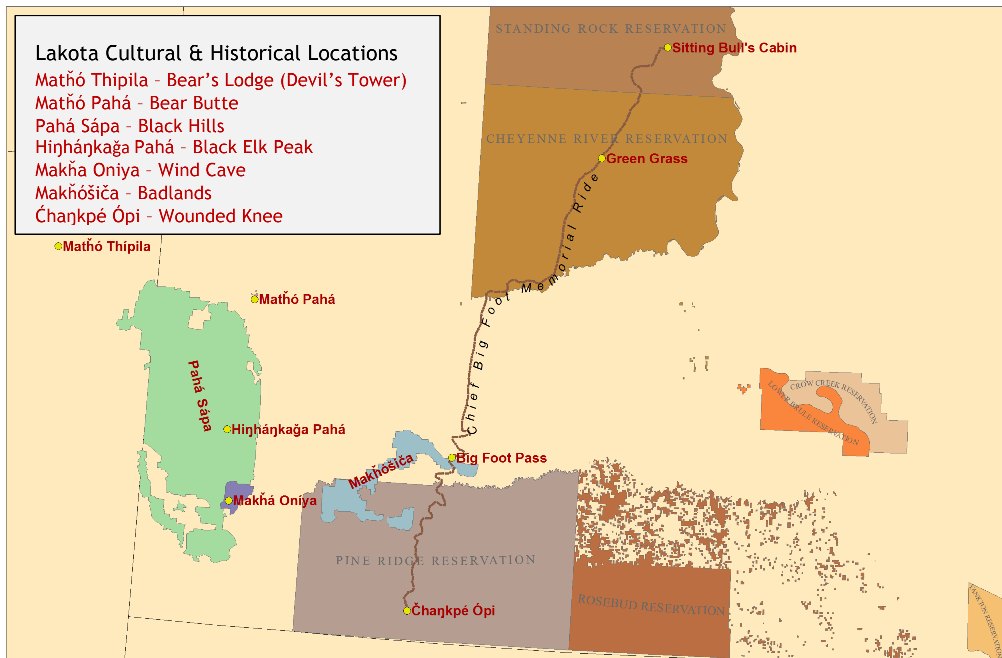

Figure 1 Lakota culturally and historically significant locations

My knowledge of the Ride, and other such rides, comes from both my research experience and community engagement with the communities and community members that organize and participate in the Ride. Since 2014, I have been a member of one or more partner organizations in the American Indian Health Research and Education Alliance (AIHREA) (n.d.), an alliance of organizations whose mission is “to partner and collaborate with American Indian peoples, nations, communities, and organizations to improve the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of American Indians throughout the United States through quality participatory research and educational programs.” AIHREA has worked closely with members of the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation on a number of research and service projects since 2013. Additionally, several participants in my thesis research exploring the importance of Lakota oral and spiritual traditions to the No Dakota Access Pipeline movement are also regular participants in the Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride.

2 METHODS

To understand how riders’ use of photographs on social media platforms helped the 2018 ride construct a Lakota and allied counterpublic, the author manually collected social media posts about the ride that included images during the fall of 2019. The desire to understand how ride itself is portrayed by participants and organizers to other community members and their social media followers overall necessitated a focus on images associated

with the Ride. A lack of standardized, targeted data collection strategies for social media posts, with some scholars preferring a manual approach (Carrotte et al., 2017) while others rely on web code to sort and collect posts (Borra & Rieder, 2014; Peruta & Shields, 2017), necessitated the development of a sampling and analysis strategy.

Table 1. Hashtags and content used in sampling

Hashtags	#BigfootRide
	#BigfootRiders
	#WoundedKnee
	#ChiefBigfoot
	#MemorialRide
	#HealingHearts
	#RememberWoundedKnee
	#Lakota
Content	"Chief Big Foot Ride"
	"Big Foot Memorial Ride"
	"Wounded Knee"

Posts collected for this project only needed some type of image associated with them. These could be historical images associated with the Ride or the Wounded Knee Massacre, photos from the 2018 Ride itself, or other images such as Ride maps. This required a multi-platform approach that included posts from Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as all three platforms were utilized by riders. Posts were included based on a number of criteria. First, posts were only selected if they fell within the dates of the 2018 ride (12/15-29/2018) as this was the most recent instance of the Ride at the time of analysis. Facebook posts were collected from groups specifically affiliated with the ride (The Chief Bigfoot Band Memorial Ride and The Future Generations Teen Photojournalism Project), but also through general searches for terms and hashtags identified as popular among those associated with the Ride on this page and group (table 1).

