# Damned Cascades: The Stochasticity of Behavioral Models vis-à-vis the Motivations of First Movers, and the Mechanics of Popular Movements

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Damned Cascades: The Stochasticity of Behavioral Models vis-à-vis the Motivations of First

Movers, and the Mechanics of Popular Movements

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Abstract


This study shows that there is a correlation between the founders and co-founders of start-ups and first movers in popular uprisings in terms of their motivations at different points in their respective journeys. It argues that first movers, like startup founders and co-founders, are altruistically motivated in their approach to action—that is, their philosophy is altruistically informed—self-interested in their risk aversion and ultimate risk assumption. Because startup founders and co-founders face high-risk, low-reward conditions similar to those with which first movers in popular uprisings are met, they were employed as a proxy. Startup founders and co-founders were surveyed to assess their motivations as they pertain to three hypotheses: (1) First movers are altruistically motivated in their approach to action; (2) First movers are self-interested in their approach to action; (3) First movers' risk aversion and risk assumption is ultimately dictated by self-interest. The results of the surveys were then applied to   the cases of Ted Kaczynski, Anders Behring Breivik, and Vladimir Lenin in order to demonstrate their validity.

Dedication


       I suppose bringing me into this world, albeit against my wishes, is sufficient cause for dedication. To that end, this paper is dedicated to my parents, Gayla and William Lynn Sr. Though they will understand little of what they are about to read, I hope they will look upon this project as validation of their faith in me. Mom and dad, thank you.

Acknowledgments


Nothing great can be achieved alone. I am fairly certain I am not the first to make

that assertion. In any case, the foregoing work has left me resistant to superfluous

citations, so feel free to take that statement as being axiomatic. That being said, in

accordance with a (presumably) long-standing tradition, I would like to call attention to

those who helped this great (deal of) work along its way. Please note that additional

mentions of persons named in previous sections are paid placements. So, again, thanks,

mom and dad. I would also like to thank: Michele and Stephen for being there in the

toughest of times; Aaron J. Brooks for encouraging me to pursue this; Dr. Ariane Liazos

for making me a better writer; Dr. Michael Miner (no relation) for pitching this project;

Dr. Maria Robson-Morrow for taking on this project, and guiding me along the way;

Silvia and Maria for supporting me, and being understanding when I spent the night in

the library instead of sleeping at home.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

First movers are known by many names: instigators, disruptors, agitators, revolutionaries. They take many forms, the nature and character of which varies from passive resistance to active protest to outright violence. They can be assessed and characterized on a spectrum as broad as human nature and the human condition will allow. First movers are a significant element—perhaps the most significant—of popular uprisings, because they are not only the starting point, but an inflection point. They represent the initial tremblings of future tectonic shifts in social, political, and economic spaces, and the institutions therein.

In the wake of the Arab Spring, for example, attempts to answer questions about popular uprisings and their participants in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)—namely, when and why people choose to protest—have focused on social movement theory-driven explanations, and individual traits as preconditions for behavior, and how those individual traits articulate with those of groups of others in cascade models and, ultimately, result in movements en masse. More recent examples that might be filed under the same disruptive popular movement heading are the January 6th, 2021 storming of the US Capitol, ANTIFA, Black Lives Matter, and even the competing sides of the COVID-19 measures and vaccination debate. In other words, this is a problem with broad sociopolitical (and socioeconomic) reach still in want of a satisfying solution. Rather than term this an old problem or a new one, it makes more sense to view it as one innate and endemic to humankind. But answers to that problem—specifically, the questions of

motivations on the part of first movers—have been scarce among the results of the application of the aforementioned criteria. In treating first movers as a constituent piece of resultant popular uprisings, these criteria have failed to accurately account for true unitary nature of first movers by failing to divorce them from the results of their actions: A first mover is still an instigator even if a revolution does not ensue. Because actual violent street riots are much more visible than a failed attempt to start one, these are the cases upon which extant scholarship is focused. As such, significant questions that govern the realities of first movers, and subsequent cascade effects, are unanswered; namely, why do first movers do what they do when risks are very high, and potential for reward or success is very low?

Additionally, with cascade models as the basic (theoretical) analytical measure of popular movements, much goes unexamined in terms of opportunity structures that provide the operational framework for mass silent protests, outright revolutions, and everything in between. These structures, to a great degree, determine both the playing field, and the rules of the game. Some are constructed intentionally as safeguards for governmental (or dictatorial) continuity, while others incidental products of policymaking, bureaucracy, and state-building that may be leveraged to the benefit of would-be revolutionaries. Still others are little more than interpersonal relationships and communication networks, loosely woven or tightly enmeshed. Irrespective of the precise nature and character of opportunity structures of which a potential first mover might avail him- or herself, it is not possible to fully apprehend and appreciate the complexity of first mover behavior without such context. To date, cascade models largely reside in a vacuum bereft meaningful application and understanding born of proper context.

As a corrective, this paper aims to provide a modest contribution toward the establishment of first principles governing first movers and their environments—as there is little direct first-mover scholarship to directly challenge—in high risk-low reward situations through qualitative and quantitative methods. Primary- and secondary-source scholarship on popular uprisings and cascade models, as well as surveys employing startup founders and co-founders as a proxy for first movers inform three hypotheses: (1) First movers are altruistically motivated in their approach to action; (2) First movers are self-interested motivated in their approach to action; (3) First movers' risk aversion and risk assumption is ultimately dictated by self-interest. The first two hypotheses correlate to a desire to act: 'I want to do this.' The third correlates to the decision to act: 'I am doing this.' Because instigators of popular uprising often do not survive the results of their actions, and others are often imprisoned, they are not readily available for direct examination. Additionally, those whose actions fail to precipitate the desired effects are difficult to identify. As a proxy for first movers, I substituted startup founders and co-founders—both failed and successful—202 of whom were surveyed in order test the hypotheses. The results of those surveys were applied to the case studies of Ted Kaczynski, Anders Behring Breivik, and Vladimir Lenin, and constituted the quantitative portion of this study. Those surveys were supplemented by primary and secondary sources to provided context and understanding of the results.

