

Shit Harper Did: A community speaking truth to power?

Jill Piebiak

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Signed by the final examining committee:

_____ Chair
Tangy Duff

_____ Examiner
Liz Miller

_____ Examiner
Lisa Lynch

_____ Supervisor
Fenwick McKelvey

Approved by _____
Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

Dean of Faculty

Date _____

ABSTRACT

Shit Harper Did:

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How did a small group of motivated citizens, with limited funds, break into a sphere of political commentary reserved for media and political elite? Built by a group of Vancouver-based comedians, in 2011, the website Shit Harper Did (SHD) mockingly reframed Harper's policies through a number of satirical YouTube videos begging Canadians not to re-elect the Prime Minister. In 2013, SHD relaunched a community-based website, built on NationBuilder, and aired a TV commercial crowdfunded on IndieGoGo. They learned new organizing strategies and SHD embraced their online community. Their humorous interventions and media tactics have complimented their current, long-term strategy enabling them to become a sustained and engaged political organization. This group exemplifies how non-elite actors mobilize social media and online organizing software to influence Canadian politics. Political advocacy in Canada changes as online organizations find new strategies to run issue-based campaigns on the power of donations and volunteer actions.

DEDICATION

Thank you to,

my Mom and Dad for encouraging me to be outspoken, giving me the space to become myself, calming me down, and teaching me about the healing powers of Spirytus.

(Dealing with my Shit)

my friends for taking me away from this document and reminding me that good people are found everywhere.

(People are not Shit)

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(Teaching me a whole lot of Shit)

And to the internet for stealing all my time and revealing that every minor ailment incurred while writing this thesis was a sure sign of death.

(The internet is a piece of Shit).

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Introduction

Among Stephen Harper's most active opponents during his 2011 re-election campaign was a small group of Vancouver-based comedians behind Shit Harper Did (SHD). The group created a catchy, sharable website and compilation of funny YouTube videos encouraging young Canadians to vote for any party other than the Conservatives. Within its first 24 hours, the site was so overloaded with hits it crashed. Even though SHD did not bring down the federal Conservatives during the 2011 election, over the next two years SHD translated their 'viral' success into an organization that successfully ran their first issue-based, headline-inspired, crowd-funded campaign in 2013. This campaign raised \$76,412 to buy airtime to place an advertisement criticising Canada's Economic Action Plan (CEAP) on *Hockey Night in Canada* during a playoff game. SHD claims, "during the 2011 election, we started out as a few artists. With your help we became an unprecedented national community of people speaking truth to power" ('Why You Matter'). In this thesis I explain how "a few artists" in 2011 become a "national community" by 2013. SHD represents the changing environment for online, political advocacy work in Canada.

During both campaigns, SHD garnered media attention, entering the 'political information cycle' (Chadwick, 2013) because of online sharing and new ways of organizing. Technology lowers barriers for groups, like SHD, to organize political advocacy campaigns (Karpf, 2012). As SHD moves forward, they make room for community members to engage more fully and have brought their campaigns offline. SHD found new ways to influence Canadian political discourse, bringing up the following questions that drive my research:

1. What prompted SHD's tactics and strategies? How do political activists use social media and the internet to organize and inform?
2. How do the previous tactics of a small group of comedians compliment or compete with SHD's current long-term strategies for political organizing and advocacy? How do these

new strategies, such as the use of social media, been influenced by, or influence, the changing Canadian political and media environment?

3. Has SHD's work in exposing the political practices of Stephen Harper influenced media coverage of the Conservative government or resulted in political change? Has sharing information become a catalyst for political action?

I use the two campaigns to answer these questions, the first follows SHD's beginnings. SHD was started by with a group of friends and acquaintances, frustrated by the way federal Conservative marketed to and represented them. Inspired by online activism occurring in the United States and Canada, during the 2011 federal election, SHD aimed to reframe Harper's tight media control and political policies. They joined together to speak out against the re-election of a Conservative government. The core group, Cameron Reed, Cam Dales, Kevin Lee, and Nathan Dales, and Sean Devlin (Payne, 2011) gathered approximately fifteen people, and pooled \$250 dollars to shoot ten YouTube videos and build a Tumblr website depicting five years of Harper's policies they saw as despicable. Early in the morning on April 11, 2011, they launched a Facebook group, Tumblr website, and four of the YouTube videos. By the time they woke up the next day, the site had reached 2 million hits and had crashed their server, throwing them into a flurry of election excitement and a bit of controversy. The YouTube videos garnered between 12,000-200,000 hits. The day after their most popular video was posted it was listed as YouTube's fifth most-viewed video in Canada (Hiltz, 2011). SHD's success even raised questions about third-party spending laws from Election Canada. On Election Day, May 2, 2011, a majority Conservative government, with Stephen Harper at its helm, was elected and though the group felt defeated, they had built a community that would be integral to their future success (Dales, 2014).

After the 2011 election SHD organizers began to think of their first campaign not as a failure, but as an opportunity that could be turned into something new. They had a huge mailing list and members of their Facebook community kept requesting more campaigns. Sean Devlin

learned about the UpWorthy model of A/B testing and realized the potential they had to run campaigns with support from the community built during the election. In April 2013, they launched a new website, SHD 2.0, built on the organizing platform NationBuilder with help from the company cStreet Campaigns. This site allowed SHD to run issue-based campaigns and strategically target their network. Their first campaign targeted CEAP – a plan aimed at getting Canada through the 2008 recession by creating jobs and lowering taxes (Flaherty, 2012). The media criticized the plan on multiple fronts. Their main critique was that it had spent more than \$100-million on advertising since 2009 (Curry, 2014). SHD’s first form of dissent was a series of YouTube videos mocking the government’s advertisements. Positive responses poured in from community members requesting SHD put the videos on television. SHD knew if they that to be a community they needed to embrace supporters’ offers to participate. So, they launched an IndieGoGo fundraising campaign, made a new commercial, and enlisted community members to donate, make content, and help share the campaign. They raised enough money to air the advertisement during an NHL playoff game on *Hockey Night in Canada* using strategies they had borrowed from UpWorthy and NationBuilder’s toolset.

I begin with my literature review (Chapter One) where I demonstrate that SHD is a prime example of how social media and online organizing software changes political advocacy strategies in Canada. The chapter is divided into three sections that explain: why SHD ran their campaigns, looking at the media environment in Canada; the way in which SHD became popular, examining media tactics and political satire; and how SHD was able to run their campaigns, pointing out online organizational affordances. Drawing on theories of media power, media tactics and online political organizing I show that both SHD campaigns have many nuances. The first campaign used social media tactics to inform while the second moved to a form of issue-based campaign strategies to organize.

In Chapter Two, I outline my research methodology, consisting of a triangulated process to unpack each campaign: interviews, content analysis of SHD's mainstream media coverage, and web sphere analysis. I first justify the dates used to limit each campaign to a specific time period and then move into a broader discussions of how each method is used. The web sphere analysis follows traffic tags associated with each SHD campaign across various online platforms and are used to build a timeline of sharing (Appendix One and Four). The media analysis demonstrates how the media frames SHD during each campaign and how SHD influenced broader political conversations happening at that time. The interviews with SHD organizer, Cam Dales, and cStreet Campaigns employee, Josh Stuart, provide background information and motivations behind each campaign. These methods show the intricate structures behind SHD, how they were more broadly represented, and how both campaigns worked differently.

SHD's 2011 federal election campaign is the focus of Chapter Three. I first outline the context of Canada's so-called "first" social media election. Next, I explain the inspiration behind SHD's satirical campaign, describing the website and YouTube Videos. I discuss how the campaign was shared across online networks and offer a content analysis of SHD's mainstream media coverage. This chapter shows that SHD broke into a 'political information cycle' (Chadwick, 2013) because people cared deeply about the issues featured in the campaign and shared them online (Benkler 2006). SHD's campaign shows that in 2011, online technology had lowered barriers to running a successful information campaign (Karpf 2011). SHD mobilized social media to run a tactical campaign that filled the news feeds of people across Canada.

The focus of Chapter Four is SHD's second campaign, the anti-CEAP television advertisement that relies on a form of issue-based campaigning. A new organizational software and website platform, NationBuilder strategically enabled SHD to air the television advertisement. After unpacking SHD's new model of campaigning and the NationBuilder

platform, I outline the various elements of the anti-CEAP campaign and the context in which it happened. A timeline of online sharing reveals the different ways this campaign reached community members. SHD did not rely exclusively on social media users to share their work instead they directly targeted their community for financial support and content creation. SHD broke into the ‘political information cycle’ again and, as the media analysis reveals, they brought two new critiques into discourse surrounding CEAP: the rising use of food banks and the rising average household debt across the country. SHD entered a new stage of organizing (Karpf, 2012 and Bimber et al., 2006 and 2012), becoming responsive to their community, running specific, issue-based campaigns, and moving some of their advocacy work offline.

These two campaigns represent the changing political advocacy landscape in Canada. Though much of the research done in this area speaks to the American context, the SHD case proves that in Canada, too, new ways of organizing are changing how groups can coordinate campaigns that can influence the ever-changing media landscape. As SHD moves forward, their website tagline urges visitors to “Know. It all.” This commitment to information sharing has been an intrinsic part of each campaign. Since 2011, SHD became a trusted organization that works to inform Canadians about the Harper Conservatives, pushing for more media coverage and scrutiny about their policies. SHD is an significant case study because the group has found new ways to embrace and mobilize their large network of supporters

Chapter One: Literature Review

As a phenomenon, the Shit Harper Did (SHD) campaigns resonate with numerous scholarly conversations regarding media, technology and politics. The group is representative of a shifting political advocacy environment. As it can be seen with SHD's work, as well as in other organization such as LeadNow and OpenMedia, an American style of issue-based campaign strategies has crossed the border. To best understand how SHD ran two different styles of campaigns, I explore three areas: the media environment in Canada (or why SHD did what they did); the tradition of tactical media and political satire (or the way in which SHD became popular); and the nuances of how SHD organized their work because of new and social media (or their ability to act). I will draw a through line between the media environment in Canada, tactical media and political organizing.

Part I: Media and Democracy

In order to argue that SHD impacted the Canadian political environment and influenced media coverage, I will show how SHD works within and responds to the Canadian media context. Politics, be that debates, policies, conversations, are not merely represented in the media, they also occur in the media and online. Keeping this in mind, I first outline how the media determines what is newsworthy. Then I explain how the media is moving from a 24-hour news cycle to a more hybridized 'political information cycle.' Next, I show how Harper's relationship with the Canadian press changed at the same time as there the media shifts into a 'political information cycle.' Finally, I apply this new media reality to the Canadian context showing how the internet influenced media and political environment.

The media plays a key role in any democracy and politics is 'informational.' Castells (1997) argues that, "outside the media sphere there is only political marginality. What happens in this media-dominated political space is not determined by the media: it is an open social and

political process” (p. 312). Rogers (2004) carries this forward, arguing that “politics are performed not through classic government-citizen exchanges and deliberations but rather through the mediation of the press and broadcasting media” (p. 5). Politics occurs on the web, in a similar manner to which it occurs in the media – neither are merely a representation. The mainstream media’s key role is informing Canadians about the happenings of the government and public affairs. In this regard, they are central to maintaining healthy democracy and inform citizens through mediated representations of politics.

The media sets a political agenda by choosing what story to share. Theories of agenda setting, such as those of McComb and Shaw (1972) suggest that, “in choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality” (in Barber, 2008, p. 623). Cohen (1963) echoes the sentiment arguing, “the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” (p. 120 in Barber, 2008, p. 623). The press makes one issue more salient than another by giving more space or coverage to certain events (Soroka, 2002, p. 265-66). Not only does the media make one issue seem more important than another, shaping political reality, they are central to the ways in which the public is able to participate in the democratic process (Kozolanka, 2014, p. 15). They serve as a check on political power while at the same time determining what is politically relevant.

The ‘political information cycle’

As mainstream media continues to determine what is newsworthy, news outlets are also shifting out of a the 24-hour news cycle, that according to Rose (2012) limits reporting to “what is episodic and ephemeral rather than thematic and enduring” (p. 151). This 24-hour news cycle is predated by a daily news based cycle. Today this shift in news sharing is from a ‘news cycle’ to a ‘political information cycle.’ The ‘political information cycle’ is a “complex assemblage in

which the logics - technologies, genres, norms, behaviours, and organizational forms – of the ‘new’ online media are hybridized with those supposedly ‘old’ broadcast and newspaper media” (Chadwick, 2013, p. 63). This cycle has dissolved the distinctiveness between political actors, the public, and the media and created a hybrid media landscape (Chadwick, 2013, p. 4). As online news sites gain credibility, social media, too, can play a larger role in influencing the news. At the same time that users share news on social media platforms, they are also beginning to shape the news coverage itself, sharing information before it is even been picked up by the press (Chadwick, 2012, p. 44). Not only are there new portals to access this news, but also there are new ways that people can interact, express and engage with this content (Chadwick, 2012, p. 59). This new kind of cycle is a hybridization of the ‘old’ broadcast media with the ‘new’ online media (Chadwick, 2012, p. 63).

The media landscape in Canada

This shift to a ‘political information cycle’ occurred Canada at the same time as the relationship changed between the government and the Canadian press during the Harper administration. Ultimately, I argue that the relationship Harper formed with the press is detrimental to democracy – which gives all the more reason for groups like SHD to respond in creative ways to raise awareness about such events. Harper’s relationship with the media is different than past administrations and tenuous at best.

Harper’s relationship was shaped during his time in the Canadian Alliance Party, a political party that suffered from poor image management and felt the press had a “mildly social activist tilt” (Sears, 2006, p. 6). The party began to learn appropriate media approaches or ‘tricks of the trade’ from the American right to offset this (Sears, 2006, p. 6 and Marland, 2012, p. 220). Over the course of Harper’s career this interpretation of the media landscape as left-leaning worked its way into his ongoing campaign efforts. He finds ways to vilify the ‘liberal press’ in

order to gain support from the Conservative base. Harper brands himself as a ‘common man’ as “an attempt to defy negative image stereotypes... juxtaposing [his] patriotic love of hockey against perceptions that he is an aloof ideologue” (Marland, 2012, p. 222). Susan Delacourt, a political reporter from *The Toronto Star*, suggests in an interview with Brown, that his strained relationship with the press is highly intentional and politically motivated. She argues that Harper, a former media pundit, knows the ins and outs of the field and frames the media as elite for his own advantage (Brown, 2014). This works both in his favour, pandering to his supporters, and to his detriment, causing much public and media outcry. The media, in turn, has perpetuated and promoted the status quo of Canadian politics (Barber, 2008, p. 622). The political leanings of national papers were not found to be skewed one way or another (Editors, 2006, p.2).¹ Soroka argues that media in Canada are relatively neutral, asserting that if anything in 2006, “Stephen Harper certainly enjoyed more favourable news and opinion coverage” than his opponents (Editors, 2006, p.2).

Upon his election in 2006, Harper carried over his media management style to the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) and the press gallery in Ottawa. The orchestrated media relationship became news itself when reports began to surface about Harper’s refusal to appear in front of the press gallery and the media’s reactionary response to not attend any of his highly coordinated media events (Global National, 2006 and Wilson, 2006). Harper did away with traditional media scrums following cabinet meetings and granting reporters access to cabinet ministers (Global National, 2006). He banned journalists and photographers from events, and the PMO provided a

¹ Barber’s (2008) research about the 2006 federal election coverage found neither a bias for the left nor the right but rather media bias was given to the poll’s electoral front-runner (p. 622). An exception was the *Calgary Herald* supported Harper. Other political leanings were contained in op-ed pieces (Editors, 2006, p. 2).

list of who could ask questions when (Global National, 2006).² Over the course of the next eight years, Harper's image also became more and more tailored.

By 2009, Harper's picture service sent out two images a day to local and national news services, claiming that the service provided small press access to all events rather than just having photographers present (Chase, 2009). Marland (2012) criticizes this image control and argues that the release of a photo-a-day "reduce[s] the perceived need for journalists to attend photo ops because political marketers can communicate an unmediated message directly to target audiences" (p. 217).³ Sending out daily photos of the Prime Minister created a two tier media system based on those outlets that choose to run with the government's story of the day and those that do not (Marland, 2012, p. 228). The Conservative government makes the choice to share political information in new ways directly sending messages to small and ethnic media (Marland, 2012, p. 221) and live tweeting the Prime Minister's pre-throne speech rather than allowing press access claiming that there were new ways for citizens to get their information (a. Canadian Press, 2013 and Harper, 2013).⁴

The Canadian press did not take lightly to this treatment. In 2008, the Canadian Newspaper Association filed a complaint to the Information Commissioner that bureaucrats were "deliberately delaying access-to-information requests" (Collob in Champion-Smith, 2008). In response, the Information Commissioner of Canada, Suzanne Legault said, in her 2010-11 report, that in the past ten years that in "the exercise of discretion in determining which information to

² Even public access to the hallways that ministers and staff of the Prime Minister were frequently cut off. Susan Delacourt, finds this measure unreasonable, on one occasion she was barred from a hallway "I threw a fit reminding [the guard] it was my House of Commons... and it wasn't the Prime Minister's place to close the corridors" (Brown, 2014). Even when the hallway was opened that day, Delacourt believes that "this PMO tries harder...[to] block corridors of power physically bar [the media]" (Brown, 2014).

³ This tight image control included the hiring of an image consultant, manager of visual communications and manager of new media and marketing, allowing only government videographers and photographers access to his military visits (Marland, 2012 p. 220).

⁴ Harper's questionable press relationship continued into 2013 (Harper, 2013; Naumetz, 2011; Chase, 2012; O'Malley, 2013; a. Canadian Press, 2013; b. Canadian Press, 2013).

disclose has been skewed toward greater protection of information” (Waddell, 2012, p. 272). In other words, the media environment on Parliament Hill has greatly shifted. Delacourt sums it up, “the implications were important and I think we [the Canadian press] lost that battle” (Brown, 2014). Whether or not this battle between Harper and the press has been won or lost, it is highly demonstrative of the changing ways in which Canadians can access news about their government.

Applying the ‘political information cycle’ in Canada

Tight media control comes at the expense of democracy. This control allows the Conservative government to stay ‘on message’ and reduce the chance a party member would contradict the PMO (Marland, 2012, p. 223). It also demonstrates the media’s important role in terms of informing citizens. The relationship between the Harper government and the press contextualizes the environment in which SHD began and continues their political advocacy and points to the kind of power that the media has in informing citizens and holding politicians accountable. In a ‘political information cycle’ social media is a platform for the traditional media, political elite, and political advocates to participate in the same space (Chadwick, 2013). In Canada, political advocates and the government are moving, more and more, online. Even though technology changes the ways people make and access media, it is important to note that mainstream media, such as the large daily papers and news networks, still play a hand in setting the agenda for smaller media sources (Fletcher, 2014, p. 31). Fletcher (2014) suggests that, “politicians, advocacy groups, and even online bloggers measure their success largely on the basis of how successful they are in attracting news media attention and influencing the nature of coverage” (p. 31). Though mainstream media may still have control over what becomes newsworthy, as Canada media shifts to a ‘political information cycle’ politics and political advocacy also begins to transform.

Certainly, the way in which Canadians get their news and media is changing. Harper's choice to live-Tweet the pre-throne speech rather than allowing members of the press to be present is just one demonstration, of how the Conservative government seems to believe Canadians do and should get their political information. This allows them to blatantly bypass traditional media control. Given this, it is significant that the platforms on which Canadians access this media are the same platforms that SHD responds to Stephen Harper's actions. This kind of work is only emerging on broader Canadian politics, where political parties and the media have begun to be more "responsive to currents emerging in the changed media environment" with blogs planting the seeds for future stories in the news (Barney, 2011, p. 206-207). Canadians have convenient access to better and more diverse political information, than ever before, as well as more opportunities for interactive participatory communication because of the rise in internet use (Barney, 2011, p. 198). Barney (2011) poses the question "[are] emerging media technologies contributing to a more participatory, inclusive and responsive democracy in Canada?" (p. 199). Though his answer is that it remains unclear, there is, without a doubt, more access and use of new technologies, yet not always necessarily for political ends (Barney, 2011, p. 205).

The information cycle is especially apparent during the 2011 federal election. Waddell (2012) argues that 2011 election represented the end of the old media system in Canada. He argues that the "digital world is transforming how Canadians communicate about politics" while the "electoral apparatus" still lags behind (Waddell, 2012, p. 369). The internet is more than just a venue to communicate about politics, it is another place to gather political information which can inspire engagement and be "an avenue for participation itself through social networking or volunteer organization sites" (O'Neill, 2009, p. 106). Reilly calls the 2011 federal election, the first 'social media election' dominated by vote mobs, political satire as a form of Anti-Harper critique, fake Twitter accounts and of course the works of SHD (Reilly, 2011). Reilly (2011) asks

whether or not new media and satirical engagement have any sort of effect on democracy, or if citizens are just “Amusing Ourselves to Death,” (p. 510). He points out that social media campaigns “put democratic politics on the table in highly engaging and entertaining ways,” it also mobilized a youth vote, provided playful critiques and most importantly provided:

reason[s] to believe that the unprecedented shifts that shook the foundations of federal politics this election may be attributed in part to the growing use(s) of social media and to the growing dissemination of satirical and critical comment online. (Reilly, 2011, p. 510)

Though O’Neil (2009) remains adamant that “newer forms of media... directly affect political engagement by providing calls and instruments for action on certain issues” (p. 106-107). Even though online social media actions still render success from traditional news coverage, Canadians also receive political advocacy and information on social media platforms.

Bennett & Segerberg (2012) suggest there are two modes of political communication, both of which I address in this thesis; “communication has many faces, and scholars of contentious action have focused on its role in information seeking and identity, persuasion, opinion and the public sphere.” They continue:

communication is much more than a means of exchanging information and forming impressions, or an instrument for sending updates and instructions to followers. Communication routines can, under certain conditions, create patterned relationships among people that led organization and structure to many aspects social life. (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 8)

Communication, they suggest, is not only about information but also organization. In the following sections, I discuss first the information aspects of political communication through the literature on tactical media and the second section I discuss who new communication technologies facilitate as Karpf (2012) puts it “*organizing with* different organizations (p. 3).”

Part II: Tactical Media

As publics form to respond to, critique and provide, synthesized information to others, they must develop tactics to engage with a changing media environment. These tactics are a way

in which new actors influence the kinds of information citizens receive. In a new media environment, attention hijacking and humour create opportunities to bring political advocacy issues to the fore-front. SHD's use of media tactics and their media coverage over the past three years is an example of the changing media world. Their attempts to enter the 'political information cycle' by using a variety of tactics such as culture jamming, attention hijacking and political satire.

Tactical media: a definition

Tactical media is a 'do it yourself' kind of media, Garcia & Lovink (2001) argue that new technologies, especially affordable electronics and new forms of distribution, are harnessed by publics who either sit against the wider public or are angered by the status quo (p. 90). They argue that media tactics aim "to cross borders, connecting and re-wiring a variety of disciplines and always taking full advantage of the free spaces in the media that are continually appearing because of the pace of technological change and regulatory uncertainty" (Garcia & Lovink, 2001, p. 91). These kinds of media do not necessitate a grand revolution, instead Raley (2009) suggests they are about engaging in a sort of "micropolitics of disruption, intervention, and education" and through this they allow critical thinking to happen (p. 1). Renzi (2010) suggests that tactical media should be viewed as a socially constructed space that contains social interactions including, "communicative practices, organization dynamics and creative processes" that are voluntary and temporary (p. 76). By viewing tactical media this way, I can highlight the ways SHD is able to work online using a variety of tactics, rather than focusing on the individuals behind the movement. It gives space to dissect the organizational practices afforded by new technologies and the kinds of media they are producing.

By translating literature about tactical media's use of cheap, accessible electronics to today's use of 'free' or inexpensive social media, tactical media can then encompass how publics

have used social media to build towards social action. Gerbaudo (2012) argues that social media is “chiefly responsible for the construction of a choreography of assembly as a process of symbolic construction of public space which facilitates and guides the physical assembling of a highly dispersed and individualized constituency” (p. 5). One of social media’s roles is to bring together and organize citizens that are physically far apart or otherwise limited. Social media is a tool that allows for organization and tactical interventions. Those orchestrating such online events are ‘soft leaders’ setting the scene and building a space for collective action to occur (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 5). The ease of organizing and information sharing echoes back to this hybridized ‘political information cycle’ that Chadwick envisions where non-elite actors are able to act more publicly. According to Boler (2010), dominant, mainstream media spaces and social media tactics are not separate from each other but rather tactical media works “within/against/upon” the dominant media (p. 29). She also argues that the internet is creating a space for new ways to share “constructions of truth” (Boler, 2010, p. 6). People are empowered to provide a different understanding of events than mainstream media. There then is a “‘truth’ as propagated as fact by corporate media and a ‘truth’ as ideas that emerge from the sociability of new pathways of sharing knowledge” (Lipton in Boler, 2010, p. 6). There remains to be much debate over this new kind of political action being little more than ‘slacktivism’ however I will discuss this in greater detail in Part III.

Culture jamming and protest

The creativity behind the early media tactics of SHD can be viewed in a trajectory of other sorts of tactical media movements. In particular, the practice of culture jamming is one specific way in which SHS captures public attention. This is a kind of tactical media, a “rhetorical protest” that disrupts the regular media structures of everyday life (Harold, 2004, p. 192). Culture jamming is “an artful proliferation of messages, a rhetorical process of intervention

and invention, which challenges the ability of corporate discourse to make meaning in predictable ways” (Harold, 2004, p. 192). *Adbusters*, is a classic example of this tactic. They use this technique to undermine multinational corporations through a series of different tactics such as parodies and media hoaxing (Harold, 2004, p. 190). What happens when such parodies are made, like the SHD’s 2011 election campaign is that they attempt to “talk back to the multimedia spectacle” (Harold, 2004, p. 192). *Beautiful Trouble* defines culture jamming as “altering the meaning of a target’s messaging or brand; packaging critical messages as highly contagious media viruses” (Malitz, 2012, p. 28). This definition brings up some interesting concepts, especially when thinking of SHD’s critique of Harper’s highly tailored media image. As I have outlined, Harper’s image was clearly orchestrated as a political strategy and for message control. The 2011 SHD website took that image (the softer side of Harper with a kitten) and the 2013 anti-CEAP campaign and altered the meaning. Not only did they repurpose and alter these images, they repackaged the politics of the Conservative government in a humorous ways. In 2011, SHD created a “highly contagious media virus” (Malitz, 2012, p. 30), robbing the image of Harper of its power. In 2013, they did the same to CEAP and its message of being a successful program. The literature of culture-jamming is often used in regard to corporate rebranding and manipulation however it serves here as an interesting way to rethink the ways in which political advocacy groups can challenge their opponents. Perhaps though, Jenkin’s (2006) critique of Culture Jamming is important to note, he argues that this kind of work might be considered ‘culture poaching’ not culture jamming highlighting those who “want to appropriate their content, imagining a more democratic, responsive, and diverse style of popular culture. Jammers want to destroy media power, while poachers want a share of it” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 150). It is difficult to define SHD’s work as one or the other as they, themselves, have not articulated whether they aim to get a piece of power or if they aim to destroy media power.

Being funny

SHD disrupts the government's policies and reframes issues but it cannot go without saying that perhaps the biggest draw for their work is the fact that it is funny. They couple novelty with humour that "forces us to reconsider the very meaning of political action" (Hynes et al., 2007 p. 107). Satire "is a tactic of resistance for those who sit outside the circles of power, and its success depends on the complicity of an audience of cultural insiders who are privy to the codes needed to 'get the joke'" (Tinic, 2009, p. 168). According to Boler & Turpin (2010), a joking tone allows one to say what is usually left unsaid to a population that may not usually encounter those politics for a variety of reasons (p. 384). For example, Jones (2010) argues that Tina Fey's Palin impression on *Saturday Night Live*,

transported the viewer out of the serious context associated with journalism - one that offered the view little recourse beyond befuddlement or disbelief - and recontextualized the encounter through a comedic lens, thereby granting the view a different perspective from which to view the event. (p. 4)

Removing the serious context from a political issue, this kind of humour, especially in the 2011 federal election campaign SHD's YouTube videos, allows people to rethink the stories they receive in the mainstream media. SHD challenged the mainstream electoral coverage and CEAP with satirical re-interpretations. Satire is a tool, a tactic, "with which to scrutinize its comedic subjects allow the situation to be stripped bare and offer the essence of the situation instead" (Jones, 2010, p.4). Online there is a growing culture of memes, video mash-ups, and citizen participation in media making and "citizens themselves are now empowered to participate in the production of political video content - repurposing ... political content for their own political critiques" (Jones, 2010, p. 13). Though SHD's online campaign is neither a meme nor a mash-up, social media and online organizing software allows them to actively participate in electoral and political conversations by making their own humorous media. Boler (2010) finds political satire hopeful as it "speak[s] truth to power," (a tagline SHD embraces too) however, she argues that

some may lament that satire has become one of the best ways to communicate media and political critique (p. 34).

Part III Traffic Tag Timeline: A New Way to Organize

New media not only allow new players to influence the ‘political information cycle,’ it also affords new ways of organizing. The SHD case study is representative of a community dedicated to illuminating and information sharing about the politics of Stephen Harper.

Slacktivism

Before getting to the intricacies of such organizations and the opportunities afforded by online organizational tools, one must attend to the criticisms of online movements. The problem with issue publics, especially those communities that are formed online, is that they can be seen as ‘flash in the pan’. There is much debate on the ability for ephemeral online media tactics aiming to inform publics to lead to lasting, meaningful change. Arguably, SHD is not ephemeral; as the group has used their online ‘virality’ in 2011 to form a meaningful, permanent organization in 2013. Benkler (2006) argues that the public can engage with issues pertinent to them in a new space created by networked communication (p. 6). These discussions that occur online and the act of information sharing, in turn, have the ability to become offline action. The discussions that occur in this new, online sphere become public action (Benkler, 2006). Benkler (2006) argues that because creating online media content is not about making capital, unlike the motivations behind mass media, people participating in online networks have an intrinsic motivation to write or comment about what they care about.

Hindman, however, does not take such a utopian view in his work *The Myth of Digital Democracy* (2009). He argues that digital democracy is impossible because the same power structures and elite-dominated media patterns can be seen mirrored in online content (Hindman, 2009). It is not just anyone on Facebook who can run a successful campaign to oust a political

figure – they must be otherwise well connected or well positioned in the power-structure. Hindman’s criticism is not taken lightly. It is true that the people behind SHD, from its early days and today, were and are well connected in the Canadian progressive movement. Sean Devlin runs his own progressive campaign business and Brigitte DePape was at one time a household name.⁵ Gladwell (2010) too is sceptical of such online collective/connective action and political advocacy groups as they are built on “weak ties” that rarely lead to “high risk activism” (p. 3). Morozov (2011), another critic, sees loosely structured organizations as doing little more than offering insubstantial, low-quality commentary that is drowning out substantive political discourse (Morozov, 2011).

SHD, does not seem to be deterred by the risk of weak ties. They *seem* to believe that online participation is as equally meaningful as traditional methods of political organization. As I will show in the subsequent chapters, SHD consistently acknowledges their community; thanking them on social media, encouraging supporters to share their message, and, during the 2013 campaign, making space for supporters to participate in more meaningful ways. Going back to the value of publics having the ability to both speak back to the government and translate information to citizens reminds us that SHD’s campaigns are never-the-less powerful and important work. I position this thesis against these critiques of social media. Whether or not SHD removes Harper from power, they have reframed his politics and brought a community together in a new and interesting way. SHD brought energy to young Canadians who had been otherwise ignored by both the government and political advocacy groups. The people that identified with the work of SHD probably already had this political stance, however, it was SHD’s tactics and strategies that brought them together. SHD created a community that without the internet would not exist today.

