

Reflections on Anonymous (both as a term and as a movement)

by Oset Babur

While reading E. Gabriella Coleman's piece *Anonymous: From the Lulz to Collective Action*, I found myself considering the multiple benefits and negative aspects of online anonymity (which is, as the name suggests, a key aspect of the organization). Coleman notes that the lack of a discernible leader, as well as a hierarchical structure are both born of this "mysterious shroud", and I think that this is both useful and detrimental in social movements (as was discussed when Petri Dish visited our lecture early on in the semester). If there's no set leader to eliminate, then movements gain a degree of immortality, in my opinion- it's harder to squash a movement if you don't know where its strongest point is, or if there are multiple strong(est) points to tackle. Coleman asks "where and how does authority lie, disperse, and pool", and I think this is an important question for both members and outside observers (or law enforcement, counter-movements) to consider. That being said, anonymity also poses a greater problem to the life of the movement itself, because this leads to a lack of centralized organization.

The screenshot provided of an IRC within Anonymous was also interesting to me, because it showed the thought process of a movement, and the back-and-forth of ideas on how to make the movement's message more salient. From airlines to big firms, multiple avenues seem to come under review.

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