This specific Facebook page and group are the sole, centralized locations on that platform where the general public (those not involved with the Ride themselves) can learn about the Ride itself. Their inclusion here is deliberate to allow for understanding of how non-Lakota individuals engage with this particular social movement. While the Future Generations page is managed by individuals affiliated with that project, the Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride group is a public group where any individual can create posts regardless of their affiliation with the Ride. This serves as a central location for Ride participants, their friends and families, and supporters to learn about and engage with the Ride itself from afar. General

searches using hashtags and keywords were used to collect any remaining posts about the 2018 ride that were not posted in this group or page. No such Ride specific profiles exist on either Twitter or Instagram and were identified by advanced searches using the same temporal and content criteria described above.

A variety of information was collected regarding each post. This information included date posted, number of engagements (reactions [or "likes"], comments, and shares), poster name and type, number of photos posted, social media platform, post location, and post description. An overwhelming majority of posts were not geotagged, therefore assigning locations to posts was required. This was done through two main methods. The first was based on content in the post and photos and the second was based on the date the photos were posted. For instance, some posts depicted locations that were easily identifiable, such as Badlands National Park, Big Foot Pass, and Wounded Knee. While other posts described which day of the ride photos were taken, providing easy identification of the locations depicted in the ride. Posts were then assigned to one of 23 "locations" along the ride that included camp sites as well as places along the route that coincided with the ride for a given day (e.g., "Little Eagle to Timber Lake" includes all posts depicting the ride from Little Eagle to Timber Lake). A couple of factors aided in the validity of these assignments. Images posted by The Future Generations Photojournalism project were posted daily, at the conclusion of the day's ride lending credence to location assignments by date. This was also largely the case for photos posted on The Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride group. In instances where this was not the case, the vast majority of photos included identifiable features in the landscape, including the Badlands, structures such as water towers, and other landmarks like the Wounded Knee cemetery. This information was organized in an Excel spreadsheet and given a unique object identification number. Furthermore, each photo was then downloaded and assigned a unique identifier that connected it to its corresponding post and was stored in an associated folder. This resulted in a total of 52 posts and 304 individual images. The total number of engagements for these posts was 28,096. Of this total, only 14 Instagram posts and three Twitter posts met the inclusion criteria. Because there were so few posts, these were combined with the remaining posts from Facebook for analysis.

This collection of posts was analyzed through both a quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Content analysis as a method of analyzing data is advantageous because it is not limited by preconceived theoretical categories and, thus, allows for the development of novel theories related to the topic under examination (Lai & To, 2015). Using a grounded theory analytical approach (Charmaz, 2001, 2017, 2021), a codebook consisting of 21 codes was developed after reviewing the photos (Bernard, 2011). Codes

were organized into categories that included types of people and objects, types of activities, locations, and photographic qualities of each image. Quantitative content analysis was then conducted by the author assigning any applicable codes to each individual photo (Banks, 2018; Bell, 2001; Bernard, 2011; Rose, 2016). However, special consideration was taken to analyze these photos as they would appear to social media users. A majority of posts included multiple photos (some as many as 16). Because of the structure of the three platforms represented in this sample, individual social media users would never encounter just one of these images by themselves. Rather, they would be encountered together on the post level. This concern required photos to be analyzed individually and then collapsed down into a content analysis for each post. This was accomplished by taking each of the individual photos included in a given post and coding the post for all of the codes that were included in those photos. To understand possible relationships between a posts content and number of engagements, and by extension its reach to unique social media users, content codes by post were compared with their number of engagements for statistical significance using Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis tests. Posts were also mapped using ArcGIS to understand distribution of posts and engagements along the ride.

Furthermore, the qualitative data associated with these posts were also analyzed. Using the same grounded theory approach, a separate codebook was developed based on the content of comments and descriptions for each post. This qualitative data was then coded using the codebook. The author then identified themes based on these codes to develop overarching theories to explain how these posts were being interpreted by social media users (Bernard, 2011). One way that this was completed was to compare comments from Lakota or non-Lakota social media users. Although an imperfect measure, these determinations were made using the content and context of the comments themselves to make these determinations. For instance, comments that included use of Lakota language were assumed to be Lakota.

