LGBTQ Human Rights and Conservative Backlash: A Case Study of Digital Activism in Mexico

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Abstract

The internet is a powerful tool that can be leveraged to form networks that disseminate information and encourage collective action. As a socio-material practice the ways in which liberal and conservative social actors use the internet matters deeply, as evidenced by the power of social media to manipulate election results. This paper asks to what degree are liberal and conservative social movement organizations using the internet -specifically, websites and social media - to achieve their goals, and what can activists and policy makers learn from trends in use of such digital strategies? To answer this question this paper presents an analysis of the websites and social media of two core sets of liberal (LGBTQ) and conservative (pro-family) organizations that engage each other within a contested policy domain. A principal finding is that while pro-family organizations use their websites and social media more extensively, neither pro-family nor LGBTQ organizations take full advantage of their digital ecosystems. While there is a significant amount research on the topic of digital activism, LGBTQ human rights, and social movements, there is very little social science research that analyzes the use of digital strategies within LGBTQ social movements, and even less that examines how conservative social movements use digital forms of activism to counteract liberal gains. This paper helps fill that gap by identifying trends in liberal and conservative organizations' use of websites and social media and in so doing contributes new knowledge relevant to social science theory(s) and public policy.

Keywords: LGBTQ human rights, Mexico, conservative backlash, pro-family, social movements, digital activism, organizations

1. Introduction

The first examples of large-scale use of digital activism (the use of the internet, websites and electronic communication technology by social movement activists and organizations) occurred in 1998 and in 1999 by activists participating in the Mexican Zapatista rebellion and the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, respectively. Since then, digital activism has garnered much attention from activists and social movement scholars, and there has been an explosion of social science research on the use and impact of digital technologies - including use of cell phones, the internet, the WWW, the 'dark web' and social media - on social movements.

Much early research on digital activism focused on developing typologies of digital repertoires (Stein, 2009), followed by research on how use of websites and the internet ("web 1.0") can influence organizational strategies and structures (Selander & Jarvenpaa, 2016). More recent research (Anderson and Jiang, 2018; Xiong et al, 2019) examines on the role of social media ("web 2.0") within social movements, focusing on the 'Arab Spring', 'Occupy', Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements, among others. To date however, few researchers have examined the use of digital activism by conservative counter-movements as compared to their liberal opponents. This paper seeks to fill that gap by examining and comparing the use of digital activism by a set of liberal (pro-LGBTQ) and conservative (pro-family) organizational actors in Mexico.

Mexico is an interesting case because LGBTQ activists in Mexico began to organize in the early 1970's and as a result the legislative landscape looks rather progressive (Corrales, 2019; Friedman, 2017), however it consistently ranks second among the most violent countries for LGBTQ persons in the world (Letra S, Sida, Cultura y Vida Cotidiana A.C., 2021; The Trans Murder Monitoring (TMM) Research Project, 2020). The first federal law banning discrimination on the basis of sexual and gender identity in Mexico was passed in 2003; in 2009-2010 Mexico City passed same-sex civil union and adoption measures; and in June 2015 the Mexican Supreme Court ruled that state bans on same-sex marriage were unconstitutional. Yet despite all the legislative progress, a majority of LGBTQ Mexicans still face a persistent paradox in which they experience homophobic conditions, discrimination, and physical violence on a regular basis (Corrales, 2019), with transgender women and

gay men as the primary targets.

For example, from 2008 to 2020, at least 1068 LGBTQ people were victims of homicidal violence (see Table 1), with 2019 being the deadliest in the five-year period. It is important to note that the real numbers are higher than those registered since many cases of homicides and hate crimes against LGBTQ people go unreported or incorrectly recorded. For example, according to calculations made by Alejandro Brito, a social scientist, journalist, and author of the publication Letra S, based on reports in the news media and other sources, the real number would approach the figure of 269 LGBTQ people killed in 2019 alone (Letra S, Sida, Cultura y Vida Cotidiana A.C., 2019). Additionally, statistics from the Transgender Murder Monitoring Project (TMM Update: Trans Day of Remembrance 2020) (see Table 1) of murders of transgender and gender diverse persons consistently rank Mexico as the second-most-deadly country (after Brazil) in terms of absolute numbers.

