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A DIGITAL HUMANITIES DATABASE: A TOOL FOR ACCESSIBLE DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

The ideas in this paper merge the pre-computer era ethnographic use of information systems with emerging ideas in cloud-resident, very large database design. The need for this revolutionary information system has arisen in the author's field of governance and public administration due to the problems faced by both mature and emerging democracies.

In today's climate, global and organizational elites are using powerful lobbyists to push an agenda of dangerous deregulation that exclusively favours their interests. Worse yet, as citations in this paper hope to demonstrate, there is cause to believe that their money, and their de facto ownership of mainstream media outlets, has been successful in skewing the outcomes of policymaking decisions and elections because of their ability to use propaganda that specifically targets uninformed and naïve citizens.

In the current era of a shrinking middle-class and increasing inequalities, public unrest aimed at countering the trends of the past four decades is mounting, but several recent elections in Mediterranean nations, Europe, and the United States are pointing to the fact that even massive protest movements are going to be ineffective in altering election and policymaking outcomes, exposing the age-old truth that for minorities and already marginalized populations, voting alone is not an effective tool of democracy.

This paper outlines an emerging information system that is already in development. As an integral part of an ambitious virtual governing institution, the project is creating an open, self-supporting socio-technical system that promises to mitigate all of these concerns by being free of barriers for participation (even for marginalized and oppressed populations), structured without a hierarchy (so that it cannot be corrupted by power), and based on free association (so that no group becomes a captive of the system).

The literature review supports how each of the elements within the proposed system is grounded in the theory of contemporary academicians and respected authors.

Keywords: narrative, very large database, public administration, social media, crowd source, governing, socio-technical system.

1   INTERPRETIVE DATA

1.1   Institutional Memory

Back in the period when computer memory was still being loaded with punch cards, Clifford Geertz, one of the most influential cultural anthropologists of the 20th century (Shweder and Good, 2005), wrote about the importance of having a "consultable record of what man has said" (Geertz, 1973, 30). In 2000, Dvora Yanow took this thinking to another level when she suggested that by, "Observing what people do and how they do it, listening to how they talk about the issue, reading what they read, and talking with them about their lives…", a person becomes more in tune with the true issues of concern. She continues by stating that, "Out of this growing familiarity, the researcher-analyst will be able to identify the overlappings and commonalities…" (Yanow, 2000, 37). These academics were talking about the value of having access to qualitative information as "institutional memory" (Thayer, 1973, 171). At the intersection of Geertz, Thayer, and Yanow is the idea of having a readily available, relevant, research-supported narrative that informs the pressing social issues of our time. This kind of information is critical to any number of disciplines, but as it relates to governance, information of this nature should be at the very foundation of every policymaking decision. Unfortunately, in the 21st century, the circumstances of citizens are seemingly less-and-less important to those that govern them. To assist in reversing a trend toward unresponsive government, a revolutionary public institution is being created as a *vehicle* for true representative democracy. This paper outlines the *engine* that is currently being assembled to become the information system that will propel such a vehicle.

Vital to understanding this proposal is a clear understanding of what an *ideograph* is, and how it relates to this emerging database concept (Miller, 2004). While an ideograph will be explained more completely within its own section of this paper, at the moment we can use a different metaphor to demonstrate the premise. Inasmuch as barriers are often constructed of bricks, ideographs are to narratives what the individual bricks are to the barriers. As the *fuel*, the database will essentially be an enormous repository for ideographs, and as the *engine*, the information system will be a query language that is engineered to retrieve multiple ideographs that can be easily framed and contextualized into policy-supporting narratives.

1.2   Ancillary Benefits

Speaking bluntly, oppressed and marginalized populations are victims of abuse. This information system, once in place, could benefit any number of causes, but the primary goal will always be to engineer it so that it can be accessed by the most vulnerable and marginalized. Cast in this light, the amazing thing is that its mere existence, even if it is nothing more than a repository from which very little data is ever retrieved, might still be enough to judge the project a resounding success.