Startup founders and co-founders often assume a great deal of deal of risk—primarily financial, and usually accompanied by Nth-order trickle-down effects—while even the prospects of rewards for success are scarce. They have available to them the same opportunity structures as those who do not act. Access to the startup "game"—as

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many founders and co-founders refer to it—is largely egalitarian, and is rooted in the meritocracy of ideas, concepts, and their execution. As such, startup founders and co-founders—in a search for origins rather than recursive, path-dependent explanatory outcomes—find logical and warranted inclusion here as a proxy for first movers in popular uprisings taking place under high risk-low reward conditions such as those in MENA during the (most recent) Arab Spring, early 20th Century Russia, and even present-day Ukraine.

Chapter II.

Definition of Terms

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate first mover motivations, and that those motivations transcend time and place. In other words, first movers and their motivations are agnostic to their environments (though their actions may be tailored to their environment). First movers identify what they view as a problem and attempt to apply a solution. And, they exist based upon a precondition of repression, the degree of which is highly subjective. That is, without repression in the first place, first movers do not exist. In terms of scope, the character of repression, or type of problem, experienced by first movers is largely irrelevant aside from its existence. Likewise, it does not matter if a first mover operates in a liberal democracy, constitutional monarchy, or authoritarian state. In examining first movers, some key terms require definition. All definitions are commonly used and accepted and are not attributable to any single scholar or thinker.

First movers are individuals who plan, publicize, promote, or initiate anti-government or anti-regime protest in any form, irrespective of its outcome. Startup founders/co-founders are individuals who create or attempt to create, from the ground up, a business and scalable business model. More specifically, a scalable product-market fit. A Popular movement is a mass, unified action, such as protests, undertaken by a given population. A Cascade model is a structural and behavioral description of the mechanisms through which popular movements generate, or fail to generate, momentum and ultimate success or failure; related to social movement theory, systems thinking.

Social Movement Theory is an explanation of how and why mass, unified mobilization occurs among a population; related to systems thinking, cascade models. Opportunity structures are sociopolitical, socioeconomic, ethnoreligious organizational constructs that inhibit, catalyze, or promote popular movements.

Chapter III.

Literature Review

Existing scholarship on first movers is focused retrospectively on the effects they produce or their social networks, and how first movers' actions generate momentum rather than why first movers act to begin with. Most scholarly works—of which there are many—that tout lessons from, or understandings of, first movers or early risers rely on forward causal inference in answering reverse causal questions. According to Andrew Gelman and Guido Imbens (2013), counterfactual reasoning can also be applied to assess attributions of causes of past events. "We label this historical reasoning as forward causal inference (…) as it is based on the estimation of effects of defined treatments'" (p. 2). Such scholarship fails to account for first movers, and their actions, as independent actors without the knowledge of what events might eventually arise from their actions. In other words, existing scholarship tends to hold the implicit view that first movers know and understand the future sequence of events born of their own and go about their first mover business with that sequence of events in mind as an end goal. As Adria Lawrence (2016) rightly notes, "there [is] no way to predict participation [in protest movements] in advance" (p.705).

Reinoud Leenders and Steven Heydemann (2012) present a paradigmatic case with their article "Popular Mobilization in Syria: Opportunity and Threat, and the Social Networks of Early Risers." While this account provides a useful application of social movement theory—though not particularly novel—and consideration of opportunity

structures balanced with perceived threat to first movers, it does not speak to the motivations of first movers. In the authors' own words, their goal is to explore "the dynamics and underlying conditions of the first few months of the uprising in Syria from mid-March 2011 until the summer of that year [and to] contextualize (threat and opportunity) within the specific social and political environment (…) of the 'early risers'" (p. 139). As this context for opportunity and threat materializes, it does so within a framework that applied to everyone in Syria, not just early risers or first movers. As with most scholarship on the subject, this piece fails to appreciate that access to opportunity, while often obstructed for later adopters due to rising costs of participation, is always available to first movers because they, effectively, hold the starter's pistol. Leenders and Heydemann also miss the fact that social networks do not matter to first movers—only for subsequent adopters—because the mechanics of cascade-based momentum have no place among independent actors, as this paper will demonstrate.

Several studies, including that of Sabine C. Carey, as well as that of Adria Lawrence provide some context on activists (to include first movers) in terms of repression, and how it affects participation in protest movements. Carey (2006) observes that "there is a reciprocal relationship between protest and repression and that protest is consistent over time" (p. 1). This is not an insignificant observation in terms of social uprisings in general, or first movers specifically, but it does not speak directly to the behaviors of independent actors. It is beyond the scope of this study in that some level—a degree which is difficult to ascertain—of repression is a given under first mover conditions. Further study of the relationship between repression and protest—to include the relative intensity of each—could be useful in determining whether first mover actions

result in (or fail to result in) widespread adoption of protest. Indeed, Lawrence correctly asserts that "further progress [in knowledge of the conditions under which repression inhibits or promotes protest] has been stalled by two challenges: difficulties in isolating the causal effect of repression, and insufficient attention to how different actors within a population respond to repression" (p. 700).