⁵ DePape was the parliamentary page that held up a “STOP HARPER” sign during a parliamentary session.

Online political organization

Working against the idea of online weak ties, SHD exemplifies what Bennett & Segerberg (2012) call ‘connective action’, which more closely recognizes the role of digital media as an organizing agent. They argue that formal organization is no longer required for political advocacy and that “taking public action or contributing to a common good becomes an act of personal expression and recognition or self validation achieved by sharing ideas and actions in trusted relationships” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012 p. 752-53). The motivation for one to join an organization such as SHD is not just a result of the kind of work one may do but rather is because of the personal relationship s/he can have to work and her/his ability to participate in the group in a connected way. Papacharissi (2011) suggests this kind of online activism allows for a more fluid kind of activism and civic engagement that gives citizens the ability to choose when, where, and how much they participate. This activism “is carving the civic vernacular of younger cohorts who integrate digital cultures seamlessly into their everyday routine” of online engagement (Papacharissi, 2011, p. 160).

Connective action occurs simultaneously with more formal, digital forms of organizing. Technology creates a new form of connection within organizations, *and* new forms of political organizing. Karpf (2012) argues that technology makes political action easier to access. While not all digital tactics are equal, technology changes the way that political advocacy organizations organize and respond political realities. He acknowledges that only a certain number of online organizations, what he calls ‘netroots,’ can be successful at the same time because they are competing for a similar audience (Karpf, 2012, p. 14). Moreover, Karpf (2012) argues that in this kind of environment, political views of participants may become polarized and acknowledges that these kinds of organizations are not the solution to complex political issues. He concludes, when it comes down to it, they do not have real bargaining power. Despite these limitations, online

affordances transformed the organizational layer of American politics including, fundraising strategies, work routines, and the ability to mobilize of supporters in new ways. Karpf (2012) argues that the internet enables political advocacy that moves fast and raises money quickly for specific, targeted and timely actions (p. 5-6). Organizations such as MoveOn, in the United States, use strategies such as native A/B testing which is crucial to their campaign efforts (Karpf, 2012, p.35).

Bimber et al. (2006 and 2012) further break down the structure of political organizing occurring in America, categorizing these kinds of organizations, or what they call collective action, by their mode of interaction and mode of engagement. The mode of interaction ranges from personal interaction among members building strong ties to impersonal interaction that emphasizes the expression of pursuits, interests and concerns without focusing on building relationships. The mode of engagement between participants ranges from highly institutional organizational structures that constrain the degree to which each member is allowed to participate to loose, horizontal flows of communication among people involved in the action (Bimber et al., 2006). These understandings of organizational structure will help to compare how SHD operates to other cases.

Concluding remarks

Bringing these three parts, media and democracy, tactical media, and a new way of organizing, together reveals how broad the SHD case study is. The creation of SHD and their ongoing advocacy work must be considered within the contexts of Canada's media relationship with the Conservative government. I have shown the traditional way of understanding mainstream media's role in democracy and the importance of people being able to stay informed about and responsive to the government. The Canadian media environment has shifted, and continues to shift, giving more power to online action. Online political advocacy can be situated

in a history of tactical media. Finally, online tools allow SHD to organize in new ways. The analysis of the two campaigns show these affordances have developed over time allowing for more strategic and meaningful engagement – much more than ‘slactivism.’ Chapters Three and Four demonstrate how these three aspects have also shaped the way in which SHD evolved into a strategic organization.

Chapter Two: Methodology

In the following chapter I outline how I trace the trends and patterns of SHD's work in order to compare the organization's evolution. I have selected two campaigns from the history of SHD that demonstrate the evolution of their political campaigning:

- the 2011 Canadian federal election;
- the 2013 IndieGoGo funded television advertisement criticizing Canada's Economic Action Plan (CEAP).

The first campaign focuses on the dissemination of their anti-Harper message. The second campaign demonstrates the strategic approach to community building and the move to go beyond online campaigning moving onto television and working closely with their community to run an issue-based campaign model.

I use interviews, newspaper content analysis and web sphere analysis to triangulate the research of each campaign. The web sphere analysis constructs a timeline of internet events, or traffic tags, to create a picture of how each campaign flows through the internet on a variety of platforms. The timeline helps to visualize the impact and influence SHD had. The spaces on which the traffic tags are shared include various social media platforms and blogs. Content analysis of media coverage during the two campaigns demonstrate how SHD's campaigns have resonated in mainstream Canadian media. Interviews with key SHD staff and Canadian political consultants draw a through-line between the two campaigns and elaborate on the processes, challenges, tactics, and strategies used for each campaign. When brought together the three methods create an analysis of how SHD does their work and more importantly, how they created an online community of interest that shares information in new ways.

In this chapter, I outline my research approach to the SHD case study; first, by justifying the choice of each campaign and second, by discussing the three methods that a triangulated. In subsequent chapters, I use these methods to draw conclusions regarding how SHD's tactical

interventions engage in media hijacking, DIY tactics and humour in order to become part of the political information cycle. The methods show how SHD's strategic, issue-based campaign had a different impact on both online networks and the media. Ultimately, these methods reveal both the intricate structures of the organization and the way in which SHD's campaigns were shared. More broadly, they show how social media and online organization software are changing political advocacy in Canada.

Part I: Two Campaigns

Since the 2011 federal election, SHD engaged in multiple campaign. The two campaigns I have chosen to study represent a shift in style from tactical interventions to strategic organizing both with the goal of sharing information in a 'political information cycle.' The first campaign centers on the time leading up to and just after the 2011 federal election (April 11, 2011- May 4, 2011). April 11 marks the launch of the SHD Tumblr site (www.shitharperdid.ca), their first Facebook post, and the day before posting of their first satirical YouTube video. SHD posted the final election themed YouTube video on May 1, one day before their last election themed Facebook post.⁶ The media published the last major news story about SHD's election campaign on May 4, 2011. This end-date for analysis is in keeping with what I observe as a shift from "election mode" into a phase of redefining what the SHD community was and could become.

The second campaign follows closely after the launch of the NationBuilder site, or 'SHD 2.0' on April 2, 2013 and represents a shift in the way SHD engages with their work, strategies and technology. It examines one aspect of SHD's response to the Canada's Economic Action Plan (CEAP), which contained multiple campaigns including YouTube videos featuring "directors commentary" of the government ads, photo bombing CEAP billboards, the IndieGoGo television ad and a campaign to apply for the job of producing the next set of advertisements.

⁶ SHD did not post on their Facebook page again until May 16, 2011 and it was not election related content.

This campaign was SHD's first campaign launched using their new NationBuilder site which affords SHD a more coherent way to organize and respond to supporters. It represents a shift to thematic, issue-based campaigns that focus on crowdfunding, and moving their campaign efforts offline. This research hones in on SHD's television commercial broadcast during Hockey Night in Canada, May 24, 2013, including the dates leading up to and following the national broadcast (April 24-June 1, 2013). The TV spot is important for SHD as it proved to both SHD organizers and their community that they could impact Canadian politics and offer new critiques about CEAP (Dales, 2014). The community created during the federal election needed to get behind the organization in a new way, not just share content on social media, but also donate funds and participate in creating content. The first day of this campaign, April 24, 2013, marks the launch of the IndieGoGo. The last day, June 1, 2013 follows the last major news coverage of the TV spot before SHD began the next portion of that campaign.

These two campaigns offer perspective into the changing ways in which Canadian advocacy groups inform the 'political information cycle.' By raising funds on IndieGoGo, SHD took a different approach compared to their former YouTube tactics which cost less than \$250. The new media strategy, including the community-oriented NationBuilder website and television campaign, is an important campaign to research when compared to the early issue-based tactics of SHD though both very differently allowed for knowledge sharing as a tool for healthy democracy. Finally, each of these campaigns follow the launch of two different SHD websites that highlight different strategies of online organizing. The 2011 Tumblr allowed for creating tactical, easy-to-share content that was highly satirical and pointed. The NationBuilder site allowed SHD to catalyze a community of supporters to work on a multi-component political campaign. These two campaigns highlight how new and social media afford different strategies for political advocacy. In particular, the differences between the campaigns highlight how SHD

asks their community for financial support directly, moved to a new medium (television), and brings their work into a ‘political information cycle’ in a different way.

Part II: Web Sphere Analysis

SHD’s campaigns are, for the purposes of this thesis, a ‘web sphere.’ The term refers to “a collection of dynamically defined digital resources spanning multiple web sites deemed relevant or related to a central theme or object” and offers cultural, social and political relations that can be analysed (Foot, 2010, p. 11-12). Web sphere analysis researches the objects that “enable analysis of communicative actions and relations between web producers and users developmentally over time” (Foot & Schneider, 2005, p. 118). This research is complex as the “boundaries of the sphere are likely to continuously find new sites to be included within it” and to be “dynamically re-established by both the researchers and the sites themselves” (Foot, 2010, p. 12). Foot & Schneider’s (2005) web sphere analysis is a multi-methodological approach investigating websites, hyperlinks, and conducting interviews with the content producers (p. 118-119). This method seeks to “recognize the co-productive nature of new media – thus the duality of users and producers – and the potential for communicative actions and structures for action, especially on the web” (Foot & Schneider, 2005, p. 119).

SHD’s influence is illustrated by defining and charting the web sphere through a traffic tag analysis. Traffic tags are unique identifiers such as YouTube URLs, hashtags, web URLs, etc. that when followed, map different sets of relationships among uploaded and shared web objects (text, images, videos, etc.), political actors (online partisans, political institutions, bloggers, etc.) and web-based platforms (social networking sites, search engines, political websites, blogs, etc.) (Elmer et al., 2012, p. 19). In this research, following tags

begins with a process of identifying the key components in political-computer networking – actors, objects, and platforms – each which contain unique forms of ID, including user

generated tags. Once... each of these actors and objects [are identified] on the net, [one] can map the traffic, or the routes of such ID tags to determine how and where political campaigns circulate. (Elmer et al., 2012, p. 120).

The process of tracing and tracking traffic tags reveals how SHD's work travelled, what the content was and who made it. The impact they had on the political community in Canada becomes clearer by understanding the size, scope, and flows that occur within the web sphere created by SHD. Comparing traffic tags across two different campaigns reveals that this web sphere is much smaller, or perhaps more private, because of direct communication between the organization and supporter enabled by NationBuilder.

The case study of the two campaigns is innovative because it draws the web sphere across time and different spaces online. I compiled the traffic tag results chronologically for both campaigns (see Appendix One and Four) charting how each political event moved across time and space in online media spheres (Elmer et al., 2012, p. 132). Traffic tag analysis offer two levels of analysis: below and beyond. This speaks to the organizational and political qualities of this research – below (the data and routes through which objects circulate and are published) and beyond “the capacity of content to represent, but also, more crucially in the online political context, to organize and spur action” (Elmer et al., 2012, p. 120).

I identified tags by searching SHD profiles on social media, Facebook and YouTube, mentions on Reddit as well as Google and Google Blogs. I manually scraped each social media platform for content between the dates outlined. Posts on the SHD Facebook page, both by the moderators and others were catalogued chronologically. I input and sorted chronologically all the information in an Excel spreadsheet. I noted information such as SHD Facebook posts, links if shared, and the number of ‘likes,’ ‘shares,’ and comments.⁷ Due to the nature of Facebook, it is difficult to search for links and posts of SHD's work within the site itself. Individual profiles that

⁷ During the 2011 federal election Facebook did not have the option to ‘share’ posts.

may have shared relevant content are most likely to be limited by privacy settings and there is no way to escape the custom style searches, or ‘smart’ searches that Facebook provides.⁸ Documenting the number of ‘likes’ and comments gives a record of how popular each post and well received it was. I used a similar technique for YouTube. All the videos posted on the SHD channel were noted including the title, post date, description provided, and number of comments, views, ‘thumbs up,’ and ‘thumbs down.’ I searched Reddit differently than the above platforms because information is not shared on a profile based page. Specific tags and terms were entered into the Reddit search bar. Similar, to the other platforms the following information was noted: content of the post, search term used, any links that were shared, subReddit on which it was posted, date, author, and number of ‘upvotes,’ ‘downvotes,’ popularity percentage, and comments.

The next technique moves beyond social media platforms themselves to gather more nuanced information related to the sharing of SHD content. Google searches using the standard Google search tool and the Google Blogs search tool were conducted. I catalogued the results, taking note of the website, author, date, post details and any other information that might be important to contextualize the result. Table 2.1 shows terms that yielded results and Table 2.2 shows terms that were not successful on any platform.

⁸ For example, what I can search for on Facebook are things related to my profile based on my past participation, location, and connections.

Table 2.1: Traffic tag search terms⁹

Google	Google Blog	Database (Eureka.cc, Factiva, Proquest, Lexus Nexus)	Reddit
"Hockey Night in Canada" "Economic Action Plan"	Hockey Night in Canada" "Economic Action Plan"	"Hockey Night in Canada" "Economic Action Plan"	(a)shitharperdid
"Sh*t Harper Did"	"Shit Harper Did"	anti-harper	Shit Harper Did
"Shit Harper Did"	Brigette DePape	Shd.ca	Shitharperdid.ca
"shitharperdid.com"	Sean Devlin	Shit Harper Did	shitharperdid.com
Brigette DePape	shitharperdid	ShitHarperDid	#shitharperdid
ccgUbezuFHYY (Stephen Harper is an Evil Astronaut)	WQm0t1v2wOM		shd.ca
e0LpIdpPwUU (Yoko Vs. ShitHarperDid.com)			
fUnFhCcNPoo (Wasted Vote)			
g0mucPiSgSw (Pokemon Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com)			
GqGbBXhNQel (Softball Team Wins Canadian Election)			
KmthTKSWFWw (Canadian Women's Favourite Pick-up Line)			
LSjc0C1bLJE (Celine Dion Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com)			
NBiD_VpG894 (Stephen Harper's Greatest Fear)			
njkuZywM0eg (Robot Army VS. Young Voters)			
ONPKi_Qhiz0 (Ben Mulroney Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com)			
Sean Devlin			
Shd.ca			
shitharperdid			
TruthFool			
WQm0t1v2wOM (Ryan Gosling Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com)			

Table 2.2: Unsuccessful traffic tag searched on all platforms

Cam Dales
Cameron Reed
d2BTGgO_sZM (RubbishHarperDid.com Comes to VANCOUVER SOUTH)
F21LJ5QmUdw (ShitHarperDid Economic Action Plan TV Ad)
iWblq4ZOLI (RubbishHarperDid.com Comes to Edmonton!)
Lz5v7wZpkj0 (You can help get this ShitHarperDid video on national TV!)
Rubbish Harper Did
S2G_TyNkm0c (We have until May 17 th to share this video with as many people as possible)
Sean Devlin
sh*tharperdid
Ua9TSMfYQJU (Rubbish HarperDid.com comes to KITCHENER-WATERLOO)
umlsgkG9vAo (ShitHarperDid Economic Action Plan TV ad)
zAbfJJJBLmA (SHD community raises \$27,000+ in one week to buy last relevant ad on TV)

⁹ In the first campaign a high number of videos were found in non-descript video embedding sites that provided no data regarding the date of the post of the number of views/visits the site had received. These were taken out of the timeline.

I created two timelines by tracing traffic tags across these platforms. I highlighted important tags, media coverage or posts made by SHD and popular items, in green; negative tags, that openly disagreed with the premise behind the SHD campaign, in red; and tags unrelated to SHD, in grey (see Appendix One and Four). The timelines provide a history of the SHD web sphere. These histories, illustrate the different SHD campaigns in each campaign. One focussed on informing and the other focused on organizing a community. The tags show how and where the object itself was shared but the interviews and content analysis shed more light on why they were shared.

I approach this research with slight trepidation as simplistic problems hinder this kind of work. The objects of this research make it challenging, a concern shared with Barney who argues “emerging media are not just emerging; they are also emergent: ever unfinished, characteristically unstable, and always in process” (2011, p. 197). This suggests that any claims made regarding these kinds of new media are “provisional at best and invite refutation by technological change and the unpredictable choices made by the people who take up with it” (Barney, 2011, p.197). That said, looking at two campaigns of online interaction to make claims about the trajectory of Canadian political engagement should not to be passed by as a some sort of fad. Both campaigns may become outdated in their style, tactics and strategies yet regardless of this, during moment they caught the attention of Canadians and the media offering important political critique. They represent a moment of political frustration in Canada. However significant they are, there is a lack of archival documentation of various iterations of websites and limitations of search engines such as Google (Earl and Kimport, 2011). Karpf (2012) suggests that these kinds of research practices,

vary widely and it is common to see outdated time stamps, the incremental addition of paragraphs at the top or bottom of stories, and deadline and URL changes to reflect new

angles as they emerge. Sometimes entire stories will simply be overwritten, even though the original hyperlink will be retained. (p. 213)

This research acknowledges that these social media platforms are going to be quickly outdated by the next big social platform. Bearing in mind that online content is in constant flux and actively being deleted, relying on content analysis of media coverage and interviews triangulated with the above methods provide more perspective and depth to this research.

Part III: Content Analysis

In order to get a more informed understanding of how the media represented SHD's campaigns and how SHD influenced the 'political information cycle,' I did a content analysis of their media coverage. Further bolstering the above traffic tag timelines, searches of databases, Eurkeka.cc, Factiva, Proquest, and Lexus Nexus aggregated traditional media coverage of SHD on news broadcasts, newspapers, online news sites and related topics that Google and Google Blogs might have missed. The content analysis of the media coverage helped to show how SHD affected the information politics of Canadian political discourse. In the first campaign, the content analysis reveals that even though SHD may not have brought attention to all the issues they promoted (such as various issues on their 2011 Tumblr). The media coverage of their campaign brought their site to broader audiences outside their online community. In the second campaign, news coverage of SHD's anti-CEAP television spot brought new issues into the broader, ongoing discussions about CEAP through their strategy of issue-based campaigning. This illustrates the changing ways SHD mobilized their community using a new set of tools and skills.

Working from framing theory, I analysed the news media for the frame SHD was presented. Frames, according to Chong and Druckman, are "the process[es] by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue" (2007,

p. 104). As Entman (1993) puts it, “frames call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions” (p. 55). The way in which the media chooses to present an issue or event determines the way in which the audience notices the story, understands and evaluates the problem, and chooses whether or not to act upon the issue (Entman, 1993, p. 54). Engaging framing theory is not to say there is a universal effect that all media have over audiences but that the presentation of the issue at hand can shape the way in people make judgements (Entman, 1993, p. 54).

Content analysis of the news coverage of SHD during both events, especially when the two campaigns are compared and contrasted, reveals the frames in which their work was presented and helps to give context to how the public may have understood their campaigns. Entman urges content analysis be done from a framing paradigm in order to acknowledge how an audience may be reading a message, arguing the “major task of determining textual meaning should be to identify and describe frames” (Entman, 1993, p. 57). For the content analysis of the media coverage I uses the four steps laid out by Chong and Druckman. First I identified an issue or event – articles that covered SHD. Next, I identified a specific attitude – if SHD was represented in a positive, negative or neutral manner. Then, I used an inductive coding scheme created based on the set of frames identified for the issue – I focused on the context of the story. Chong and Druckman’s (2007) final step is to select the sources that to code (p. 106-107). I determined the sources by performing database searches using search terms found in Table 2.1 and limiting the search period to the dates of each campaign.

I coded each story for tone, frame and subject nothing whether or not the media referenced SHD in a positive, negative or neutral manner. This was determined by if the article actively criticized the organization and their work, more than just poking fun at their name, for example. I also recorded the frame of the story, for example, youth voting movements, social

media in the election, or in the case of the second campaign, CEAP failures or crowdfunding. I noted whether or not the issues that SHD was campaigning for or against were covered in the news story or if they were covered more generally as a political advocacy group (see Appendix Three and Seven). This is particularly interesting because though media coverage helped to raise a profile for SHD, their information campaigns did not necessarily get covered explicitly. I added the media coverage to the traffic tag timelines to paint a picture of each campaign in terms of how their campaigns flowed.

Showing how SHD's work is represented in the media demonstrates how media functions in the Canadian political sphere and the difficulty faced by political advocacy organizations to, as SHD puts it, "speak truth to power" (Why You Matter, n.d.). The issue SHD campaigned for were not necessarily translated into news coverage of their work. Comparing the coverage of each campaign against one another shows that SHD learned to communicate more clearly and that media shapes politics in Canada.

Part IV: Interviews

I interviewed key actors who were part of the emerging field of SHD. They include Cam Dales of SHD and Josh Stuart of cStreet Campaigns. Interviews triangulate the decision making processes over the course of SHD's advocacy work and how their previous work compliments their ongoing strategies as an organization. They provide insight into how SHD staff use new media and technologies to promote their work. They also demonstrate the ways online social advocacy tools created for an American political sphere are translated into a Canadian context. This reveals personal motivations, keeping in mind that, interviews are "actively and socially assembled in the interview encountered (Briggs, 1986, in Holstein and Gubrium, 2002, p. 4). Interviewing the staff of SHD and cStreet Campaigns, serves "to shorten time-consuming data gathering processes" as they hold "practical insider knowledge" and can speak on behalf of "a

wider circle of players” (Bogner et al., 2009, p. 2). Speaking to Dales and Stuart lessened the work of finding background stories and past media interviews which serve a different purpose. Each interviewee was willing to participate which allowed for the opportunity to expand access and unearth new areas to the case (Bogner, et al., 2009, p. 2). Most importantly, as suggested by Bogner et al. (2009), expert interviews shed light on the details and intricacies of an otherwise abstract system (p.4) that to which I do not have access.

I first interview Josh Stuart, a staff person from cStreet Campaigns, the company that built the SHD NationBuilder site, on December 11, 2013. I then interviewed Cam Dales, a staff person and founder of SHD on April 18, 2014. I transcribed each interview word-for-word, highlighting ‘notable quotations’ that demonstrated important concepts and themes (as suggested in the work of Rubin & Rubin 2012, p. 191). I did not need to build a coding framework because there were only two interviews conducted and they did not need to be compared. The highlighted important quotes accounted for how particular decisions were made during SHD’s campaign and the motivations behind much of their work.

These interviews offer perspectives on how political advocates perceive their work in a broader political sphere and understand their contribution to a media environment shaped by a ‘political information cycle.’ The interview with Dales, connects the two campaigns, providing details about the organizational structure and how SHD made decisions at each point. Together the interviews, tell the story of how and why SHD was able out of an election period and into a long term organization with staff that runs issue-based campaigns, with offline components Interviews provide more information than what can be gleaned from the path traffic tags take through online networks and provide a vision of how SHD will continue into the future.

Part V: Triangulation of Methods

These methods help to reveal the ways SHD motivates their audience, supporters, and community to share content in regards to media hijacking DIY media and political satire. The construction and analysis of the two traffic tag timelines, charts the differences between the two occasions in terms of internet tactics and strategies. The interviews provide a much more fruitful explanation for why and how SHD's tactics and strategies have evolved. I conclude that political advocacy has changed in Canada because of SHD's inside perspective on the transition into a long-term political advocacy group using issue-based campaign strategies, triangulated with the web sphere and news content analysis. I balance a micro view of SHD's work with a broader understanding of how social media and online organizing software allow for different kinds of social organizing and political advocacy.

By using the same approach for each campaign the subsequent chapters show that SHD has grown into a community. Starting with the 2011 federal election campaign, I use the above methods to create a timeline of digital activity and supplement it insider information from Cam Dales. The news analysis shows how SHD broke into the 'political information cycle' because of the success of the campaign. For second campaign, SHD's anti-CEAP campaign, I have also created a timeline of digital activity that reveals that a very different approach to campaigning occurred. The interviews with Dales and Stuart reveal a heavy emphasis on finding new ways to organize their community around issue-based campaigns and the news analysis shows how through this SHD brought new political issues into main steam media coverage about CEAP.

Chapter Three: “Seriously? Tell me some other shit!” Shit Harper Did takes on the 2011 Federal Election

“There was a general feeling, especially in Vancouver of a lot of complaining, a lot of dissatisfaction [with how] our generation was both being represented and being communicated to” reflects Cam Dales on the motivations behind Shit Harper Did (SHD). Dales and the other founders of SHD felt the Harper government ignored them. “People were kind of pissed off but... no one was doing anything” (Dales, 2014). So together, with his friends, Dales did something. The small group began crafting a satirical campaign that would become one of the most successful, non-partisan campaigns of the 2011 federal election (Francoli et al., 2011, p. 234).

SHD was more than a group of “scruffy hipsters talking trash” as they were portrayed in the media (Haupt, 2011). SHD’s campaign, which includes a well-made, funny, catchy website and compilation of YouTube videos, allowed them, as members of the non-elite, to gain access to mainstream media coverage through avenues afforded by a ‘political information cycle’ (Chadwick 2013). They entered this cycle because the media reported on the website’s instant popularity. The site went ‘viral,’ as the media labelled it, not only because the content was funny but also because people cared about the issue at hand; online content is not shared passively (Benkler, 2006, p. 259). This campaign was possible because, as Karpf (2012) argues, technology changed the way that political advocacy organizations can organize and speak to political realities. He suggests the technology transformed the organizational layer of American politics. This chapter demonstrates that this phenomenon is also the case north of the border. SHD’s campaign was a tactical intervention into Harper’s electoral representation from a place of powerlessness.

In this chapter I outline SHD’s 2011 federal election campaign – the tools they used and how the campaign travelled through online spaces. The timeline of SHD’s campaign

demonstrates the flow of the campaign, and the interviews paint a better picture of behind the scenes and the news analysis represents how SHD broke into, or gained coverage within, a ‘political information cycle.’ Part I places the campaign within the context of the 2011 federal election and other social media political advocacy occurring at the time. Part II outlines the inspiration behind the site and the humorous campaign materials: the website, www.shitharperdid.com, and three batches of YouTube videos. Part III dissects how both aspects of the SHD campaign flooded Canadian social media, informing citizens about their stance on Stephen Harper. This outline of the traffic tag timeline allows for speculations upon how the campaign moved through various networks and garnered media attention. A news analysis of this coverage, in Part IV, helps to show how mainstream journalism represents SHD and how non-elite members can influence how the media represents some aspects of the election. In the discussion in Part V I place this campaign in a body of literature that explains, more broadly, how it worked as a piece of online advocacy. The concluding reflections elaborate on how, even though Harper won a majority government, SHD can be read as a successful campaign and how the organizers dealt with the feeling of failure.

This chapter focuses on the motivation behind this tactical campaign, unpacks its various elements, the networks in which they were shared, and the news coverage it received. If the measure of success for this campaign is the creation of a ‘viral’ phenomenon; SHD was successful. Yet, if the measure is the removal of Harper from power, ultimately, they failed. Neither measure is appropriate because, as I demonstrate in this Chapter, SHD represents a contemporary Canadian example of digital organizing, a new way of reaching out to their peers to build a community, and a demonstration of the new ways individuals can break into a changing news cycle. This case shows that the Canadian political advocacy scene has been

undergoing a major shift in the way in which it can do its work and illustrates the potential for different ways of organizing through the Internet.

Part I Context: A Social Media Election

On March 25, 2011, the CBC reported another election was around the corner. A majority of Members of Parliament had found the Canadian government in contempt of parliament for refusing to supply sufficient information for three key expenditures, “the cost of the F-35 fighter jets, their justice system reforms and their projections for corporate profits and tax rates” (CBC News, 2011). Prime Minister Harper’s rebuttal to what he called the Liberal, Bloc, and NDP “coalition,” was to force an unwanted election. Being that this would be the fourth election in the seven years prior, Harper said it was “an election Canadians clearly don’t want... Thus the vote today that disappoints me, will, I expect, disappoint Canadians” (CBC News, 2011). Scandal and a strained media relationship (as outlined in Chapter One) were still the talk of the nation as the stage was set for an election. This election, unlike elections in Canada’s near past, would be openly engaged with social media and digital activism.

Political parties had watched the swell of online activity in United States electoral campaigns. Obama’s ground-breaking 2008 campaign led many to wonder when a similar campaign would happen in Canada. Political parties learned similar strategies and watching American parties prepare for the 2012 election. Francoli et al. argue that 2011 was the first “experimental social media election” (2011, p. 244). Most parties tested the water on social media platforms but did not use them to their full potential (Francoli et al., 2011, p. 244). For example, in terms of political presence on Facebook, the Liberal Party had the most candidates with pages, followed by the NDP, Green, Conservatives, Bloc and Pirate parties. Parties used the pages to pass on campaign information (Francoli et al., 2011, p. 232). Jack Layton’s NDP leadership page tended to focus on using the events feature of Facebook. The Liberal’s main page

had a question section for members to ask questions; however, it was only used twice. The Liberals did successfully run a discussion board on Facebook that was well used. Beyond this, there were few examples of political parties using social media, Facebook in particular, interactively (Francoli et al., 2011, pp. 232-33).

The 2011 federal election did see an upswell of citizens participating online in a variety of ways even though political parties did not integrate social media into their campaigns in a substantial way. At this time, especially in the United States, sites like Change.org, MoveOn.org, and Avaaz – urging online, political, citizen actions and organization – were continuing to gain popularity. In their reflection on social media use in the 2011 federal election, Francoli et al. point especially to the use of YouTube and other online videos suggesting that the most “interesting and innovative use of video did not come from the party campaigns themselves, but from citizens” (2011, p. 234). Their research points to two noteworthy events: videos of student vote mobs (see Table 3.1) that spread across Canadian universities and SHD’s campaign (Francoli et al., 2011, p. 234). Reilly also points to other social media use in the 2011 federal election such as: the devoted anti-Harper group “Enough Harper,” a group that shared various videos and images that had about 2,000 followers on Facebook and 1,600 followers on Twitter (Reilly, 2011, p. 504); and the women behind the “It’s Over Steve” YouTube Videos that were quite popular. Episode 001 of “It’s Over Steve,” posted on April 10, 2011 got 68,227 views, Episode 002, posted April 11, 2011 got 14,414 views, and Episode 003, posted April 16, 2011 got 3,440 views (itsoversteve 2011). During this election there were also numerous fake Twitter accounts satirizing political candidates, and amateur video productions that participated in online political commentary (Reilly, 2011p. 508).

Table 3.1: University vote mob YouTube videos posted during 2011 federal election

University	Date Posted	Views*
University of Guelph	31-Mar-11	47, 883 views
University of Victoria	07-Apr-11	29,484 views
McMaster University	07-Apr-11	13,809 views
University of Ottawa	11-Apr-11	18,541 views
McGill University	15-Apr-11	21,388 views
Carlton University	18-Apr-11	7,705 views
Memorial University	18-Apr-11	7,756 views
University of Waterloo	20-Apr-11	3, 201 views
University of British Columbia	20-Apr-11	8,805 views
Simon Fraser University	22-Apr-11	3,004 views

* Views relevant as of June 25, 2014.

Francoli et al. insist that the people who engage in such online activities are “most likely already committed partisans or voters who would have been more likely to cast ballots whether the technology existed or not” (Francoli et al. 2011, p. 242). They are “confident in concluding that social media did not play as important a role in terms of influencing the results of the election as traditional media did, notably television” (2011, p. 242). Knowing the results of the 2011 election, that Harper’s Conservative’s won a majority does not tell the whole story. I argue that SHD is politically significant because together, with many of their peers who may not have been interested in politics (Dales, 2014), they publically voiced dissent for Stephen Harper. SHD, and these other campaigns, did receive mainstream media coverage, which in turn influenced “the tenor and tone of the media coverage and became part of the election narrative” (2011, p. 242). This election narrative, I argue, is key to showing the importance of this kind of online participation. The media coverage of SHD is the focus of Part IV which demonstrates how SHD joined the mainstream, political conversations occurring offline.