Research supports the fact that by simply having a validating outlet through which one can recount one's abuse, a person begins the healing process and ends the cycle of submitting to further abuse. Studies show that survivors of abuse who do not talk about it impair their recovery (Lepore, Ragan, & Jones, 2000; Hemenover, 2003; Ruggiero et al., 2004). One psychologist writes, "Those who have survived [traumatic events] learn that their sense of self, of worth, of humanity, depends upon a feeling of connection to others. The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against […] despair" (Judith Herman). Countless web pages have already become invaluable as virtual support groups to meet the demand, but it is completely fragmented. Similar to the records of numerous global protest movements, the data does not lend itself for use within an "information system."

Even though the topic of abuse will not be revisited again in this paper, it should be noted that from a mental health standpoint, the natural outcome of "telling one's story" is that it alters the discourse inside a person's own head. Furthermore, when a victim of societal abuse finds a fellow survivor with a similar story, they start a conversation. In a nurturing and supportive environment, these conversations (often undertaken online through pseudonyms if the victims are living under oppressive religious or political conditions) will build momentum over time. Slowly, new narratives for living one's life emerge, even in the absence of visible change to outside observers. While the remainder of

this paper will be about taking an institutionalized, proactive role in resisting some of the most powerful forces on the planet, the change that occurs in the hearts and minds of individuals should never be overlooked. Indeed, the momentum of the Arab Spring movement was nothing more than the visible manifestation of latent thoughts that became visible as the collective will of oppressed citizens.

2 BROKEN DEMOCRATIC SYSTEMS

2.1 The Organizational Elite and Governance

The famed sociologist Robert Michels wrote in 1911 about the *iron law of oligarchy*. In that piece "...he developed the view that modern organizations typically end up under the control of narrow groups, even when this runs against the desires of the leaders as well as the led. [...] Despite the best intentions, these organizations seemed to develop tendencies that gave their leaders a near monopoly of power (Morgan, 2006, 296)." Existing theories about organizational elites do an excellent job of explaining why the problems with government and public administration are what they are today (Farazmand, 1999, 325; Chen, 2009, 451). In the wake of the current austerity crisis in Europe, Farazamand today expresses his concern that the tight alliance between the super-powers of Germany, France, Britain, and the United States is creating the largest Global Empire that the world has seen since the Fall of the Persian Empire 2300 years ago. Farazmand sees the disproportionate burden of austerity that is being imposed upon smaller, less powerful nations as creating points of bifurcation that will necessarily lead to the breakup of the European Union; a move that, in his view, would ultimately be beneficial to the smaller nations inasmuch as it will free them to begin a process of reclaiming their ability to determine their own futures (Farazmand, 2012; Farazmand, 2012). Regardless of one's views about the future of the European Union, what is vital is that the people become as informed as possible, and that their personal investment in the decision not be minimized, or worse yet, suppressed. Unfortunately, what the theories about the global elite typically lack is a clear, practical method whereby oppressed populations can effectively resist them, thereby restoring equal and fair access to the democratic process for marginalized populations (El-Mahdi, 2009, 1011).

2.2 Discourse Structuration and Hegemony

For the information system proposed in this paper, the process of engineering the algorithms that will assist in the construction of narratives is anchored to the theory of *discourse structuration*. The term was used by Hajer in 2005 in *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*. Miller, in 2012, quotes Hajer as well, writing, "discourse-coalition is not so much connected to a particular person, but is related to practices in the context in which actors employ story lines and (re)produce and transform a particular discourse" (Hajer, 2005, 303; Miller, 2012, in press).

For the global elite, discourse structuration has never been a problem. Hegemony, as described by Antonio Gramsci, accurately illustrates how power is retained by the ruling class when they *structure* the governing narrative to always benefit *them* (Bates, 1974, 351). As bad as that is, the truly insidious nature of hegemony comes from the fact that on the counter-hegemonic side, marginalized and oppressed classes are proactively being kept "at war" with each other through carefully "structured" narratives that not only tell a population who they should hate (a process called *framing*), but also instructs the governed to consent to their *own* oppression. This is done by carefully structuring prescribed benefits that supposedly will enure to them as long as they do not oppose the elites (a process called *contextualizing*). It is important to note that these are tactics that are also available to the marginalized, but only if they can find consensus on which topics should be "framed" and "contextualized" for public consumption.