However, Lawrence does offer some of the only concrete, empirical evidence of first mover motivations in her study of "Morocco's February 20th Movement." According to Lawrence (2016), "first movers are people who plan, publicize, and initiate anti-regime protest. They are, by definition, crucial for starting street protests in authoritarian regimes" (p. 701). This description provides the definition of first movers employed in this study. In noting that first mover behavior "is difficult to explain; they engage in contentious action before most people are willing to do so, accepting the risks of collective action before any pay off can be anticipated" (p. 702), Lawrence (2016) attempts to get to the core of first mover motivations.

Importantly, Lawrence (2016) correctly observes that "there are few systematic explanations for [first movers'] behavior" (p. 701). She studied their characteristic nature, as well as their historical demographics, and previous political experience. And Lawrence (2016) finds "that is specifically a history of repression that matters, not family history of activism in general" (p. 709). Suzanne Mettler conducted a similar study on G.I. Bill recipients and their subsequent involvement in civic and political activities to gauge how policy affects participation— effectively, the same issue regime repression presents potential protestors. Mettler (2002) found that "the [G.I. Bill] policy also had an independent effect [from family history] on [increased] civic membership rates" (p. 357).

Additionally, when applied to political participation, "findings parallel the results for civic memberships" (Mettler, 2002, p. 358). This suggests that response to policy—be it repression or governmental largesse—or policy feedback, acts on a level common to all humans in all situations, not just first movers specifically, or activists in general. As such, important questions are still unanswered; namely, if a response to a given policy is something all humans do—whether it is active, passive, or apathetic—why do first movers choose an active approach?

Given the dearth of scholarship directly and highly focused on the motivations of first movers under high risk-low reward conditions, literature related to popular uprisings must be examined to extract theory that informs and influences this study. To begin to disentangle first mover motivations from the results of their actions and move beyond a continuum-based logic wherein popular uprisings are viewed as necessary products of an instigative incident, consideration of Timur Kuran (1991) and Wendy Pearlman's (2016) work on social movements and cascades is necessary, as they have significant implications within the context of this study in several ways. First, Kuran establishes an explanatory framework centered on individuals—rather than structures or institutions—thus providing the theoretical foundations and initial questions upon which this study is built, as well as the above hypotheses. Kuran ably and logically demonstrates the mechanics of social cascades through the application of rationality, and the fluid nature (from an overall system perspective, not that of an individual) of what he calls a revolutionary threshold. That is, the point at which an individual moves to one end of the revolutionary scale of the other by achieving critical mass—either joining in protest or abstaining.

Second, Kuran addresses the first hypothesis with structuralist theories, and highlights the utility and limitations of the syncretic value of extant theory, demonstrating a need for investigation of first movers. Kuran's work, if only obliquely, is an attempt to reconcile structuralist theory and rational choice in terms of predictive value. Kuran (1991) notes that structuralist theories base their appeal on the employ of "structural causes to explain shifts in the structure of political power [and do] not depend on such 'subjective' factors as beliefs, expectations, attitudes, preferences, intentions, and goals" (p. 14). Unfortunately, such theories and their attendant explanatory calculus entirely obviate the need for first movers of popular uprising, let alone attention to their motivations. Structuralist theories identify opportunities for revolution—usually on a post hoc basis—by articulating vulnerabilities in inanimate governmental institutions or other systems, but they cannot explain why or how individuals avail themselves of such opportunities. As Kuran (1991) correctly observes, structuralist theory elucidates why the revolution broke out at a time when the Soviet Union was emitting increasingly convincing signals that it would not use force to try to preserve the East European status quo. But it explains neither why the old order collapsed so suddenly in several countries at one nor why the events of 1989 outdistanced all expectations (p. 14). This demonstrates the one-sided nature of structuralist theory; that its focus precludes those who take part in, and propel, revolution and instead lends unwarranted weight to an apparatus that, in and of itself, is incapable of effecting outcomes.

Third, Kuran addresses the second hypothesis, providing a partial corrective to structuralist theoretical shortcomings in his examination of rational choice, and demonstrating a need to examine first movers and their motivations irrespective of events

precipitated by their actions. Rational choice theories are useful in that "they explain well

(…) the rarity of popular uprisings" (Kuran, 1991, p. 14). This rarity is significant in that

it suggests the possibility of a unified theory of how popular uprisings gain momentum

based upon uniformity—and to some extent, predictability—of group behavior, i.e.,

popular uprisings are rare because potential participants are, either explicitly or

implicitly, beholden to certain shared norms of both behavior and decision-making. But

this says nothing of individuals and, more to the point, first movers and their motivations

for engaging in high-risk behavior under low-reward conditions. As Kuran (1991)

correctly states, "standard [rational choice] theory simply fails to make sense of why the

first people to challenge the regime choose selflessly to gamble with their lives" (p. 14).

While startup founders and co-founders are not literally risking their lives in their

business endeavors, they are certainly risking their livelihoods—the things that make life

worth living—and important factor in the decision-making among first movers in MENA

during the Arab Spring.

Fourth, Wendy Pearlman's work, though intended as an explanation of social

cascades, unintentionally picks up the question of why first movers gamble with their

lives in her concept of moral identity and addresses the third hypothesis. But her work is

not without issue, and its theoretical foundations are, largely, subsumed by Kuran's work.