Part II Motivation and Inspiration: Building Shit Harper Did

According to Dales, back in 2011, Canadian youth, especially the group in Vancouver behind SHD, were dissatisfied, disappointed, and ultimately “pissed off” with the leadership of Harper and his Conservative party (Dales, 2014). Dales remembers his frustration with the federal Conservatives for completely misunderstanding “what our core values are as a group and as a group that is posed to inherit the problems of the previous generation and also [that the Conservatives] have really no idea how to communicate” (Dales 2014). They were angry and got active. Co-creator of SHD, Sean Devlin, who had his own advocacy and campaign firm, Truthfool, approached Dales, a print designer, to help with the SHD project. Devlin showed Dales the website “What the fuck has Obama done so far?” and suggested that they build a site that would do the exact opposite. According to Dales, Devlin wanted to build a website that would bring together “four years of bullshit policy- and decision-making, especially around a couple of key issues” (Dales, 2014). Devlin gathered a group of “artists, musicians, designers, event people, people that you might generally term creative class types, really early career or people still in school” of whom brought different skills to the table (Dales, 2014). This included Cameron Reed, who was working at Radar DBB, a social media marketing company, as well as including some comedians. The group decided how they could “serve this content in the fastest, easiest, most fun way” (Dales, 2014). They determined that key to the project would be its sense of humour as well as its usability. This section will further unpack the inspiration for this site, SHD’s satirical approach, and both the website and YouTube content.

Online copy cats

“What the fuck has Obama Done so far?” was a jumping-off point for SHD. The creators built the site in response to the criticism Obama received for his perceived lack of action on his

campaign promises. The American creators wanted to inform people that he had actually done work (Snyder, 2010).

Image 3.1: “WhatTheFuckHasObamaDoneSoFar.com”



Image from: <http://web.archive.org/web/20101104014754/http://whatthefuckhasobamadonesofar.com/>.

The SHD organizers took this informing model, with its easy-to-share, simple website layout, tailored jokes, and links to media coverage, and turned its positive attitude on its head. SHD reminded Canadian citizen’s “What the fuck Stephen Harper [has] done so far.”

Creators of “What the fuck has Obama done so far?” based their site on the joke website “Barack Obama Is Your New Bicycle,” built in 2008, that would generate random non-sequiturs. The simple layout site with silly phrases such as “Barack Obama left a comment on your blog” or “Barack Obama danced with your mom at your sister’s wedding” received a large enough following that it led to a book deal and copy-cat sites with versions for Hilary Clinton, Sarah Palin, John McCain, Michelle Obama, and Ron Paul (Dubs, 2009). This transference of style from one site to the next – this sort of re-make and do-it-yourself culture – empowers people to produce their own political critiques (Jones, 2010, p. 13).

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Image 3.2: “BarackObamaIsYourNewBicycle.com”

BARACK OBAMA
SUBSCRIBED TO
YOUR FEED

LIKE THE SITE? GET THE BOOK ON [AMAZON](#) OR [BAN](#)

Image from: <http://web.archive.org/web/20081103004313/http://www.barackobamaisyournewbicycle.com/>.

SHD remade the American website in a way that would be culturally relevant for young Canadians. This transference of tactics is important to note as it is part of online, political culture. Political tactics and strategies circulate as modules across campaigns and borders (Tarrow, 1994). They are modular in the sense that they are “capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations” (Anderson, 1991, p. 4).

This copying behaviour is encouraged online. Chadwick suggests that “parties, interest groups and social movement can and do borrow from each other’s typical organizational and mobilization repertoires” (2007, p. 284). Chadwick uses the term “repertoires” to refer to organizational forms or tactics adopted by similar organization (2007, p. 284). SHD’s campaign tactics, specifically their website layout and style, highlight the kinds of tactics, designs, and campaign tools that circulated as modules or repertoires in 2011. In the next chapter, I speak to

the different kinds of software and strategies that were circulating in the political advocacy sphere in 2013.

Using humour: “If I was Rita MacNeil’s Back-Up Dancer and I asked you to Vote...”¹⁰

Like the websites that came before www.shitharperdid.com, humour was key to its success. This comedic tone was also integral to the YouTube videos that featured actors who would comically note that they were not celebrities like Howie Mandel, Celine Dion, or Rick Moranis. They would also refer to Canadian television shows such *Breaker High*, *Degrassi*, and *Mr. Dress-up*, allowing the audience, their peers, to feel they could relate to the content. For example, one video quips,

If I was Sarah McLachlan, and I asked you to vote? Would you do it? If I was Babar King of the Elephants, would you be confused? If I was Ben Mulroney, that would be pretty great... We are not celebrities, but we still hope you will vote. (a.ShitHarperDid, 2011)

The references suited the 20-something youth they were targeting. In the videos, SHD interspersed jokes between lines about Stephen Harper’s policies recounted in a humorous way. For example, in the video “Stephen Harper is an Evil Astronaut,” an actor claims that Harper was “the first Prime Minister to arrest over 1,000 Canadians all at once. And most of them weren’t charged, so I guess that was just practice for when real crimes happen” (c. ShitHarperDid, 2011). SHD crafted jokes for the website with a similar tone such as, “Stephen Harper loves handcuffs, but not, you know, the sexy kind...” referring to G20 arrests (Kempton, 2011) and “Stephen Harper rewrote history... with a racist crayon” referring to a speech in which he denied Canada’s colonial past (Murphy, 2011). Organizers understood the audience of young Canadians for whom they created the website and YouTube videos by including inside jokes riddled with cultural references to ease them into thinking about political issues that faced voters.

¹⁰ “... would you ask me who Rita MacNeil is and why she needs back-up dancers? Or would you just go and vote?” Line from the first SHD video (b. ShitHarperDid, 2011).

Dales (2014) recalls that this tactic was conscious. Especially for him, having hilarious content was essential for this site to take off. As SHD built the site, satire became an obsession for the team. Dales (2014) explains:

We were really severe on how critical we were being of the joke content. So we were taking these news headlines and then rewriting jokes, you know, one liners for them and those went through a lot of iterations. That was a huge amount of work that went into that stuff. I really think it was vindicating for me personally. I can't speak for anyone else at the organization... [for me] it stood as a reminder that content still is the thing that rules. Your dissemination strategy is totally important but if the content isn't there it doesn't matter and it won't matter, at least in my opinion. I can't say that definitely, but for me with out that stuff it doesn't matter how much effort you put into that dissemination strategy and that amplification strategy.

Dales' insisted that the jokes be well-crafted speaks to the way in which political satire works, and the campaign's success aligns with the growing prominence of political satire. The popular success of shows like *The Daily Show with John Stewart* and *The Colbert Report* on American televisions have blurred the line between entertainment and information (Boler & Turpin, 2010, p. 383; Jones, 2010, p. 19). With their combination of headlines and joke material, SHD fits into this "fake news genre" that is a "hallmark of contemporary popular culture (Reilly, 2011, p. 507). Jones argues that this blurred line leads people to question the "reality" and "truth" that news media constructs, challenging the public to question news that is taken for granted as true (2010, p. 19-20). SHD's campaigns challenge assumptions about Harper's time in parliament.

The profanity associated with the site, alienated some viewers of the content, reinforcing their support for right-wing parties (Elmer 2011 quoted in Reilly, 2011, p. 507). Reilly points out evidence of this dissent in the comments sections of some of SHD's campaign (2011, p. 507). That being said, the number of hits SHD received in the first few days alone vindicates Dales' instinct to create effective political satire. Even with the risk of alienation or reinforcing conservative values, Tinic (2009) asserts that the use of political satire allows groups, such as

SHD, who exist outside of powerful circles to resist the status quo (p. 168). As Boler & Turpin (2010) indicate, jokes allow groups entry into political discourse by say that which is left unsaid in more serious mediums such as the news media (p. 384). They could critique the media and the ruling party without repercussions that may have come from more professional media sources.

Shit Harper Did: The 2011 tactical campaign

No one would have laughed at SHD's jokes had they not been shared on the Internet. This portion of the chapter will outline how SHD circulated their jokes through their website and the YouTube videos. The campaign relied heavily on their social media presence, especially Twitter and Facebook, the latter of which is accounted for in Part III.¹¹ SHD also dabbled in on-the-ground campaign work including club specials with participating DJ's across Canada during the early voting dates, and local get-out-the-vote events in four swing ridings. The focus of this research is on the spread of their online campaign. This is not to belittle the important milestone of being able to move offline but rather to keep this research manageable and focused.

The campaign centres on the website www.shitharperdid.com.¹² Devlin's required the website to be "something that is super sharable and kind of fun to use and play with" (Dales, 2014). They built the simple website on Tumblr, an easy-to-use blog platform, founded in 2007. As described in the news magazine *Forbes* more than just a hosting site, "Tumblr harnesses the enthusiasm around a particular topic and coalesces into a community" (Savitz, 2013). This enthusiasm is easy to bring together through the tagging and reblogging features that are prominent and straight-forward to use. Though now only accessible through screen shots and internet archives, the Tumblr version of www.ShitHarperDid.com had a simple layout.

¹¹ This research was unable to account for the Twitter activity due to the sheer amount of Tweets and no access to SHD's Twitter archive.

¹² I relied on screen shots found in Google's Image Search because the site is no longer live.

Image 3.3: “ShitHarperDid.com” Harper’s Mayonnaise

If Stephen Harper was your roommate and you bought some mayonnaise, he would put a sticker on it that said 'Harper's Mayonnaise'

Harper likes being in power so much, he renamed 'The Government of Canada' to 'The Harper Government'. Creepy right?



Read about it at CBC

Seriously? Tell me some other shit!

Send me new videos!



ShitHarperDid.com on Facebook

Like 4,541



Watch our videos

Follow us on twitter

Send us an email

Media contact

a truthful project

THERE ARE BETTER OPTIONS THIS ELECTION. Liberal NDP BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS green

Image from: <http://www.canadiandesignresource.ca/digital/shitharperdid-com/>.

The site included links to “Watch our Videos” (linking to their YouTube channel), “Follow us on Twitter,” and had an embedded Facebook “Like” feature. There was also an option to sign up for a newsletter for notifications of future videos which presumably this list became imperative to their 2013 campaign. At the bottom of the page a set of links to the Liberal, NDP, Bloq Quebecois, and Green Parties’ respective sites. Though not affiliated with any other party, SHD encouraged visitors to educate themselves about what they called “BETTER options.” By clicking the “Seriously? Tell me some other shit” button, the layout of the site remained the same while the quotation, description, and linked news sources would cycle through 27 other statements (Reilly, 2011, p. 507).

Image 3.4: “ShitHarperDid.com” Egomaniacal Harper

What some see as egomaniacal, Harper sees as a perfectly normal hallway filled with photos of Stephen Harper.

Harper decorated the government lobby in parliament with photos of just himself, instead of the traditional portraits of former Prime Ministers.

Read about it in The Ottawa Citizen...

Seriously? Tell me some other shit!



Image from: <http://canadaartsconnect.com/magazine/2011/04/how-artists-are-using-social-media-to-influence-the-vote/>.

SHD’s website, like “What the fuck has Obama done so far?” would scroll through satirical quips about Harper’s record. Unlike the American counter-part, www.ShitHarperDid.com would highlight flaws in the national leader’s administration rather than successes. Some of the issues that the site would generate included: Harper’s denial of Canada’s colonial past (Murphy, 2011), weakening the regulations of the Canadian food inspection agency (Kempton, 2011), removing the portraits of past Prime Ministers in the hallways of the House of Commons and replacing them with his own (Coleman, 2011), rebranding the Government of Canada to “The Harper Government” (Mira Catherine, 2011), the G20 security budget and arrests data (Nolan, 2011), and the lack of action towards providing safe drinking water on Canadian reservations (Ross P, 2011). These jokes linked to news sites confirming their facts. Finally, the sketch of Harper with a kitten pokes fun of the “softer side” of

Stephen Harper, repurposing Image 3.5, released by Harper’s media team, the site ridicules his well-sculpted media persona.

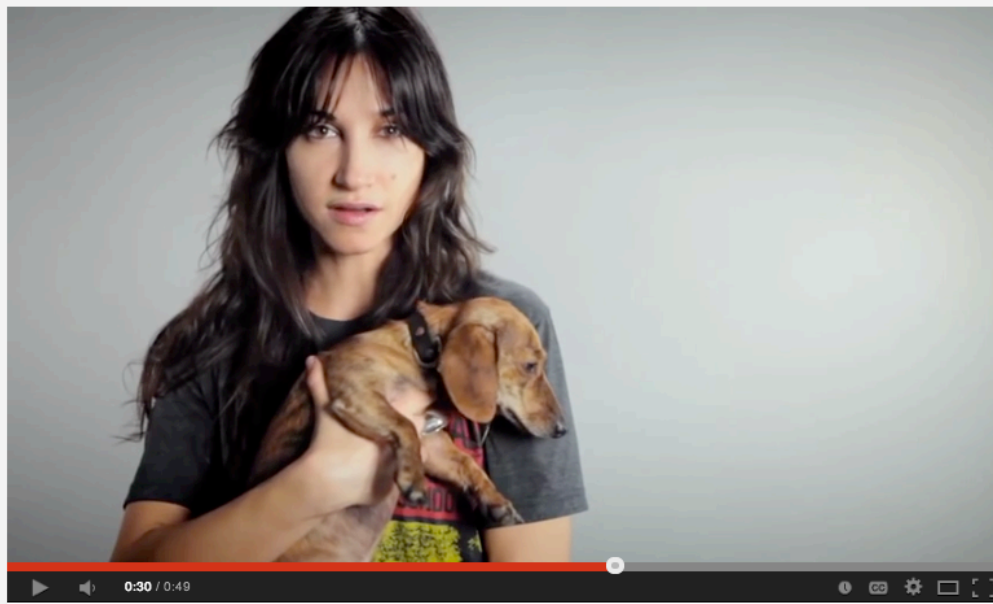
Image 3.5: Stephen Harper and his Kitten



Image from:
<http://www.canada.com/news/decision-canada/Photos+Cats+Holding+Stephen+Harper/4671963/story.html>.

SHD also made a series of YouTube videos. In total, they created 15 video. They made the videos one morning in Vancouver. SHD organizers gathered about 20-30 people, each with a variety of skills, to help film, act in, and produce the videos. The whole affair only cost them approximately \$250 of their pooled resources (Dales, 2014). The YouTube videos, like the website, were easily shared, humorous, and strategically named. SHD released three batches of videos at different times during the campaign. The first batch coincided with the launch of the website on April 12, 2011. SHD released the second batch of videos over the course of the 2011 campaign period. The third batch was SHD’s last push to get-out-the-vote in key swing ridings that non-Conservative candidates had the chance to win against Conservative candidates by a narrow margin. The first two batches of videos followed the same aesthetic, with actors delivering lines in front of a white screen, shot from the chest up (see Image 3.6).

Image 3.6: Screen Shot of “Ryan Gosling Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com”



The first batch of videos ended with a title screen promoting the website (Image 3.7). They used celebrity names, such as Celine Dion, Ryan Gosling, Ben Mulroney, and Pokémon in their titles, but not the celebrities themselves, encouraging people to get to the polls, citing the low voter turnout that brought Stephen Harper to power in the previous election. The videos do not get into the specific issues that the website outlines.

Image 3.7: Screen Shot of the end title screen of the first batch of SHD videos



The second batch of videos had the same aesthetic, with actors standing in front of a white screen with clips of them cut together delivering jokes as well as urging young people to both vote and visit the website or educate themselves about Stephen Harper's political reputation. However, rather than ending with the image of Harper with a kitten the title screen features the website URL in bold white on a purple background.

SHD geared the third batch of videos towards four specific cities (Edmonton, Kitchener-Waterloo, Saanich-Gulf Islands and Vancouver South). They did not feature any live actors or video clips but instead included a compilation of still images illustrating a narration encouraging people to come out to their on-the-ground events in the riding. The images used included screen shots of the SHD website, local landmarks in each city, and silly pictures that went along with the narrated jokes (Image 3.8 and 3.9)

Image 3.8: Screen shot of “Go away bees!” in “RubbishHarperDid.com Comes to SAANICH-GULF ISLANDS!”



Image 3.9: Screen shot of swing riding NDP candidate in “RubbishHarperDid.com Comes to EDMONTON!”



Each of videos in the third batch ended with a title screen featuring the URL RubbishHarperDid.com referring to the video “Stephen Harper’s Greatest Fear” from the second batch that urged voters to tell their grandparents about the SHD website (in a less profane way).

Part III Traffic Tag Timeline: The Dissemination of SHD

ShitHarperDid.com's content and shareability were key to the spread of campaign through various communities online. This section focuses on what happened after the website went live on April 11, 2011, until just after the federal election May 4, 2011. This section outlines the organizers personal experience with launching the website, which was so overwhelmed with hits on the first day it crashed. This is followed by the results from the traffic tag research showing where and when each component of the campaign spread.

Disemination without a strategy

Around 3 AM April 11, 2011, SHD organizers set website live and sent links to the site, YouTube videos and Facebook page to a group of 15-30 friends of the core-team (Dales, 2014). When asked about the strategy for the website launch and their plan to gain a following, Dales (2014) explained,

Honestly our strategy was at that point: get the thing... live on the web, and get a Facebook account for it, and then try to send it out to as many people as we can. But we tried like a few people that night and we expected that we were going to do a push that following morning and it turned out that push ended up not to be necessary but that was kind of it. I am pulling the curtain up a little bit but our strategy was really quite basic.

By the time they woke up, the site had already spread through their friend's broad networks, and that one email was enough to crash the site by the end of the next day. According to Dales, it was a huge surprise when they realized they would not have to push their content on social media at all; with high-quality content, dissemination happened on its own.

Suddenly, SHD not only had a cross-country network of 'tech-support,' but also had clogged the social media news feeds Canada-wide. After the site crashed, the server the team quickly migrated the content to new servers. "A bunch of people around the country who were colleagues, really loose colleagues, who were in the activism world who stepped in and helped us in a really huge way," offering to load the content onto their own servers (Dales, 2014). The

Reddit community also helped them sort through the debacle. Dales recalls that the site had even been backed up in Europe by someone who had heard about them on Reddit (2014). Reflecting this early success, Dales said that Cameron Reed, another original co-creator of the site,

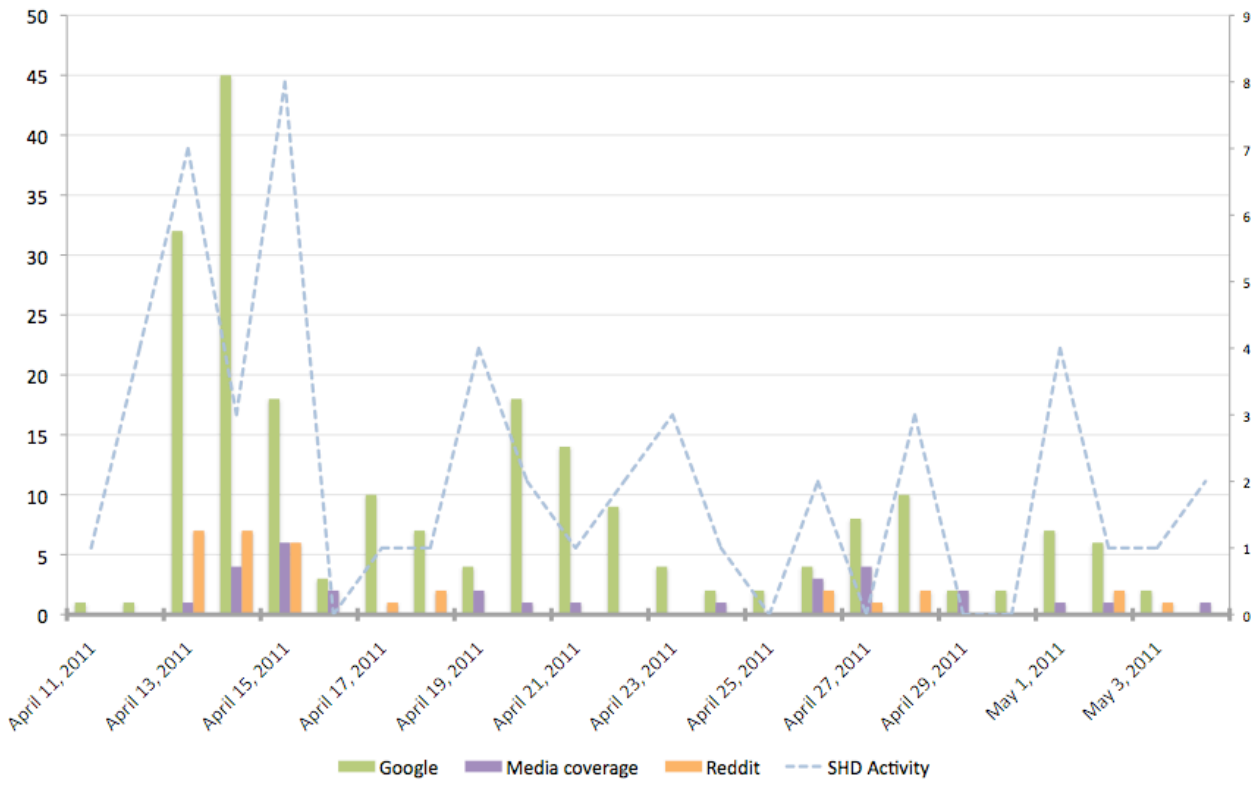
had a really proud moment that on the day that our servers went down because every single person on Radar [where Reed was working at the time in social media] on their social media feeds were clogged with our content. That means it was coming through from everywhere so that was really great. (2014)

They did not control the spread of their work. SHD's content spoke for itself and they had successfully targeted their audience.

Shit Harper Did's timeline of social sharing

When SHD organizers awoke, their site had spread across the internet and social media with an initial spike then a gradual buzz of activity. The traffic tag timeline shows when and where the media created by SHD was shared. It contextualizes each video, each piece of news coverage, and links to/mentions of SHD content in a larger story of internet sharing. The timeline provides an overview of, what was coined by the media as a 'viral' phenomenon, actually looks like. Appendix One shows the order, by date, where I found each traffic tag. By searching for traffic tags (see Chapter Two for a further explanation of this term) I found the number of times links to each video and to site were shared or mentioned. Appendix One illustrates that the broad audience and networks that shared SHD content extending beyond social media. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the overall pattern of sharing. I produced the graph using the timeline (Appendix One) described in the methodology. It compares SHD's social media activity (posts on Facebook and YouTube) with the columns representing the places SHD content was shared and how often. There is a spike in activity after each post which shows how the online community responded to each new SHD post.

Figure 3.1: SHD content sharing by platform and time



On the first day of the launch April 11, 2011, a huge spike in traffic would ultimately lead to the website crashing. I located links to the shitharper.com and two YouTube videos on three blogs, two forums, and Tegan and Sara’s fans’ Tumblr page (Appendix One). By April 13, 2011, just over 24 hours later, SHD posted on their Facebook wall: “Sorry, everyone. We just found out we’ve had ONE MILLION HITS since 8am. We’ll be up and running again soon” (Appendix One). The Facebook comment received 160 likes – a small number compared to what would come. Later that same day SHD posted that the number of likes of the Facebook page had grown,

10,000 - Thank you! More than 2-dozen young Canadians have volunteered their time to prepping this for the past 2 weeks. Thank you for embracing it so quickly! We have lots more in the works -- stay tuned and spread the word. PS. the word is “VOTE.” (Appendix One)

The post acquired 325 likes. In one day SHD reached 10,000 people. That day there people posted seven times on Reddit (the most popular getting 45 “upvotes”), and linked to SHD content

in 31 other networks ranging from the United Church of Canada’s Wonder Café community, a BC sports bike forum, MidnightPoutine.ca, HeartyMagazine.com, and the list goes on (Appendix One).

That same day *The Globe and Mail* embedded “Ryan Gosling Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com” on their site (“Hipsters tout ShitHarperDid.com”) preceding the first newspaper article about the viral site (more later regarding the media content and representation). *The Globe and Mail* embedded video was the highest viewed video in the first batch. There is no way of confirming that this led to the spike in viewership but there is a possibility this was the reason it received well over 132,159 more views than the other SHD videos.¹³ Table 3.2 illustrates this bump in views, the breakdown of the first batch of videos, and the number of views, comments, shares, thumbs up, and thumbs down.

Table 3.2: First batch of YouTube videos posted by ShitHarperDid¹⁴

Title (followed by URL tag)	Date Posted	Views	Comments	Shares	Thumbs Up	Thumbs Down
Celine Dion Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com (LSjc0C1bLJE)	12-Apr-11	60,809	185	158	562	43
Ryan Gosling Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com (WQm0t1v2wOM)	12-Apr-11	225,582	749	639	1,673	205
Ben Mulroney Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com (ONPki_Qhiz0)	12-Apr-11	93,423	211	245	509	44
Pokemon Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com (g0mucPiSgSw)	12-Apr-11	54,884	127	40	410	28

¹³ Ryan Gosling’s jaw-dropping beauty and high-brow acting may have also misled fans to this video while searching for Ryan Gosling content on YouTube. Extrapolating conclusions from this kind of research is difficult.

¹⁴ Views and shares for Table 3.2. 3.3 and 3.5 are relevant as of January 31, 2014. Comments, Thumbs Up, and Thumbs Down relevant as of June 6, 2014. I did not account for two videos that were two parts of the television show “The Party”, that aired towards the end of the election period on CTV News Channel (CTV Staff, 2011). The show was only mentioned in one media piece, there were no posts on Facebook about it, nor did Cam Dales mention it.

The first batch of videos received 60,809, 225,582, 93,423, and 54,884 views each, respectively – higher than many of the Vote Mob videos or most videos shared by a political party. These numbers are not to be dismissed when compared with other “viral phenomena” on YouTube – Hiltz (2011) reports that “among its videos [Ryan Gosling Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com] was the one most shared by Canadians on YouTube Wednesday – the website’s fifth most-viewed video nationwide.” Referring back to Table 3.1, the videos received substantially more views than the university student vote mobs. Also, even the most popular “It’s Over Steve” video, mentioned earlier, only got 68,227 views. SHD was most definitely the most popular Canadian political group posting on YouTube at the time. As with all subsequent videos, the first batch of videos received the majority of views within the first days of being posted. An example of the instantaneous popularity of the one of the first video’s posted is demonstrated in Figure 3.2 and 3.3.

Figure 3.2: “Celine Dion Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com” Daily Views

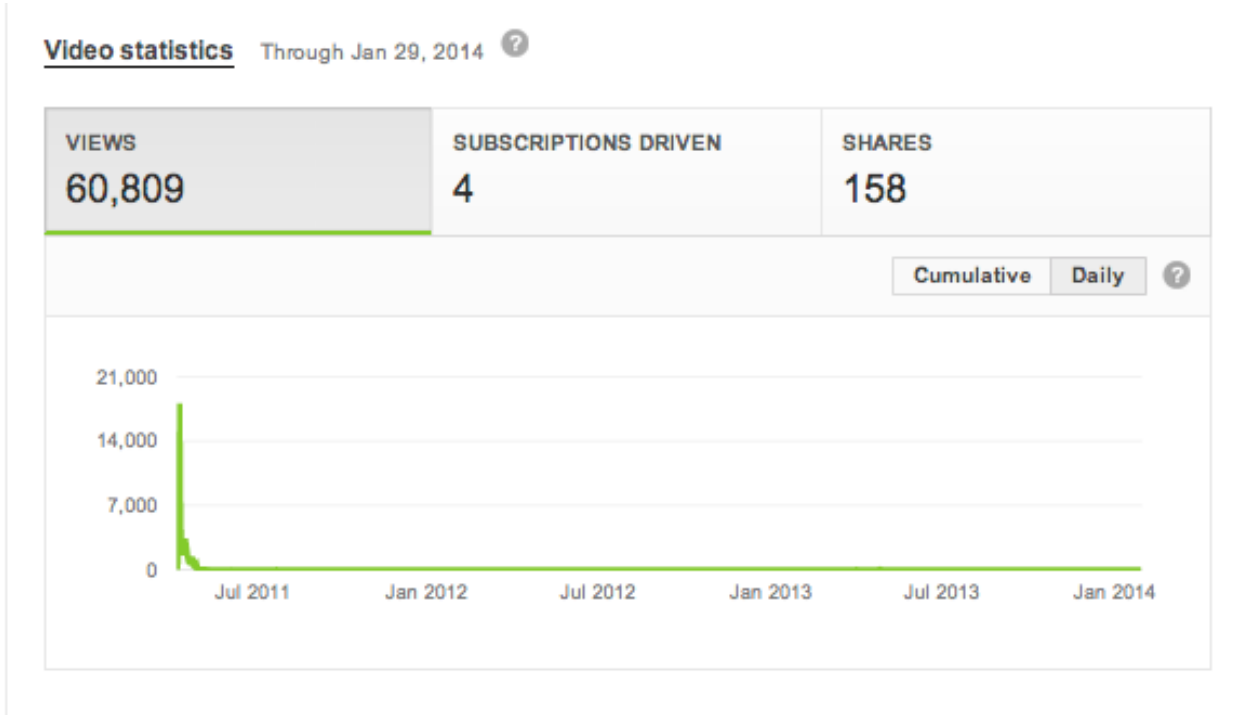
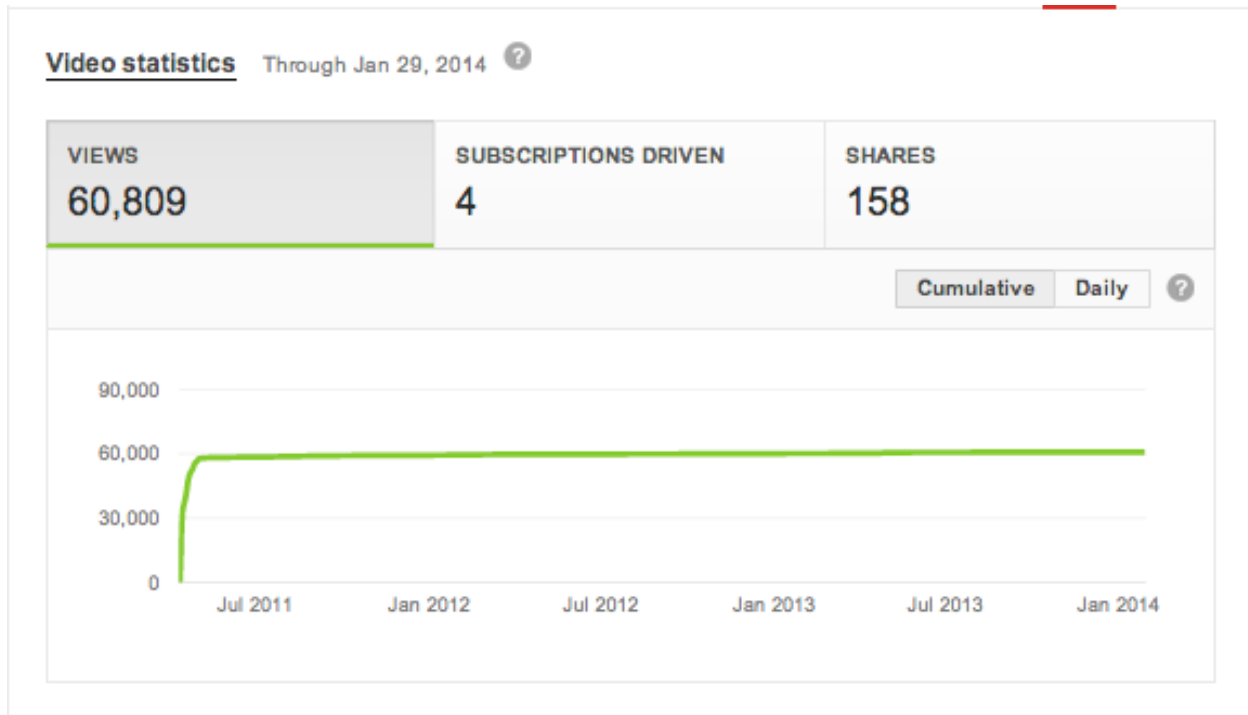


Figure 3.3: “Celine Dion Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com” Cumulative Views



On April 14, 2011, SHD reported to their Facebook community that,

Last night we asked you if we could hit 10,000 by this morning... about to hit 20,000 - Thank you! Please “Suggest To Friends” Will have some fun stuff for you to play with later today. (Appendix One)

Seven more Reddit posts were found referring to “Shit Harper Did,” and 42 more posts on blogs and forums linking to SHD material. The most noteworthy among the bunch, Adbusters and *The Tye* posted links to SHD content that would have had much higher readership than the aforementioned blogs. Four news articles mentioned SHD that first day, which I outlined in the next section. The next day, April 15, 2011, the media published six more news articles and SHD posted on Facebook,

We passed 3.5 million hits in the first 36 hours! The national media is embracing our message, with some reporting that we’ve “changed the game”...and it’s all because of YOU. We put this thing together, but it is your overwhelming support that gives it true strength. New videos on the way... (Appendix One)

On April 18, 2011 SHD started promoting the first of the second batch of YouTube videos, posting on Facebook,

NEW VIDEO! Not all that serious. But we will be releasing 1 a day this week! Others with a more serious focus. No matter where you are in Canada please join us for ShitperDid.com PRESENTS Vote Responsively, Dance Recklessly. (Appendix One)

Though they ultimately did not post a video every day, they did post consistently. April 19, 20, 22, 23, and 28, 2011 SHD released new YouTube they had created. These videos, as shown in Table 3.3, ranged in views from 12,102 to 186,063.