A modern example of when a majority of citizens "consented" to their own oppression is the idea of supply-side economics, an ideology that was pitched to world citizens in the 1980s and 1990s by the likes of Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and a host of other global leaders. Dubbed "trickle-down economics," what this discourse told citizens is that if they would *allow* the super-rich to become obscenely-rich, then *everybody* would be better off. With the benefit of hindsight, statistics on wealth accumulation show that the top 5 percent of the US population retained 81.7 percent of all new wealth

in the period from 1983 to 2009. Meanwhile, the bottom 60 percent lost a 7.5 percent share of the total wealth gain in the same peroid (Mishel, 2011; Allegretto, 2010). After the 2008 crisis it only got worse, with the top 1 percent raking in 93 percent of all new wealth in 2009 and 2010, with the bottom 99 percent experiencing growth of 0.2 percent (Saes, 2012, 7). As witness to the power of discourse structuration, in the face of these statistics almost every proposed tax increase on the wealthy is still being opposed by ruling political parties, all while austerity is being imposed upon the general citizenry in an almost dictatorial fashion (Farazmand, 2012). With a consensus-building information system, powerful and majority-supported new narratives to resist these tactics will be possible.

2.3 Fragmentation and the "Othering" Tactic

As noted above, the units of information that will be stored in this proposed system are called ideographs. The focus now turns toward specific ways in which those ideographs will be utilized, and why it is expected that these ideas will be effective in improving the democratic process for minorities.

For the most part, it is more useful for the elite to win elections rather than wage wars, so as a small group they must carefully craft a narrative that will attract a majority "favored" class to align with them at the polling booth. In most cases they do this by sharing a carefully measured amount of power with this segment of the population in order to sweeten the deal (Farazmand, 1999, 325-326). Because of this, much of the current discourse that is being structured by hegemonic forces is geared toward deflecting the blame for the economic hardship of that "favored" segment of the middle-class onto disfavored "others" who, in truth, have very little or nothing to do with the current crisis. In the United States this is reflected through the much-ballyhooed phrase, "Take our country back;" a phrase in which the unspoken context pines for a period when the white, Christian, heterosexual male faced little or no opposition from visible minorities, atheists, non-Christians, feminists, and gays. The use of this kind of "othering" tactic in Europe and elsewhere now brings us to a situation where nations are "struggling greatly with inclusiveness and discrimination" and the United States has become "one of the most unequal democracies in the world" (Stille, 2011).

From the perspective of narrative theory there are mitigating factors that can counter this kind of harmful activity. Arguably, the single failing on the part of protest narratives seems to be rooted in the fact that marginalized populations are not monolithic (Wilkes, 2006, 510), and the forces of hegemony have known for centuries that if you can keep your enemies fighting each other, then you don't even have to fight your own battles. It is the opinion of the author that if a socio-technical system, acting in the role of a barrier-free public institution, can integrate its information system with crowd-sourced social media content from virtually every global protest movement, then that system, with a bit of guidance from trained custodians, could potentially *frame* and *contextualize* protest narratives so that they provide compelling support for policy proposals that are viable as actual governing narratives. A "governing narrative," in this case, is defined by whether the new policy proposals of the protestors become *viable* (majority-supported) alternatives to the ideas being pushed by the global elite.

2.4 Engineering the Consensus-building Narrative Threads

The mechanism whereby the goals of the emergin virtual governing institution are accomplished calls for records to be structured in such a way that fields containing recognized consensus-building ideals emerge organically during most querying procedures. To accomplish this, identified consensus-building fields will be narrowly defined, allowing for additional fine-tuning of the algorithms that drive the query language. Conversely, traditionally divisive issues, when input into this system, will be left more broadly defined. Using the issue of gay marriage and abortion as examples, such topics will not exist as record-level fields, but will rather exist only in the third tier of a four-tiered drill-down mechanism. At the record level, instead of gay marriage there will be topics that are recognized as steps toward eliminating religious-based bigotry in every way that it is manifest. Starting from the "Living Diverse" gateway, a user will drill down *through* LGBT Issues (lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender), and *through* gay marriage, before encountering the final sorting parameters. At this final database-record level, all but one choice will highlight consensus-building ideals. For example, the separation of church and state, the financial burdens that gay marriage bans impose upon same-sex

couples, and the advantages to society that full marriage equality will bring, to name just a few possibilities. Opposing views against gay marriage will have a place, but they will not be so narrowly defined, thus not "structuring" the same kind of organic consumable narrative. A similar approach will be made for all such divisive issues, thus giving consensus-building narratives a distinct advantage over narratives that would perpetuate fragmentation of the counter-hegemonic discourse.