Year	Murders of Transgender Persons	Murders of LGBTQ Persons
2008	4	63
2009	9	64
2010	14	61
2011	33	103
2012	49	108
2013	45	84
2014	40	65
2015	35	61
2016	61	76
2017	67	95
2018	61	92
2019	65	117
2020	57 (as of Sept 2020)	79
Total	540	1068
	Source: The Trans Murder Monitoring (TMM) Research Project, 2020	Sources: Brito & Bastida, 2009; Letra S, Sida, Cultura y Vida Cotidiana A.C., 2014; 2019; 2021

Table 1: Murder Rates of LGBT Persons in Mexico, 2008-2020

A notable trend in these statistics is that murder rates increase on or just after the years in which pro-LGBTQ legislation is approved. For example, as indicated by the statistics cited in Table 1, 2010 - the year gay adoption and marriage laws were passed in Mexico City – marks an uptick, followed by a steady increase in murders. After 2015, the year the Mexico Supreme Court ruled laws preventing same-sex marriage were not legal, the murder rate increased markedly again and has continued to exhibit an upward trend with the exception of 2020 when the LGBTQ homicide rate declined 32%, largely due to lack of 'social contact' caused by the pandemic (Letra S, Sida, Cultura y Vida Cotidiana A.C., 2021).

Despite – or likely because of – high rates of discrimination and violence, LGBTQ activists began to organize in the early 1970's, forming one of the first formal LGBTQ activist organizations – *Colectivo Sol* - in 1981. Research on LGBTQ activism in Mexico (Corrales, 2019; Diez, 2016; Friedman, 2017) indicates a robust civil society response and the growth of a vibrant counter public space for transnational development and debate, particularly in regard to the politics of gay marriage. Much of the success of LGBTQ activists and organizations has rested on combining specific repertoires of contention, including 'activism in the streets and at the polls and activism by legislative means' (López, 2018); the incorporation of systematic use of digital forms of activism via websites and social media arises after 2000. Indeed, Latin American LGBTQ and feminist activists, particularly those in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, were early adopters of the internet in relation to other social movements (Friedman, 2017); building on their histories of struggle, they incorporated new technologies to strengthen their communities, networks and successes in political representation, legislative reform and identity recognition.

In contrast to LGBTQ activism, the roots of 'provincial conservatism' and the mobilization of religious, 'pro-family' actors to defend the Catholic Church against state anticlericalism can be traced as far back as the early 1800's in some regions of Mexico (e.g. Mixteca Baja, Oaxaca) (Smith B. T., 2012). The contemporary iteration of conservative activism in relation to LGBTQ (and women's) rights began in 1917, when the organization National Union of Parents (UNPF; *Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia*) was formed to push back against attempts to promote sex education and coeducation of boys and girls, among other activities (Mendez, 2017). In the 1970's, the UNPF was one of the main organizations that, in collaboration with the PAN (*Partido Acción Nacional*; National Action Party) and other conservative groups, generated an 'organizational backlash' (Corrales, 2019) to oppose the incorporation of sex education in public schools, and to promote the criminalization of abortion and censorship of sexual content within the media and art (Ruiz, 2010). In contrast to the LGBTQ movement, much of the success of the conservative pro-family movement has rested on the ability to reach a large cross section of Mexican society in a consistent and pervasive manner via in person church activities and involvement in political

parties (versus the internet), and to maintain a united front via producing collective frames (e.g. "ideology of gender") that resonate with deeply held conservative values (Corrales, 2019; Wilkinson, 2021).

Initially, the organizational backlash from conservative pro-family actors against legislative gains made by LGBTQ activists was rather weak (López, 2018), however by 2015 Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical churches had mobilized a large part their constituencies to engage in a sustained countermobilization to resist transformations and raise the cost of institutionalization of LGBTQ human rights. For example, after the June 2015 Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage the National Cofraternity of Christian Evangelical Churches, a network of 800 religious associations throughout Mexico, released a statement that condemned the ruling and confirmed receipt of 110,000 signatures in favor of an initiative to prevent gay marriage and adoption. In May of 2016 President Enrique Pena Nieto presented a package of constitutional reforms to the Congress that included outright legalization of same sex marriage (taking the Supreme Court ruling against laws preventing same sex marriage a step further), adoption by same sex couples and the possibility of making changes in gender identity documents. While public opinion seemed favorable at first, a sustained wave of organizational backlash ensued (Baruch, 2016; López, 2018; Wilkinson, 2021; Zedillo Ortega, 2019). Eight days after the event, the National Front for the Family (*Frente Nacional de la Familia*; FNF) was formed and proceeded to coordinate mass demonstrations across the country in June and September 2016 (López, 2018; Zedillo Ortega, 2019); as a result the proposed constitutional reforms did not pass. The goal of the FNF, now an organization of millions of people and thousands of institutions across Mexico, is to protect and promote 'family citizenship' – defined as the 'public involvement of the family to promote initiatives and laws that protect life, family and freedoms.'