3 RESULTS

As many of the images used in posts collected for this study were depicting specific, identifiable locations, principal analysis explored whether or not any representations of these locations garnered increased engagement with social media users. Initial findings revealed that social media posts and engagements were not found to be evenly distributed along the ride. Locations with the most posts were Wounded Knee and “Big Foot Pass” in the Badlands, however their combined posts accounted for less than 35% of the total from the 2018 ride. These two locations also had the most photos

included in their posts, also just under 35% of the total photos (see table 2). Additionally, nine photos were not able to be coded for location. These photos either included ones that were informational, such as maps of the ride route itself, or reposts of photos from the 2017 ride.

Table 2. Posts by location

Location	Posts (% of N=52)	Photos (% of N=304)	Engagements
Little Eagle	0	0	0
Little Eagle to Timber Lake	1 (0.02%)	9 (0.03%)	910
Timber Lake	0	0	0
Timber Lake to Bill Opp Ranch	1 (0.02%)	6 (0.02%)	129
Bill Opp Ranch	0	0	0
Bill Opp Ranch to Green Grass	1 (0.02%)	13 (0.04%)	235
Green Grass	3 (0.06%)	5 (0.02%)	230
Green Grass to Lloyd Jantzen Ranch	1 (0.02%)	10 (0.03%)	470
Lloyd Jantzen Ranch	0	0	0
Lloyd Jantzen Ranch to Cherry Creek	1 (0.02%)	12 (0.04%)	1282
Cherry Creek	0	0	0
Cherry Creek to Bridger	2 (0.04%)	14 (0.05%)	403
Bridger	0	0	0
Bridger to Four Corners	2 (0.04%)	11 (0.04%)	696
Four Corners	6 (0.12%)	31 (0.1%)	3236
Four Corners to Big Foot Pass	4 (0.08%)	22 ((0.07%)	1884
Big Foot Pass	13 (0.25%)	64 (0.21%)	6415
Big Foot Pass to Red Water Creek	2 (0.04%)	18 (0.06%)	292
Red Water Creek	3 (0.06%)	16 (0.05%)	1005
Red Water Creek to Red Owl Springs	3 (0.06%)	20 (0.07%)	3645
Red Owl Springs	0	0	0
Red Owl Springs to Wounded Knee	1 (0.02%)	3 (0.01%)	81
Wounded Knee	10 (0.19%)	41 (0.13%)	5325

When controlled for the numbers of posts, Wounded Knee and the section of the ride between the Lloyd Jantzen Ranch and Cherry Creek had the most engagements per location (see fig. 2), but differential engagement by location was not found to be statistically significant.