It is important to point out that the crowd-sourcing mechanism, through which records are generated, will be very similar. Pre-defined pull-down fields will obligate contributors to think through the process of what best describes their work from both the media genre perspective (also with four drill-down tiers), and the policy perspective (as illustrated in the above example). This will, in many cases, force contributors themselves to face the truth that is easily overlooked; the truth of inherited "privilege." Hegemony rewards complicity, which by design means that if the "favored class" fail to challenge traditional hegemonic views, they will, by default, reap a benefit. Returning to the example of marriage equality as an example, a contributor who desires to add a record that supports a continued ban against gay marriage would have to read (and consciously bypass) the four or five consensus-building selections before finding the one selection (deliberately at the bottom of the list) that would sort their record as one that supports *continued fragmentation* of the counter-hegemonic discourse.

3   A NEW SOCIO-TECHNICAL SYSTEM

3.1   Hierarchical Structures as the Problem

In recognizing how organizational elites and multinational corporations use the mechanism of hierarchical control to concentrate their power, and thereby manimpulate the leaders of emerging democracies as their puppets, organizational theory expert Gareth Morgan writes, "…we may be able to remove key problems [within our institutions] by changing the 'rules of the game' that produce them" (2006, 332-333). Like Frederick Thayer before him, Morgan was referring to a complete restructuring of the hierarchical organization, and by extension, bureaucracy. Figure 1 below shows how a typical hierarchical structure might look for a functional unit within the institution proposed by this paper. Figure 2 shows how it is actually structured so that it is free of hierarchy and favours consensus-building. Morgan and Thayer are not alone in advocating for a complete overhaul in how our public institutions are constituted. In the preface to his current edition of *Public Organization*, Denhardt writes, "As a theory of organization, [the history of past efforts of the field has] limited itself
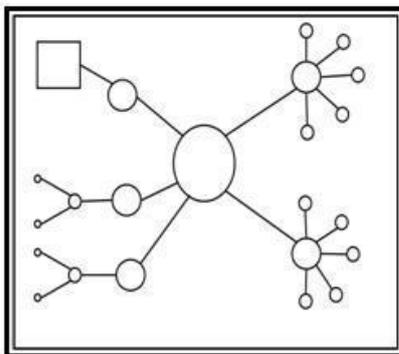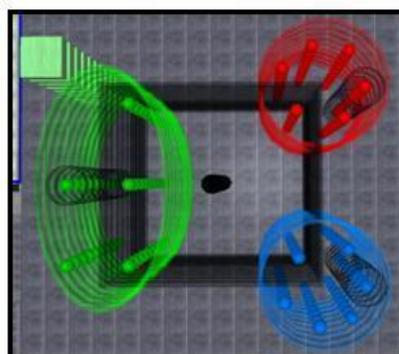

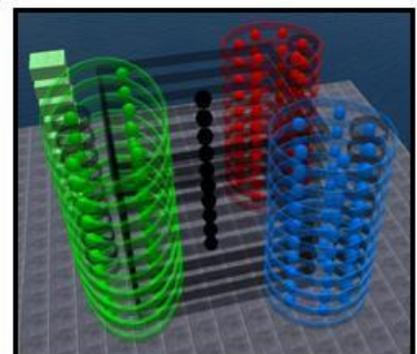Figure 1 - Hierarchical   Figure 2 – Non-hierarchical   Figure 3 – Virtual Institution

to instrumental concerns expressed through hierarchical structures, failing to acknowledge or to promote the search for alternative organizational designs." Adopting a tone almost as serious as Thayer, he underscores how serious he is, by adding, "If democracy is to survive in our society, it must not be overridden by the false promises of hierarchy and authoritarian rule. *Democratic outcomes require democratic processes"* (Denhardt, 2011, x-xi; emphasis in original).

Even though they were written almost 40 years ago, Thayer's views in particular have shaped the engineering of this proposed information system because he was one of the earliest, and arguably the most vocal, in strongly advocating for an alternative to hierarchy, suggesting instead that society and its institutions be guided by an "almost infinite number of small groups" (1973, 171). As a starting

point, in his search for the ideal group size, Thayer traces the history of human civilization and finds that most tasks seem naturally suited for a small group process, and that the natural affinity is to gravitate into these small groups when work becomes especially challenging and the risk of an incorrect decision increases (1973, 8). He concludes on this topic by affirming that, "While common sense would seem to dictate that there can be no 'magic' number, five appears so often in so many environmental situations to carry persuasion with it" (Thayer, 1973, 8). The citation at the back of his book lists over a dozen studies that support Thayer's number (199).