The current wave of conservative organizational backlash represents a new opportunity to investigate and understand the discourse and strategies of conservative pro-family actors who oppose the institutionalization LGBTQ rights. This is important because much research on social movements has focused on progressive causes, in part because scholars tend to lean left. Consequently the vast majority of research on digital activism has also focused on left wing movements (Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Schradie, 2019), often producing results that show liberal movements are more likely to be politically active via digital mediums. However, more recent studies on the use of digital activism have found that right wing actors are increasingly likely to use digital platforms to move their agendas forward (Larsson, 2020; Schradie, 2019).

The question driving this paper is to what degree are liberal and conservative organizations using their websites and social media to achieve their goals, and what can activists and policy makers learn from these digital ecosystems and strategies? To answer this question this paper examines the content and use of organizational websites and social media (e.g. Twitter, Instagram and Facebook feeds and YouTube channels) by LGBTQ activist organizations and their conservative pro-family opponents. While there is a significant amount research on the topics 'digital activism' and LGBTQ human rights and social movements, there is very little social science research that analyzes the use of digital activism *within* LGBTQ social movements, and even less that examines how conservative social movements use digital forms of activism to counteract liberal gains.

It is important to understand differences in the use of websites and social media by liberal and conservative social movement organizations because the internet is a powerful tool that can be leveraged to form networks that spread information and encourage action. Viewed as a 'socio-material practice' (Friedman, 2017) in which social relationships are mediated by technology within specific contexts, the ways in which liberal and conservative social actors use the internet matters deeply, as evidenced by the power of social media to manipulate election results. The presence of the internet is ubiquitous and nearly universal yet the ability to access the internet and digital technologies and knowing how to use its tools effectively is clearly not a uniform phenomenon. The results of the case study of LGBTQ and pro-family organizations' use of the internet provides insight into liberal and conservative responses to the fight for LGBTQ human rights in Mexico and in so doing contributes new knowledge relevant to social science theory(s) and public policy.

2. Research design/methodology

This paper stems from a larger project that takes a mixed methods 'comparative case study' approach to investigate the dynamics of LGBTQ activism and consequent pro-family organizational backlash within Mexico. Following Burstein (1991), I conceptualize the dynamics of LGBTQ and pro-family organizational actions as occurring within a contested policy domain. This contested policy domain constitutes a comparative case study of two separate, often conflicting organizational fields that occasionally interact in an overtly direct manner to engage in a range of processes leading to legislative enactment (or rejection) of policy change. Methods utilized for the larger project include in-depth (in-person and telephonic) interviews with both liberal and conservative activists; comparative document and policy analysis and observation of key events; and analysis of the content and use of organizational websites and social media (e.g. Twitter and Facebook feeds) by LGBTQ activist organizations and their conservative pro-family opponents.

This segment of the project seeks to determine to what degree liberal and conservative organizations use their websites and social media to achieve their goals. To that end I examine selected datapoints relevant to the content and

use of organizational websites and social media of a selected 'core set' of Mexican LGBTQ and pro-family organizations. Drawing on methods used by scholars seeking to map the organizational fields of social movements (Barnes, 2008; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Klandermans, 1992) I first identified a core set of the most well-known and active LGBTQ and pro-family organizations within Mexico, and then extracted and analyzed data from their websites and social media. The organizations were identified via extensive and detailed internet searches (in both Spanish and English) for existing LGBTQ and pro-family organizations which were then cross-referenced with multiple organizational directories (also located via internet searches) to verify accuracy and currency. Organizations were selected based on their core constituency and purpose (e.g. as serving and/or representing members of the LGBTQ or pro-family populations, respectively) and whether they utilized a website and social media. Eleven LGBTQ organizations and six pro-family organizations were ultimately selected as the 'core set' of organizations for this study and are further described and discussed in Table 2 and the following sections of the paper.

To select relevant datapoints from organizational websites and their social media accounts (see Tables 3 and 4, respectively), I drew on analytical frameworks developed by those investigating social movement organizations' (Stein, 2009) and political parties' (Gibson & Ward, 2000) use of websites and social media (Jost, et al., 2018; McKeon & Gitomer, 2019; Xiong, Cho, & Boatwright, 2019). Based on Stein's (2009) typology of communication functions and Gibson and Ward's (2000) coding scheme, I selected a sub-set of specific datapoints for analysis of the extent and utility of organizational websites and social media. This sub-set of datapoints include those relevant to: 1) 'Organizational information' (dates established, location, structure); 2) 'Types of content and information flows' in terms of downward (.e.g. research reports, newsletters, blogs, online workshops, FAQ's, etc.), upward (donation tab, merchandise, use of cookies), lateral (partisan and reference links), and interactive (joining lists, online campaigns, online chat, etc.) information flows; and 3) Types of 'in-person activities' (e.g. support services, political actions) promoted on organizational websites.