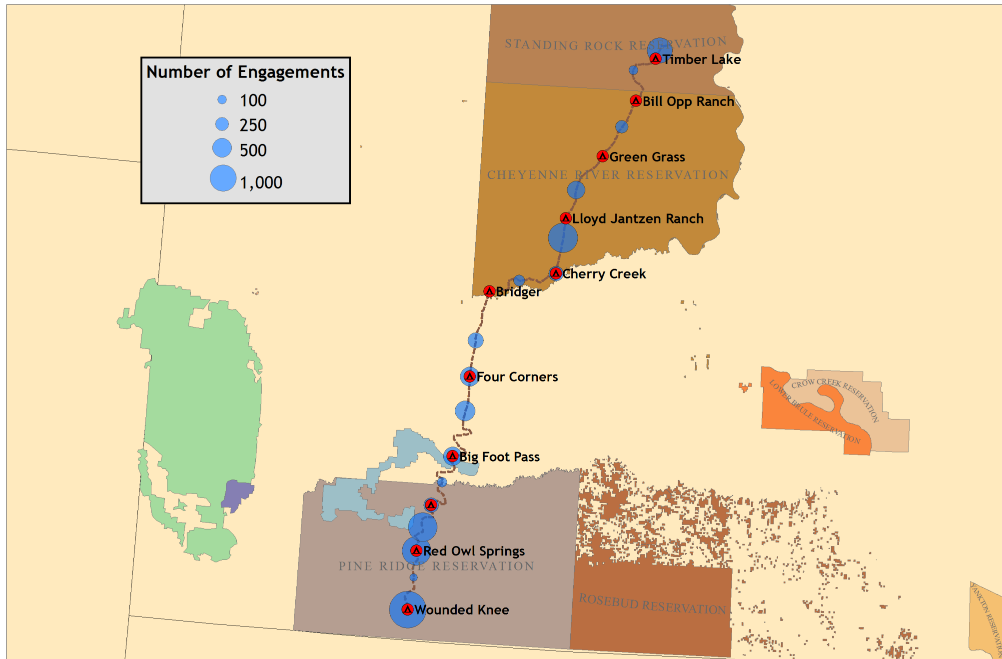

Figure 2. Social media engagements by location

The quantitative content analysis revealed that nearly 80% of the posts, unsurprisingly included photos of horses and individuals riding them. Moreover, a majority of posts included photos that were portraits (photos where individuals were doing things and/or could be recognized), in contrast to photos that depicted the riders moving through vast landscapes. Using the Mann-Whitney U Test, a statistically significant difference was recognized in the number of engagements received by posts that were disseminated by pages or groups rather than by individuals (P<.00001). Furthermore, there were a number of content codes that increased the likelihood that a post would receive more engagements. Posts that included photos that were coded as youth (P=.006), elders (P=.02), women (P=.03), eagle staffs (P=.02), riders (P=.009), and horses (P=.0125) garnered increased engagements when compared to posts that did not (see table 3).

Qualitative content analysis also found several overarching themes throughout the post descriptions and comments. First and foremost, engagement with these posts seemed to allow community members to express their pride in Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride participants. This particularly targeted close family members and friends of commenters but was also general in character. One community member remarked, "Took my breath away and filled my heart with joy. Bigfoot riders carry on,

ancestors are proud!” Moreover, many of these expressions of pride were directed at youth participants. This was often in the form of “tagging” these individuals in photos that they were captured in, but also included expressions of general satisfaction with their participation. “Nice to know the young ones are taking a stand! Much love and blessings to you all,” one commenter exclaimed.

Table 3. Statistically significant variables

Code	Frequency (% of N=52)	Significance (*p*<.*05*)
Page	40	<.00001
Youth	42	.006
Elders	26	.02
Women	42	.03
Eagle staff	56	.02
Riders	77	.009
Horses	79	.0125
Note: All variables coded for were tested for statistical significance, but only those with significance are listed here.		

Secondly, community members used the comments section on these posts to send support to riders in the form of prayers and direct invocations of Lakota *wakȟáŋ*[4] beings. These general statements of support were directed at the riders rather than specific groups within the participants. However, these posts took on a special character as they included Lakota philosophical concepts and spiritual invocations informed by Lakota spiritual practices. For instance, one community member prayed, “Thank you and Tunkasila bless these riders,” while another pronounced, “Love these pictures! ❤️ Sending prayers for the riders and their horses. Mitakuye Oyasin.❤️”

Lastly, the comments section on these posts was not only a place for community members to engage with and support riders. Non-Native allies also used this space to send their own support. This took on two primary forms. The first was through general statements of solidarity proclaiming where the support was “coming from.” In these comments, individuals often declared their support for the ride while also stating where in the world they were located. Supporters identified themselves from being in

[4] Wakȟáŋ is a concept that permeates all Lakota spiritual life. While it is often translated as, “holy” or “transcendent,” accounts by both Lakota individuals and scholars suggest a more nuanced meaning. According to Lakota individuals, its meaning is much closer to that of “spiritual efficacy” or “spiritual power.”

many states across the United States as well as from international locations such as France, Ecuador, Norway, Switzerland, Ireland, and Canada.

The second way that these allied commenters acknowledged the ride was through recognition of the history that inspired the ride. These posters referenced a variety of historical circumstances that led to the ride's establishment. While some made specific references, other made more general proclamations. One such commenter explained, "Let us never forget this travesty against the people" in direct reference to the Wounded Knee Massacre.