As shown below in Figure 2, the proposed socio-technical system that would administer this information system calls for a policy group overseeing six all-encompassing campaigns (bottom right circle), a media group overseeing six all-encompassing genres of artistic creativity (top right circle), an operations group of five (the oval on the left), and a steering group of six that links the outer three groups (the black square). Together, the entire proposed unit will contain 18 individuals. The institution expands its reach (and becomes a cloud-based virtual governing institution) by simply inviting additional units of 18 individuals to affiliate with them, as illustrated by the "stacking" mechanism in Figure 3 below. It is the opinion of the author that such a *vehicle* (or something similar to what is being proposed herein) will soon emerge from somebody's garage, and it will be demanding *fuel* from somewhere. The problem with waiting too much longer is that it could very well be that *profit*, not **knowledge**, will be the primary driving force behind it. Nevertheless, this paper is ***not*** specifically about the design of the organization.

3.2   Collective Thinking and an End to Hierarchy

As a final word on how the entire organization will rely upon this "institutional memory," we will trace the decision-making process that guides its crowd-sourced content. Viewed as a matrix of 180 individuals, Image 3 cannot be construed in any way to show a hierarchy. Instead, all decisions are the product of a collective effort. Each virtual (vertical) team will be working as a consensus-building unit, just as the city-based (horizontal) teams do, and the product of their work will be that the supporting information that is guiding the process in ten cities will now be remarkably similar in each of the respective communities. The central black ball (the *central-figure* position described in paragraph 5.2 below) will not only be a member of the steering group (the black square of Figure 2) at the city level, but the ten of them (as the vertical column seen at the centre of Figure 3) will also have met in the virtual realm. In this way, the information that will inform the group decisions will have been diffused throughout the matrix, and in the process will have been influenced by the collective will of the entire organization, both city-based and virtual. The model in Figure 3 illustrates ten groups, but in practice there would be no rigidity in the design. Each group, organization or institution will be able to choose any number of affiliations based on geography, ideology, or purpose.

4   THE RECORDS IN THE DATABASE

4.1   Contributors

Each of the 180 individuals represented in Figure 1 will not only be a crowd-source contributor to the proposed database, but each of them will also be a conduit and custodian, naturally helping to frame and contextualize the consensus-building (discourse-altering) nature of the content that is brought to from the grassroots of a population. If expanded to encompass the 951 cities that were engaged in the 2011 protests (imagine a stack with 951 layers instead of 10), this organization would have boasted to have 17,118 individuals in its organization, from 82 countries. As representatives for their community, they would provide outreach for the database to literally hundreds of thousands of fellow activists, providing for an almost infinite sprawl of crowd-sourced material as digital content begins to accumulate from activists and community workers within each of their communities. This content will be everything from art, to photojournalism, blogs, novels, non-fiction books, podcasts, YouTube videos, and any number of hyperlinks to other content already on the Internet. It could also be something as simple as a cell phone image that was uploaded with a text message caption. It is important to note that the content is being generated already, and whether or not this database exists

will neither accelerate nor diminish the rate at which this data is posted to the Internet. The only thing that this database will do is allow it to be accessed through the query language of an information system, thus weaving it together into usable narrative.

4.2   Crowd-sourcing of Ideographs

In Africa, approximately 60 per cent of the population does not have access to a bank facility, but over 50 per cent of adults now have cell phones. In response to this, rather than build more branches, the banking industry has decided to move to mobile banking instead (Ghosh, 2011). In August 2011 cell phones and SMS technology allowed Kenyans to raise more than $200,000 from fellow Kenyans in the first 12 hours of a famine relief campaign. More significant than the $200,000 is the fact that, in the appeal to have citizens send a text as a way of donating money, the public were encouraged to donate what they could, even as little as ten cents (BBC, 2011). Technology, even in third-world nations, is now a reality. Access to technology is now truly global, and cell phones can be purchased in India, Turkey, and eight African nations for under $15 (Fox, 2011). In similar ways, throughout the developing world, emerging technology is reshaping every aspect of the lives of populations that otherwise remain highly marginalized and vulnerable.