Pearlman (2016) argues that "intrinsic motivations for protest are malleable and

interdependent" (p. 880), yet such motivations are drawn from moral identity; something

that, if flowing from "the frame of commitments and principles that defines who people

are and from within which they distinguish good and bad" (p. 896), should be considered

fixed. Additionally, Samer Abboud (2018) notes that during the Syrian uprising, "the

heavy repression experienced by activists, many of whom were prominent figures in their respective professional fields, disincentivized any forms of activism by laypeople" (p. 57). This suggest that there is a degree of repression at which cessation of protest becomes absolute, irrespective of moral identity. However, the fluidity of moral identity—which I believe to be, and treat as, fixed—is not the most significant factor in the context of this or Pearlman's study. It is the potentially interdependent nature of intrinsic motivations that is of the greatest concern. If these motivations are, in fact, interdependent, it suggests that a first mover (or startup founder or co-founder) could experience competing motivations. That is, a first mover's assessment of risk, and subsequent decision to act or abstain, is subject to, and perhaps even dependent upon, the source and nature of his or her motivations (self-interested or exogenous—hypotheses 1 and 2).

Additionally, Pearlman also considers concepts aside from, though connected to, moral identity that may further inform a first mover's decision-making computations, and ultimate risk assumption, and also speaks to hypotheses 1 and 2. Though aimed at later adopters as "mechanisms [which] describe ways that individuals' responses to early risers trigger moral identity-based motivations for protest" (Pearlman, 2016, p. 877), concepts of normative ideals, joy of agency, and moral obligation may be better applied to first movers. Rather than looking at the effects of first movers on bystanders (potential participants), I will discuss of these concepts as they affect first movers to create a starting point for popular uprisings.

First, Pearlman (2016) applies to bystanders the concept of normative ideals based, in her estimation, on a sense of self-respect: "witnessing early risers display

esteemed values such as courage can activate bystanders' urge to act in order to earn their own self-respect" (p. 878). This is to say nothing of the source of first movers' courage, but it is implied that its origins can be found in self-respect, or a need to earn one's own self-respect. After all, self-respect is a human concept, not one of titular qualification. It is available to, and needed by all, to include first movers. The idea of self-respect-as-motivation lends weight to the second hypothesis—that first movers' motivations are self-interested.

Second, Pearlman again applies to bystanders a concept that is fully egalitarian in its availability and affects: the joy of agency. According to Pearlman (2016), "observing first movers' joy in voicing their true beliefs can also intensify onlookers' desire to exercise agency" (p. 878). Here, Pearlman acknowledges that joy of agency plays a role in the motivations of even first movers, but its intrinsic value is likely surpassed by that of the potential for extrinsic reward in the form of political and governance changes. She continues, "subsequent movers are hence reevaluating not the instrumental benefit of protest for achieving political objectives, but its inherent reward as a form of self-actualization" (Pearlman, 2016, p.878). But, for first movers, instrumental benefits of protest are clearly of great importance. Otherwise, there would likely be no first movers, no revolutions, no change; only a static world circumscribed to a predestined fate. The idea of extrinsic benefits being a motivating factor among first movers has significant implications in the first hypothesis.

Lastly, Pearlman's application of moral obligation has implications for the third hypothesis in that speaks to a risk assessment-based logic for participation in protest among later adopters. This logic is equally applicable to first movers, though on slightly

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different terms. According to Pearlman (2016), in absorbing punishments, early risers can trigger others' feelings of obligation to stand up for a moral principle, and thereby their willingness to make sacrifices that they previously had not" (p. 878). Certainly, it can be said that first movers begin with a sense of moral obligation (either intrinsic or extrinsic—hypotheses 1 and 2) to act. But that moral obligation is only translated from potential to kinetic action in conjunction with an assessment of potential punishments.

Where first movers differ greatly from later adopters—and what Pearlman misses entirely—is in their qualification and acceptance of unknowns. A first mover cannot be certain of how an incumbent regime will respond to acts of protest. Even nonviolent protest may be met with extreme violence. By the time a social cascade reaches critical mass, both the regime and the protest bloc have, usually, shown their respective hands, and know what to expect from one another. The stakes and rules of the game have already been codified. If a first mover's motivations are, as the third hypothesis suggests, extrinsically motivated, this may help to explain their willingness to accept the uncertainty of attendant risks.

Additionally, Nassim Nicholas Taleb's concept of skin in the game—briefly, having something of importance to lose by engaging in a given activity—may help to explain risk-taking behaviors among first movers. Two of the chief themes of Taleb's (2018) skin in the game are "symmetry in human affairs, that is, fairness, justice, responsibility, and reciprocity [and] rationality in complex systems and in the real world" (p. 3). The implication, particularly with the latter theme, is that humans innately employ a risk logic in making decisions. The former sets up the conditions under which that risk logic is employed. Taleb (2018) asserts that "there is a 'stop' somewhere, an absorbing

barrier that prevents people with skin in the game from emerging from it—and to which the system will invariably tend. Let us call these situations 'ruin,' as there is no reversibility away from the condition. The central problem is that if there is a possibility of ruin, cost-benefit analyses are no longer possible" (p. 225).

This accurately illustrates the situation in which many first movers find themselves, suggesting that pure rational choice might not play on the motivations of first movers. Later adopters may have pure rational choice at their disposal when rules of the game and expectations have been established, but first movers, such as Mohamed Bouazizi, the Tunisian street vendor who set himself on fire in protest, often risk Taleb's characterization of ruin. Likewise, startup founders and co-founders' risk financial and personal ruin short of death.

Owing to the lack of literature directly addressing motivations of first movers, it is necessary to examine scholarship on startup founders and co-founders to provide further context for their inclusion as a proxy for first movers under high risk-low reward conditions. Startup founders and co-founders often assume a great deal of deal of risk— primarily financial, and usually accompanied by Nth-order trickle-down effects—while even the prospects of rewards for success are scarce, mimicking the conditions confronted by first movers in MENA. While startup founders and co-founders do not (usually) risk their lives in pursuit of their goals, they do pursue those goals knowing that uncertainty of outcomes abounds, and in so doing risk the wellbeing and security of many of the things that make life a worthwhile pursuit: spouses, children, friends, homes, etc. This provides a useful corollary for the risks facing first movers in MENA.