4 DISCUSSION

In relationship to Indigenous social movements, particularly those in the United States, social media's impact on the ability of American Indian communities to garner support is an increasing topic of interest among social scientists. The logistical and political implications for mainstream media outlets' coverage of these movements continues to hinder the success and reach of American Indian social movements (Hunt & Gruszczynski, 2019; Johnson, 2017). Consequently, the potential for social media's role in strategies used by Indigenous communities to publicize their movements cannot be overstated (Belarde-Lewis et al., 2021). Examples of its use are numerous including the Idle No More (Tupper, 2014) and No DAPL movements (Hunt & Gruszczynski, 2019), among others. The geographic, social, and political contexts of American Indian communities often stifle their ability to communicate to larger portions of the national and global population. Despite the disparity in access to broadband internet in American Indian communities, the relative availability and affordability of social media counteracts these circumstances and provides opportunities for these communities to communicate to a wider audience (Johnson, 2017).

With the goal to understand how social media posts from the 2018 Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride aided in the construction of a Lakota and allied counterpublic, analysis of the images posted throughout the ride revealed multiple findings demonstrating post traits that drove increased engagement and brought together local activists and their disparate supporters. First, the structure of social media platforms analyzed seems to drive higher engagement with posts. Statistical analysis of poster type, whether individual or page/group, revealed that posts on pages were significantly more likely to have higher engagements from social media users. This suggests that while individual posters are important to the movement as a whole, posts that either originate from pages or are shared by pages are able to circumvent individual privacy settings that may hinder the reach of any individual post. Furthermore, these groups themselves constitute their own overlapping counterpublics made up of page followers

who engage with posts. These allow individuals less geographically and socially connected offline to participate in the movement and keep up with its development, suggesting the importance of establishing specific social media pages or profiles dedicated to unique social movements to serve as information hubs, in addition to diffuse posts from individual social media users.

This analysis also revealed the broader themes around which this counterpublic is constructed. Principally, it appears that Lakota cultural practices and beliefs were important for driving increased engagement by social media users engaging with these posts. The qualitative analysis suggests that, for Lakota commenters, references to Lakota spiritual practices and oral traditions, evident in invocations of tȟuŋkášila and other wakȟáŋ beings, were central ways of communicating support for riders and the Ride, generally. This is further supported by greater engagement with posts containing photos of eagle staffs (P=.02) and horses (P=.0125), although these findings are less clear as this engagement was likely driven by non-Native allies as well. These findings begin to suggest that for Lakota community members participation in this ride and the greater social media counterpublic may evidence an expression of the tenacity of Lakota cultural practices and values, especially due to the Ride's connection to the devastating Wounded Knee Massacre. Despite the interpretation of Wounded Knee as the end of the traditional Lakota way of life and years of termination era federal policy, participation in this counterpublic for some Lakota community members represents the strength of these communities to overcome contemporary and historical barriers to the exercise of their lifeways, reflecting findings related to social media use in other Indigenous communities (Rice et al., 2016).

Furthermore, specific references to Lakota philosophical and spiritual concepts reveals the sustained relevance and authority of these traditions for some Lakota citizens. The Lakota concept of Mitákuye Oyás'iŋi, or "all my relations," is described by late Lakota scholar and Rosebud Sioux Nation citizen Albert White Hat, Sr., as a central philosophy that explains the Lakota understanding of the interrelationship of all elements and beings in the universe (White Hat Sr & Cunningham, 2012). Whether it is stated explicitly or inferred, the philosophy of Mitákuye Oyás'iŋ, runs through every aspect of Lakota belief and is an important foundational aspect of their spiritual and cultural traditions (Albers et al., 2003; White Hat Sr & Cunningham, 2012). Moreover, the word tȟuŋkášila, or "grandfather," referenced in comments on some posts in this sample, is a frequent gloss for Lakota conceptions of the Creator (Ullrich, 2008).

Likewise, the cultural and political significance of eagle staffs in many American Indian communities further contributes to this interpretation. A common site at powwows and Tribal Council meetings across North

America, eagle staffs are important symbolic representations of tribal sovereignty and treaty rights in Native American communities. Color guards for Native American events are frequently led by a community veteran carrying an eagle staff, signifying a traditional "flag" in addition to those of individual Tribal nations (Herle, 1994). This interpretation, along with references like those mentioned previously show that for some Lakota individuals the counterpublic and the Ride itself is indelibly linked to the pervasiveness of Lakota cultural and spiritual traditions as well as representing an exercise of tribal sovereignty and novel form of culturally specific protest.