Table 3.3: Second batch of YouTube videos posted by ShitHarperDid

Title (followed by URL tag)	Date Posted	Views	Comments	Shares	Thumbs Up	Thumbs Down
Yoko VS Harper – ShitHarperDid.com (e0LpldpPwUU)	17-Apr-11	46,941	201	247	496	57
Stephen Harper is an Evil Astronaut (ccgUbezuFHY)	19-Apr-11	66,194	475	456	832	135
Canadian Women’s Favourite Pick-Up Line (KmhTKSWFWw)	20-Apr-11	186,063	968	798	1,466	316
Stephen Harper’s Greatest Fear (NBiD_VpG894)	22-Apr-11	23,024	164	62	182	36
Softball Team wins Canadian Election (GqGbBXhNQel)	23-Apr-11	15,686	100	72	166	11
“Wasted Vote” Shane Koyczan (fUnFhCcNPoo)	26-Apr-11	42,015	417	311	720	89
Robot Army VS Young Voters (njkuZywM0e)	28-Apr-11	12,102	117	78	177	17

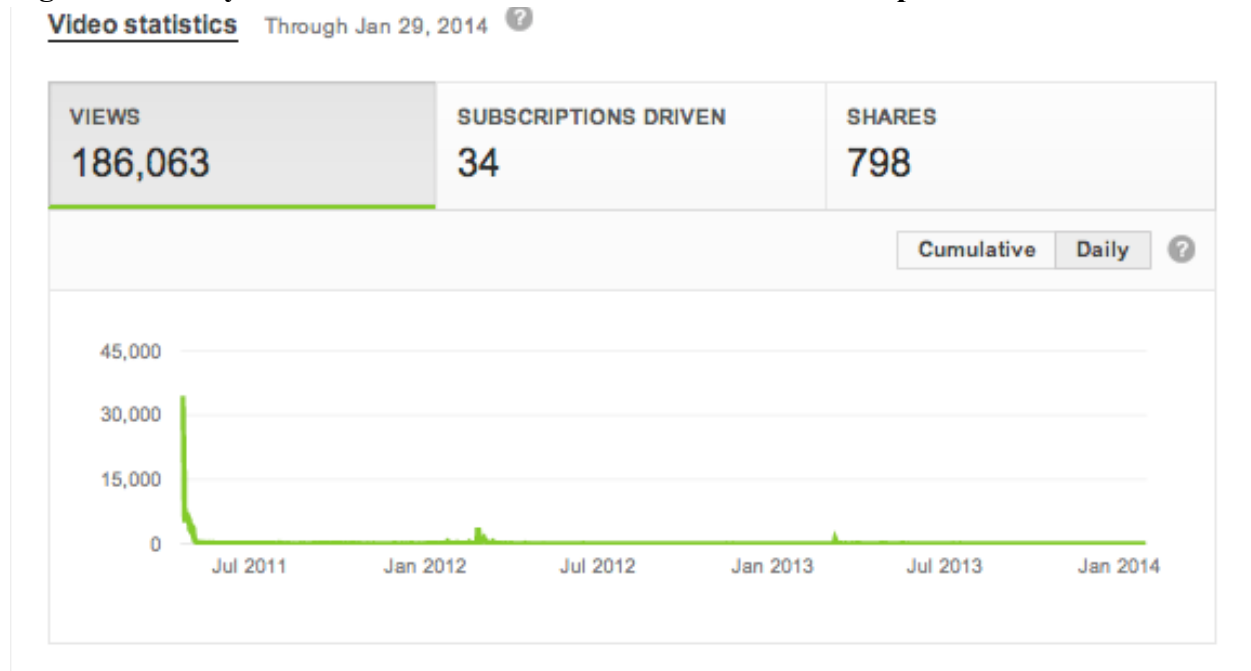
The first video, “Yoko VS Harper” (44,941 views), poked fun at Harper’s rendition of the Beatle’s “Imagine,” and prompted voters to go to advanced polls. The video also promoted the connections SHD had made with DJs across Canada, offering advanced poll deals at various clubs across Canada. The more serious content that SHD referred to on Facebook may have alluded to the next video, posted on April 19, 2011, “Stephen Harper is an Evil Astronaut”

(66,194 views), which focused on the charge against the Prime Minister for being in contempt of Parliament. The actors in the video claim the election was called “because Prime Minister Stephen Harper violated the democratic rights of Canadian citizens, like you! Don’t believe it? Go to ShitHarperDid.com.”

SHD posted another video on April 20, 2011 and Sean Devlin appeared on a podcast – Alert! Radio – to talk about SHD’s work. On the podcast, Devlin says that 2/3 of young Canadians do not listen to the news, they do not vote, and are not following the political events in the country. He claims that by targeting youth in an entertaining way, SHD could increase interest in voting. In the midst of the campaign, Devlin felt that SHD was a success because there were over four million page views on the site in the first 72 hours. According to Devlin, by this time the media had embraced them. He argues that www.shitharperdid.com reminds people that Harper is a minority leader that goes about his controversial actions in quiet or covert ways (Episode 182, 2011). Though Devlin is correct that the media ‘embraced’ them in terms of covering the campaign, in the next section I argue that the mainstream news media did not do SHD justice in its news coverage of the issues toward which the site is dedicated.

The second most popular video, “Canadian Women’s Favourite Pick-Up Line,” also posted on April 20, 2011 eventually attracted 186,063 views. (The line, by the way, is “I’m not Stephen Harper”). It focused on the funding cuts to women’s advocacy groups. As with the videos above it to received the majority of its views within the first few days (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: Daily views of “Canadian Women’s Favourite Pick-Up Line”



As Appendix Two shows, when SHD posted this video on their Facebook page, the link got 833 “likes” and 54 comments. This post, in bold in Appendix Two, is also the second-most “liked” comment on SHD’s Facebook page before the election. This table also illustrates the variation of “likes” SHD content received over the course of the entire campaign.

The popularity of “Canadian Women’s Favourite Pick-Up Line” and “Ryan Gosling Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid” in terms of view counts were also the most popular videos tags found in Appendix One. Table 3.4 shows the frequency of each traffic tag found over the course of the entire SHD campaign.

Table 3.4: Traffic tags in order of number of results

Number of results	Tag (followed by video title)
71	"Shit Harper Did"
51	ShitHarperdid
35	ShitHarperdid.com
24	WQm0t1v2wOM (Ryan Gosling Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com)
19	Shit Harper Did
17	KmthTKSWFWw (Canadian Women's Favourite Pick-up Line)
10	e0LpldpPwUU (Yoko Ono VS ShitHarperDid.com)
6	ccgUbezuFHY (ShitHarperDid is an Evil Astronaut)
7	fUnFhCcNPoo ("Wasted Vote" by Shane Koyczan)
6	LSjc0C1bLJE (Celine Dion Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com)
6	ONPki_Qhlz0 (Brian Mulroney Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com)
5	(a)ShitHarperDid
3	Sh*tHarperDid
2	Sean Devlin
2	njkuZyWM0eg (Robot Army VS. Young Voters)
2	g0mucPiSgSw (Pokemon Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com)
2	ShitHarperdid.ca
1	GqGbBXhNQeI (Softball Team wins Canadian Election)
1	NBiD_VpG894 (Stephen Harper's Greatest Fear)

As the election carried on, Figure 3.1 shows that the sharing lessened but did not stop. SHD released the last three videos in the second batch on April 23, 2011. The video “Stephen Harper’s Greatest Fear” asked viewers both to phone their grandparents and tell them why they would not be voting for Harper, and to send them to their “old-folk friendly website,” “RubbishHarperDid.” Though it only received 23, 060, views the video is notable for SHD’s awareness both of their young audience, and that their use of profane language might have some turned some people away from their work. On April 26, 2011, “Softball Team wins election”

(15,698 views) was a get-out-the-vote plea that informed viewers that some ridings in the previous election had only been won by 20 votes (“there were more kids on Degrassi!”), reminding the community that its votes can count. The last video, “Robot Army VS. Young Voters,” posted April 28, 2011, had 12,121 views and warned youth of false polls that might be reporting troubling numbers. They reminded voters that polls rely on land-lines, and that they were therefore not representative of youth views, encouraging voters to prove the polls wrong: “The polls won’t decide this election – We will” (Robot Army). Towards the end of the period of study, one last noteworthy milestone was that on April 29, Margret Atwood mentioned SHD in an interview with *The Globe and Mail* – she (along with Ellen Page) became one of the celebrity reTweeters who had helped to expose SHD’s work to a larger community.

The third batch of videos continued with this get-out-the-vote theme. They each played off of the second URL they had created and the joke from the “Stephen Harper’s Greatest Fear” video. RubbishHarperDid would redirect to ShitHarperDid.com and it became the title for the four videos aimed at swing ridings. Each video promoted SHD organizers that were coming to the Edmonton, Kitchener-Waterloo, Saanich-Gulf Islands and Vancouver South to get-out-the-vote. They received 1,628, 1662, 1574, and 3,854 views respectively, not nearly as many views as the other videos. This may have been because SHD posted on the videos May 1, 2011, one day before Election Day, or because they targeted specific audiences so others may not have been as interested in sharing or promoting them in wider networks.

Table 3.5: Third batch of YouTube videos posted by ShitHarperDid

Title (followed by URL tag)	Date Posted	Views	Comments	Shares	Thumbs Up	Thumbs Down
RubbishHarperDid.com Comes to EDMONTON! (iIWblq4ZOLI)	01-May-11	1,628	5	3	17	1
RubbishHarperDid.com Comes to KITCHNER-WATERLOO! (Ua9TSmfYQJU)	01-May-11	1,662	2	0	16	1
RubbishHarperDid.com Comes to SAANICH-GULF ISLANDS! (zW3PJuiB8yQ)	01-May-11	1,574	5	2	16	0
RubbishHarperDid.com Comes to VANCOUVER SOUTH! (d2BTGgO_sZM)	01-May-11	3,854	10	15	19	2

Referring to Appendix One, there were a range of posts found over the course of this campaign that have not been illustrated above. However, this timeline only shows a fraction of the data that was shared, leaving any conclusions that can be drawn tentative. This research is unable to account for posts on individual Facebook walls leading to clicks on the website and video views, as well as Twitter tweets, reTweets, and favourites that might provide insight into just how many people were involved in sharing this campaign. That said, it is still interesting to note the number of community members that posted on SHD’s own Facebook wall towards the end of the campaign in Table 3.6. There was a high level of interactivity present on the Facebook wall with people sharing relevant news stories and encouraging people to vote.

Table 3.6: Posts by others on Shit Harper Did’s Facebook page¹⁵

Number of Posts on Facebook	Date
202	30-Apr-11
228	29-Apr-11
102	28-Apr-11

After the election, and when this campaign of research ends, on May 3, 2011, SHD commented on the outcome,

¹⁵ Facebook’s “posted by others” feature on SHD’s timeline would only load for these three days. This echoes the frustrations mentioned in the Chapter Two regarding the difficulty of researching online.

Welcome to 4 years of a FALSE MAJORITY. Our archaic electoral system somehow just awarded 40% of voters 54% of the seats in Parliament, while awarding 60% of voters 46% of Parliament. We update our computer software almost daily, yet the system that allows us to choose our government hasn't been updated in more than a century.

SHD did not get the results they had hoped for, which I discuss in the conclusion of this chapter.

The remaining posts on the Facebook wall spoke to the theme of the results of the popular vote.

They also promoted a link to a LeadNow petition to hold the Prime Minister accountable. In the days following the election, SHD's activity subsides.

Part IV Media Analysis: “Scatological attack on Stephen Harper’s record goes viral”

If the campaign had attracted media coverage, what was the press talking about? Effective media management by the PMO had effectively silenced the Canadian press as explained in Chapter One. Could SHD get journalists talking about the Harper record again? In a roundabout way, SHD exposed Harper's record through their news coverage. The crash of www.ShitHarperDid.com and the popularity of the campaign did make the news, but coverage rarely unpacked the issues featured on the website.

SHD received mostly negative or neutral coverage. As shown in Appendix Three in general articles that covered the website were neutral in their tone towards SHD. Two articles did take a negative tone. One article calls the group frivolous and the other is an opinion piece that took general offence to multiple satirical and profane sites. Three articles did cast SHD in a positive light. Two of these three framed SHD as a prescription for youth political apathy, and a letter to the editor promoted the site in a small local paper.

Interestingly, only three of the articles acknowledge any of the issues featured on the SHD website. Instead, media coverage focused on youth political engagement taking place online. They framed SHD in two ways, finding them noteworthy for their “virality,” and the fact that the site had actually crashed (“Heavy traffic crashes anti-Harper Website” and “Vancouver-

based anti-Harper website sh*tharperdid.ca attracts two million hits”). Or, articles only listed SHD in conjunction with other youth movements at the time such as voting mobs and other websites (“Viral Voting Videos: youth try to combat dismal turnout record among peers,” “ShitHarperDid.com uses humour to fight voter apathy,” “Pitching politics in with comedy; Humour grabs youths’ attention” and “Youth-led internet campaigns step up before Canadian poll”). Coverage also tended to focus on the phenomenon of social media usage in the election more generally.

Nearly all the articles explicitly point out both that the site was humorous and that the name of the site was profane. One might speculate that this framed the site as a less serious critique of Harper’s work but, these two focuses reiterate the importance of political satire. For example, the article printed April 13, 2011 in *The Globe and Mail*, “Scatological attack on Stephen Harper’s record goes Viral: Aimed at engaging youth voters, videos featuring scruffy hipsters talking trash about Tory Leader tear up Twitter and Facebook,” features a lot of what the other articles covered: trashing Harper, social media, ‘virality,’ and youth voters. The article claims the video’s producer, Sean Devlin, “felt compelled to engage prospective voters with entertaining content,” and follows with a quote from him directly:

I think Mr. Harper is reshaping this country in quite appalling ways, and I think people haven’t really taken notice because Canadian politics is kind of boring and I think Mr. Harper is actually using that as a strategy... When he is attacked or when really serious issues are brought up, he tried to make them seem boring, almost because he wants people to not pay attention. (Devlin in Houpt, 2011)

Devlin claims they tried to repackage the white noise that the media prints in an entertaining way (Houpt, 2011). Yet, the article doesn’t go further by outlining the issues alluded to by Devlin.

The coverage is a major point of disconnection in the SHD campaign as their perspective did not carry over into press coverage. As outlined earlier, the importance of breaking into this sphere is not just about reaching a wider audience, it is about the power that the media hold in

terms of agenda setting. The news is not simply an information source, it is able to persuade and inform in a particular way (Grossberg et al, 1998). The media determine what the politics for the day, and if SHD broke into that sphere by being worthy of news coverage, they became the word of the day. Ultimately, the press chose not to cover SHD's critiques of Harper even though SHD did offer a new way to discuss Harper's policies.

Part V Discussion: Why SHD Matters

SHD represents a shift in Canada's traditional news cycle to a 'political information cycle.' It demonstrates why online campaigning works and the personal motivations that go into this kind of work by every single individual involved. SHD also demonstrates the affordances offered by the internet that have allowed for this kind of political advocacy to happen in the first place. Finally, this campaign is representative of new forms of media tactics and content hijacking.

A 'political information cycle'

As Chadwick (2012) argues, and is shown in the Literature Review, "increasingly, publics are able to exert influence and hold politicians and media to account through the use of newer media logics" (p. 59). This quotation sums up, almost perfectly, how SHD broke into the 'political information cycle.' As the number of supporters grew, and more their campaign material was shared, the more SHD influenced the media. In a sense, the popularity of this campaign called for reaction from politicians. They did not only ask Prime Minister Harper to account for his actions, they reminded other politicians about issues that were important to SHD's group of supporters and peers. SHD held the media to account for all the issues they left out of their election coverage and passed over during Harper's leadership.

One of the tactics SHD used to enter the 'political information cycle' was that as activists they engaged in activities that fit "seamlessly into their everyday routines" of their audience

(Papacharissi, 2011, p. 160). By posting in networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube – places where youth already participated in actively –SHD’s made content easy for supporters to share. The style of both the videos and the site were just as Devlin wanted, something “super-sharable” and fun. The vast number of Facebook “likes” and YouTube views noted above prove that this was the case. Papacharissi (2011) suggests this kind of online activism allows for a more fluid kind of activism and civic engagement that gives citizens the ability to choose when, where, and how much they participate. There was no burden for supporters to participate in the campaign. By seamlessly integrating into their peer’s networks, the SHD website received enough hits to crash the website’s servers, post one of the most viewed video’s during the election, and get a substantial amount of press coverage.

This changing media environment and SHD’s ability to access it is not demonstrative of a complete overhaul of the media system, rather, as Chadwick argues, this occurs within, “older media’s power and older media logics” (Chadwick 2012, p. 59). As Chadwick puts it, media organizations “are in many respects successfully co-opting newer media logics for their own purposes while at the same time restating and renewing logics that sustained their domain” (2012, p. 208). Mainstream media, even in a hybridized news cycle sustains and legitimizes power, recognized in this research because of the emphasis put on SHD entering mainstream news. By taking into account the framing of SHD in traditional media we can see the limited influence SHD had in bringing certain issues, such Harper’s cuts to many women’s programs, to the table. The dominant media did not pick up on all the issues SHD found important to the 2011 election. As argued before, any mention of the SHD campaign at all may still have, in a roundabout way, brought readers to the content.

Meaningful, connective action

Rather than sitting back and doing nothing, the SHD organizers did something to counteract the way the federal Conservative party represented and communicated to them. Benkler argues that the internet allows one to become active members in public discourse and changes the way s/he observes and processes events (Benkler, 2006, p. 213). SHD's observations were not just conversations within their offline community, these feelings were potential subjects for broader communication (Benkler, 2006, p. 213). Moreover, online content does not just go 'viral.' There are individual people behind every share, like, retweet, and share. People shared the campaign and implicitly contributed to the relevance of SHD. Benkler (2006) argues, that people intrinsically care about the content they share online. The shared content is "something directly relevant to their lives and needs that they want to fix" (Benkler, 2006, p. 259). Through the sharing of SHD's website and videos, young Canadians proved that they actually cared about the 2011 federal election, and that the issues promoted by SHD were pertinent to them as voters. This case represents that online political advocacy is much more than just passive 'clicktivism,' sharing the SHD website and videos became a method of dissent and political action.

This case also shows the validity of organizations that exist and act almost exclusively online. As Chadwick (2012) states, "The internet, [is] not just... a channel for the communication of information, but also a mechanism of organization and networked collective action in the creation of the news" (p. 46-47). These networks and organizations are also quite meaningful. The internet allows for "connective" action in which trusted relationships can be built online through the act of sharing ideas and acting together online (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 752-53). This connectivity means that formal organizations no longer have to be the guide that leads political dissent or political action, people are able to take action and contribute in different ways online. At the same time, those involved in online organizing can express their personal beliefs

and feel a sense of validation for having contributed (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 752-53). SHD did not organize with their community to its full extent during the 2011 election as there were few opportunities for those outside of the core-group of organizers to contribute beyond sharing content. However, as shown in Chapter Four, opportunities to participate in new ways became intrinsic to their strategy in 2013.

Internet affordances

As mentioned earlier, SHD's team consisted of 5-6 core members who relied on their friends to help with production, dissemination, and creation, and they only spent \$250 on the campaign. This low budget and small team highlight the kinds of affordances offered by social media and the internet that have generally lowered the barriers of access for groups to mobilize or as Karpf (2012) puts it "*organizing with different organizations*" (p. 3). The following two examples illustrate some of the ways in which the SHD demonstrates the potential for online political advocacy work in Canada.

When the site went live and quickly spread through SHD's own network, it gained more and more traction the more it was shared. As previously mentioned, the Reddit community, strangers to the team, offered to back up the site. There is even one case of someone in Europe who let SHD know that the site had a back-up copy on a European server if it were to happen again (Dales, 2014). Dales also recalls that some of Devlin's loosely connected acquaintances also began to help the group in a major way by volunteering to make sure that the content would be running at full capacity. This example demonstrates the tools that online organizing affords these kinds of groups. They can work with people who they have never even met, in different time zones, rather than within a more structured organization with paid staff. This decentralized structure, as argued by Karpf (2012), is key to online organizations, and he argues this decentralization will begin to play an intermediary role in defining civic beliefs and citizenship

ideals (p. 11). As the next chapter explores how SHD begins to communicate more with their community, I show how SHD moved into that intermediary role.

The following, second example also demonstrates how online political advocacy needs to be taken more seriously in Canada. The low cost of production and high viewership led to many skeptical inquiries from Elections Canada about third party political group spending limits. Dales (2014) remembers that this was very surprising for them:

Elections Canada called us a million times, because they were convinced...that we were lying about how much money we had spent... In Canada you have to register as an official third party advertiser if you spend more than \$500.00 on a campaign. So they were ringing our phone off the hook for like two weeks and we just ignored them. We were like 'We don't know what to do. This is serious.'

When Dales finally worked up the courage to answer the phone, Elections Canada's only question was about how much money they had spent. When he said they only spent \$250 Elections Canada left them alone. Dales recalls that an Member of Parliament publically mocked them for this in the media saying that SHD had "alleged to have spent \$250.00" (Dales, 2014). Many found it hard to believe that this kind of action was inexpensive. Today, SHD's website boasts that "Elections Canada officially recommended that federal election rules be changed to account for the big impact that our little campaign had" (Why you matter, n.d.). The Report of the Chief Electoral Officer under Section 3.3 Communications and Social Media reads,

The third party regime reflects a concern for creating a level playing field between opponents with differing financial resources... Social media and the Internet are conducive to political participation by allowing a broad dissemination of messages at a very low cost. The use of new technologies can improve the federal electoral process by enhancing both equality and freedom of expression. To reduce the current uncertainty and take advantage of new technologies, Parliament may wish to consider excluding from the definition of election advertising all Internet-based communications by third parties, except perhaps communications placed for a fee by the originator on another site. (Mayrand, 2011)

Though there is no proof from Elections Canada that SHD is the cause of the above concern or the changes to the spending limit on non-registered third party groups to \$250.00.

Elections Canada does recommend in an official public record that online groups should be taken seriously for their potential for political upheaval.

Tactical media

SHD engaged in media tactics. As outlined in the Chapter One, tactical media is defined as the “media of crisis, criticisms and opposition” (Garcia & Lovink, 2001, p. 90). Particularly, with this campaign, SHD took full advantage of internet affordances, using free online space to run a popular campaign (Garcia & Lovink, 2001, p. 91). This campaign can also be read in terms of Raley’s definition of tactical media which focuses on the aspects of education, intervention, and disruption (Raley, 2009, p. 1). SHD worked to educate viewers not only about Harper’s political record but also about how as youth they could make a substantial difference in the outcome of the election. They linked their site to “Better Options” for whom to vote and targeted specific ridings where change could be made. The site also intervened in the media narrative about the election. The media coverage of their campaign served to bring youth perspectives into the mix. They also intervened in the representation of Harper’s policies. By curating a group of news stories not usually read together, SHD informed users, sparking critical thinking and political engagement. Finally, they also disrupted, clogged, or jammed social media feeds with their content. The quotation in which Dales recounts the story of how exciting it was to have filled all the staff at Radar DDB’s Facebook feeds is representative of how SHD became the most important thing on the web, at least that first day, for their peers.

Cheap, online tools make these kinds of do-it-yourself media tactics possible. SHD used the shifting media environment to their advantage, using online tools, proven to work in the United States, and well-written, satirical content. They became one of the most interesting, online, political commentary during the 2011 federal election. SHD is noteworthy because it

represents a milestone in Canadian online political advocacy being one of the first groups to really mobilize in this way.

Part VI Conclusion: Harper Wins 166 of 308 Seats

Ultimately, Harper won the election. For all work SHD did to inform Canadians about Harper's atrocious record, and even with all the people that viewed pleas for young people to vote for change, Harper's power was only made clearer. Dales (2014) remembers watching the election on May 2, 2011,

We didn't see a translation between the amount of attention that it [the campaign] received and people going to the polls... we didn't really see any swing. As we were watching the election and as we were watching seat after seat being grabbed we were just like 'ugh.' It was really a depressing, a really defeating moment.

The SHD organizers had to recalibrate and come to a consensus about what had happened and where this project could go. They also had to figure out how to measure this as a success or a failure. Dales (2014) recalls,

In the meetings afterwards a lot of what we were meeting about was the idea of this failure and what we could do with this failure or do we need to consider this project as a failure? Do we consider the measure of success that we did achieve? Can we use that to create some more currency? Or is this worth is it worth essentially trying to revive this thing? ...Our real measure of success in that context is that there were people outside, or sort of on the outskirts of that particular group that put the first iteration of it together who wouldn't touch talking politics with a ten foot pole and all of a sudden now it's okay to talk about it because it's kind of funny... so it's more of a conversation that wasn't existing before. It's a not taboo subject where it was once taboo.

Clark & Van Slyke argue that the success of such online phenomena may not actually be how they alter political discourse at all, but rather their ability to bring in new audiences, gain credibility, strive to influence, and show a demonstrated engagement with their community (Clark and Van Slyke, 2010, p. 55-56). The quotation from Dales above this represents this new audience, all these people "who wouldn't touch talking politics" who engaged in SHD's work. As

the next chapter will show, the very fact that SHD regrouped demonstrates their credibility and ongoing engagement in their work and community.

Ultimately, SHD concluded that their campaign had been a success:

The result of the attention that was given to that especially considering how many people we were able to add to our mailing list, to our Facebook community, all that kind of stuff, we realized like okay, we are not alone in dealing with this. This feeling of malaise or this feeling of not being communicated with effectively is totally something that is not isolated to say this part of Canada...It was a great success in the fact that the collective consciousness, what ever you want to call it, touched a nerve of some sort. (Dales, 2014)

The organizers of SHD were not alone, and they were able to fill the interim time between the 2011 federal election and the launch of ShitHarperDid 2.0. They even led a cross-country workshop series on university campuses in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Vancouver, and Victoria. The SHD organizers workshopped “creative activism, history and strategies [and] met a lot of people over the course of that tour in during the course of that tour who have stepped up and really volunteered in various areas” (Dales, 2014). This support and their interim work kept the social media community active.

SHD, even without defeating Harper, successfully demonstrated the ability to inform citizens about issues they cared about, and that others cared about enough to share. One might measure the success of their content, inspired by “What the fuck has Obama done so far,” by their own copycat, the “ShitHarperSaid” YouTube channel. ShitHarperSaid got just over 7,000 views but in the video description of their 12 videos posted between April 15-26, 2011, they encourage people to support ShitHarperDid.com:

To learn more shit Harper did and said, visit www.ShitHarperDid.com. We are not affiliated to ShitHarperDid but we're big fans and supporters. We join our voice to the ShitHarperDid movement and encourage you to do the same. Please go vote on May 2nd! (shitharpersaid, 2011)

With that, perhaps the measure of success is that SHD started a ‘movement.’ The realization that they were not alone was powerful. Even with the sense of urgency that came with a short

election, SHD revived this community in a post-election context. SHD decided this campaign was not a “single serving thing” (Dales, 2014). This ability to continue to work with a group of support based online is at the very crux of this research, and I discuss SHD’s new strategies they picked up along the way in the next chapter. This chapter outlined how online political advocacy happens, what ‘virality’ as defined by the media coverage consists of, and how the internet worked in 2011. Of note, in the coming chapter, is that the internet looks like something else in 2013. SHD has much more potential for action with a large online community of support. Though a small group can make headway through well-made content, relevant to their audience, with a better strategy, they can do that much and more.

Chapter Four: “Shit Harper Did Thinks You Matter” Becoming a Movement

On April Fools’ Day 2013, Shit Harper Did (SHD) relaunched their website on the organizing system, NationBuilder. The website, www.shd.ca, claims:

A lot of big movements have started as “just an internet thing”: Google, Twitter, the French Revolution (we assume). We have equipped the SHD community with an evolving set of innovative tools to turn online sharing into real world action. Our experienced Action Team is dedicated to working with you to develop creative and effective direct action in your community and across the country. (Why You Matter, n.d.)

This promise encapsulates the change in SHD from a focus on tactical media and social sharing to a new kind of online, political organization. The “evolving set of innovative tools” describes the strategic deployment of the leading online organizing tool, NationBuilder, to support an issue-based, crowdfunding model of campaigning. SHD’s move into a space of offline, “real world action,” speaks to their 2013 campaign to air a television commercial advocating against Canada’s Economic Action Plan (CEAP) on CBC’s *Hockey Night in Canada*. Finally, SHD’s commitments to both its their community and to help mobilize “your community” speak to SHD’s new role connecting with and listening to supporters. This new perspective, strategy, and dedicated “Action Team” demonstrate the new forms that online political advocacy groups, such as SHD, are taking.

This chapter explores two events as part of the evolution of SHD: the launch of its new, NationBuilder website that enabled it to set in motion, the second event their first campaign since the 2011 election. SHD’s goal for the anti-CEAP television spot was to tell a story about ‘bought’ versus ‘earned’ media and prove to the SHD community that together they were capable of voicing their opinion in the same space that the government was preaching to Canadians. SHD’s campaigns two years after the election, and today, shows that they embraced their community, listened to feedback, and engaged with members. SHD trusts their members to help with

campaigns, with helping to create content, and relies on members' donations to fund the work. To do this, SHD moved to an issue-based campaigning model. This model runs timely campaigns to raise funds by creating a sense of urgency around controversies already in the media (Karpf, 2012, p. 41). This style of campaigning is representative of a new kind of organization that exists online and is able to create campaigns offline.

This chapter demonstrates how SHD represents of a new wave of online campaigning that is more organized than the media tactics campaign in 2011. I defend this claim by focusing on the software that led to this campaign's success and by analyzing the spread of the anti-CEAP campaign. Part I begins with the launch of SHD's NationBuilder website, and describes how they came to find this solution and its layout. Part II outlines SHD's anti-CEAP television campaign. I explore the motivation behind the campaign, the broader political context in which it took place and the three aspects of the campaign: the IndieGoGo page and YouTube videos. Next, in Part III, the traffic tag timeline analysis highlights the networks that shared this campaign and shows that I found significantly fewer tags than in the 2011 SHD election campaign (see Chapter Three and Appendix One). I will also outline the amount of money SHD raised and the details behind the advertisement. The timeline reveals a proportionally higher amount of media stories. A content analysis of these stories in Part IV shows that SHD clearly communicates their criticisms about CEAP to the press. In Part V, I further highlight the major shifts that SHD has undergone in this new stage of organizing including: becoming a responsive community; the shift to run timely, specific and targeted campaigns; and moving some of their advocacy work offline.