Beyond cell phones, in October 2011 India launched a $35 tablet computer (powered by Android) to reduce the digital divide between rich and poor in that country. The first 100,000 units were distributed to college students for free (Fox, 2011). In January 2012 the One Laptop Per Child charity introduced their $100 solar-powered XO 3.0 tablet at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. Shipments of 75,000 units to Uruguay and Nicaragua were to be made in March 2012 (Fox, 2012).

These advances in technology for the developing world are important because the future of equal rights for minorities and other marginalized classes of people may very well depend upon vulnerable populations having access to the Internet, whether through a cell phone, tablet, or laptop computer. The central concept of this digital humanities database project is that true democracy in the 21st century will hinge upon who has access to digital media, both as a consumer, and a contributor. This precept was underscored when *Time* magazine honoured "The Protestor" as The Person of the Year for 2011 (Andersen, 2011), and one event, in January of that year, figures prominently in how the events of the year unfurled. Accurate or not, the *ideograph* of the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi is of something far more significant than a penny-less fruit vendor from a remote town in Tunisia. That image now signifies a young man who had attempted to do everything that he was told he should do in order to be a contributing member of society. It signifies someone who was systematically being denied the simple dignity of work by a system that had been designed to allow for the oppression of the vulnerable and already marginalized (Thorne, 2011). Bouazizi's death thus became a central part of a powerful narrative and propelled the protest movement so rapidly in Tunisia that a dictator who had ruled for 23 years was forced to step down within ten days.

Central to the design of this proposed information system is the undeniable fact that there would have been no Mohamed Bouazizi ideograph were it not for the technology that captured an event that lasted for mere seconds, and within just a few hours, allowed it to spread across the planet. Now, as an *enduring* ideograph, it continues to resonate in the minds of millions (Miller, 2004, 469). The digital humanities database that is envisioned by this project will primarily be a central repository for these kinds of ideographs; an information system with a query language that is engineered to retrieve such ideographs in roughly-framed and contextualized threads from which narratives naturally flow.

5   IMPACT AND EVALUATION

5.1   The Paradox of Vulnerability and Trust

Within this emerging information system, at the nexus of organizational behaviour and policymaking, resides a paradox of vulnerability and trust. A mechanism to compensate for this is critically important because the trust of the common person has been violated, most notably by the events that led up to the 2008 financial crisis. Even beyond that, it has not seemed to matter whether a person lived in a

democratic nation or one ruled by a dictator, because, in both cases, vulnerable people routinely have their trust in leadership violated. Mohamed Bouazizi should have been able to trust the police in his town to enforce the law equally. He was *vulnerable* to a corrupt system that was *untrustworthy*.

In this climate, where vulnerabilities are *routinely* exploited, trust is not given easily to any person who could take that power and use it against the people that it was intended to protect. In reviewing the book, *Globalization from Below*, Peter Evans wrote, "Preoccupation with movement democracy is complemented by a profound distrust of established governance organizations" (2007, 62). It is noteworthy that he wrote that more than a year *before* the global financial crisis.

5.2   The Twin Hypotheses

The premise that such an information system would achieve wide-spread use revolves around twin hypotheses, each in turn mitigating the problems of vulnerability and trust. The ***central-figure hypothesis*** suggests that in motivating people to ***contribute to*** the database, as well as to glean narrative content from it, there will need to be a central figure; a person so driven by a passion for social justice that she or he will be willing to persist with dogged determination in the daunting task of bringing together a team of 17 *existing* (preferably prominent) community leaders for a unified purpose of improving policymaking decisions on behalf of a population. It will take this degree of determination because most will listen to the initial sales pitch for "yet another nonprofit advocacy group" under a cloud of pervasive skepticism (i.e. *mistrust*). The one idea that should resonate with all of them is the idea that hegemony is the problem, and that it will take a movement, not just a person, to do battle with it. When describing such movements, speaking specifically about segregation in America and women getting the right to vote, Al Sharpton captured the spirit well by simply stating, "A lot of things were acceptable – until we stopped accepting it" (Sharpton, 2011).