Amy Wilkinson's book, *The Creator's Code*, is the result of more than 200 interviews of entrepreneurs—mostly startup founders and co-founders—from Elon Musk to Reid Hoffman. For five years, Wilkinson (2015) studied "the literature relevant to entrepreneurial endeavor from the fields of organizational behavior, psychology, sociology, entrepreneurship, economics, strategy, decision theory, and creativity" (p. 10). Among the most important findings is that "creators are not born with an innate ability to conceive and build $100 million enterprises. They work at it" (p. 10). This goes some distance in demonstrating that first movers are, necessarily, unaware of future, unknowable consequences of their actions. And first movers do not act with those consequences in mind. It also demonstrates the egalitarian nature of opportunity among startup founders and co-founders (creators), and first movers under high risk-low reward conditions.

In the course of her study, Wilkinson (2015) found that all creators "share certain fundamental approaches to the act of creation" (p. 10). There are six commonalities in all, and all of them apply to the mechanics of popular uprisings in general. A few apply directly to first movers. 'Finding the gap,' refers to creators' ability to recognize opportunity (Wilkinson, 2015, p. 10). First movers must, obviously, recognize an opportunity to act (though that opportunity is available to all). 'Drive for daylight' suggests that creators—and first movers—focus on the horizon, moving toward a goal without full understanding of peripheral consequences. It also suggests that creators' decisions and actions are not constrained by those of their peers. In short, they act independently (Wilkinson, 2015, p. 10). This addresses hypotheses 1 and 2. 'Fly the

OODA (observe, orient, decide, act) loop' refers to a continuous updating of assumptions and preferences (Wilkinson, 2015, p. 11) which might aid first movers in their ability to recognize opportunities to act before others, and is aligned with hypotheses 1 and 2.

From a political entrepreneurship perspective, Mark Schneider and Paul Teske (1992) offer that "entrepreneurs engage in the act of 'creative discovery'—they try to take advantage of newly discovered or newly created possibilities in order to earn entrepreneurial profits" (p. 738). 'Fail wisely' is the creators' understanding "that experiencing a series of small failures is essential to avoiding catastrophic mistakes" (Wilikinson, 2015, p. 11). This speaks to hypothesis 3. It is possible that first movers understand this concept, and act with it in mind. Perhaps Mohamed Bouazizi believed that his own death was only a small "failure" that would negate the catastrophic results of having to continue living under the conditions present at his self-immolation.

Ben Horowitz's book, *The Hard Thing About Hard Things: There Are No Easy Answers*, provides some useful insight on the mindset of startup founders (and first movers). As a (highly successful) startup founder and venture capitalist with more than two decades of experience in the startup "game," Horowitz offers a boots-on-the-ground or inside-the-mind-of perspective. Speaking about unknowable consequences of his actions, Horowitz (2014) says, "How could I have possibly prepared for this? How could I know that half our customers would go out of business? How could I know that it would become impossible to raise money in the private markets?" (p. 91). This certainly applies to first movers in that they cannot possibly know, or make sense of, what might come of their actions in the future. This may be significant for hypotheses 1 and 2. Horowitz (2014) also offers a piece of advice that may not be unfamiliar to first mover

motivations—and ties into Wilkinson's concepts of failing wisely and flying the OODA loop: "all the mental energy you use to elaborate your misery would be far better used trying to find the one seemingly impossible way out of your current mess" (p. 92). This may also be of importance for hypothesis 1 and 2.

As a corollary to the overall atmosphere confronting first movers under authoritarian regimes, Horowitz offers the Struggle. The Struggle is characterized by doubt, difficulty, deprivation, uncertainty—all things, presumably, familiar to first movers (and with implications for all three hypotheses. In short, Horowitz (2014) says, "the Struggle is when you want the pain to stop. The Struggle is unhappiness (…) The Struggle is when you are surrounded by people and you are all alone. The Struggle has no mercy (…) The Struggle is the land of broken promises and crushed dreams" (p. 61). This is perhaps the best illustration of the similarities of startup founders and co-founders, and first movers.  This paper builds on extant first-mover scholarship by integrating theory and practice, employing startup founders and co-founders as a proxy for real-world first movers. Using survey data as a vehicle to test three hypotheses, this paper examines startup founders and co-founders (first movers) on their own terms: As being disentangled from the results of their actions, and within the context of volatile, uncertain environments characteristic of conditions faced by firsts movers.

Chapter IV.

Research Methods


In order to understand motivations of first movers under high risk-low reward

conditions, such as those presented in MENA during the Arab Spring, startup founders

and co-founders were used as proxy for first movers. The goal of this study is to provide

a modest contribution to the understanding of motivations of first movers on something

of a lowest common denominator level in order to provide a foundation for future

research. To that end, the focus of this study is on the nature and origins of these

motivations. Given that the nature and origins (intrinsic versus extrinsic) of motivations

are not specific to either first movers or late adopters, such a construction might help to

disentangle first mover preferences from those governed to a greater degree by rational

choice among later adopters. That is, a strong preference for either intrinsic or extrinsic

motivations among startup founders and co-founders could demonstrate the foundational

elements of first mover actions.