Part I The New Website: Shit Harper Did 2.0

After realizing the potential SHD had to organize with the huge mailing list and social media following collected during the 2011 election, the organizers knew they had to find a tool that would allow them to use this data strategically. Like the original website, Devlin wanted Shit

Harper Did 2.0, to give users the same tailored experience with “fast, hit me again information” (Dales, 2014). The front end would include more topics, pages and categories than the original site and the back end would allow the staff to “drill into [the] metrics and see how things were performing” (Dales, 2014). Devlin wanted the website to be built with integrated software that would help SHD replicate the UpWorthy campaign model. This model uses native A/B testing to create the best possible content for their audience. For example, content shared on Facebook first goes through a test that compares two different versions of the content (using a different headline, link or image) on a smaller group of community members. The version with the most hits automatically is sent out to the rest of the community. Dales says that UpWorthy has “some sneaky code that no one ever got to look at” that would determine winning content. This kind of testing can also be run on mass email campaigns: changing the headline; placement of content, or sent-from address to see which performs best. This strategy of A/B testing is also used by organizations such as MoveOn.org (Karpf, 2012). This represents another example of a ‘module’ (Anderson, 1991) or ‘repertoire’ (Chadwick, 2007) migrating between organizations (see Chapter Three).

After playing around with some other software solutions, including ActionKit, SHD found they could afford NationBuilder. It is one complete system that brings together many features including a database, email, text messaging, and social media tools (What is NationBuilder, n.d.). NationBuilder markets four key features that work together: organizing supporter data and activity; financing (including donations, goal setting, and personal fundraising with follow up prompts and searches); communications tools (such as email and text blasting and phoning integrated with social media data); and a website platform (which allows for multiple user pages and online accessibility) (NationBuilder Features, n.d.). It helps “businesses, nonprofits, governments, and politicians... to organize their communities and build more

meaningful relationships with customers, supporters, and constituents (What is NationBuilder, n.d). At an affordable cost per month – between \$200-\$1,000 depending on the number of emailable members – SHD would be able to run UpWorthy-style campaigns without having to “to mess around with super web savvy people on your backend” (Pay as you Grow, n.d. and Dales, 2014.)

Toronto-based NationBuilder architects, cStreet Communications, helped SHD staff migrate their email list from 2011 from MailChimp onto NationBuilder, and taught SHD staff both how to do A/B testing on social media and email, and how to use NationBuilder’s fundraising tools. By bringing together their email, fundraising, and social media data into a central repository, or ‘nation’ SHD could then refine their messages to best target their community (Stuart, 2013). For example, NationBuilder’s tools can help SHD decide what kind of advertisement to put on TV by emailing members, creating a forum, or surveying members to find out which topic matters the most (Stuart, 2013). The software then allows SHD to raise money from their members to buy the airtime (Stuart, 2013). SHD can split their support list into groups based on members’ past interactions on social media, or based on donations so it can contact specific groups of people rather than blanket emailing all its supporters. This allows SHD to encourage supporters to become even more involved in the campaign. Stuart explains,

instead of asking all those people to give to the next ad buy you ask all those people to give monthly, and then you ask all the non-donors to give to the ad buy... you convert them to sustained supporters. (Stuart, 2013)

This toolset changed the way SHD runs campaigns, targets and interacts with community members, and can analyze their success.

The new design

The new site, ShitHarperDid 2.0, looks a lot different than the original site on Tumblr. The welcome page (Image 4.1) prominently features a member’s sign-up box and a pop-up (not-

pictured) that floats onto the page as visitors click through various links on the site, urging them to sign-up for more information. The original Harper sketch sits in the headline with a speech bubble that scrolls through SHD members' Tweets, Facebook likes/shares, or public donations. This scrolling feed is a NationBuilder feature that helps to highlight active community members and encourage others to do the same.

Image 4.1: Home page of www.shd.ca (June 21, 2014)



Scrolling further down the main page (Image 4.2), the “Shit Harper Did” style of informing visitors about the Prime Minister’s policies is retained. Currently, it features five images that, when clicked, reveal windows regarding different issues such as: Members of Parliaments’ controversial spending habits, cuts to Canada’s national childcare program, halted environmental impact assessments, and the robocalls scandal. For example, this window (Image 4.3), features sourced background information, including links to media coverage of the issue, and social sharing tools for Facebook, email and Twitter.

Image 4.2: Images representing “Shit Harper Did”

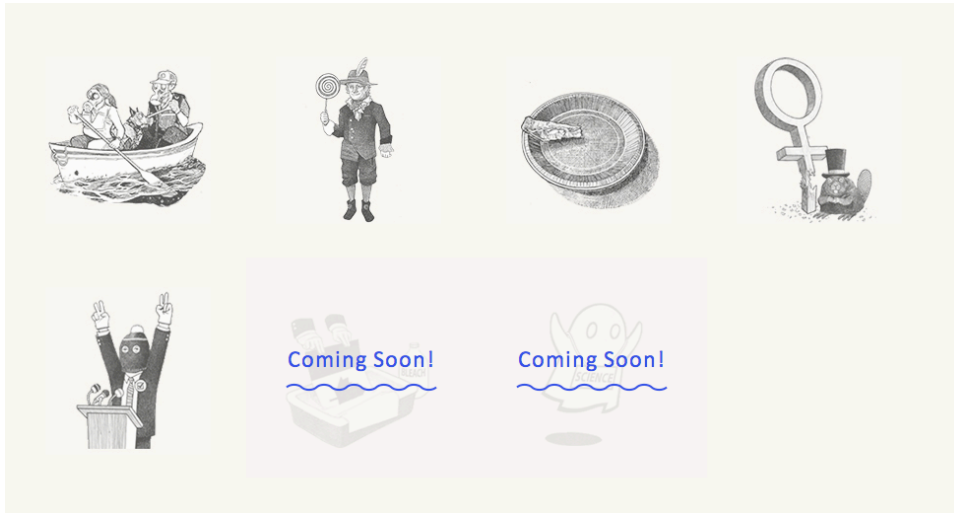


Image 4.3: “Stephen Harper is a good economist, in theory”



The site has been under constant construction since its April 2013 launch. SHD builds new pages for each new campaign. Permanent pages include: “Why You Matter” compelling visitors to join the community; a donation page; a page to “Submit a Fact” about the Harper government; a press information page; a volunteer sign-up form; a request form to bring SHD organizers to your community; and SHD’s privacy policy, contact information and details about contributions and refunds (www.shd.ca). One last page, “Our People” lists SHD’s “Action Team.” No longer just a group of friends disgruntled with the Conservative government, there are

now three staff members to organizing SHD campaigns. Each of these pages reveals SHD's broader scope of campaigns and their increasingly more professional approach to its work.

Part II Campaign Two: “Bought vs. Earned Media” and SHD’s Response to Canada’s Economic Action Plan

The same day that SHD launched their new website, their first course of action was the release of two YouTube videos that were satirical “Director’s Cut” versions of official CEAP advertisements. SHD released two more videos on April 3, 2013. Each video featured a patched-in a voice-over in top of the original government commercial. They critique both the ads and the program as a whole. The videos articulate, in a humorous way, much of the criticism CEAP had already received. Though SHD did not put these videos on television, the feedback from the community inspired them to run their first crowdfunded, issue-based campaign. This section will provide the context in which SHD ran this campaign and what the various components of the campaign.

SHD targeted the contentious CEAP advertising campaign. The CEAP campaign was present in the media both in news coverage and via advertisements put out by the federal government through a variety of media. CEAP was the Federal Government’s highly branded response to the 2008 global recession. In the plan’s 2012 Final Report, Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, claims it had created 610,000 net new jobs and completed 30,000 projects since July of 2009 (Flaherty, 2012). He asserts that the government’s prudent management of the program stimulated economic growth through multiple means such as: reducing taxes, helping unemployed Canadians, infrastructure projects (including improving education facilities, job creation, industry and community support and improving access to and strengthening the Canadian financial system) (Flaherty, 2012).

The plan did not receive the positive reception that the Conservative government hoped for (Beeby, 2013). CEAP went through its fair share of media scrutiny. In an article from the February 17, 2013, issue of *The Toronto Star*, Beeby reports,

The Finance Department alone has spent well over \$25 million in Economic Action Plan ads since 2009, in addition to tens of millions of EAP ad spending by other departments. The government reported \$52.3 million in total EAP ad spending in 2009-10.

Comparatively, Ottawa spent \$41.3 million in 2005-06 on government advertising. Since Harper became prime minister spending has “roughly doubled” every year (The Canadian Press, 2013). Moreover, in 2013 a cross-country survey found that CEAP ads sent the wrong message entirely. Respondents called the ads “material ‘propaganda’ and a ‘waste of money,’ while fewer people than ever are taking any action after viewing the ads” (Beeby, 2013). *Maclean’s* magazine called the plan “an all-purpose brand for feel-good government measures” (c. The Canadian Press, 2013). The government promoted tax credits predating the 2008 economic crash and a variety of First Nations announcements under CEAP even though they were not related to its strategy at all (c. The Canadian Press, 2013).

SHD agreed with these criticisms and wanted to further inform Canadians about the realities behind the controversial plan. They felt that the

Economic Action Plan ads were non-representative. They are prescriptive and they are misleading and they have been proven so and we wanted to put something on mainstream media in the same arena that challenges the content put forward by this set of propaganda which, if we are calling it what it is, is what it is. (Dales, 2014)

The “Director’s Cut” videos were picking up traction, as confirmed by Dales, who said SHD received substantial feedback and support for them, and as also confirmed by the number of YouTube views each video received (16,093, 9,711, 10,183, and 14,401 respectively).

Motivation: “bought vs. earned media”

SHD decided to release a television advertisement based on positive feedback from their community about the YouTube series (Dales, 2014). If SHD was going to use this as an

opportunity to put the videos on television, they would “really need the help of the community” (Dales, 2014). Rather than airing one of the four “Director’s Cut’s” videos, SHD set out to make an ad that featured two specific criticisms of CEAP: that despite programs initiated under CEAP, the number of people accessing Food Banks was rising, and so, too, was the average household debt. On April 24, 2011, SHD posted an IndieGoGo campaign in order to fund the campaign through crowdfunding.¹⁶ People who directly supported the SHD message would pay for the campaign, unlike the advertisements for CEAP. The funds SHD raised would buy airtime on *Hockey Night in Canada*, pay for administrative and production costs, and a percentage would be donated to the Canadian Food Bank.

The government broadcast CEAP ads on some of the most expensive air-time available on Canadian television, during *Hockey Night in Canada*, and in particular, during the play-offs (Dales, 2014). This ties into the Conservative government’s strategy to appeal directly to Canadian citizens, such as live-Tweeting speeches, rather than relying on the media to report their work (See Chapter One, Part I). According to Dales (2014), SHD needed to run the campaign in the same space that the real CEAP ads ran, to prove to themselves, their members, and Canadian taxpayers, that they were capable directly responding to the government. SHD wanted to tell the story, as Dales (2014) put it, of bought vs. earned media. He explains,

What’s this [campaign] going to do for us? Just say for example we are able to raise the money? We don’t know how but let’s say we can. We get this thing on TV. What’s it really going to do? We are only really going to be able afford to put this on TV one time. So it wasn’t necessarily about putting this thing on mainstream media. Getting it on mainstream media was the achievement but the story was about that piece of media was what we were after. It was the story of that piece of earned media vs. bought media. (Dales, 2014)

¹⁶ Even though NationBuilder has an integrated fundraising feature this first campaign was run on IndieGoGo. Speculatively, this might be because staff were still migrating data onto the platform or had not fully learned how to use the tools. Future campaigns to raise funds for similar projects were done on the website using a similar style as IndieGoGo.

SHD wanted to show Canadians what it means to earn support for a message on television. “The story was [about] a community of Canadians pitching in, to put an ad [on television] that challenges the hypocrisy of this administration and of this administrations approach to the economy” (Dales, 2014). Moreover, SHD wanted to highlight what they saw as the mainstream media’s complacency or lack of reporting on the controversial plan (Dales, 2014). Dales (2014) argues,

If we were able to get this community to get this ad on the most watched television event yearly, the Stanley Cup Finals, then that says there is this dissent, this challenging voice, this questioning voice, exists in Canada and it exists outside of our mainstream media. What does that say about our mainstream media? What does that say about the willingness of our mainstream media to be controlled in some ways? And what does that say about how cavalier the federal Conservatives are being with the way they treat a national broadcasting source?

SHD put a lot of weight on this campaign. More than just pointing out all the problems they had with CEAP, it also became a rare occasion for a political advocacy organization to show a different perspective on the issue. Putting this kind of advertisement on air is extremely rare. Adbusters had tried to put a similar style of campaign on Canadian television in 2009 and Global denied their request entirely, and the CBC ignored the desired airtimes (Adbusters Media, 2009). Adbusters took both media entities to court, where they won their appeal, clearing a path for SHD to do this kind of media work. Adbusters claimed that this case proves that it is the “right of Canadian citizens to have (as stipulated by the Canadian Broadcasting Act) ‘reasonable opportunity... to be exposed to the expression of differing views on matters of public concern’” (Adbusters, 2009). Similarly, in 2013, when Conservatives cut funding to the CBC, the organization FRIENDS of the CBC saw this as a further demonstration of Harper’s media control limiting the ability for the CBC to respond to the Prime Minister’s approach to the press. The CBC denied the FRIENDS’ request to air a commercial criticizing the funding cut (FRIENDS, 2013). After SHD’s successful fundraising effort and getting airtime on CBC, SHD provided a

differing view and pushed back against the Conservative government's CEAP well into the future (see Conclusion).

The campaign: “Help ShitHarperDid.ca kick the Harper Government Right in the TV”

The IndieGoGo campaign aimed to raise \$6,000 by May 17, 2013 from community members. SHD's actual goal was a hefty \$95,000 (see Appendix Five), though it may have been lowered because IndieGoGo charges a 9% fee for unsuccessful campaigns as opposed to 4% fee for successful campaigns (IndieGoGo Basics, n.d.). The fundraising ask (Appendix Five) included infographics, an embedded promotional video, and goal meter. Not pictured, at the bottom of the IndieGoGo ask, is a reminder of SHD's 2011 work, the tagline, also used on their new website. It reads:

During the 2011 election, we started out as a few artists. With your help we became an unprecedented national community of people speaking truth to power. Together we reached millions of people. (sara, 2013)

SHD bolsters the importance of their electoral work claiming, “as a result Elections Canada officially recommended that federal election rules be changed to account for the big impact that our little campaign had” (sara, 2013). The page also includes quotes from the media about their success in 2011, and their 2013 website launch. Each function as a way to legitimize the project showing SHD is capable of running a successful campaign.

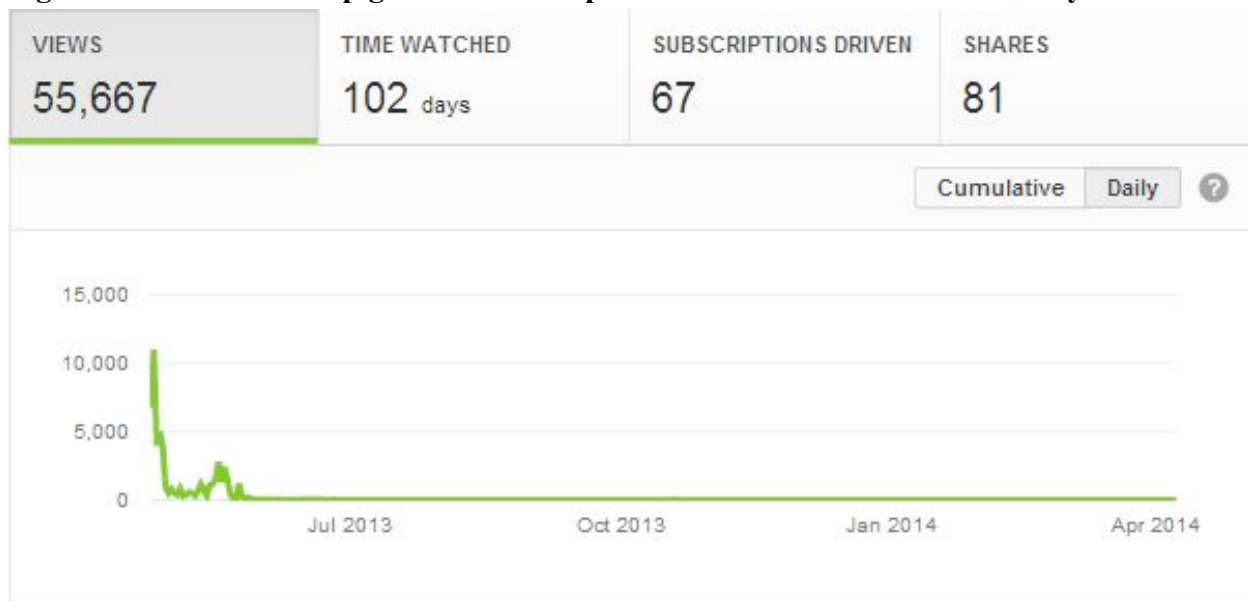
The second component of this campaign includes three promotional videos posted on YouTube. The videos made for the campaign are creative, funny pleas from SHD staff urging members to donate. They speak directly to community members rather than a broad audience of peers as they had done in the 2011 election. Table 4.1 outlines the popularity of the videos released by SHD.

Table 4.1: YouTube videos and popularity¹⁷

Title	Date	Views	Comments	Shares	Thumbs Up	Thumbs Down
You can help get this ShitHarperDid video on national TV!	24-Apr-13	55,667	127	81	259	64
SHD community raises \$27,000+ in one week to buy last relevant ad on TV	01-May-13	3,699	6	6	32	4
We have until May 17 th to share this video with as many people as possible.	14-May-13	38,916	108	320	302	108
ShitHarperDid Economic Action Plan TV Ad	24-May-13	39,219	66	93	181	14
ShitHarperDid Economic Action Plan TV Ad	24-May-13	3,144	6	26	50	0

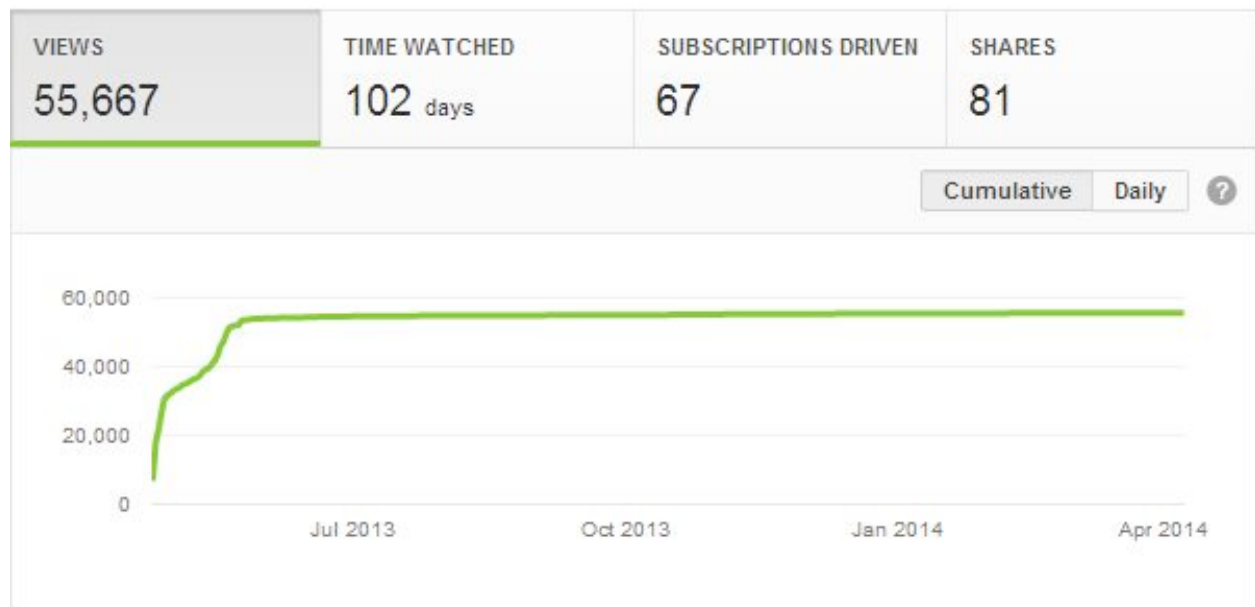
The videos from this campaign received nearly all of their views within the first day of being posted. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 show “You can help get this ShitHarperDid video on national TV!” video’s daily and cumulative views rates.

Figure 4.1: “You can help get this ShitHarperDid video on national TV!” Daily Views



¹⁷ Views, Comments, Thumbs Up and Thumbs Down are relevant as of April 9, 2014. Shares are relevant as of June 9, 2014.

Figure 4.2: “You can help get this ShitHarperDid video on national TV!” Cumulative Views



SHD embedded their first video in the IndieGoGo ask which 55,667 views. It features Brigitte DePape, pleading to community members to do something to challenge CEAP. She states that community members had asked that their work be put on the air and SHD had listened. DePape asks members to help raise \$95,000 to air a commercial during the NHL playoffs, which was a tangible goal if every member of the SHD community donated \$2. The video ends with the advertisement they had made.

The second video posted again speaks to the community members directly, thanking them by name, for supporting the campaign. The final video points to the urgency of raising funds before the IndieGoGo deadline. It also shows how SHD found ways to engage its supporters beyond donations. An important feature of this video is that SHD used images sent in by community members voluntarily posing next to CEAP billboards in their neighbourhoods, holding large red arrows representing local statistics of growing number of people requiring access to food banks in their region (Image 4.4).

Image 4.4: New Brunswick SHD supporters photo-bombing CEAP sign



Part III Social Media and SHD's Anti-CEAP Campaign: Finding New Ways to Gain Support

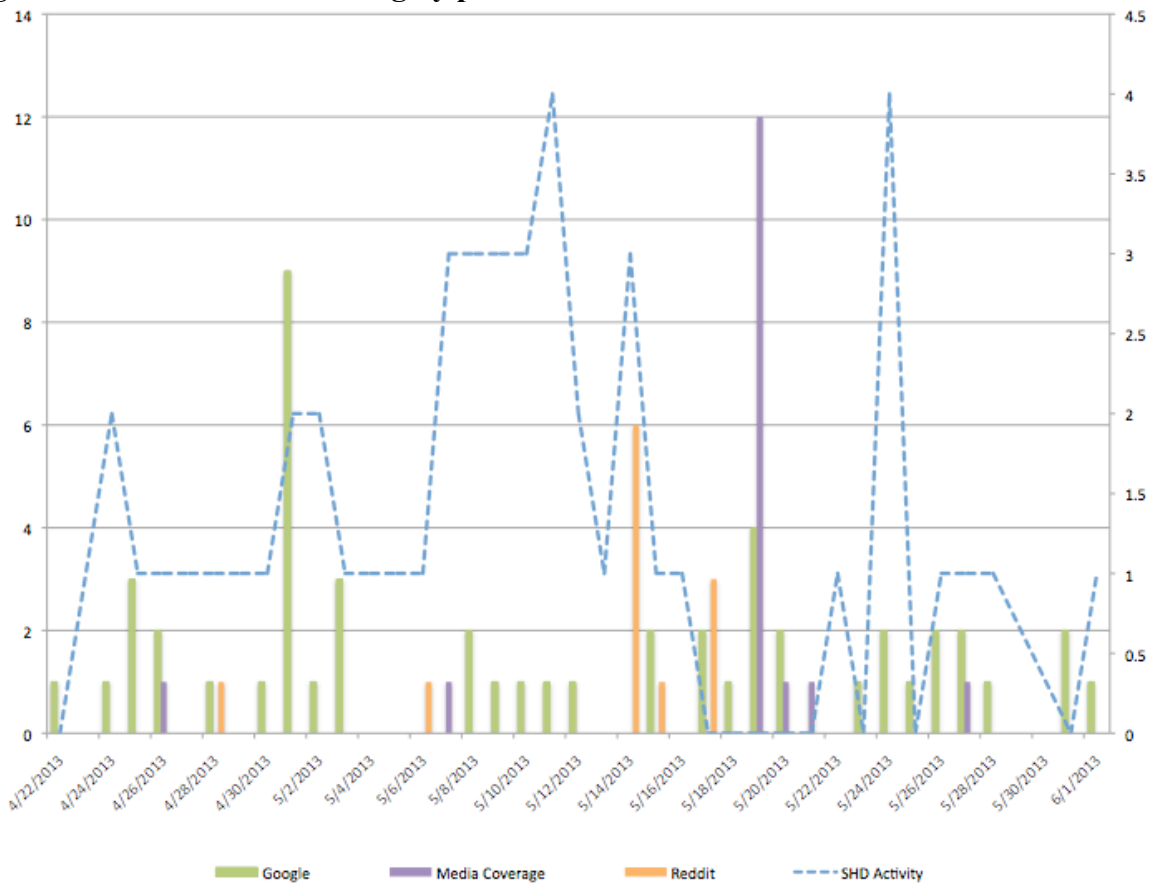
During this campaign, SHD used social media to facilitate aspects of the campaign, like the photo-bombing, but also relied on the various platforms to share the campaign. There was much more structure in this approach. The campaign received both support and criticism in various networks. I found fewer tags found between April 24, 2013, the date the SHD posted the IndieGoGo campaign, and June 1, 2013, marking the last day mainstream media coverage. There are, however, proportionally more tags found in mainstream media coverage. Table 4.2 shows how many results each tag had, and demonstrates that the majority of the content found was in reference to SHD and not their YouTube videos.

Table 4.2: Traffic tags in order of number of results

Number of results	Tag
18	Shd.ca
18	ShitHarperDid
16	“Shit Harper Did”
9	“ShitHarperDid”
9	Brigette DePape
4	Shit Harper Did
4	Sean Devlin
3	Sh*t Harper Did
2	“Canada’s Economic Action Plan” “Hockey Night in Canada”
2	@ShitHarperDid
1	anti-Harper
1	Shitharperdid.ca
1	#ShitHarperDid
1	TruthFool
0	YouTube URLs

In Figure 4.3, a visualization of Appendix Four, there is not as strong a correlation between SHD posts on social media (Facebook and YouTube) and reaction in various online communities and the mainstream media as there is in Appendix One during the 2011 federal election. Though social media posts by SHD did receive a lot of attention from their community (as shown further on) SHD also communicated directly to their mailing list. The success of this campaign was not linked to the campaign being spread through diverse networks and social sharing.

Figure 4.3: SHD content sharing by platform and time



As illustrated in Appendix Four blogs and forums had a slower reaction to this campaign. The data in Appendix Four shows that the first blog to even mention the campaign was posted two days after the launch of the IndieGoGo campaign. A second blog post was not posted until April 28, 2013. One major highlight occurred on April 30, 2013, when *The Tyee* featured the campaign prominently on their site. *The Tyee* has a large readership and by posting SHD’s campaign they further promoted the cause to a group of like-minded Canadians. Over the course of the month of May, ten more blog posts encouraged readers to support SHD’s campaign.

As opposed to the last campaign, where viewers could only watch and share the videos made by SHD, this time, SHD encouraged community members to participate by donating money or by making content for some of the YouTube videos. On May 7, 2013. SHD started

asking community members on Facebook to photo-bomb CEAP signs in their region and send in the pictures. These images visually represented the two political points SHD made in their TV spot. The images showed that across the country, SHD supporters saw the effects of the recession and evidence of growing financial disparity. Over the next few days, SHD made requests on Facebook asking supporters, in various cities, to help with the campaign. For example, one post reads

This Saturday SHD community members across the country will be photo-bombing Conservative Economic Action Plan ads! If you want your photo-bomb to be featured in next week's SHD video please RSVP to this Thursday's special conference call by clicking here: <http://ow.ly/kO2gq> [Link to "Call for ShitHarperDid Video Action" Conference call on Maestro Conference]. (Appendix Six)

I can only speculate that these images were used in the second YouTube video "We have until May 17th to share this video with as many people..." posted on May 14, 2013 (see Image 4.4 above). The above post also highlights the how SHD set up a conference call with those who would be involved to work closely with community members on the project. This clearly shows how SHD made a concerted effort to engage with their community members at large.

Post on Facebook remained a key way for SHD to communicate to their audience. Appendix Four reveals how popular SHD's Facebook posts were over the course of their anti-CEAP campaign. SHD continued to share content that was not necessarily about CEAP with their members. For example, one of the most popular posts on Facebook from May 8, 2013, was about broader controversies regarding federal government spending. Over the course of the two years between these campaigns, SHD kept communicating to their supporters on Facebook which has been growing in importance as a platform for online communication. SHD's page became known for bringing together news stories and activist responses to controversial issues that arose under Harper's leadership. Another popular post on Facebook included a link to the video, "We have

until May 17th to share this video with as many people as possible,” which was shared 2,094 times (Appendix Six). This demonstrates how engaged, despite the few tags and low view counts, community members were in the campaign.

Over the course of this campaign, supporters also posted on SHD’s Facebook wall. The majority of these linked to various news stories and comments about SHD’s anti-CEAP campaign or SHD’s work in general. Posts rarely received more than a couple comments, likes or shares. Table 4.5 shows how many posts people made on their Facebook profile page. The number of posts per day is a fraction of the posts during the 2011 Federal Campaign (see Table 3.6) yet, there was still interaction occurring within this space.

Table 4.5: Posts by others on Shit Harper Did’s Facebook page

Number of Posts on Facebook	Date
12	24-Apr-13
10	25-Apr-13
13	26-Apr-13
5	27-Apr-13
9	28-Apr-13
6	29-Apr-13
4	30-Apr-13
8	01-May-13
5	02-May-13
3	03-May-13
4	04-May-13
2	05-May-13
1	06-May-13
4	07-May-13
3	08-May-13
7	09-May-13
3	10-May-13

7	11-May-13
4	12-May-13
3	13-May-13
8	14-May-13
5	15-May-13
1	22-May-13
1	24-May-13
1	26-May-13
1	01-Jun-13

As Dales points out, SHD had thought that their new NationBuilder site might become the main platform for community members to interact with SHD staff and each other. They realized that,

Facebook worked so well for keeping people in contact and it was already working pretty seamlessly and we had this huge community. It was kind of folly for us to think that [supporters would say] “Yeah, I am going to sign up for another social network, especially one that doesn’t use the same feature set as Facebook.” (Dales, 2014)

Facebook remained the space in which SHD’s audience could be found, and acted as the space in which this audience could interact with SHD staff.

Appendix Four also reveals how the Reddit community responded to this campaign in a more nuanced way than during the 2011 federal election. In the past, Reddit was a place of support and a community that helped SHD immensely when the site crashed (Dales, 2014). Support for the campaign in 2013 was not nearly as fervent – for each positive post and UpVote there was nearly as much disapproval. There were multiple right-wing, conservative responses to SHD from one subReddit, metaCanada. The members had an adverse reaction to SHD’s 2013 website launched and to this campaign, more generally. One post from May 15, 2013 post, “How anti-Conservative lies perpetuate themselves,” reads,

Enough young “intelligent” people will read SHD.ca in the lead-up to the next election and will believe this bullshit. It simply doesn’t matter that it was based in nothing. There is just enough to spread the idea around and to keep it alive. (Lone Conservative, 2013)

The post received 25 UpVotes, and 14 DownVotes. On May 17, 2013 in the same subReddit, a user named trollunit posted sarcastically, “Our favourite Senate page is trying to get ShitHarperDid on national TV,” and the link to the first campaign video. The post received 15 UpVotes, and 5 DownVotes. SHD had become more controversial or perhaps popular enough to have enemies.