WebsiteOutlook.com and Cookieserve.com were used to gather information regarding the organizational websites in terms of numbers of page views and cookies, size of webpage, dates created and updated, and geographic location of organizations. Other data points, such as those related to website 'information flows' and interactive features, as well as those relevant to social media (e.g. dates established, numbers of followers, views, posts, and/or videos, etc.) were pulled directly from the organizational websites and social media accounts. Data were gathered and verified from January-June of 2021. Data analysis occurred via comparative mapping (in table format) of datapoints pulled from websites and social media utilized by the LGBTQ and pro-family organizations.

By design, the resulting data and analysis (presented below) are limited to providing a somewhat narrow and decontextualized description of the utility and scope of liberal and conservative organizations uses of their websites and social media. Future research and publications stemming from the larger project will provide a contextualized analysis of the substantive content of websites and social media, as well as an analysis of 'big data' collected from social media (e.g. using the Twitter application program interface and Archivist, the Twitter archiving service).

3. Findings & Discussion

LGBTQ and pro-family organizations can be understood as constituting two separate, often conflicting organizational fields which occasionally interact in an overtly direct manner within a contested policy domain (Burstein, 1991); such actions and interactions involve engagement in a range of processes leading to legislative enactment (or rejection) of policy change, including agenda setting, developing policy proposals, and struggling for (or against) the adoption of particular proposals. The primary question driving this case study is to what degree are liberal and conservative organizations using their websites and social media to achieve their goals? The findings are outlined below, where I first provide a fuller description the organizations and their fields, then discuss the data collected from the organizations' websites and social media.

Given Mexico's highly centralized political system, in which political and economic resources are concentrated within the Federal District (Mexico City), it is no surprise that most of the organizations in this study are located in Mexico City, with the exception of one of the pro-family organizations (*Conciencia Nacional por la Libertad Religiosa* is located in Queretaro, just north of Mexico City). Additionally, one of the pro-family organizations - *Con Participación* – is unique in that it has locations in both Mexico City and Monterrey. As stated in the introduction, the first politically mobilized pro-family organization (the UNPF) emerged in 1917, however the rest of the core set of pro-family organizations inception dates extend from 1999 forward; half of the core set (3 of 6) formed between 2014 and 2016. Additionally, only 20% (2) pro-family organizations have formalized as a non-profit organization (A*sociación Civil* - A.C.). In contrast, the first formal LGBTQ organization (Colectivo Sol) emerged earlier than pro-family organizations (with the exception of UNPF); Colectivo Sol was formed in 1981 and the rest of the core set of organizations for which data was available (7 of 11) were formed between 1991 and 1999. Additionally, and 80% (9) of the LGBTQ organizations have formalized as an A.C.

Despite that most pro-family organizations are relatively new and the size of its core set is approximately half that of the LGBTQ organizational field (6 pro-family versus 11 LGBTQ organizations), the embeddedness (Lune, 2010) of pro-family organizations in relation to major mainstream social and political institutions, particularly the Catholic, Evangelical and Protestant Churches, gives these organizations a substantial advantage in terms of numbers of potential constituents and size of political impact. For example, in terms of the potential reach of religious institutions, 77.7 % of Mexico's population is Catholic and 11.2% are Protestant or Evangelical; only 8.1 percent of the population identifies as not having a religious affiliation (Domínguez, 2021), in comparison with 29% in the US (Smith G. A., 2021).

A review of the mission statements of pro-family organizational websites (see Table 2) indicates a high degree of uniformity and agreement in terms of target population and organizational goals – all of these organizations appeal to traditional heterosexual families to protect the 'human rights' and 'citizenship' of families and children, with slight variations in terms of specific interventions. For example, while all promote the values of the traditional heterosexual family, some pro-family organizations focus on enabling parents to intervene in the public education system to contest the promotion of inclusive 'gender ideology' whereas others focus on the criminalization of abortion and preservation of traditional heterosexual marriage.