Surveys

Survey methods were approved by, and conducted in accordance with, the

Harvard University Institutional Review Board, and its protocols. Two-hundred-two

known startup founders and co-founders were studied via survey, and the results of the

surveys were applied to case studies of Ted Kaczynski, Anders Behring Breivik, and

Vladimir Lenin.  Anonymous startup founders and co-founders were taken from a

cultivated community on the platform Survey Monkey. As the first "question," the survey contained an abstract regarding its purpose and application, as well as an explanation of the voluntary nature of the survey. The survey contained eight questions, with the first three being qualifying questions—to include attestation that the participant was at least 18 years of age, and whether or not they were a current or former startup founder or co-founder (see Appendix I for full text of questions).

Questions four through six were based on a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree) and are as follows: Founding or co-founding a startup came with the risk of financial ruin? Founding or co-founding a startup came with significant financial risk to my loved ones? The potential benefits of founding or co-founding a startup significantly outweighed the potential personal risks? Questions seven and eight were multiple choice, with only one selection allowed per question, and are as follows: What was the most important potential benefit to you in founding or co-founding a startup (a). personal financial gain; b). changing the world; c). helping my loved ones; d). personal fame)? What was the most important potential risk to you in founding or co-founding a startup (a). financial ruin; b). inability to change the world; c). negatively impacting loved ones; d). personal lack of fame)?

Questions four through six were used to assess motivations (intrinsic or extrinsic) and mindset for founding or co-founding a startup in the first place. For instance, an intrinsically motivated founder would agree or strongly agree with questions four and six, and disagree or strongly disagree with question five. For an extrinsically motivated individual, the response would be the opposite. Questions seven and eight were used to assess the motivations (altruistic or self-interested) of ultimate risk assumption. That is,

whence decisions to act are informed. For question seven, a startup founder whose risk assumption is extrinsically motivated and self-interested is expected to choose option a). personal financial gain, or d). personal fame. An intrinsically motivated individual would choose either b) or c). For question eight, an extrinsically motivated founder would, again, choose either option a) or d), while an intrinsically motivated founder would choose b) or c). Questions were ordered as they are, as opposed to the reverse order, for the purpose of allowing respondents to holistically consider all benefits of founding a startup without prompting, by way of a list of potential benefits, thus inducing more honest answers.

Additionally, because all respondents have founded or co-founded a startup, their reported motivations can be taken as concrete. In other words, founder and co-founder motivations are real, rather than theoretical. And, a comparison of answers to questions four through six to those of questions seven and eight could reveal interdependencies between the motivations in the initial approach to founding a startup and motivations of actual risk assumption. That is, generally intrinsically, altruistically motivated founders may have their ultimate decision to go into business dictated by external forces, and heightened self-interest. For example, an individual for whom benefits of founding a startup outweighed potential personal risk might also report that his or her most significant potential risk was negatively impacting loved ones, or being unable to change the world.

Case Selection

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate general initial principles. This study affirms the practical existence of those principles, and demonstrates their portability and

robustness (on limited selection criteria). As such, I wanted to avoid the specificity of a given time in history, and place in the world. Effectively negating the rules of the "game" native to an era or location will allow for the observation of portability of principles across time, and from place to place. In the interest of demonstrating the potential robustness of the nascent theories set forth herein, I sought diversity in cases across several elements. Some of those elements function as general, comparative preconditions—as attributes of the group of selected cases as a whole—for selection while others are more specific requirements employed for the purpose of directly addressing each case to the hypotheses.  To those ends, I selected the cases of Ted Kaczynski, Anders Behring Breivik, and Vladimir Lenin.

General criteria include controlling for rules of the "game" by selecting cases from different time periods and different regions, disparity of outcomes, and dimension of society most affected by the first mover's actions.   General criteria provide an operational framework for hypotheses-specific criteria. Each criterion serves as a means of demonstrating generalizability portability. Together, the body of criteria not only demonstrate robustness—applicability across multiple dimensions of assessment—but open the door to future scholarship on, say, understanding or predicting outcomes when selecting for the aspect of society (social, political, or economic) targeted by first movers.

Because of the nature of first mover motivations—that they are herein treated as persistent in the face of shifting societal norms—those motivations can be uniformly assessed across eras and geographic regions. The idea that technology, the Internet, or the Information Age have democratized the "job" of first mover is not correct. In many cases, technology has raised entry barriers, or even created new ones. But first movers pre-date

everything we currently term "technology," and some first movers even exist solely as a proposed (read: self-prescribed) curative for that technology. Startup founders and co-founders, like other first movers, are concomitants of humankind. That is, where people exist, so too do first movers. They are not, nor will they ever be, circumscribed to a particular geographic region, or constrained by a particular era (though the rules of the "game" may be bound by the peculiarities of a given region or era). Importantly, first movers and their respective actions are always defined in terms of societal conventions. In other words, "disruptive" or aberrant behaviors are assessed (and thereby made noticeable) against the backdrop of defined societal conventions. Given that societal conventions—broadly, the social, political, and economic norms that bind a people together—differ from place to place, as well as across time, many elements of the first mover and first mover behaviors may, in complimentary fashion, change without materially impacting motivations and, thereby, obviating the need for periodization for the purpose of study.

The character of an outcome—either success or failure—is beyond the scope of this study. Rather, having an outcome such that it is observable, of one variety or the other is what matters. Most startups fail, not unlike the majority of popular movements (at least in terms of their stated objectives). However, even failure connotes visible, tangible action on the part of first movers. Most startups fizzle and fade in rather unspectacular fashion, making their ephemeral existence nearly undetectable either in the moment or by the far-sighted gaze of history. But some failures do leave a footprint and, in so doing, provide instruction for future first movers regarding what to do, what not to do, what to embrace, what to avoid, etc.—Theranos, Elizabeth Holmes' fraudulent blood

testing endeavor, comes to mind as a particularly grandiose failure. In January 2022, Holmes was found guilty on seven of eleven charges relating to defrauding the public and investors (BBC, 2022). The point is that, irrespective of outcome, visible, tangible first mover action is a prerequisite for cases on the subject.