The positive posts on Reddit included six posts on May 14, 2013 that each promoted the campaign. Even though the posts were positive, the two that gained the most traction also received a lot of dissent. One of these posts, “ShitHarperDid.ca is trying to get a commercial on TV during an NHL playoff game. Here is their pitch to you” received 16 UpVotes *and* 16 DownVotes (Appendix Four). Another post shared SHD’s urgent call at the end of their campaign,

If they raise \$95,000 they’ll buy a spot during an NHL playoff game, sending their message to one million people from coast to coast. #shitharperdid 4 days left. @indiegogo. (Appendix Four)

It received 45 UpVotes, 36 DownVotes, just barely a positive response. Two more people posted positive comments on May 15, 2013 and May 17, 2013, neither of which are particularly popular (Appendix Four). SHD did not need the Reddit network to pick up their campaign – rather they needed to appeal to their supporters directly through their own established channels.

All this online activity did translate into dollars. The community responded, and by May 17, 2013, SHD exceeded their low target raising \$76,412 (Dales, 2014 and ‘Help Kick Harper,’ n.d.). This included 594 public donations of \$10, 68 donations of \$100, and 5 donations of \$500. A quick run of the numbers reveals that this only adds up to \$15,240, with a total of 2,305

donors. The remaining 1,638 donors raised \$61,172 through private donations (from groups such as Mennonites for a Better Canada, Killing Time Entertainment and Canucks for Change) all for unreleased amounts and donations that were at different amounts than the set giving rates (\$10, \$100, \$500, and \$1000). Rather than putting out a general appeal to community members, this kind of issue-based fundraising is modelled on the way MoveOn raises funds. It links fundraising asks to “whatever issue dominates the current media cycle” (Karpf, 2012, p. 41). In this case SHD created a sense of urgency by trying to air the ads during the NHL playoffs in the same context that the government was airing their advertisements.

The TV ad: “Brought to you by the taxpayers who paid for those *** conservative ads”**

The television advertisement also constituted the last two video’s SHD posted on YouTube during this campaign, both on YouTube May 24, 2013. Each was viewed 39,219 and 3,114 times respectively, and had the following description:

ShitHarperDid’s people-powered ad will begin airing during hockey games the weekend of May 24th. The first ad airs Friday May 24th during CBC’s Hockey Night in Canada in the first period of the Senators vs. Penguins game (starts 7:30PM PST). Through our IndieGoGo campaign, the ShitHarperDid community has raised over \$76,000, of which \$11,000 will go to Food Banks Canada. Thank you to everyone who made this possible! Follow us at www.shd.ca or www.facebook.com/shitharperdiddotcom for more info as the ads air (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umlsgkG9vAo>). (c. ShitHarperDid, 2013)

The ad takes place in a living room filled with nondescript Canadian sports fans that express exaggerated displeasure, in slow motion, when a CEAP advertisement comes on the television they are watching (Image 4.6). SHD juxtaposes CEAP claims with counter-claims that both the use of food books and average household debt are at an all time high (Image 4.7).

Image 4.6: SHD TV spot with non-descript sports fans



Image 4.7: Food bank use in Canada



Other than the rather humorous look and antics of the characters the tone of the television spot is quite serious. At the end of the thirty-second advertisement a disclaimer is displayed and read out loud (Image 4.8).

Image 4.8: SHD TV spot disclaimer



Dales recalls, that a volunteer crew made the advertisement in 48 hours. He explains that there was an unknown learning curve that comes with producing content for televisions. For example, to his memory, the ad aired between a Ford and a Wendy's commercial which really highlighted the low quality of their own video. Dales (2014) explains,

For example, our audio on the master was turned way down so people couldn't hear what the hell was going on during the commercial. So that stuff was difficult when you put it on next to something that had a million a half budget for a thirty second spot.

The SHD organizers were still amateurs in the field even with the new tool kit of strategies they had picked up during the two years preceding this campaign.

Part IV Media Analysis: “Anti-Harper comedians seek ‘meaningful’ change”¹⁸

As with the 2011 campaign, breaking into a ‘political information cycle’ for this campaign was equally advantageous. During the 2011 federal election, SHD broke into this cycle because of the instant popularity of their videos and site. In this campaign, SHD not only put their campaign on television, directly against the government ads, they also gained news

¹⁸ (Kane, 2013)

coverage that put them in direct conversations with controversial aspects of CEAP. This coverage often brought up SHD's own critiques of CEAP. Generally, as Appendix Seven shows, news articles mention the government's over-sized budget for CEAP marketing and cite SHD as actively criticizing the program on television. Half of the articles actually cite SHD's two main claim that prove the Conservative government is touting a program that has not worked – the growing use of Food Banks across the country and the rising average household debt. These two issues became part of the wider frame about CEAP (Appendix Seven, column "Issues Covered," "Household Debt," and "Food Banks"). SHD brought new issues into the news coverage of CEAP. Similar to the theme during the 2011 coverage, the articles highlight the unique, newness of this kind of crowdfunding in Canada. Brigitte DePape is featured prominently in the SHD campaign videos and is tagged in the media as a 'rogue page,' linking her back to her previous activism. Even though SHD is featured in a fewer number of articles than it was for its 2011 campaign, this coverage demonstrates that they have again successfully entered the 'political information cycle' as non-elites (see Chapter Three, Part V).

Three examples of the media coverage found in Appendix Seven demonstrate the nuances of the coverage this campaign received. The first article published May 7, 2013, in *The Globe and Mail*, titled,

Trudeau and anti-Conservative groups see fundraising boost: The federal Conservatives have, for many years, been the masters of party financing, but they're starting to get challengers. (Galloway)

Different from other articles in above table, this article focuses on political party fundraising, noting the ability for the federal Conservative's to fundraise with great ease. Galloway notes,

On a more micro-scale, non-partisan but decidedly anti-Harper groups are finding it's becoming easier to raise money to fund their own attacks on the Conservative government. One of them is ShitHarperDid.com... (2013)

This article is unlike any other article found in the first campaign because it brings up SHD as the one key example of third party fundraising happening outside of the party system. According to Galloway, SHD is the most interesting or notable case of political advocacy at that moment. The article also clearly outlines SHD's anti-CEAP stance.

The most widespread article in Canada, by Bruce Cheadle, published May 19, 2013 in various Post Media venues, "Harper Government buying ads to promote job program that doesn't yet exist" (see Appendix Seven). Cheadle (2013) reports that the federal government is "spending hundreds of thousands of dollars advertising a program that does not yet exist." The article directly frames SHD's work against CEAP. Though the tropes that played out in the last campaign, such as pointing out SHD's "naughty name" are once again used the article does show how SHD demonstrates that CEAP is not, at the expense of Canadian tax payers, living up to its stated goals. Unfortunately, Cheadle does not name SHD's two main criticisms regarding household debt and food bank use.

Finally, on May 17, 2013, *The Toronto Star* published a story called "Comedy website raises \$50,000 for anti-Stephen Harper ad" by Laura Kane. The tag line reads "A satirical website with an unprintable name related to Stephen Harper is turning humour into political activism with a new fundraising campaign" (Kane, 2013). The title alone plays on many of the tropes that occurred during the last campaign, noting the profanity and humour that are intrinsic to the identity of SHD. Even though in the body of the article Kane refers to SHD as pranksters she also quotes the two facts featured on their television ad. This article also focuses on the newness associated with crowdfunding campaigns in Canada.

Part V Discussion: "We Heard Your Feedback Loud and Clear"

SHD became an online organization that listens, in a meaningful way, to their community members, as well as one that trusts members to do work for them, and support the organization

financially. This case study shows that SHD is well on their way to mastering a style of issue-based campaigning that both creates a sense of urgency and offers a specific solution to an identifiable problem. The few traffic tags found during this campaign demonstrate that SHD had more effective, more direct ways to communicate with their supporters using NationBuilder. Finally, since 2011, SHD has found a way to become a more responsive organization, listening to their community members and moving some aspects of their advocacy work offline.

Becoming a community

In the first video released during this campaign, DePape explains that

We got fantastic feedback from community members like you. From Oak Bay, BC, to North Bay, Ontario. From Winnipeg to Montreal. We consistently heard one desire, 'I wish SHD's videos were on TV.' We heard your feedback loud and clear. (a. ShitHarperDid, 2013)

Dales (2014) explains that in the past, SHD had been nervous about taking community members' suggestions "to heart." SHD had a very strict about the look of their content and did not let supporters participate in the process of creating content (Dales, 2014). Yet, people constantly contacted the organizers explaining how they loved SHD's work and really wanted to participate more (Dales, 2014). SHD knew they had to foster this relationship better. Dales (2014) continues, "if you are going to act as a community that exists on social media, we should be willing to be social, there should be an interplay there. There should be a give and take." So, when the suggestions to put the videos on television started coming in Devlin explains that this was the opportunity to interact that they were looking for. The campaign was inspired by, used images from, and was ultimately paid for by the community. The Facebook call for photo-bombing and the conference call to organize the project shows how seriously SHD took the call to engage with supporters. Community members wanted to be trusted to help with a campaign that they too cared about. The lesson they had learned from the success of this campaign, in regards to their

community, was that, “people are willing to get off their computer and do something in the real world” (Dales, 2014).

This engagement with supporters is a key theme that carries through the three YouTube videos. SHD did not post the videos to build a following, as they did in 2011; rather, they spoke directly to their supporters through the videos. The videos took the opportunity to thank the community for their support, and encourage members to continue sharing the content. For example, in the second video, SHD comically scrolls through a list of community members, directly thanking them for their support, and praising them publicly. In the last video, a direct ask is made to SHD supporters – “share, share, urgent, share, share, share, share, right now, share, share, share, share, cher” the video to help SHD make the fundraising goal (b. ShitHarperDid, 2013). SHD makes it clear that in order for the campaign to work, community members need to share the content. The last video also directly thanks one member, “Sarah Williams and her daughter who sent us this picture from Nunavut,” which became part of the photo-bombing project. This level of engagement works to encourage members to participate so they too, can be featured in future content.

Issue-based campaigning

One of the most important findings in the traffic tag research is that I found fewer tags. There were also significantly fewer views of SHD’s YouTube videos (see Table 4.1 compared to Tables 3.2, 3.3, and 3.5). This decrease does not necessarily indicate that one campaign was more successful than the other but rather it represents the shift in strategy to issue-based campaigning.

SHD created structured opportunities for participating in this campaign. They took feedback and suggestions on the content and theme for the campaign from their community. This kind of organizing is much more structured than the 2011 campaign, which relied on media tactics and social sharing. NationBuilder gave SHD organizational capacities to create a sense of

urgency around the 2013 campaign. This style of issue-based campaigning, fostered by the internet, allows for quick campaigns that “fundraise and organize public pressure around... short-run controversies” (Karpf, 2012, p. 41). As mentioned earlier, this style is present in SHD’s fundraising strategy that appeals to donors by using campaigns that are already controversies present in the media (Karpf, 2012, p. 41). Running a campaign this way and using an A/B native testing technique, is a strategy borrowed from MoveOn.org, another organization that has moved away from a traditional model of political organizing. Karpf (2012) explains the difference:

While direct-mail fundraising uses relatively *generic* issue appeals to solicit small *general funding* donations, MoveOn uses *targeted* e-mails fundraising to make *timely* appeals related to a *specific* fundraising purpose. (p. 42)

SHD found a way to make generic dissent for CEAP into something specific, airing a commercial on CBC, and ultimately setting the deadline for the hockey playoffs. SHD could have carried their general anti-Harper sentiment over from the 2011 election however, to be financially viable and effective organizers came up with smaller campaigns, like this one, to keep SHD’s community involved, supportive, and interested.

Moving offline

With a new website built on NationBuilder’s organization software, SHD changed their focus from being just a group that promotes campaigns existing solely online. The shift to offline work and their growth as an online political advocacy organization represents a move between Karpf’s (2012) and Bimber et al.’s (2006 and 2012) organization categories. It is important to think about these categories in respect to SHD’s work because it helps to place them in conjunction with how similar organizations work. Using Karpf’s (2012) categorizations, SHD, back in 2011 SHD was an “Internet media issues generalist” (p. 78). Communication was top-down from the organizers disseminated down to potential supporters. The first of Karpf’s (2012) other two categories “Online communities of interest” (p. 78) foster member-to-member

communication which SHD has not done yet, but Dales (2014) hopes that in the future SHD might create a separate platform on NationBuilder that would be a space for activists to meet and to network. The second category “neo-federated organizations” use online organization tools to arrange offline engagement (Karpf, 2012, p. 78). SHD’s television campaign in 2013 shifted the group into this category of organization. Though not all of their campaigns today include offline components they use NationBuilder’s online organization tools, such email marketing and crowdfunding, to create offline actions and engagements.

This echoes back to Bimber et al. (2006 and 2012) who categorize online political organizations by their modes of interaction and modes of engagement. The mode of interaction for community members of SHD, especially during the 2011 federal election, is quite weak and impersonal. There is no focus on building or fostering relationship between supporters rather SHD priorities expressing their concerns which happened to match their community. This focus in 2013 gradually moved to be more interactive. They take suggestions from their members to make sure they have their support and are building stronger ties among members by highlighting their activity on the NationBuilder website. Bimber et al.’s (2006 and 2012) categorizes organizations by their mode of engagement or how much responsibility is given to each member. Here too SHD, in 2011, gave little to no responsibility to its members. In 2013, they have gradually have begun to give small responsibilities to members. This includes funding the organization, asking them to share content, participate in content making, and sharing responsibility for the success or failure of their campaigns.

SHD embraces the social aspect of online organizing and moved some of their actions offline in a concerted effort to spur change in Canadian politics. They also attempt to move away from a top-level-down model of communication with in the huge network they have created. This progression from one category to another demonstrates how internally, online political advocacy

organizations seek to increase political participation. As noted in the traffic tag analysis, posts by others on the SHD Facebook wall received very little interaction from others. This might be chalked up to the way that “posts by others” are displayed on Facebook pages, but it also points out that SHD maintained a way for members to communicate with one another.

Part VI Conclusion: Issue-Based Campaigning

What I have demonstrated by outlining the new NationBuilder site together with an analysis of the success of the 2013 crowdfunding campaign is that the strategies that SHD has learned since 2011 have drastically changed the way they can campaign online. SHD sent a powerful message by placing an ad on the same platform used by the government. SHD informed citizens about an alternative view of how CEAP is performing. They have also fostered a new relationship with their community members. The traffic tag timeline reveals how differently the two campaigns functioned in online networks. The content of this campaign did not go ‘viral;’ instead, SHD made direct pleas to community members, involving them in the creation of content, and thanking them publically. SHD mobilized this campaign strategically. When the media reported on the campaign, there was a notable difference in the style and content of their framing compared to 2011. Rather than positioning SHD within a group of similar groups using social media, the media features SHD in a variety of ways, including being one of the only groups that offered a public voice against CEAP. Not only did SHD enter the ‘political information cycle,’ the issues that SHD thought were most important entered the public conversation about CEAP. The rising use of food banks in Canada and the rising household debt were clearly communicated to the wider public through the media. SHD’s ability to target community members and run a new style of campaigns is because of NationBuilder’s game-changing, organizational software.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have shown how Shit Harper Did (SHD) represents ongoing change in the Canadian political advocacy environment. SHD first informed Canadians through a tactical use of funny online videos and then moved to a model of strategic, issue-based campaigning. By way of conclusion, I will first go back to the questions posed in my introduction. I will reflect on the inspiration behind SHD's tactics and strategies and how they used the internet to inform and organize. Next, I will look at the relationship between the two campaigns and how SHD influenced the broader Canadian context. Then, I will argue that despite not having affected the Harper government in any tangible way, SHD's ability to break into the 'political information cycle' is demonstrative of new ways Canadian political activists strive to make change. I will then reflect on some of the limitations of this research. Finally, I will highlight some of SHD's ongoing work to show they still have an engaged community that strives to 'wreak havoc' on the Conservative government (Shaw, 2011).

How do political activists use social media and the internet to organize and inform? What prompted SHD's tactics and strategies?

The tactics and strategies used by SHD came from the logics of social media platforms, other online advocacy campaigns and through their own attempt to represent public opinion. SHD found platforms that helped to spread their message and organize support. Facebook and NationBuilder were both used by SHD to inform and organize. They reached a large number of people with their criticisms and because of the first campaign's 'virality,' SHD garnered media attention. In the second campaign, they went beyond social media to inform. Their new strategies raised enough money to inform Canadians offline via television. Their commercial informed a broad audience about SHD's critiques of CEAP. The commercial also showed the SHD community that together they could pay to air mainstream television content that had earned

support, as opposed to the government's promotion of a plan that lacked public support. SHD succeeded, in part, by representing public opinion. In 2011, Harper's control of the press, outlined in the literature review, frustrated the media and the public, creating a sympathetic environment for a group of comedians to satirize Harper's policies and image. In 2013, SHD's satirical commercial reflected many Canadians' views of CEAP advertisements. Where SHD's 2011 campaign had simply resonated, they used their NationBuilder platform to listen to supporters and launch the anti-CEAP campaign based on their feedback.

SHD found inspiration in media advocacy from the United States such as, "What the fuck has Obama done so far?", the UpWorthy-style of issue-based campaigning, as well as use of the NationBuilder platform. The transferring of some of these strategies from the United States to Canada can be mapped in very tangible ways. Devlin, for example, learned about UpWorthy strategy at a conference whose organizers also introduced him to NationBuilder (Dales, 2014). I have shown a direct flow of tactics from past political campaigns to SHD.

How do the previous tactics of a small group of comedians compliment or compete with SHD's current long-term strategies for political organizing and advocacy? How do these new strategies, such as the use of social media, been influenced by, or influence, the changing Canadian political and media environment?

SHD's former tactics compliment their long-term organizing strategies. Their claim to fame is their satirical approach and their strategies for bringing in the community they have today. Satire runs through all of their campaigns. SHD also uses the media coverage of their 2011 campaign to promote newer campaigns as a way to legitimize their work. Through satire SHD invited a group of Canadians into the political world, and they turned out not to be as apathetic as the media portrayed. Proof of this comes from the success of the 2013 anti-CEAP campaign. Satirical content and the ensuing success of their election campaign are two ways SHD's first campaign compliments their long-term strategies. Their early tactics built an audience that would

become their community. Though at the end of the 2011 campaign SHD was overcome by the majority Conservative government and recognized that even though they did not change the outcome of the election, they built a huge network of supporters. These community members laid the foundation for the successful relaunch of SHD 2.0 and their subsequent campaigns. Supporters wanted to help SHD in more ways than just participating on social media. The mailing list and Facebook supporters from the 2011 campaign clearly helped SHD move forward as an organization.

SHD's use of social media and online campaigns has influenced the political environment in Canada. SHD is ahead of the game in comparison to how Canadian politicians approach social media, and it is able to catalyze much more successful campaigns. During the 2011 election political parties were on Twitter and used Facebook, however they did not really embrace the platforms' full capabilities (Francoli et al., 2011). Today, political parties move to amp up their technology use, run better databases, and find new ways to target supporters. However, especially in 2011, political advocacy groups were better at mobilizing people online (Francoli et al., 2011). In 2013, and going forward, online political organizations such as LeadNow and OpenMedia are on the rise in Canada. These groups, and SHD, have better strategies to target and organize in comparison to political parties that use older, proprietary systems. SHD's ongoing success shows that online organizing has become a part of Canadian politics.

SHD has also been influenced by the changing media environment in Canada. As more and more news content moves online SHD uses this to their advantage. Facebook has become a platform to find and read the news and SHD's Facebook page has become a place to share news about and campaigns against the Harper government. This keeps up momentum between campaigns, reminding the community what they, together, are working towards. SHD has also become better at clearly outlining what their criticisms are, which is another way they seek to

influence political discourse in the media. In the 2013 campaign, SHD chose two specific critiques of CEAP and mentioned them in every aspect of the campaign. The media ultimately brought both issues up in their coverage of the campaign.

Has SHD's work in exposing the political practices of Stephen Harper influenced the media coverage of the Conservative government or resulted in political change? Has sharing information become a catalyst for political action?

Using the research gathered for this thesis I am unable to conclude whether the overall media coverage of the Conservative government between 2011 and 2013 has changed or measure broad political change in Canada. Though this may be unanswerable now, it may not be the case following the 2015 federal election or with further research. Perhaps the work of SHD and other progressive political advocacy groups in Canada will lead to measurable change in both electoral politics and media coverage. This question encourages future work and points to the importance of groups such as SHD to the Canadian political environment. Whether or not SHD changed the narrative of Stephen Harper and his party, they brought together a community of like-minded individuals. Cliché as it may be, many are more powerful than one. We will have to wait to see if the information publicized by SHD will result in tangible, measurable outcomes in the coming election.

That said, between 2011 and 2013 SHD did receive media attention for both campaigns, the latter of which outlined their criticisms of the government more clearly. Harper is still in power and the issues that sparked SHD into being have not been solved. CEAP is still present in multiple government-funded media campaigns and programs. Even with widespread support, and the ability to raise funds quickly, it is unlikely that SHD is on the Prime Minister's radar. That being said, it is important that SHD was able to run a campaign at all in 2013, and that it still exists today, because this indicates they are speaking to and for a large group of Canadians. They raised enough money to openly criticize the government on television, more than once. Though

they may not be a household name across the country, for many young Canadians they are a much needed critical voice against Conservative policies.

This ability to continue to run campaigns happens because of the SHD community. Dales knew that if SHD was going to turn their social media support into a thriving organization they would need to be a *real* community and not just say they were (Dales, 2014). They embraced their members' calls to help and found ways to integrate members into their work. In their 2013 videos, SHD spoke to community members directly. This in a sense is one way in which sharing information has led to on-the-ground political action. SHD also moved their content offline onto television and organized workshops to continue to build their network of supporters. Dales (2014) explains that as they dream of "developing a non-violent direct action network across the country... that most likely is going to leverage NationBuilder's social aspects in a much bigger and much more comprehensive way." As it stands now, they are using the "website agnostic of a toolset and it's going to be way more of a place to organize" (Stuart, 2014). Each campaign SHD runs and their approach to social media is about informing Canadians and reminding them that there are others who have the same political beliefs. SHD has successfully taken this approach and moved their work offline, creating campaigns that are building political action against the Conservative government.

Limitations

There are two limitations that I encountered in this research. The first is the limitation of the research methodology and the second is the limitation of using the case study to make claims about the broader political environment in Canada. In terms of the methodology, the data I have collected is limited by the platforms. I chose not to collect tags from Twitter because the sheer number of Tweets was too much to scrape on my own and I was not able to access SHD's Twitter archive. Manually recording these posts would have been next to impossible. Further,

making conclusions from the YouTube video view count is difficult because there is no way to account for bots, people watching the video more than once, or people viewing the video who do not support SHD. The traffic tag analysis is limited by Google's algorithms and Facebook's ever-changing timeline archive. Having access to only one lead organizer behind SHD, for one hour interview, also limited the amount of insider knowledge I could get. However, without it, I would have never been able to make any claims regarding the data collected. Finally, during the 2013 campaign, I had not signed up for the SHD newsletter and was unable to reach staff to forward archives of that material. Such information would have further strengthened the claims made in Chapter Four.

Using the SHD case study to make broad claims about online political advocacy organizations in Canada comes with some apprehension. This is not a comparative study that accounts for other organizations gaining popularity in Canada today, such as LeadNow or OpenMedia. However, case-studies about these online movements in Canada are few and far between. As I have demonstrated in the literature review, in the United States online organization is growing in importance and Canadian organizations and political parties are learning from this. This case study seeks to explain one way in which these tactics and strategies are happening in a Canadian context.

Shit Harper Did today

After the anti-CEAP advertisement was aired, SHD continued to run campaigns, some of which continued to target CEAP. Their first campaign following the anti-CEAP advertisement was submitting a job application for the federal government's \$113,000,000 advertising contract to create the next round of CEAP advertisements in 2013 (Tell Harper, n.d.).¹⁹ SHD then raised

¹⁹ SHD sent in a completed application, including an "uncommonly smooth stone" to help the reader remain calm, and re-wrote the entire application process to turn a 52-page form into three questions: "Do you want to make these ads?"; "Are you pure of heart?"; "Will you waste tax payer's money?" The recommended budget for the project

\$18,417 to buy local air time during the 2013 Conservative Convention in Calgary, Alberta to air another, advertisement criticizing unnecessary Conservative MP spending (Help ShitHarperDid.com, n.d.). For that campaign, they used their own NationBuilder fundraising platform. The website SHD also urges supporters to take direct, non-violent action against Harper's environmental policies (We ruined Harper's pipeline, n.d.) after two SHD organizers, dressed as waiters, found their way on stage during Harper's 2014 address at the Vancouver Board of Trade and held up signs reading "Climate Justice Now" (Mas, 2014). Most recently, in the spring of 2014, SHD has released four more satirical CEAP commercials that call out specific ways the program has not worked (The Conservative Economic, n.d.). They even managed to air one national advertisement during a World Cup playoff game on CBC in July 2014. This campaign was promoted on the domain, www.economicactionplan.ca, which was conveniently available, and used the same NationBuilder platform as their main website. Presumably, any data collected on the joke website would be filtered into their own data set. The SHD community continues to support, both financially and through various actions as needed, all the above campaigns and the staff.

SHD continues to develop and improve its campaign strategy. Dales dreams about SHD forming a network of activists across the country. SHD also wonders if they might better use the data analytics in NationBuilder. By moving onto NationBuilder SHD is able to track supporters' engagement with their content which has been invaluable. Dales explains that with NationBuilder SHD organizers are

able to drill down and really identify the potential real-world, tight connections, between people and... see [connections] between people and the organization. We can see those at the start of their life-cycle so that's really cool (Dales, 2014).

allocated the majority of the funds to reinstating funding to programmes that had been cut by the Conservative government such as to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Elections Canada and the Canadian Broadcasting Company (Tell Harper, n.d.).

Their ability to use this data will allow SHD to target their supporters in different ways in each subsequent campaign. SHD will be able to encourage supporters to move from donating one time, to perhaps donating on a regular basis. As SHD learns along the way, they find that “people are willing to get off their computer and do something in the real world” (Dales, 2014). Knowing that people are willing to get out there, SHD can use NationBuilder’s toolset to help encourage them.

Final remarks

SHD makes two major claims on their website today. The first is that “during the 2011 federal election we started out as a few artists. With your help we became an unprecedented national community of people speaking truth to power.” (Why you matter, n.d.). The second, the new website’s tagline, is, “Know it. All.” These claims represent the SHD case study perfectly. Starting as a group of comedians the organizers were surprised to find that a huge community of Canadians agreed with their concerns about Stephen Harper. Together, SHD and its supporters could make change or, at the very least, make the news. The website’s tagline, “Know it. All,” reminds visitors it is not just the media who should hold the government responsible for their actions. Citizens, like those who visit the SHD website, have a responsibility to inform themselves. As SHD moves forward today, they have found a new strategy to organize their community to both inform and to speak truth to power. They still work towards their long term goals which, according to Devlin, are that they

need people to plug into others in their community and start to organize... In the short term, the ultimate goal is to get Harper out of government. But the community we build will hopefully help usher in a new government... we hope [that community] will be prepared to get that government to account and push for the systemic changes we need to get through... (Bitonti, 2013)

Even if Harper is no longer Prime Minister after 2015, SHD’s work will continue.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Traffic tag timeline of SHD's 2011 federal election campaign

See attachment.