Another important theme, linking this movement to other Lakota social movements, is the importance of youth involvement. Both the qualitative and quantitative content analysis revealed that the recognition of youth involvement in the ride was important for members of the counterpublic. Like other contemporary Lakota social movements, such as the No Dakota Access Pipeline movement, findings suggest that youth involvement is not only important to the movement on-the-ground, but also in its digital manifestations, as well. This places the Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride firmly within the greater context of Lakota social movements and American Indian movements (Ferguson, 2018; Goeckner et al., 2020). As in the No Dakota Access Pipeline movement, youth also have a direct impact on the portrayals of the Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride. Photos from the Future Generations Teen Photojournalism Project made up 38% of the photographs in the sample. This direct youth involvement in the Ride, in general, and its publicity represents the strength of Lakota youth in these communities despite staggering youth suicide rates and poor educational outcomes (Freeman et al., 2016; McVey, 2016).

Additionally, these findings suggest that the Ride's social media presence allowed for greater reach outside of Ride participants and their families. This corresponds with Hayley Johnson's (2017) assertion that social media engagement allows for Indigenous social movements to overcome problems of geographic and political isolation in their communities. Findings that support this conclusion include explicit instances of supporters identifying their location in their comments. These identifications included three continents, seven countries, and multiple US states. By engaging with social media posts, these disparate supporters of the ride are able to express their support and solidarity for this movement. Given that the majority of Ride participants are from North and South Dakota, this suggests that the Ride's social media presence allowed these individuals to remain engaged with contemporary issues in Lakota communities from afar.

Likewise, findings suggesting the increased awareness of historical and contemporary instances of settler-colonial violence supports the

assertion that engagement with the Ride on social media allowed for individuals outside of Indian Country to learn about and recognize the historical circumstances surrounding the Ride. Unfortunately, curriculum designed to teach American Indian history often stops at the end of the nineteenth century (frequently with Wounded Knee) (Shear et al., 2015). Completely ignoring the existence of contemporary communities of American Indian peoples all over the United States, this inadequate education neglects not only the existence of these communities, but their continued struggles as well. Involvement in discourse related to the Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride through social media posts allows non-Native allies to overcome these barriers in education to learn about and recognize the historical atrocities against Lakota communities. Furthermore, this engagement provides opportunities to learn about contemporary struggles for sovereignty, cultural persistence, and equity in these communities.

4.1 Construction a Counterpublic

Social media continues to shape lives of individuals in communities around the world. In addition to transcending familial diasporas and sharing memes, social media plays a central role in the spread of social movements. This rings true for movements from Indigenous communities as much if not more than broader movements. Their isolation and marginalized status present significant barriers for the growth of these movements. However, through conscious and intentional use of social media they can overcome these barriers to create spaces of discourse where movement goals and community concerns are not subsumed by more dominant discourses. These spaces constructed through social media constitute what Nancy Fraser calls counterpublics.

The Chief Big Foot Memorial Ride and associated social media presence are effectively directed at constructing counterpublics for protestors and allies of these movements. Analysis of social media posts from the 2018 Ride revealed there are many important factors related to the content of social media posts that contributed to increased engagement with the posts. Photographs from the Ride that represented cultural persistence and tribal sovereignty as well as the involvement of youth offer insights into strategies that can be used in future movements to engage with both Lakota and allied individuals. Findings suggest that the construction of social media pages for the movement itself garner greater support for the movement by providing a centralized location for interested individuals to learn about and engage with the movement, rather than diffuse content created and disseminated by individual social media users.

This project also generates questions for future research into the impact and reach of social media use in Indigenous social movements.

Primarily questions about the spatial reach of the movement could offer insights into the types of content that increase involvement from individuals in different regions of the world. This analysis suggests the increased publicity of the adversities faced by many members of American Indian communities through social media is not only beneficial for the Indigenous social movements and community members themselves, but also for non-Native allies who wish to support and engage with these movements.

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[i] Lakota terminology italicized throughout the text adhere to the orthography established by Ullrich, J. F. (2008). New Lakota Dictionary: Lakȟótiyapi-English, English-Lakȟótiyapi & incorporating the Dakota dialects of Yankton-Yanktonai & Santee-Sisseton. Lakota Language Consortium Inc. Lakota terminology not italicized use popular spellings used by community members such as “Lakota” and “Oceti Sakowin.”