The impact of first mover actions, whether obliquely or directly, tends to affect all aspects of societal norms—namely, social, political, and economic aspects. First mover goals are often aimed more keenly one of the three. Owing to the inherently intertwined construction of what we qualify as a society, the remaining two aspects will necessarily experience residual effects.

Hypotheses-specific criteria, and their logic for inclusion, focus on four main areas: 1). Having clear, identifiable motivation; 2). Having clear, identifiable primary source literature or data. 3.) Having a clear, identifiable target, perceived problem, or perceived enemy; 4). Having clear, identifiable results. These criteria necessarily overlap, and speak to the real world, practical applicability of the hypotheses.

Clear and identifiable motivation on the part of first movers is evidenced in both primary source literature and, to a lesser degree, in the fact that first mover actions precipitated observable results. It should be noted that initial motivations, and initial intentions, do not always align with results. Motivations are causal elements, and are instructive as such, only insofar as they bring about an effect irrespective of that effect's nature or character. Primary source literature provides insight into the mindset, objectives, and logic of first movers. It serves as the theory—the philosophical foundation—for the first mover's practical application. Additionally, it may shed light on the first mover process. That is, the iterations (or lack thereof) in planning, amendment of

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objectives, alterations, and efficacy of methods (in execution of action, or distribution of

philosophy), etc. In short, primary source material elucidates change over (or lack

thereof) time leading up to the moment when the first mover takes action.

A first mover's reason for existing is defined in terms of his or her target. That is,

a perceived enemy (which can be any manner of noun, common or proper) or perceived

problem shapes a first mover's motivation, and everything that flows from it. For

instance, a political problem (perceived or real) may illicit a different response that one of

an economic nature. Therefore, it was important to include cases that address different

societal dimensions.

Having clear, identifiable results makes the case visible. As previously noted, an

actual violent street riot is much more noticeable than a failed attempt to start one. If a

moment in time does not pique the interest of history enough for it to commit the event to

its memory, the event becomes very difficult to study. This should be obvious, but it is

significant for reasons beyond the obvious. This is why, in part, it was necessary to

include cases that were both successful and unsuccessful in achieving the first mover's

aims. Results are the fruit of motivation. That interstitial space between obvious and

oblivion is where the first mover lives. Ultimately, the results of a first mover's actions—

whether successful or unsuccessful (even to the extent that such a determination is an

exercise in subjectivity)—are what delineate obvious from oblivion, and place the first

mover in the history books, or delete him or her from collective memory.

Chapter V.

Research Limitations


Internal limitations of this study include the fact that survey respondents were confined to the United States, which might impact generalizability. However, case studies—those of Ted Kaczynski, Anders Behring Breivik, and Vladimir Lenin—from both differing time periods and geographic regions were employed to aid in combatting this. In questions five, seven, and eight, the term "loved ones" is not defined, which could lead to inconsistent application of the term for the purpose of responses. Lastly, the phrasing of question three, and the fact that respondents have all founded or co-founded a startup, may cause responses to be based upon experienced outcomes rather than potential risks faced at the outset. External limitations include lack of availability of first movers, which is offset, theoretically, by the use of startup founders and co-founders as a proxy.

Chapter VI.

Results


The survey received 202 responses, the small majority of which came from females (53.96%; Table 1 – Gender). The bulk of responses (74.26%) were comprised of those between the ages (Table 2 – Age) of 30 and 60, with the 45-60 age group being most prevalent (41.09%). All survey participants were geographically located in the United States (Table 3 - Region) , with the most commonly represented regions being the mid-Atlantic (27.92%) and Pacific (21.83%). Household income levels (Table 4 - Income) were widely but relatively evenly distributed, with and median of $112,499 (at the upper end of the range), and interquartile range of $125,000.

## Gender

Answered: 202   Skipped: 0
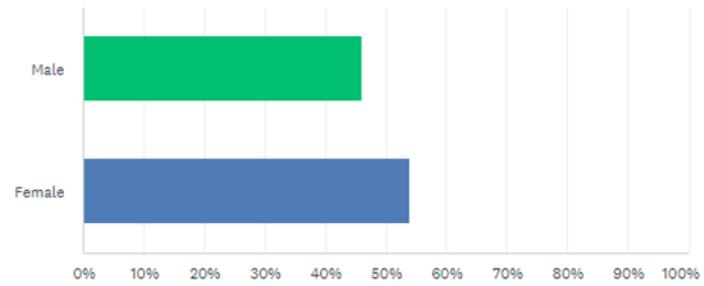


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 46.04% | 93 |
| Female | 53.96% | 109 |
| TOTAL | | 202 |

Figure 1. Gender

## Age

Answered: 202    Skipped: 0
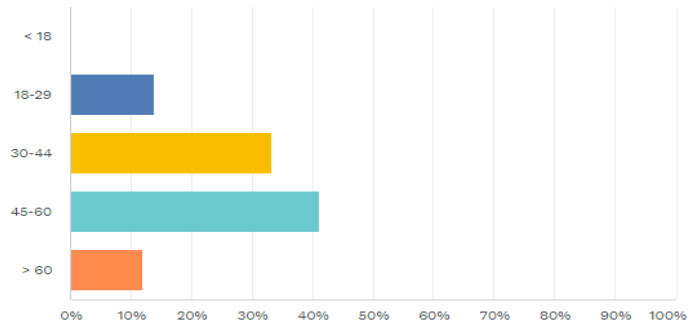


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| < 18 | 0.00% | 0 |
| 18-29 | 13.86% | 28 |
| 30-44 | 33.17% | 67 |
| 45-60 | 41.09% | 83 |
| > 60 | 11.88% | 24 |
| TOTAL | | 202 |