As a final point on hegemony, for centuries now the thinking has been that hegemonic narratives needed to be deconstructed and proven wrong, but this is not what will be advocated by the custodians who guide the use of the proposed information system through its embedded (virtual) continuing education component. Hegemonic narratives are sustained by deeply entrenched bulwarks, resistant to direct attacks. For this reason, the mission for this project will clearly state that users should strive to *displace* old and harmful narratives instead of proving them false (Miller, 2012, in press).

The second hypothesis, or ***collective-thought hypothesis***, supports two ideas. First and foremost is the need to protect the fledgling group from the *central-figure* who will emerge as their spokesperson, thus mitigating the past experiences of vulnerability and trust. The second will be to devise an organic data structure that will assist in framing and contextualizing the growing repository of ideographs, enabling users to effectively displace socially constructed narratives that are rooted in hegemony but not supported by factual history. When Peter Evans (in 2007) predicted that globalization would divide the elite class and open a window of opportunity for global solidarity, he was largely correct (2007, 64). Currently, the window is cracked, but the counter-hegemonic voices have yet to coalesce. Here again, they have the "information" that they need, but they have no "system."

5.3   Grant Funding vs. Self-funding

Grant funding is currently only being pursued to fund the development of the software and the initial year of operations. This is because the web portal is being structured in such a way that it will be self-funded by traffic to the site and its proposed online store. After that, it is hoped that no further outside funding will be needed. Items that can be offered for sale will be a natural extension of having an audience at the site, and such items are expected to be things like limited edition art prints, books, CD's, DVD's, postcards, bumper stickers, mugs, t-shirts and apparel, bookmarks, and the like. Revenue streams will also be realized from web ads of supportive affiliates, symposia, exhibitions, tours, and public speaking engagements of members of the collective. As noted earlier, there will be no profit motive, but in similar ways to how farmer's cooperatives worked a century ago, members of the collective who have converted their talent into revenue streams through their contributions to the database will be compensated first by a royalty, and then, once expenses are covered, the artists and other contributors will likely participate in a proportionate share of any surplus.

6   PROGRAMMING PLATFORM AND LANGUAGE

The information system proposed by this paper is currently being engineered in C# on a .NET Platform. At the time of writing, the on-going debate is about whether a SQL relational database system will become too "resource expensive" in the event of massive growth. A sample alternative solution (one out of several) is the recent "success-tolerant" Performance-Insightful Query Language (PIQL; pronounced 'pickle') that was recently developed by the AMP Lab at UC Berkeley (Armbrust, and et. al., 2012, 181).

7   CONCLUSION

As noted, virtually all of the artistic creativity needed to create new, more compelling ideographs already exists within a community, and the leaders that can inspire this creativity are already in place with organizations that support them. As supported by the literature review of this paper, a primary reason why policymaking efforts are failing to produce the desired changes for vulnerable populations is that there is a lack of consensus. As of yet, nobody speaking for marginalized populations has presented a clear, cohesive narrative that the counter-hegemonic forces will rally behind. In spite of enormous efforts by umbrella organizations with a global reach, attempts to inspire the nonprofit and activist communities to be better at collaborating are having little effect. The view from inside is very similar to watching bumper cars in an arena as they collide into each other before heading off in every possible direction. Again, it comes down to trust, because much of the competition in the third sector is over who gets to stand at the microphone; an inherent flaw that is rooted in the hierarchical design of both large and small nonprofits.

Alternatively, when the *collective thought* of a community comes together through small consensus-building groups that are gathering alongside of a *central figure,* the breach between *vulnerability* and *trust* can be reconciled. The voice that actually "speaks" might be that of the *central figure*, but the words used by that voice will be the words of *"a people,"* gleaned from the real-life experiences of a population that took the time to deposit their *"voice"* within archives over which they held a measure of control.

In the same way that the printing press ushered in the Age of Enlightenment and broke the stranglehold of the absolute monarchs, the Internet today offers an opportunity for a Second Age of Enlightenment. The challenge will be to not repeat the mistakes of the peasant revolutions. It will not be enough to merely topple a government so that new oppressors can replace them. And instead of pikes, the weapon that will allow the people to win this new global revolution will be narrative. When a majority begin to look past the traditional, inherently divisive narratives of their past and choose instead the narratives that embrace diversity, we will truly be able to make claim that we, as humanity, have become "enlightened."

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