LGBTQ Organizations	
Org name (Date founded) *Mission/Target Pop*	Website URL Social Media URLs
Agenda LGBT, A.C. (date unknown) *LGBTQ human rights*	http://www.agendalgbt.org/ (website not functional) https://www.facebook.com/AGENDALGBTAC/ https://twitter.com/agendalgbtmx?lang=en
Brigada Callejera (1993) *Transgender women; sex workers*	http://brigadaac.mayfirst.org/ https://www.facebook.com/brigadacallejera/ https://twitter.com/brigadaelisa
Clóset de Sor Juana A.C. (1991) *Human rights of women/lesbians*	http://www.elclosetdesorjuana.org.mx/ https://www.facebook.com/ClosetSorJuana/ https://twitter.com/ClosetSorJuana https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHkxQ4kdUuPuffn0xEviHFA/featured
Colectivo Sol, A.C. (1981) *LGBTQ human rights; HIV/AIDS prevention*	http://colectivosol.org/ https://www.facebook.com/Colectivo-Sol-AC-209031852497196/ https://twitter.com/colectivosol
Cuenta Conmigo México (1999) *LGBTQ human rights; Gender equality*	https://cuentaconmigo.org.mx/ https://www.facebook.com/diversidadconmigo/ https://twitter.com/Cuenta_Conmigo https://www.instagram.com/cuentaconmigodiversidadsexual/ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJB8FuwOiEValoLg_1HYuRQ
Fundación Arcoiris (1998) *LGBTQ human rights*	http://www.fundacionarcoiris.org.mx/ https://www.facebook.com/fundarcdiv
Guimel (2012) *Jewish LGBTQ support services*	https://guimel.mx/ https://www.facebook.com/Guimelmx https://twitter.com/Guimelmx?fbclid=IwAR1GtHymRZqDiaKIxqOmpn0nmJpZn bWJK_CGgIumzUMhqLsOL6BWbl_I3mk https://www.instagram.com/guimelmx/?fbclid=IwAR0MNdUTZrm61KfNscpKpq GfnA6ppP8MySva4O8536L5Hi8PDraIkt--mTA https://www.youtube.com/user/Guimelmx/featured
Jóvenes LGBT México (1999) *LGBTQ human rights; Reproductive rights*	https://www.yaajmexico.org/jovenes-lgbt-mexico/ https://www.facebook.com/yaajmexico/ https://twitter.com/YaajMexico https://www.instagram.com/yaajmexico/ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWsPdjKR5Doe1Tsbhl96bzQ
LeSVOZ, A. C. (1994) *Feminist and Lesbian human rights*	https://www.lesvoz.org/ https://www.facebook.com/lesvoz/?ref=page_internal https://twitter.com/lesvoz https://www.instagram.com/lesvoz/ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyQB5UjmVPAIrn-iLAxvhXA?view_as=public
Letra S (1994) *Information dissemination re: LGBTQ human rights, HIV/AIDS, sexuality*	https://letraese.org.mx/ https://www.facebook.com/letraeseweb/ https://twitter.com/Letraese https://www.instagram.com/letra_ese/?hl=es-la

Red de Juventudes Trans México (date unknown) *Build networks to defend human rights of transgender youth*	https://www.juventudestrans.org/ https://www.facebook.com/redjuventudestransmx/ https://twitter.com/JuventudesTrans/ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKqRSKVf6e2NN2CLa_Ms9HA
Pro-Family Organizations	
Org name (Date founded) *Target Pop*	Website url Social Media urls
Con Participación (date unknown) *Pro-life and marriage; Anti gender ideology in schools*	https://conparticipacion.mx/ https://www.facebook.com/ConParticipacion/ https://twitter.com/ConParticipa https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCI4l_cE_d7Q3nv5Ka1ApGOQ
Conciencia Nacional por la Libertad Religiosa (2015) *Human rights of the family; religious freedom and conscientious objection*	https://conciencianacional.org/ https://www.facebook.com/CNLRLATAM/ https://twitter.com/conciencia_nal https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxqkIKsY9Pz2__fg9UEmiaw
Consejo Mexicano de la Familia; ConFamiliaMX (2014) *Information dissemination to protect the natural family*	https://confamilia.org.mx/ https://www.facebook.com/confamiliamx/ https://twitter.com/confamiliamx https://www.instagram.com/confamiliamx/?hl=en https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqROhe7EOmo_ShYCnSSeRGA (account was suspended due to hate speech)
Frente Nacional por la Familia (FNF) (2016) *Educate, organize parents to protect citizenship rights of family*	http://frentenacional.mx/ https://www.facebook.com/FrenteNacionalPorLaFamiliaOficial/ https://twitter.com/fnxfamilia?lang=es https://www.instagram.com/FNxFamilia/ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEW0P07ZTXFDmwnqdL0TKvw
Red Familia (1999) *Promote ideals of 'natural family' in education, policy and media sectors*	https://www.redfamilia.org/ https://www.facebook.com/redfamiliamexico https://twitter.com/RedFamilia https://www.youtube.com/user/RedFamiliaMexico/featured
Unión Nacional de Padres de Familia (1917) *Generate participation in the family and educational spheres through the organized action of parents in cultural, legal, economic and political matters*	https://www.unpfmexico.com (website not functional) https://www.facebook.com/UNPFmexico/ https://twitter.com/UNPF_mx https://www.youtube.com/user/UNPFmx