Appendix Two: SHD posts on their Facebook wall with total likes and comments

Post content	Date	Likes/ Comments
"You guys knocked out the site. We're getting so much traffic! We'll be up and running ASAP"	13-Apr-11	194 Likes 32 Comments
"Sorry, everyone. We just found out we've had ONE MILLION HITS since 8am. We'll be up and running again soon."	13-Apr-11	160 Likes 10 Comments
"It's coming back up! be patient!"	13-Apr-11	78 Likes 11 Comments
"Those scruffy hipsters"	13-Apr-11	302 Likes 34 Comments
"We have 5 minutes to hit 10,000 or @kevinward has pledged to vote conservative! Help!	13-Apr-11	138 Likes 26 Comments
10,000 - Thank you! More than 2 dozen young Canadians have volunteered their time to prepping this for the past 2 weeks. Thank you for embracing it so quickly! We have lots more in the works -- stay tuned and spread the word. PS. the word is "VOTE"	13-Apr-11	325 Likes 26 Comments
"Thanks for all the nice emails! Someone just warned us that: "s.350 (1) of the Elections Canada act states - A third party shall not incur election advertising expenses of a total amount of more than \$150,000 during an election period." ---- We've spent less than \$200 so far, rented some lights for our video shoot and paid for some webspace. Appreciate the concern though!"	13-Apr-11	479 Likes 51 Comments
"Anti-Harper social media attack goes viral" - Vancouver Sun	14-Apr-11	302 Likes 26 Share
"Last night we asked you if we could hit 10,000 by this morning... about to hit 20,000 - Thank you! Please "Suggest To Friends" Will have some fun stuff for you to play with later today "	14-Apr-11	318 Likes 37 Comments
"You are all incredibly inspiring. Thanks for the support."	14-Apr-11	591 Likes 58 Comments
"Just finished an all night re-design of shitharperdid.com with Justin Guptell!! new site is up"	15-Apr-11	179 Likes 41 Comments
"We passed 3.5 million hits in the first 36 hours! The national media is embracing our message, with some reporting that we've "changed the game"...and it's all because of YOU. We put this thing together, but it is your overwhelming support that gives it true strength. New videos on the way..."	15-Apr-11	836 Likes 95 Comments
"The majority of human body is water, the majority of Stephen Harper's body is cruel."	15-Apr-11	596 Likes 72 Comments
"About to crack 30K! YouTube App just added - click the youtube button to the left under the drawing of Steve. More vids coming.	15-Apr-11	146 Likes 13 Comments
"We really appreciate that many of you are telling us that it isn't just the "youth" that we're speaking to. Keep it coming. These issues transcend age"	15-Apr-11	475 Likes 94 Comments
""Vulgar, viral, informative and hilarious...may just change the game." - AdBusters --- If we can get AdBusters AND CanWest media on side... must be doing something right!" Link	15-Apr-11	403 Likes 25 Comments
"Sign it! This is some real dictatorship style ShitHarperDid.com" Link	15-Apr-11	278 Likes 48 Comments
"Stephen Harper is in the Vancouver area tomorrow - Burnaby a key swing riding. Maybe you'd like to join these folks and say hello to our Prime Minister?"	15-Apr-11	412 Likes 64 Comments

"NEW VIDEO! Not all that serious. But we will be releasing 1 a day this week! Others with a more serious focus. No matter where you are in Canada please join us for ShitHarperDid.com PRESENTS Vote Responsively, Dance Recklessly"	18-Apr-11	310 Likes 56 Comments
"We swear when we talk about Stephen Harper, because its an honest expression of how we feel. The thing which is truly offensive is his record as PM. We fully endorse this video produced by a young Canadian"	19-Apr-11	239 Likes 26 Comments
"Actual Patriotism has to do with loving a place enough to try and improve it" - Win Butler (Arcade Fire) Link	19-Apr-11	503 Likes 15 Comments
"OUR NEW VIDEO! Let us not forget WHY this election was called!"	19-Apr-11	727 Likes 53 Comments
"OUR NEW VIDEO! This one's for the ladies... well not strictly speaking (but we just wanted to say that, makes us feel like cool DJ or something)."	20-Apr-11	833 Likes 54 Comments
"Turns out he lied during the debate - who'd a thunk it?" Link	21-Apr-11	60 Likes 382 Comments
"Need help with some videos! Does anyone live in the follow ridings? Kitchener-Waterloo, Kitchener-Center, Edmonton-Strathcona, Vancouver South, Saanich Gulf Islands, Mississauga-Erindale, Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggar, Brampton-West, Brampton-Springdale, Saint John NB -- If so please email us at shitharpervideo@gmail.com [Please include your riding in the subject line]"	22-Apr-11	38 Likes 37 Comments
"This is TOMORROW. Anyone else have unwelcoming parties planned? "	23-Apr-11	202 Likes 47 Comments
"NEW VIDEO! Advanced polls today & Monday! MORE INFO HERE http://www.elections.ca/scripts/vis/finde "	23-Apr-11	212 Likes 22 Comments
"Hi Folks! If you live in Vancouver and are interested in being an extra in a video we are producing for broadcast on TV - please email extrasforharper@gmail.com SHOOT is TOMORROW (Monday) 8pm-11pm"	24-Apr-11	72 Likes 22 Comments
"Honoured to have start of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Opening Ceremonies, Slam Poetry Champion Shan Koyczan - ask us to share this with you." link	26-Apr-11	506 Likes 87 Comments
"Early voting was up 35% from the last election ++ Friday & Monday were the highest turnouts for early voting days EVER! Did you vote early? Or are you voting on Monday?"	28-Apr-11	219 Likes 91 Comments
"Harper Victory?" - Says who? Link	28-Apr-11	71 Likes 271 Comments
"<URGENT> We are getting reports out of Guelph (swing riding) that Republican-Style ILLEGAL vote suppression tactics are being used. People are getting called and told their polling station has changed. If you receive one of these calls KEEP THE # & ASK WHO THEY ARE! Pls SPREAD THE WORD - Don't let them trick you out of voting!"	02-May-11	453 Likes 107 Comments
"Welcome to 4 years of a FALSE MAJORITY. Our archaic electoral system somehow just awarded 40% of voters 54% of the seats in Parliament, while awarding 60% of voters 46% of Parliament. We update our computer software almost daily, yet the system that allows us to choose our government hasn't been updated in more than a century."	03-May-11	1332 Likes 165 Comments
"If our electoral system were a professional "Guy who slices up pizza and hands it out at the birthday party" he would be out of a job and this birthday party would be full of screaming children. So at the risk of being labeled a screaming child, let me say this: In Canada we have some form of democracy, but it is not a modern one and certainly, it is not a fair one."	04-May-11	352 Likes 38 Comments
"We are the majority! Great new campaign from Leadnow.ca - À l'Action"	04-May-11	380 Likes 52 Comments

Appendix Three: Content analysis of SHD media coverage during 2011 federal election

Neutrality*	Issues covered	Topics	Headline	Paper	Date	Author
N	no	viral/crashed, social media, youth vote, humour, profanity anti-Harper, GOTV, other sites/events	Scatological attack on Stephen Harper's record goes viral; Aimed at engaging youth voters, videos featuring scruffy hipsters talking trash about Tory Leader tear up Twitter and Facebook	Globe and Mail	13-Apr-11	Simon Houpt
N	2 issues as description	viral/crashed, youth vote, humour, profanity anti-Harper, other sites/events	Viral voting videos: youth try to combat dismal turnout record among peers	The Canadian Press	14-Apr-11	Allison Jones
N	no	viral/crashed, youth vote, humour, anti-Harper, other sites/events	Tories, Grits and Greens on the defensive	Postmedia News	14-Apr-11	Althia Raj
N	no	viral/crashed, social media, youth vote, humour, voter turnout	Website shitharperdid.com uses humour to fight voter apathy	The Province	04/14/2011 and 04/15/2011	Jennifer Saltman
N	no	viral/crashed, social media, youth vote, humour, profanity, anti-Harper, other sites/events	Harper haters take message online	Regina Leader Post	15-Apr-11	Robert Hiltz
N	no	viral/crashed, social media, youth vote, humour, profanity, ELECTIONS ACT	Vancouver-based anti-Harper website sh*tharperdid.ca attracts two million hits	Postmedia News/ Vancouver Sun	15-Apr-11	Gillian Shaw
N	no	viral/crashed, social media, youth vote, humour, anti-Harper, voter turnout, other sites/events	Heavy traffic crashes anti-Harper website	Victoria Times Colonist	15-Apr-11	VTC
N	no	viral/crashed, social media, youth vote, anti-Harper	@P.A. politicians, where the # are you?	Prince Albert Daily Herald/ Prince Albert Rural Roots.	04/16/2011 and 04/24/2011	Hannah Zitner
P	2 issues vaguely	social media, youth vote,	Popular website seen as engine to get out youth vote	The Vancouver Sun	16-Apr-11	John Sbragia
NG	no	social media, humour, GOTV, other sites/events	Campaign fatigue meets fun, frivolity with online election games.	Postmedia News	19-Apr-11	Misty Harris

NG	no	anti-Harper, GOTV, other sites/events	Do Canadians need to be sexually cajoled into voting? A website has pitted 64 candidates against each other to let the people determine who is 'Canada's Sexiest Election Candidate	The Globe and Mail	26-Apr-11	Zosia Bielski
P	brief reference to 'content'		Tories show themselves as Criminal Party	Summerland Review and Penticton Western News	26-Apr-11	Frank Martins, letter to the editor
P	no	Viral/Crashed, social media, youth vote, humour, profanity, other sites/events	Stirring the pot...	Omineca Express and Caledonia Courier (Fort St. James)	27-Apr-11	Ruth Lloyd
N	no	social media,	Voters take over Canada's Twitter election	itbusiness.ca	27-Apr-11	Nestor E. Arellano
P	no	humour, profanity, other sites/events	Margaret Atwood at the editorial board	The Globe and Mail	29-Apr-11	Globe and Mail
N	no	viral/crashed, social media, youth vote, humour, profanity, anti-Harper, other sites/events	The Party	Power Play with Don Martin	29-Apr-11	Don Martin
N	no	viral/crashed, social media, youth vote, anti-Harper, other sites/events	Youth-led Internet campaigns step up before Canadian poll	Agence France Presse/ ARP Journal Internet	01-May-11	Judi Rever
N	no	social media, humour, GOTV	Social media's election impact not much to tweet about	West Ender	04-May-11	Jessica Barrett

*N (Neutral), NG (Negative), P (Positive).

Appendix Four: Traffic tag timeline of SHD's Anti-CEAP campaign

See attachment.

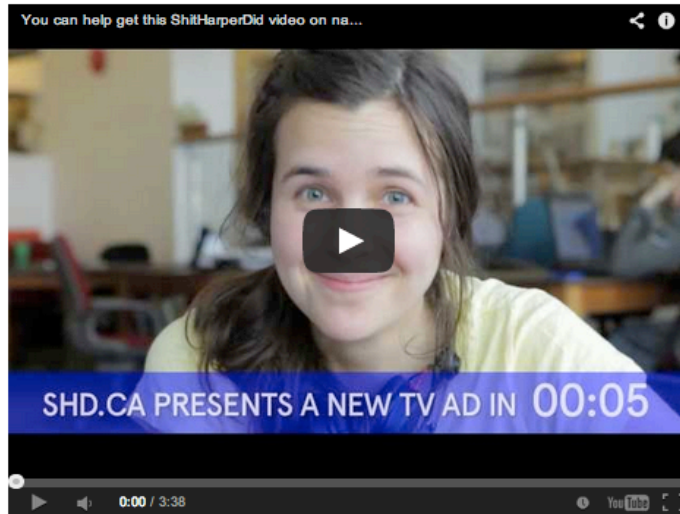
Appendix Five: Help ShitHarperDid Kick the Harper Government Right in TV

Help ShitHarperDid.ca kick the Harper Government Right in the TV

For the cost of a \$100 cup of coffee, help put this ad on national TV & expose 1 million people to the true state of our economy + we'll find you cheaper coffee

Vancouver, Canada Politics

Story Updates 1 Comments 121 Funders 2,305 Gallery 4



\$76,412 CAD
RAISED OF \$6,000 GOAL

1,274% 0 time left

This campaign started on Apr 24 and closed on May 17, 2013 (11:59pm PT).

Flexible Funding

CAMPAIGN CLOSED
This campaign ended on May 17, 2013

SELECT A PERK

6.6k 705 85
Share Tweet +1 Email Embed Link Follow

\$10 CAD

A Virtual Thank You!

If you can donate \$10 towards putting us on the air, we will email you our gratitude and a virtual high-five.

594 claimed

\$100 CAD

Reach 5,000 People

Donate \$100 and reach 5,000 people through through an overnight ad aired on Canadian television.

68 claimed

\$500 CAD

Reach 25,000 People

Donate \$500 towards the ad and reach 25,000 people on the airwaves.

5 claimed

\$1,000 CAD

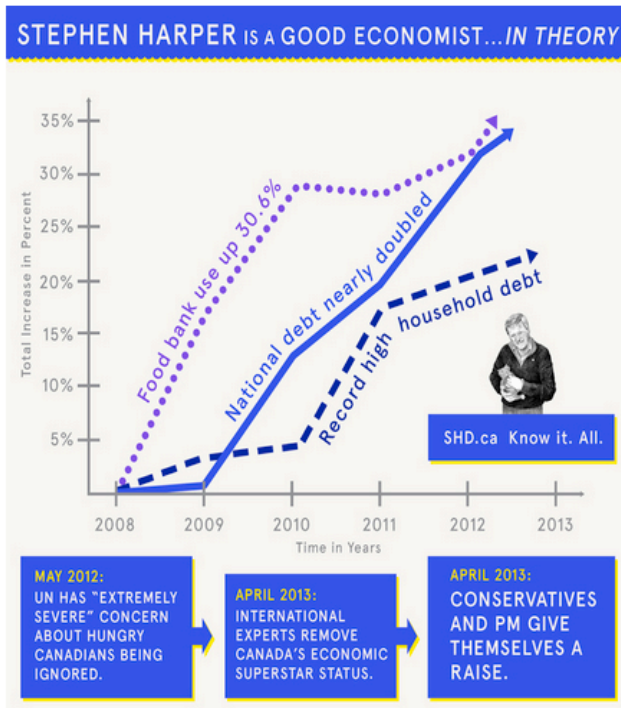
Thanks to everyone who donated to get this people-powered ad on national TV! If you would like to DONATE to keep SHD.ca going strong **CLICK HERE!**

IF YOU WATCHED THE OSCARS, THE SUPER BOWL OR A HOCKEY GAME RECENTLY, YOU'VE PROBABLY BEEN ANNOYED BY ONE OF THE CONSERVATIVES' ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN ADS. THEY CLAIM THE ECONOMY IS "WORKING FOR YOU."



Sadly though, the Canadian economy is not working for most of us—especially young people.¹ And even if you aren't young, chances are you're not a multinational oil corporation, so Harper's economic policies probably aren't working for you either.

Share this Infographic on Facebook:



BUT ADS THAT FEATURE WORKING FAMILIES DROWNING IN DEBT AND STRUGGLING TO PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE AREN'T AS COOL AS PRETENDING ALL OF US HAVE JOBS ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF ORANGE ROBOT TECHNOLOGY.



The Harper Conservatives have spent **\$21 million** on these ads in the last year and they are as **annoying and uninformative** as ever.^{2,3} Thankfully they are going off the air for a while on April 30th. That means we have a chance to strike back with an ad of our own! One that's more entertaining and informative. Instead of a trojan horse packed with boring soldiers who attack you with false optimism, it's a trojan horse packed full of fun soldiers who slow dance with you while whispering sweet truths in your ear!

- If we raise **\$500**, we can buy five ad slots on late night television across Canada, reaching **25,000 viewers**.
- If we raise **\$6,000** we'll air our ad on a primetime news hour **watched by 150,000 Canadians**.
- If we raise **\$95,000** we'll buy a spot during an NHL playoff game, sending our message to **one million people** from coast to coast.

Reach 50,000 + "Robocall"

Fund \$1,000 worth of advertising on TV and reach 50,000 people on the airwaves. Plus, you will receive a personalized "Robocall" from the ShitHarperDid Comedy Team!

Estimated delivery: **May 2013**

0 out of 50 claimed

\$95,000 CAD

ONE MILLION PEOPLE

If we raise \$95,000, together we will reach one million Canadians during the NHL Playoffs. Just imagine Stephen Harper sitting down to watch Game 7 and seeing this ad!

0 claimed

Do you think this campaign contains prohibited content? Let us know.

If we surpass our first goal, we'll **continue to buy up airtime** in order to reach the most Canadian eyeballs:

- **\$500** will reach **25,000** people
- **\$2,000** will reach **80,000** people

If we overshoot our second goal, we'll use the extra funding to buy **even more** airtime:

- **\$10,000** will reach **250,000**
- **\$25,000** will reach **500,000**

If we surpass our third goal, our message will be seen during a **Stanley Cup** playoff game!

DISCLAIMER:

12 percent will cover Indiegogo & transaction fees and an added **15 percent** will be donated to the Canadian Food Bank. We'll keep a maximum of **eight percent** to cover administrative costs.

*We are a non-profit project of the Canadian Mobilization and Education Hub Society (a legally registered BC non-profit Society).

Appendix Six: SHD posts on their Facebook wall with total likes, comments, and shares

Post Content	Date	Likes/ Comments/ Shares
NEW report reveals the government misplaced \$3.1 billion in “anti-terrorism” funding. The other \$9.8 billion they didn’t lose was used for things like infringing on our basic civil liberties, targeting people of colour as well as indigenous and environmental activists as “terrorists.” READ MORE: http://www.shd.ca/its_probably_stopping_terror JOIN US: http://www.shd.ca/why_you_matter	02-May-13	297 Likes 32 Comments 452 Shares
GOOD NEWS! First New Mexico, now Nova Scotia! We should all change the names of our homes to “N-something Something.” Link to “Inverness County passes anti-fracking bylaw”	07-May-13	152 Likes 8 Comments 49 Shares
This Saturday SHD community members across the country will be photo-bombing Conservative Economic Action Plan ads! If you want your photo-bomb to be featured in next week’s SHD video please RSVP to this Thursday’s special conference call by clicking here: http://ow.ly/kO2gq. Link to “Photo-Bomb the Harper Conservative Billboards!”	07-May-13	37 Likes 3 Comments 2 Shares
Live in Nova Scotia, PEI, MB, SK or Nunavut? We are looking for one person from your province to make our next project happen! Can you take a special photo this Saturday and be part of ShitHarperDid’s next video? Comment to let us know if you’re interested.	08-May-13	17 Likes 42 Comments 1 Share
BREAKING NEWS: Today a Toronto Star investigation found that 90% of \$2.4 billion paid for “management consulting” comes with no description of the work done. LIKE/SHARE if you think people deserve to know how their money is being spent. JOIN US: http://www.shd.ca/why_you_matter SOURCE: “Millions in taxpayer-funded consulting work kept secret” (Toronto Star)(Infographic).	08-May-13	599 Likes 32 Comments 1,337 Shares
Live in Newfoundland? We are looking for one person from your province to make our next project happen! Can you take a special photo this Saturday and be part of ShitHarperDid’s next video? Comment to let us know if you’re interested.	09-May-13	7 Likes 7 Comments 1 Share

Excited to see all the photo-bombs on Saturday! Have you RSVP'd yet? Looking forward to the conference call we're about to do with more than 40 people who have stepped up to be SHD action leaders in every province and territory - Brigitte. Link to Photo-Bomb the Harper Conservative Billboards! Event Page	09-May-13	35 Likes 0 Comments 0 Shares
Hi PEI! We are looking for one person from PEI to make our next project happen! Can you take a special photo this Saturday and be part of ShitHarperDid's next video? If so, e-mail brigette@shd.ca with your phone number. Talk soon :) - Brigitte	10-May-13	2 Likes 3 Comments 0 Shares
POSTERS - Photo-Bomb the Harper Conservative Billboards Link to album	10-May-13	103 Likes 6 Comments 39 Shares
Hi Alberta! We are looking for one person from PEI to make our next project happen! Can you take a special photo this Saturday and be part of ShitHarperDid's next video? If so, e-mail brigette@shd.ca with your phone number. Talk soon :) - Brigitte	11-May-13	6 Likes 4 Comments 1 Share
One of the most popular stories on the Metro News site is about your people-powered TV ad campaign! We are very excited to see how many people the SHD community can reach before the crowdfunding ends next Friday. Link to "Shit Harper Did Hopes for Satiric Ad" (Metro News)	11-May-13	108 Likes 3 Comments 55 Shares
Hi Prince Edward Island! We are looking for one person from PEI to make our next project happen! Can you take a special photo this Saturday and be part of ShitHarperDid's next video? If so, e-mail brigette@shd.ca with your phone number. Talk soon :) - Brigitte	11-May-13	0 Likes 0 Comments 0 Shares
Hi Quebec! We are looking for one person from PEI to make our next project happen! Can you take a special photo this Saturday and be part of ShitHarperDid's next video? If so, e-mail brigette@shd.ca with your phone number. Talk soon :) - Brigitte	12-May-13	5 Likes 4 Comments 0 Shares
Check out our NEW VIDEO! Then head on over to Indiegogo to contribute: http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/help-shitharperdid-ca-kick-the-harper-government-right-in-the-tv/x/3082177 "We have until May 17 th to share this video with as many people as possible"	14-May-13	157 Likes 28 Comments 2,094 Shares
SHARE if you want to see our people-powered ad on TV during the playoffs! Watch the ad and donate here: http://igg.me/at/shd-on-tv designed by SHD volunteer: Matthew Kowalyk (Infographic).	16-May-13	158 Likes 17 Comments 311 Shares
Tell us what additional TV spots you want to air the ad on by voting HERE: http://www.shd.ca/ad_buy_survey_2 The first airing is TONIGHT during the Ottawa vs. Pittsburgh hockey game, which starts at 7:30pm EST. The SHD ad will air during two playoff hockey games and there is still enough money left to buy between 20-100 additional national tv spots! (Infographic)	24-May-13	554 Likes 34 Comments 305 Shares
Some historical context for the federal court's ruling on robocalls. READ MORE: http://o.canada.com/2013/05/23/federal-judge-confirms-election-fraud-in-2011-vote/ JOIN US: http://www.shd.ca/why_you_matter	27-May-13	207 Likes 15 Comments 284 Shares
According to CBC overnight ratings, about 1.8 million people saw the SHD advertisement during last Friday's hockey game! That's roughly 3.6 million eyeballs drinking it in, all thanks to you! Get ready, 1.8 million people, the ad is going to air during hockey AGAIN this weekend! Congratulations to the SHD community! Link to "Watch Sh*t Harper Did Slam Tory Action Plan Spots (Huffington Post	28-May-13	580 Likes 36 Comments 86 Shares

Appendix Seven: Content analysis of SHD media coverage during Anti-CEAP campaign

Neutrality	Issue Covered	Topic	Headline	Paper	Date	Author
N	No	new website, humour, Young people's political apathy, Rogue Page, 2011, federal election Success,	Merry band of Vancouver pranksters relaunch Sh*t Harper Did with focus on real activism	<i>Vancouver Sun Canada.com</i>	25-Apr-13	Mike Hager
N	Yes	IndieGoGo funds, CEAP Failure, new website, humour, Young people's political apathy, Embridge Hearing.	Sh*t Harper Did activists coming to a TV Screen near you in political ad	<i>Vancouver Sun</i>	25-Apr-13	Mike Hager
N	Yes	Anti-Harper, IndieGoGo, Fundraising, CEAP Failure, third party spending limits, Liberal Party Fundraising, Political Party Advertising Budgets.	Trudeau and anti-Conservative groups see fundraising boost	<i>The Globe and Mail</i>	07-May-13	Gloria Galloway
NG	No	Anti-Harper, Profanity	Justin Trudeau's Pecs Don't Win My Respect	<i>Huffington Post (Canada)</i>	9-May-13	J.J. McCullough
N	Yes	IndieGoGo Campaign, CEAP Failure, Household Debt, Food Banks.	Sh*tHarperDid hopes for satiric TV ad	<i>MetroNews.ca</i>	10-May-13	Luke Simcoe
P	Yes	Young people's voter apathy, Social Media, Rogue page, federal election Success, New Website, CEAP Failure.	Can online Activism incite political agency? ShitHarperDid keeps apathy in its crosshairs	<i>Rabble.ca</i>	11-May-13	Harrison Samphir
	Yes	Profanity, Satire, CEAP Failure, Household debt, Food Banks, IndieGoGo Campaign, Social Media, 2011 federal election Success, Rogue Page.	Comedy Website Raises \$50,000 for anti-Stephen Harper ad	<i>The Toronto Star</i>	17-May-13	Laura Kane
N	Yes	CEAP, Provincial hold up on CEAP, CEAP Failure, anti-Harper, Profanity, IndieGoGo Campaign, Misleading ads, Conservative branding.	Harper Government buying ads to promote job program that doesn't yet exist	<i>PostMedia Breaking News, Brandon Sun, The Toronto Star, The Record, The Winnipeg Free Press, The Canadian Press, Medicine Hat News, MSN Canada, The Mississauga News, The Canadian Press Broadcast Wire, The Moncton Times</i>	19-May-13	Bruce Cheadle
N	Yes	Profanity, humour, Anti-Harper, CEAP Failure, Household Debt, Food Banks federal election Success, Brigitte DePage Rogue Page, IndieGoGo campaign, Trainings.	Anti-Harper comedians seek 'meaningful' change	<i>The Toronto Star</i>	19-May-13	Laura Kane

N	Yes	2011 federal election Success, IndieGoGo Campaign, CEAP Failure, Household Debt, Food Banks.	New ShitHarperDid ad to receive television début tonight during CBC's Hockey Night in Canada	<i>The Straight.com</i>	24-May-13	Yolande Cole
	Yes	Anti-Harper, Satire, IndieGoGo Campaign, CEAP doesn't work, Household Debt, Food Banks.	Anti-Stephen Harper group raises enough money to air attack ad on Hockey Night in Canada	<i>Yahoo</i>	24-May-13	Andy Radia
N	Yes	Viral, 2011 federal election Success, CEAP Failure, IndieGoGo campaign, Food Bank, Household Debt.	Shit Harper Did Ad Airs During Hockey Night in Canada (VIDEO)	<i>Huffington Post Canada</i>	27-May-13	

*N (Neutral), NG (Negative), P (Positive).

Image 3.2: “BarackObamaIsYourNewBicycle.com”

BARACK OBAMA **SUBSCRIBED TO** **YOUR FEED**

LIKE THE SITE? GET THE BOOK ON [AMAZON](#) OR [B&N](#)

Image from: <http://web.archive.org/web/20081103004313/http://www.barackobamaisyournewbicycle.com/>.

SHD remade the American website in a way that would be culturally relevant for young Canadians. This transference of tactics is important to note as it is part of online, political culture. Political tactics and strategies circulate as modules across campaigns and borders (Tarrow, 1994). They are modular in the sense that they are “capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations” (Anderson, 1991, p. 4).

This copying behaviour is encouraged online. Chadwick suggests that “parties, interest groups and social movement can and do borrow from each other’s typical organizational and mobilization repertoires” (2007, p. 284). Chadwick uses the term “repertoires” to refer to organizational forms or tactics adopted by similar organization (2007, p. 284). SHD’s campaign tactics, specifically their website layout and style, highlight the kinds of tactics, designs, and campaign tools that circulated as modules or repertoires in 2011. In the next chapter, I speak to

Image 3.3: “ShitHarperDid.com” Harper’s Mayonnaise

If Stephen Harper was your roommate and you bought some mayonnaise, he would put a sticker on it that said 'Harper's Mayonnaise'

Harper likes being in power so much, he renamed 'The Government of Canada' to 'The Harper Government'. Creepy right?



Read about it at CBC

Seriously? Tell me some other shit!

Send me few videos!



ShitHarperDid.com on Facebook

Like 4,341



Watch our videos

Follow us on twitter

Send us an email

Media contact

a truthful project

THERE ARE BETTER OPTIONS THIS ELECTION. Liberal NDP BLOC QUEBÉCOIS green

Image from: <http://www.canadiandesignresource.ca/digital/shitharperdid-com/>.

The site included links to “Watch our Videos” (linking to their YouTube channel), “Follow us on Twitter,” and had an embedded Facebook “Like” feature. There was also an option to sign up for a newsletter for notifications of future videos which presumably this list became imperative to their 2013 campaign. At the bottom of the page a set of links to the Liberal, NDP, Bloq Quebecois, and Green Parties’ respective sites. Though not affiliated with any other party, SHD encouraged visitors to educate themselves about what they called “BETTER options.” By clicking the “Seriously? Tell me some other shit” button, the layout of the site remained the same while the quotation, description, and linked news sources would cycle through 27 other statements (Reilly, 2011, p. 507).

Image 3.4: “ShitHarperDid.com” Egomaniacal Harper

What some see as egomaniacal, Harper sees as a perfectly normal hallway filled with photos of Stephen Harper.

Harper decorated the government lobby in parliament with photos of just himself, instead of the traditional portraits of former Prime Ministers.

Read about it in The Ottawa Citizen...

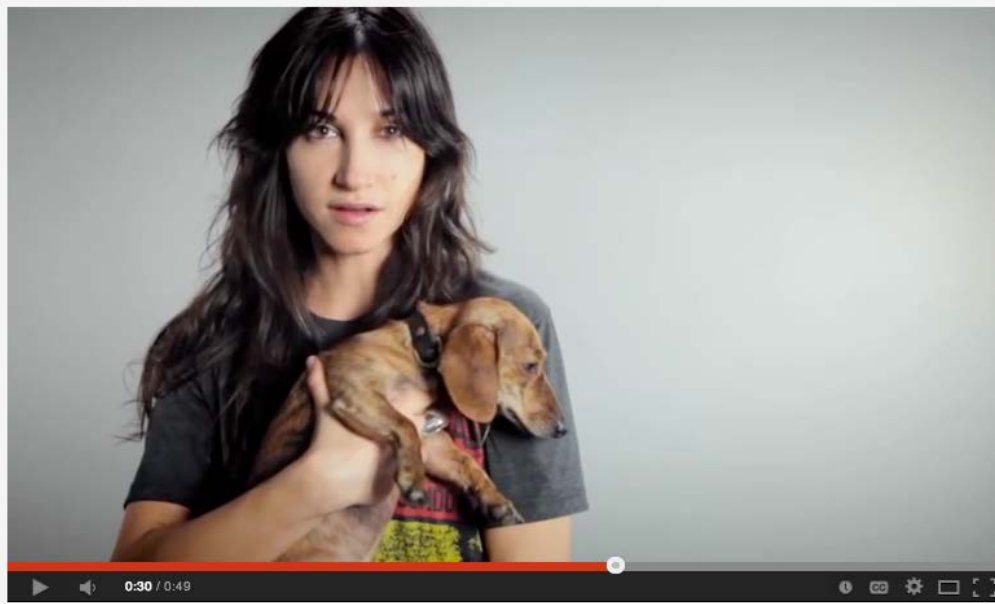
Seriously? Tell me some other shit!



Image from: <http://canadaartsconnect.com/magazine/2011/04/how-artists-are-using-social-media-to-influence-the-vote/>.

SHD’s website, like “What the fuck has Obama done so far?” would scroll through satirical quips about Harper’s record. Unlike the American counter-part, www.ShitHarperDid.com would highlight flaws in the national leader’s administration rather than successes. Some of the issues that the site would generate included: Harper’s denial of Canada’s colonial past (Murphy, 2011), weakening the regulations of the Canadian food inspection agency (Kempton, 2011), removing the portraits of past Prime Ministers in the hallways of the House of Commons and replacing them with his own (Coleman, 2011), rebranding the Government of Canada to “The Harper Government” (Mira Catherine, 2011), the G20 security budget and arrests data (Nolan, 2011), and the lack of action towards providing safe drinking water on Canadian reservations (Ross P, 2011). These jokes linked to news sites confirming their facts. Finally, the sketch of Harper with a kitten pokes fun of the “softer side” of

Image 3.6: Screen Shot of “Ryan Gosling Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com”



The first batch of videos ended with a title screen promoting the website (Image 3.7). They used celebrity names, such as Celine Dion, Ryan Gosling, Ben Mulroney, and Pokémon in their titles, but not the celebrities themselves, encouraging people to get to the polls, citing the low voter turnout that brought Stephen Harper to power in the previous election. The videos do not get into the specific issues that the website outlines.

Image 3.7: Screen Shot of the end title screen of the first batch of SHD videos



The second batch of videos had the same aesthetic, with actors standing in front of a white screen with clips of them cut together delivering jokes as well as urging young people to both vote and visit the website or educate themselves about Stephen Harper's political reputation. However, rather than ending with the image of Harper with a kitten the title screen features the website URL in bold white on a purple background.

SHD geared the third batch of videos towards four specific cities (Edmonton, Kitchener-Waterloo, Saanich-Gulf Islands and Vancouver South). They did not feature any live actors or video clips but instead included a compilation of still images illustrating a narration encouraging people to come out to their on-the-ground events in the riding. The images used included screen shots of the SHD website, local landmarks in each city, and silly pictures that went along with the narrated jokes (Image 3.8 and 3.9)

Image 3.8: Screen shot of “Go away bees!” in “RubbishHarperDid.com Comes to SAANICH-GULF ISLANDS!”

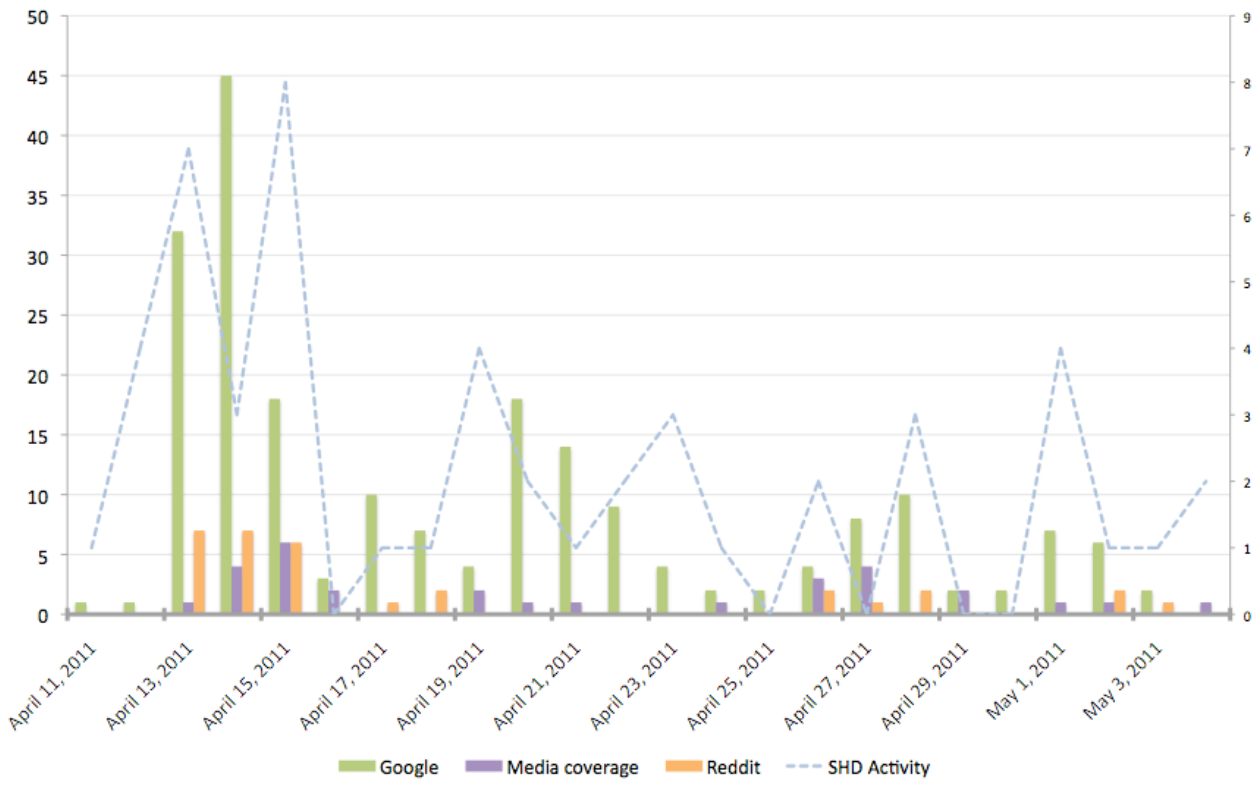


Image 3.9: Screen shot of swing riding NDP candidate in “RubbishHarperDid.com Comes to EDMONTON!”