Table 2: Core Sets of LGBTQ and Pro-Family Organizations

In contrast to the pro-family organizational field, the size of the LGBTQ core set is almost double that of the core set of pro-family organizations, yet LGBTQ organizations represent a minority of the Mexican population and do not have the same kind of embeddedness in mainstream culture and politics enjoyed by pro-family actors. For example, the size of Mexico's LGBTQ population is estimated at between 1.9% (OECD, 2019) and 11% (Ipsos, 2021) and there is no larger unifying institutional force such as the Catholic Church to provide a basis for promoting their agenda(s). Additionally, the mission statements of LGBTQ organizations reflect a high degree of diversity and lack of uniformity in terms of target population and goals (see Table 2). For example, LGBTQ organizations range in focus from advocating for the human rights of transgender women, transgender youth, lesbians, and sex workers; raising awareness of HIV/AIDS, sexual health, reproductive rights and gender equality; and providing support services for Jewish LGBTQ persons, transgender youth and those with HIV/AIDS. While all fall under the 'LGBTQ' umbrella, this diverse set of organizations does not represent a unified ideological or political sphere. Indeed, researchers of LGBTQ politics and culture(s) warn that it is a misnomer to talk about a LGBTQ 'community' as community belonging is not a given just because people share a gender or sexual identity (Formby, 2017). Yet, as described in the introduction, despite their relatively small numbers and lack of unity, the LGBTQ population and its supporters have managed to make major legislative gains in recent years.

The analysis of the content and use of organizational websites and social media of LGBTQ and pro-family organizations (see Tables 3 and 4) generally indicates that both sets of organizations underutilize their websites and social media, but LGBTQ organizations significantly more so. This finding agrees with Stein's (2009) research which determines that social movement organizations in the US do not use their websites to full advantage. For example, the number of daily views of pro-family organizations websites ranges from 477-1,250; for LGBTQ organizations daily views range from 337 to 490. In terms of information flows, the emphasis is on 'downward' flows (from organizational website to viewer-constituents); all LGBTQ and profamily organizations include mission and/or vision statements and most (80% of pro-family and 90% of LGBTQ) include organizational histories on or their websites. Additionally, 80% of pro-family and 70% of LGBTQ organizations offer via their

websites some form of policy or legal educational material and/or workshops relevant to their specific focus and goals. Pro-family organizations are more focused on reaching constituents via public relations and media releases (80% vs. 30% for LGBTQ organizations), blogs (60% vs. 30%), event calendars (40% vs. 10%) and FAQ's (40% vs. 10%), whereas LGBTQ organizations are slightly more likely to provide research reports (50% vs. 40% for pro-family organizations) and newsletters (20% vs. 0%).

	Pro-family (N=6)	LGBTQ (N=11)
Organizational Information		
Dates organization established	1917-2016	1981-2012
Dates website established	2000-2016	2000-2019
Organization location	Mexico City, Querétaro, Monterrey	Mexico City
Structure (nonprofit/AC)	16%	82%
Types of Content: 'Downward information flows'		
Views per day	477-1,250	337-490
Organizational History	67%	82%
Mission/Values/Ideology	100%	100%
Newsletter	0%	18%
Research Reports (self-published)	33%	45%
Blog	67%	27%
Policy& Legal analysis/workshops	67%	64%
PR/Media releases	67%	27%
Event Calendar	33%	9%
FAQs	33%	9%
Types of Content: 'Upward/lateral/interactive information flows'		
'Upward information flows'		
Donation tab	50%	55%
Merchandise	0%	0%
Cookies	100%	73%
'Lateral information flows'		
'Partisan' links	16%	27%
'Reference' links	16%	27%
'Interactive information flows'		
Subscribe/Join email list	67%	27%
Join Online Campaign	50%	0%
Chat/What's App	33%	18%
In Person Activities		
Provides Support Services	0%	45%
Coordinates 'In-Person' Political Actions	100%	73%

Table 3: "Web 1.0" – Organization's Website Features:

Non-downward information flows (e.g. upward, lateral and interactive) are a less common website feature yet also exhibit a similar pattern of underutilization. In terms of upward flows, none of the organizations sell merchandise to fundraise, however donations are solicited equally by both sets of organizations (60%). Additionally, all pro-family organizations utilize cookies to gather information from those who view their websites, whereas only 73% of LGBTQ organizations do so. Lateral information flows involve providing links to supporters and/or referrals to other organizations; in both cases, pro-family organizations are slightly less likely to provide such links that LGBTQ organizations (20% vs. 30%, respectively). Interactive flows are more likely to appear on pro-family websites: 80% (vs. 30% of LGBTQ websites) offer the opportunity to subscribe or join an email list; 60% (vs. 0% LGBTQ) allow one to join an online campaign; and 40% (vs. 20% LGBTQ) provide a live chat function via the website. Finally, LGBTQ and pro-family websites differ in the promotion of 'in-person' activities. 50% of LGBTQ (vs. 0% of pro-family) organizations use their websites to promote in-person support services whereas 100% of pro-family (vs. 70% of LGBTQ) organizations use their websites to promote and coordinate in-person political activities (e.g. attend demonstrations, sign legislative petitions, contact political representatives, etc.).

Data collected on organizations' social media (listed in Table 4) also reflect a similar pattern of underutilization, particularly by LGBTQ organizations, in terms of reach and content. Of the four social media options, Facebook is the most popular as all pro-family and LGBTQ organizations possess Facebook accounts. Pro-family organizations' Facebook accounts were created more recently (between 2012 and 2016) than LGBTQ organizations' accounts (created between 2009 and 2014), however the number of pro-family Facebook followers is greater, ranging from 12,074 to 121,062, versus 1,441 to 92,497 followers for LGBTQ Facebook accounts.

	Pro-family (N=6)	**LGBTQ** (N=11)
Facebook account	100%	100%
Dates created	2012-2016	2009-2014
# of followers	12,074-121,062	1,441-92,497
Twitter account	100% (66% operational)	91%
Dates created	2009-2016	2009-2014
# of followers	4,276-13,778	635-14.5K
# of tweets	1,297-11.3K	81-51.8K
Instagram account	33%	45%
# of followers	775-1,500	372-16K
# posts	9-207	26-801
YouTube account	100%	64%
Dates created	2011-2020	2007-2016
# of followers	40-3.12K	49-2.27K
# videos	5-495	7-86
# views	1,108-324,598	6,700-99,984

Table 4: "Web 2.0" – Organization's Social Media Features

Twitter is the second most utilized social media option - 100% of pro-family organizations possess Twitter accounts (although only 80% are functional) and 90% of LGBTQ organizations have one as well. Both LGBTQ and pro-family organizations created their Twitter accounts in more or less the same time period – between 2009-2016 in the case of pro-family organizations and between 2009 and 2014 in the case of LGBTQ organizations. In terms of numbers of followers pro-family organizations tend to have larger numbers on the 'low end': 4,276 versus the 635 followers of the least popular LGBTQ account. That said, LGBTQ organizations have slightly greater numbers on the 'high end': 14,500 versus the 13,778 followers of the most popular pro-family Twitter account. Numbers of tweets reflect a similar pattern in which pro-family organizations tend to have larger numbers on the 'low end': 1,297 versus the 81 tweets posted by the least active LGBTQ account, whereas LGBTQ organizations have significantly greater numbers of tweets on the 'high end': 51,800 versus the 11,300 tweets from the most active pro-family organization.

YouTube is also a popular form of social media for pro-family organizations: 100% have a YouTube channel as compared to 70% of LGBTQ organizations. That said, LGBTQ organizations created their YouTube accounts earlier (between 2007 and 2016) than pro-family organizations (between 2012 and 2020) yet have fewer followers - between 49 and 2,270 versus between 40 and 3,120 followers of pro-family YouTube channels. There is some variability between the two sets of organizations in terms of numbers of videos posted and numbers of views, however, generally speaking pro-family organizations numbers are higher. Pro-family organizations have posted between 5 and 495 videos as compared to between 7 and 86 videos posted by LGBTQ organizations. Numbers of views range from 1,108 to 324,598 for pro-family YouTube videos compared to between 6,700 and 99,984 for LGBTQ YouTube videos.

In contrast to other forms of social media, Instagram is the least utilized; only 40% of pro-family organizations and 50% of LGBT organizations possess an Instagram account. Pro-family organizations' Instagram accounts have attracted between 775 and 1,500 followers compared to between 372 and 16,000 followers of

LGBTQ Instagram accounts. Pro-family organizations have generated between 9 and 207 Instagram posts as compared to between 26 and 801 posts by LGBTQ organizations. Generally speaking, LGBTQ organizations tend to utilize Instagram slightly more than do pro-family organizations.