Each of videos in the third batch ended with a title screen featuring the URL RubbishHarperDid.com referring to the video “Stephen Harper’s Greatest Fear” from the second batch that urged voters to tell their grandparents about the SHD website (in a less profane way).

Figure 3.1: SHD content sharing by platform and time



On the first day of the launch April 11, 2011, a huge spike in traffic would ultimately lead to the website crashing. I located links to the shitharper.com and two YouTube videos on three blogs, two forums, and Tegan and Sara’s fans’ Tumblr page (Appendix One). By April 13, 2011, just over 24 hours later, SHD posted on their Facebook wall: “Sorry, everyone. We just found out we’ve had ONE MILLION HITS since 8am. We’ll be up and running again soon” (Appendix One). The Facebook comment received 160 likes – a small number compared to what would come. Later that same day SHD posted that the number of likes of the Facebook page had grown,

10,000 - Thank you! More than 2-dozen young Canadians have volunteered their time to prepping this for the past 2 weeks. Thank you for embracing it so quickly! We have lots more in the works -- stay tuned and spread the word. PS. the word is “VOTE.” (Appendix One)

The post acquired 325 likes. In one day SHD reached 10,000 people. That day there people posted seven times on Reddit (the most popular getting 45 “upvotes”), and linked to SHD content

The first batch of videos received 60,809, 225,582, 93,423, and 54,884 views each, respectively – higher than many of the Vote Mob videos or most videos shared by a political party. These numbers are not to be dismissed when compared with other “viral phenomena” on YouTube – Hiltz (2011) reports that “among its videos [Ryan Gosling Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com] was the one most shared by Canadians on YouTube Wednesday – the website’s fifth most-viewed video nationwide.” Referring back to Table 3.1, the videos received substantially more views than the university student vote mobs. Also, even the most popular “It’s Over Steve” video, mentioned earlier, only got 68,227 views. SHD was most definitely the most popular Canadian political group posting on YouTube at the time. As with all subsequent videos, the first batch of videos received the majority of views within the first days of being posted. An example of the instantaneous popularity of the one of the first video’s posted is demonstrated in Figure 3.2 and 3.3.

Figure 3.2: “Celine Dion Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com” Daily Views

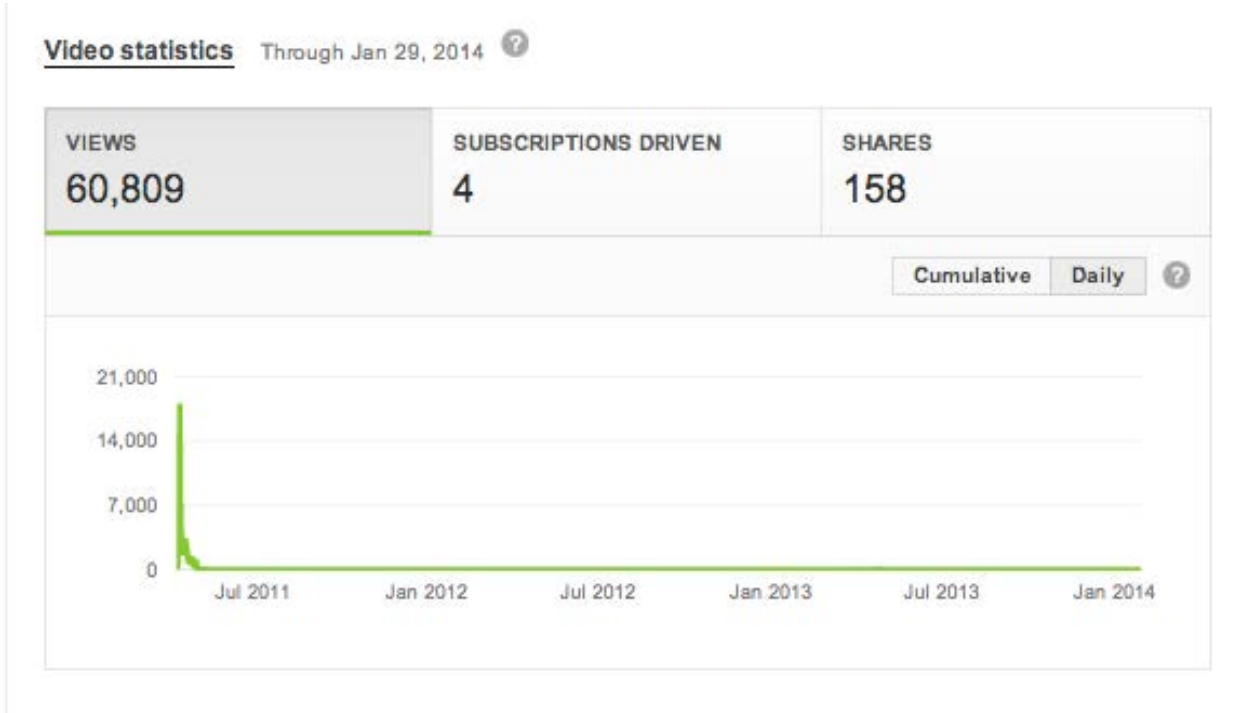
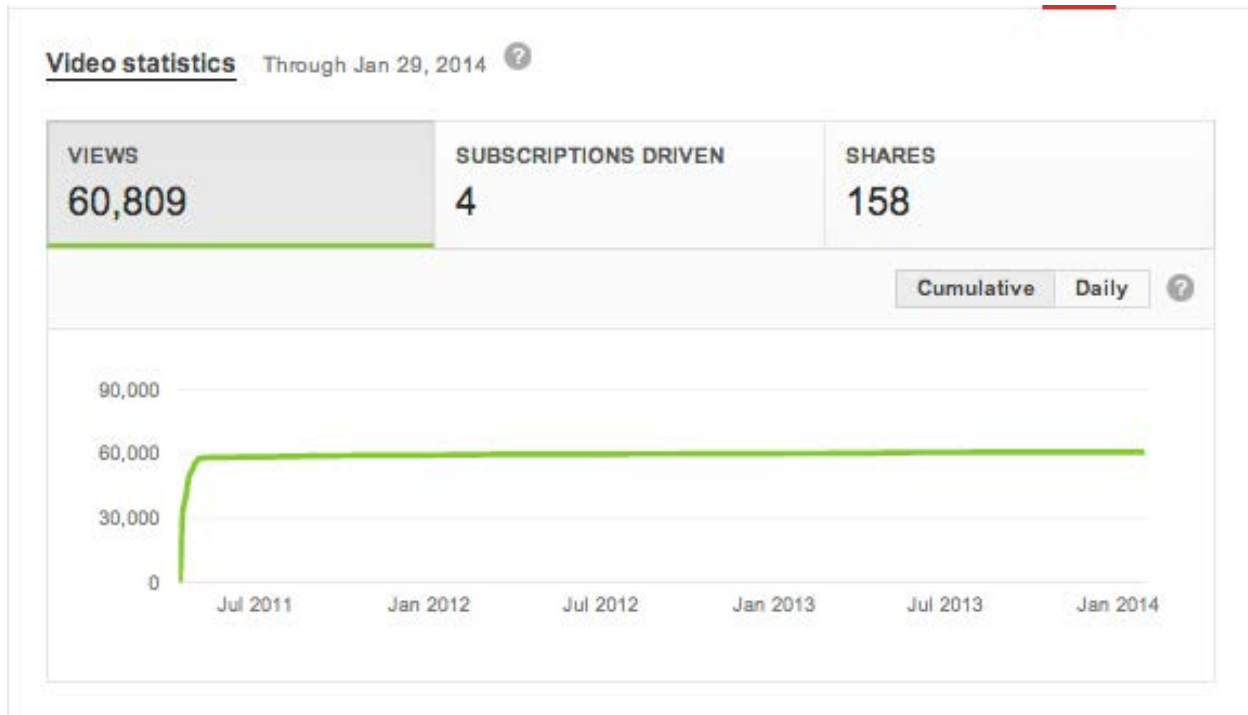


Figure 3.3: “Celine Dion Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid.com” Cumulative Views



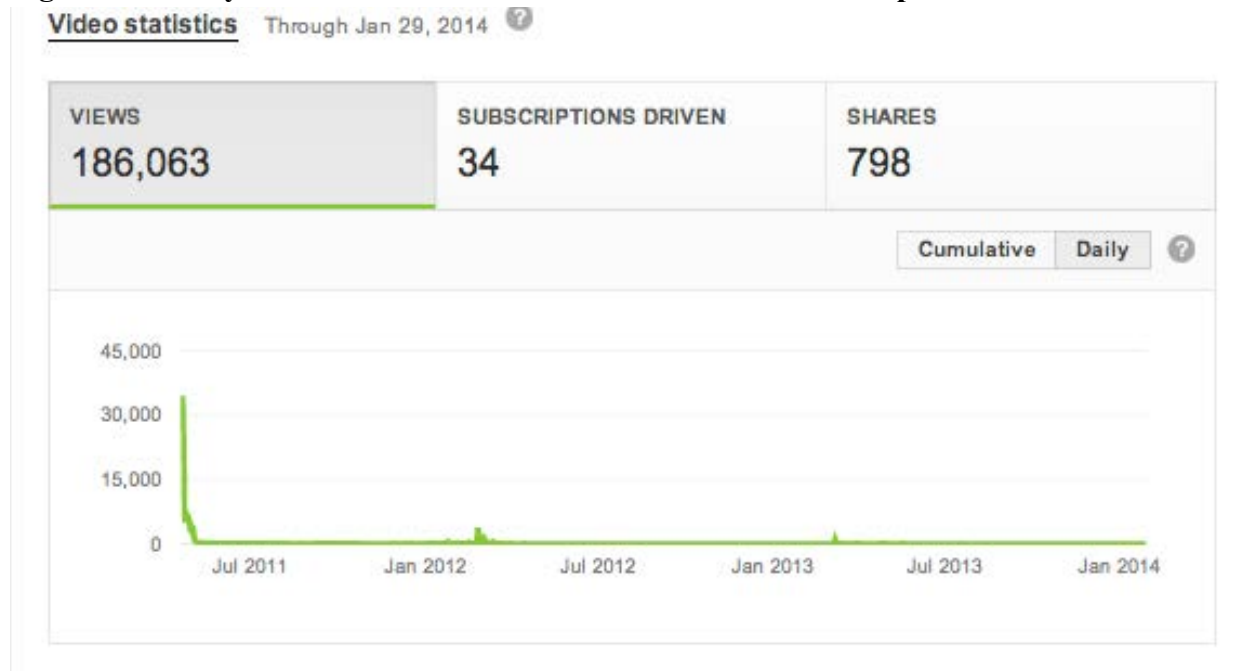
On April 14, 2011, SHD reported to their Facebook community that,

Last night we asked you if we could hit 10,000 by this morning... about to hit 20,000 - Thank you! Please "Suggest To Friends" Will have some fun stuff for you to play with later today. (Appendix One)

Seven more Reddit posts were found referring to "Shit Harper Did," and 42 more posts on blogs and forums linking to SHD material. The most noteworthy among the bunch, Adbusters and *The Tye* posted links to SHD content that would have had much higher readership than the aforementioned blogs. Four news articles mentioned SHD that first day, which I outlined in the next section. The next day, April 15, 2011, the media published six more news articles and SHD posted on Facebook,

We passed 3.5 million hits in the first 36 hours! The national media is embracing our message, with some reporting that we've "changed the game"...and it's all because of YOU. We put this thing together, but it is your overwhelming support that gives it true strength. New videos on the way... (Appendix One)

Figure 3.4: Daily views of “Canadian Women’s Favourite Pick-Up Line”



As Appendix Two shows, when SHD posted this video on their Facebook page, the link got 833 “likes” and 54 comments. This post, in bold in Appendix Two, is also the second-most “liked” comment on SHD’s Facebook page before the election. This table also illustrates the variation of “likes” SHD content received over the course of the entire campaign.

The popularity of “Canadian Women’s Favourite Pick-Up Line” and “Ryan Gosling Not Endorsing ShitHarperDid” in terms of view counts were also the most popular videos tags found in Appendix One. Table 3.4 shows the frequency of each traffic tag found over the course of the entire SHD campaign.

pictured) that floats onto the page as visitors click through various links on the site, urging them to sign-up for more information. The original Harper sketch sits in the headline with a speech bubble that scrolls through SHD members' Tweets, Facebook likes/shares, or public donations. This scrolling feed is a NationBuilder feature that helps to highlight active community members and encourage others to do the same.

Image 4.1: Home page of www.shd.ca (June 21, 2014)



Scrolling further down the main page (Image 4.2), the “Shit Harper Did” style of informing visitors about the Prime Minister’s policies is retained. Currently, it features five images that, when clicked, reveal windows regarding different issues such as: Members of Parliaments’ controversial spending habits, cuts to Canada’s national childcare program, halted environmental impact assessments, and the robocalls scandal. For example, this window (Image 4.3), features sourced background information, including links to media coverage of the issue, and social sharing tools for Facebook, email and Twitter.

Image 4.2: Images representing “Shit Harper Did”

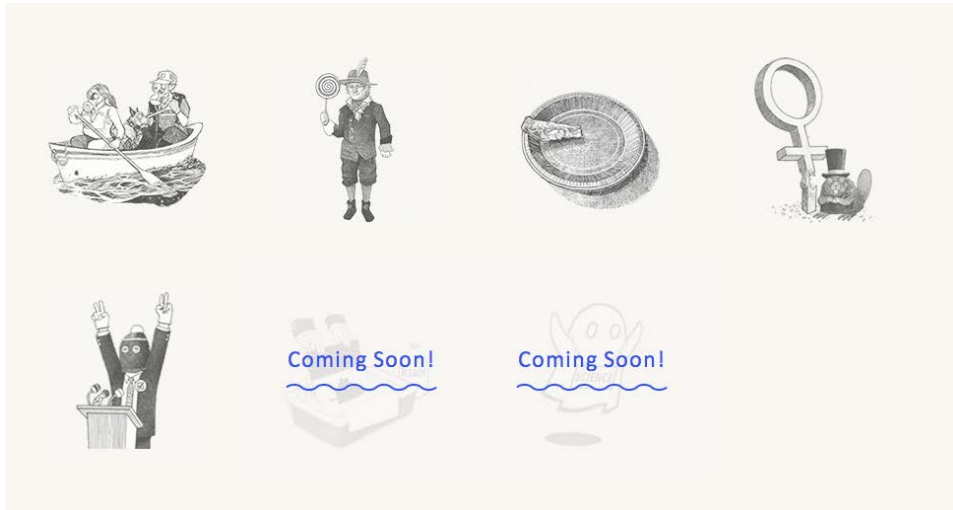
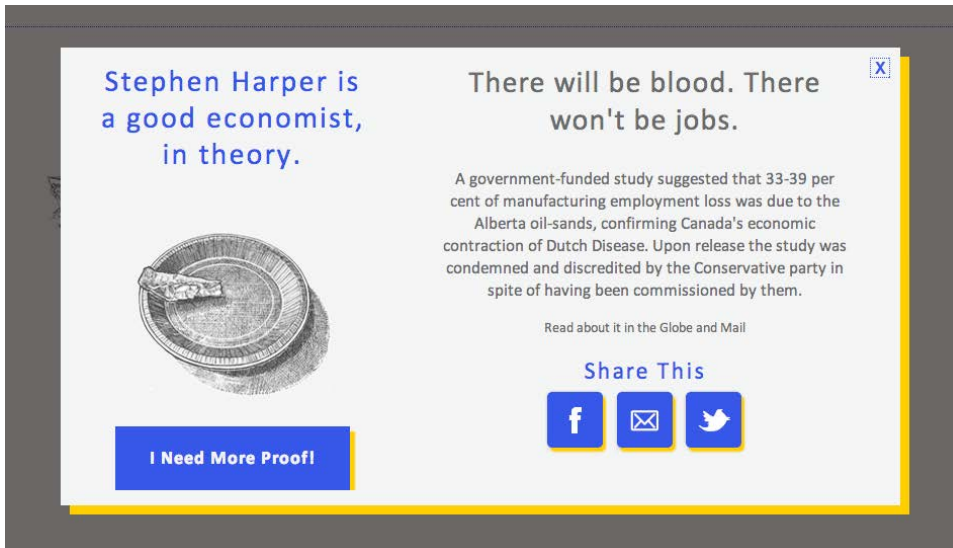


Image 4.3: “Stephen Harper is a good economist, in theory”



The site has been under constant construction since its April 2013 launch. SHD builds new pages for each new campaign. Permanent pages include: “Why You Matter” compelling visitors to join the community; a donation page; a page to “Submit a Fact” about the Harper government; a press information page; a volunteer sign-up form; a request form to bring SHD organizers to your community; and SHD’s privacy policy, contact information and details about contributions and refunds (www.shd.ca). One last page, “Our People” lists SHD’s “Action Team.” No longer just a group of friends disgruntled with the Conservative government, there are

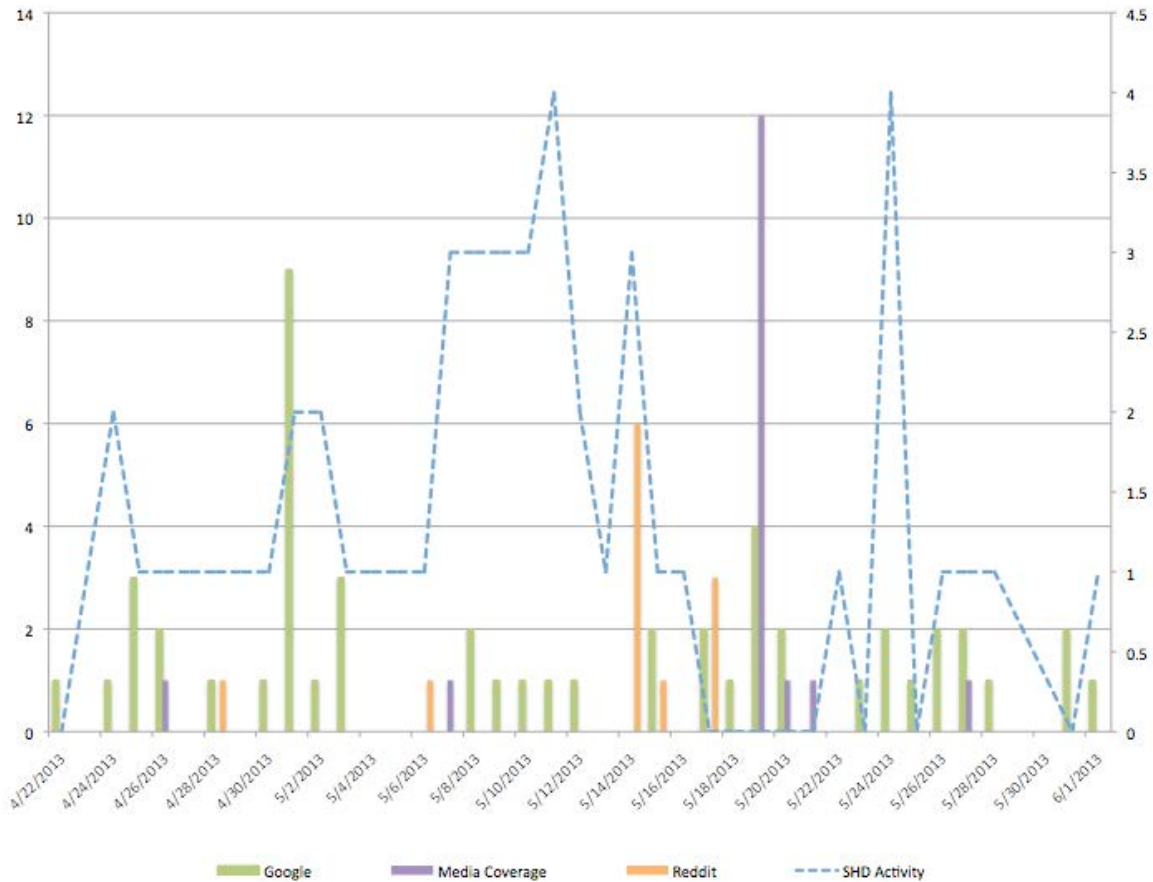
Image 4.4: New Brunswick SHD supporters photo-bombing CEAP sign



Part III Social Media and SHD's Anti-CEAP Campaign: Finding New Ways to Gain Support

During this campaign, SHD used social media to facilitate aspects of the campaign, like the photo-bombing, but also relied on the various platforms to share the campaign. There was much more structure in this approach. The campaign received both support and criticism in various networks. I found fewer tags found between April 24, 2013, the date the SHD posted the IndieGoGo campaign, and June 1, 2013, marking the last day mainstream media coverage. There are, however, proportionally more tags found in mainstream media coverage. Table 4.2 shows how many results each tag had, and demonstrates that the majority of the content found was in reference to SHD and not their YouTube videos.

Figure 4.3: SHD content sharing by platform and time



As illustrated in Appendix Four blogs and forums had a slower reaction to this campaign. The data in Appendix Four shows that the first blog to even mention the campaign was posted two days after the launch of the IndieGoGo campaign. A second blog post was not posted until April 28, 2013. One major highlight occurred on April 30, 2013, when *The Tyee* featured the campaign prominently on their site. *The Tyee* has a large readership and by posting SHD’s campaign they further promoted the cause to a group of like-minded Canadians. Over the course of the month of May, ten more blog posts encouraged readers to support SHD’s campaign.

As opposed to the last campaign, where viewers could only watch and share the videos made by SHD, this time, SHD encouraged community members to participate by donating money or by making content for some of the YouTube videos. On May 7, 2013. SHD started

Image 4.6: SHD TV spot with non descript sports fans



Image 4.7: Food bank use in Canada



Other than the rather humorous look and antics of the characters the tone of the television spot is quite serious. At the end of the thirty-second advertisement a disclaimer is displayed and read out loud (Image 4.8).

Image 4.8: SHD TV spot disclaimer



Dales recalls, that a volunteer crew made the advertisement in 48 hours. He explains that there was an unknown learning curve that comes with producing content for televisions. For example, to his memory, the ad aired between a Ford and a Wendy's commercial which really highlighted the low quality of their own video. Dales (2014) explains,

For example, our audio on the master was turned way down so people couldn't hear what the hell was going on during the commercial. So that stuff was difficult when you put it on next to something that had a million a half budget for a thirty second spot.

The SHD organizers were still amateurs in the field even with the new tool kit of strategies they had picked up during the two years preceding this campaign.

Part IV Media Analysis: “Anti-Harper comedians seek ‘meaningful’ change”¹⁸

As with the 2011 campaign, breaking into a ‘political information cycle’ for this campaign was equally advantageous. During the 2011 federal election, SHD broke into this cycle because of the instant popularity of their videos and site. In this campaign, SHD not only put their campaign on television, directly against the government ads, they also gained news

¹⁸ (Kane, 2013)

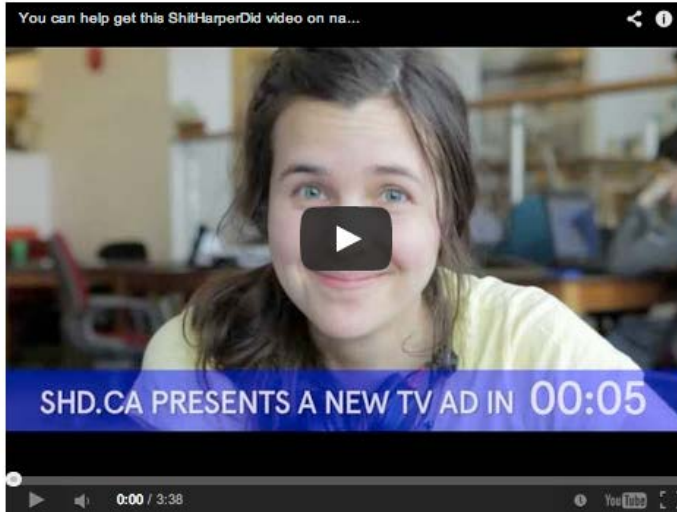
Appendix Five: Help ShitHarperDid Kick the Harper Government Right in TV

Help ShitHarperDid.ca kick the Harper Government Right in the TV

For the cost of a \$100 cup of coffee, help put this ad on national TV & expose 1 million people to the true state of our economy + we'll find you cheaper coffee

Vancouver, Canada Politics

Story Updates 1 Comments 121 Funders 2,305 Gallery 4



\$76,412 CAD
RAISED OF \$6,000 GOAL

1,274% 0 time left

This campaign started on Apr 24 and closed on May 17, 2013 (11:59pm PT).

Flexible Funding

CAMPAIGN CLOSED
This campaign ended on May 17, 2013

SELECT A PERK

6.6k 705 85
Share Tweet +1 Email Embed Link Follow

\$10 CAD

A Virtual Thank You!

If you can donate \$10 towards putting us on the air, we will email you our gratitude and a virtual high-five.

594 claimed

\$100 CAD

Reach 5,000 People

Donate \$100 and reach 5,000 people through through an overnight ad aired on Canadian television.

68 claimed

\$500 CAD

Reach 25,000 People

Donate \$500 towards the ad and reach 25,000 people on the airwaves.

5 claimed

\$1,000 CAD

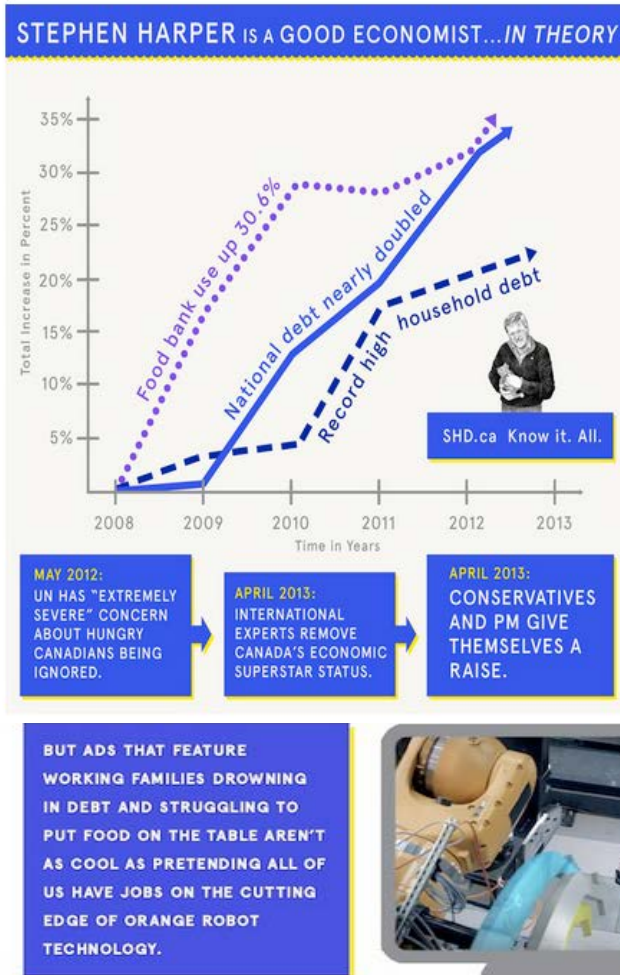
Thanks to everyone who donated to get this people-powered ad on national TV! If you would like to DONATE to keep SHD.ca going strong **CLICK HERE!**

IF YOU WATCHED THE OSCARS, THE SUPER BOWL OR A HOCKEY GAME RECENTLY, YOU'VE PROBABLY BEEN ANNOYED BY ONE OF THE CONSERVATIVES' ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN ADS. THEY CLAIM THE ECONOMY IS "WORKING FOR YOU."



Sadly though, the Canadian economy is not working for most of us—especially young people.¹ And even if you aren't young, chances are you're not a multinational oil corporation, so Harper's economic policies probably aren't working for you either.

Share this Infographic on Facebook:



Reach 50,000 + "Robocal!"

Fund \$1,000 worth of advertising on TV and reach 50,000 people on the airwaves. Plus, you will receive a personalized "Robocal!" from the ShitHarperDid Comedy Team!

Estimated delivery: **May 2013**

0 out of 50 claimed

\$95,000 CAD

ONE MILLION PEOPLE

If we raise \$95,000, together we will reach one million Canadians during the NHL Playoffs. Just imagine Stephen Harper sitting down to watch Game 7 and seeing this ad!

0 claimed

Do you think this campaign contains prohibited content? Let us know.

The Harper Conservatives have spent \$21 million on these ads in the last year and they are as annoying and uninformative as ever.^{2,3} Thankfully they are going off the air for a while on April 30th. That means we have a chance to strike back with an ad of our own! One that's more entertaining and informative. Instead of a trojan horse packed with boring soldiers who attack you with false optimism, it's a trojan horse packed full of fun soldiers who slow dance with you while whispering sweet truths in your ear!

- If we raise \$500, we can buy five ad slots on late night television across Canada, reaching 25,000 viewers.
- If we raise \$6,000 we'll air our ad on a primetime news hour watched by 150,000 Canadians.
- If we raise \$95,000 we'll buy a spot during an NHL playoff game, sending our message to one million people from coast to coast.

If we surpass our first goal, we'll **continue to buy up airtime** in order to reach the most Canadian eyeballs:

- **\$500** will reach **25,000** people
- **\$2,000** will reach **80,000** people

If we overshoot our second goal, we'll use the extra funding to buy **even more** airtime:

- **\$10,000** will reach **250,000**
- **\$25,000** will reach **500,000**

If we surpass our third goal, our message will be seen during a **Stanley Cup playoff game!**

DISCLAIMER:

12 percent will cover Indiegogo & transaction fees and an added **15 percent** will be donated to the Canadian Food Bank. We'll keep a maximum of **eight percent** to cover administrative costs.

*We are a non-profit project of the Canadian Mobilization and Education Hub Society (a legally registered BC non-profit Society).

Appendix Six: SHD posts on their Facebook wall with total likes, comments, and shares

Post Content	Date	Likes/ Comments/ Shares
NEW report reveals the government misplaced \$3.1 billion in “anti-terrorism” funding. The other \$9.8 billion they didn’t lose was used for things like infringing on our basic civil liberties, targeting people of colour as well as indigenous and environmental activists as “terrorists.” READ MORE: http://www.shd.ca/its_probably_stopping_terror JOIN US: http://www.shd.ca/why_you_matter	02-May-13	297 Likes 32 Comments 452 Shares
GOOD NEWS! First New Mexico, now Nova Scotia! We should all change the names of our homes to “N-something Something.” Link to “Inverness County passes anti-fracking bylaw”	07-May-13	152 Likes 8 Comments 49 Shares
This Saturday SHD community members across the country will be photo-bombing Conservative Economic Action Plan ads! If you want your photo-bomb to be featured in next week’s SHD video please RSVP to this Thursday’s special conference call by clicking here: http://ow.ly/kO2gq. Link to “Photo-Bomb the Harper Conservative Billboards!”	07-May-13	37 Likes 3 Comments 2 Shares
Live in Nova Scotia, PEI, MB, SK or Nunavut? We are looking for one person from your province to make our next project happen! Can you take a special photo this Saturday and be part of ShitHarperDid’s next video? Comment to let us know if you’re interested.	08-May-13	17 Likes 42 Comments 1 Share
BREAKING NEWS: Today a Toronto Star investigation found that 90% of \$2.4 billion paid for “management consulting” comes with no description of the work done. LIKE/SHARE if you think people deserve to know how their money is being spent. JOIN US: http://www.shd.ca/why_you_matter SOURCE: “Millions in taxpayer-funded consulting work kept secret” (Toronto Star)(Infographic).	08-May-13	599 Likes 32 Comments 1,337 Shares
Live in Newfoundland? We are looking for one person from your province to make our next project happen! Can you take a special photo this Saturday and be part of ShitHarperDid’s next video? Comment to let us know if you’re interested.	09-May-13	7 Likes 7 Comments 1 Share