In sum, the data show that conservative pro-family organizations generally do a better job of utilizing their websites and social media for purposes of political mobilization than do liberal LGBTQ organizations. Despite that the LGBTQ organizations are older than pro-family organizations (with one exception), are more numerous and diverse, and were earlier adopters of social media, their websites and social media generally have fewer views and followers, and they tend to use social media less. In contrast, pro-family organizations are fewer, less diverse, and relatively younger than LGBTQ organizations, yet their websites have more followers, and they use social media more prolifically. Finally, content and action orientations differed: pro-family organizational websites and social media focused on information dissemination, education and political activism that targets legislation, whereas LGBTQ organizational websites and social media focused more on engagement in human rights activism (e.g. documenting hate crimes), and promoting and providing support services and 'diversity workshops' for workplaces, families, legislators, etc.

4. Conclusion

This paper identifies trends which generally indicate that conservative, pro-family organizations do a better job of utilizing their websites and social media than to liberal, LGBTQ organizations. This finding contradicts the assumption that liberal actors are more likely to use the internet to engage in political action and supports recent research (Larsson, 2020; Schradie, 2019) that shows conservative social movement actors are increasingly successful at using digital platforms to move their agendas forward. While a direct causal relationship is not identified, the ability of conservative pro-family organizations to implement more robust form of digital engagement may help explain why, despite legislative gains, LGBTQ human rights remains a highly contested policy domain in Mexico (and elsewhere).

However, it must be acknowledged that the findings in this paper are the "tip of the iceberg", serving to raise more questions than provide answers. For example, a qualitative analysis of the substantive content of organizational websites and social media would further contextualize and help explain the trends in the use and impact of liberal and conservative organizations digital strategies. Additional quantitative research that leverages big data scraping tools such as CrowdTangle (for Facebook and Instagram), Tweet Archivist (for Twitter)and Social Blade (for YouTube) would also further contextualize and shed more light on the topic. Future research by myself (------Barnes, 2022) and others also seeks to answer related questions about the relationship between digital forms of activism and street activism, institutional-level policy change, as well as hate crimes and murder rates.

Meanwhile, Mexico continues to make progress in advancing LGBTQ rights as evidenced by growing participation of LGBTQ persons in elections and mainstream politics. For example, the 2018 Mexican elections were unique in that the National Electoral Institute approved a protocol allowing gender non-conforming persons to vote despite having credentials with a designation that may not match actual gender presentation. In 2018, five lesbian and gay candidates were elected to office (3 in Mexico City, 1 in Puebla and 1 in Michoacán), and in 2021 more than 100 LGBTQ candidates ran for office in the June midterm elections – more than any year previous. The increase in LGBTQ participation is in part due to an order form electoral authorities for political parties to include more diverse candidates on their slates, but activists and analysts say the sheer number of candidates is a victory as it signals a departure from a history of hiding sexual identity to pursue a political career (NPR, 2021; Ortiz, 2021). However, it must be noted that the June 2021 midterm elections were also one of Mexico's deadliest, with estimates of between 90-150 candidates killed (Toedte, 2021) and ultimately none of the LGBTQ candidates were voted into office.

In addition to the uptick in electoral violence, the growing power of conservative, far-right actors in Mexico is a concern. Factors such as the growth of evangelicalism, opposition to AMLO's (Andrés Manual López Obrador, Mexico's current president) version of left-wing populism and the ongoing recession (exacerbated by the COVID pandemic) in Mexico have contributed to the rise of the far-right (Aguilera, 2017; Aguilera, 2020). Of particular note is the emergence of an 'anti-AMLO' movement organized by the National Anti-AMLO Front (FRENAAA) which is noted for its skillful use of social media and displays of religious affiliation (Uribe, 2020).The rise of Mexico's far-right is a phenomenon that connects to a larger global context of conservative pushback against the past 20 years of liberal gains in which there was a notable increase in elections of conservative right-wing leaders (e.g. Trump in the US, Putin in Russia, Boris Johnson in England, Duterte in the Philippines, Erdogan in Turkey, Orban in Hungary, Bolsonaro in Brazil, etc.) and increasing popular support for their policies. As a consequence, key wedge human rights issues - from the environment to women's and LGBTQ civil rights - are under increasing attack, with some populations targeted for extreme forms of state-sponsored (in the case of Russia, Brazil and the Philippines) and/or state tolerated violence. Ultimately, this and future research on conservative and liberal social movement organizations provides much-needed insight into the ways civil society utilizes both digital and 'street' activism to impact social policy and human rights, as well as sheds light on the larger phenomena of increasing polarization between liberal and conservative actors in society.

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