Figure 2. Age

## Region

Answered: 197    Skipped: 5
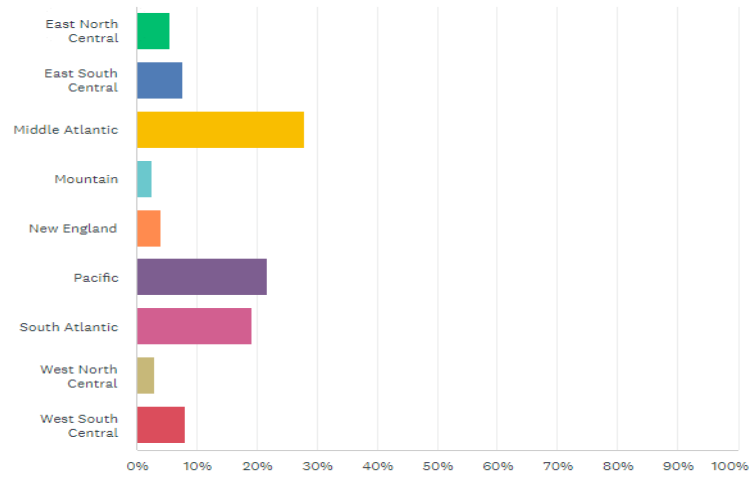
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| East North Central | 5.58% | 11 |
| East South Central | 7.61% | 15 |
| Middle Atlantic | 27.92% | 55 |
| Mountain | 2.54% | 5 |
| New England | 4.06% | 8 |
| Pacific | 21.83% | 43 |
| South Atlantic | 19.29% | 38 |
| West North Central | 3.05% | 6 |
| West South Central | 8.12% | 16 |
| TOTAL | | 197 |

Figure 3. Region

**Household Income**

Answered: 202   Skipped: 0

| Income Range | Percentage |
|---|---|
| $0-$9,999 | 3.47% |
| $10,000-$24,999 | 7.92% |
| $25,000-$49,999 | 15.35% |
| $50,000-$74,999 | 8.91% |
| $75,000-$99,999 | 13.37% |
| $100,000-$124,999 | 12.38% |
| $125,000-$149,999 | 11.39% |
| $150,000-$174,999 | 6.44% |
| $175,000-$199,999 | 7.43% |
| $200,000+ | 9.41% |
| Prefer not to answer | 3.96% |

Figure 4. Income

In accordance with survey results, hypotheses one and three are accepted. Results failed to support acceptance of the second hypothesis. In assessing the results of the survey, a pattern emerged. R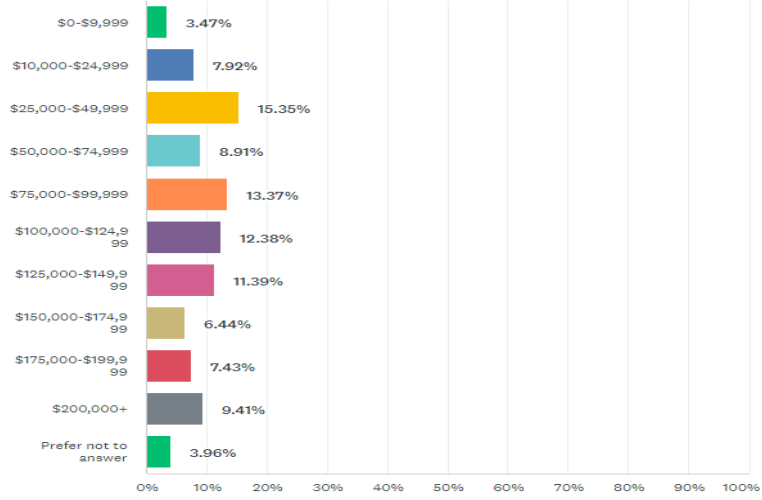isk assessment and the desire to act were intrinsically or endogenously motivated. Put another way, startup founders and co-founders are demonstrably less self-interested, and more altruistic in their approach to action. Conversely, they are more self-interested—or extrinsically or exogenously motivated—in their ultimate assumption of risk. That is, as the moment of no return—the point at which a decision to act must be made—becomes nearer, and the potential results of one's decision become increasingly real and palpable, individuals tend to weight their personal risk more heavily.

Questions four through six were used to assess motivations (altruistic or self-interested) and mindset for founding or co-founding a startup in the first place. The plural majority of respondents (45.54%) indicated that they strongly agree that founding or co-founding a startup came with the risk of financial ruin. This indicates that, not only were founders—and, by extension, first movers—aware of potentially devastating personal risks, they chose a more selfless and altruistic focus in their approach to action, and assessment of risk. Question six saw similar results, with 39.11% strongly agreeing that the potential benefits of founding or co-founding a startup significantly outweighed the potential personal risks, again reasserting an altruistic locus of decision-making pertaining to their approach to action. Additionally, both questions four and six saw the overwhelming majority of respondents either agree or strongly disagree. Both questions four and six demonstrate support for the first hypothesis and undermine the second

hypothesis. The inverse would have been true had the majority, or plural majority,

disagreed or strongly disagreed with questions four and six.

Approach to Action: Risk of Financial Ruin

## Founding or co-founding a startup came with the risk of financial ruin?

Answered: 202    Skipped: 0



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 45.54% | 92 |
| Agree | 30.20% | 61 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 15.35% | 31 |
| Disagree | 4.95% | 10 |
| Strongly disagree | 3.96% | 8 |
| TOTAL | | 202 |
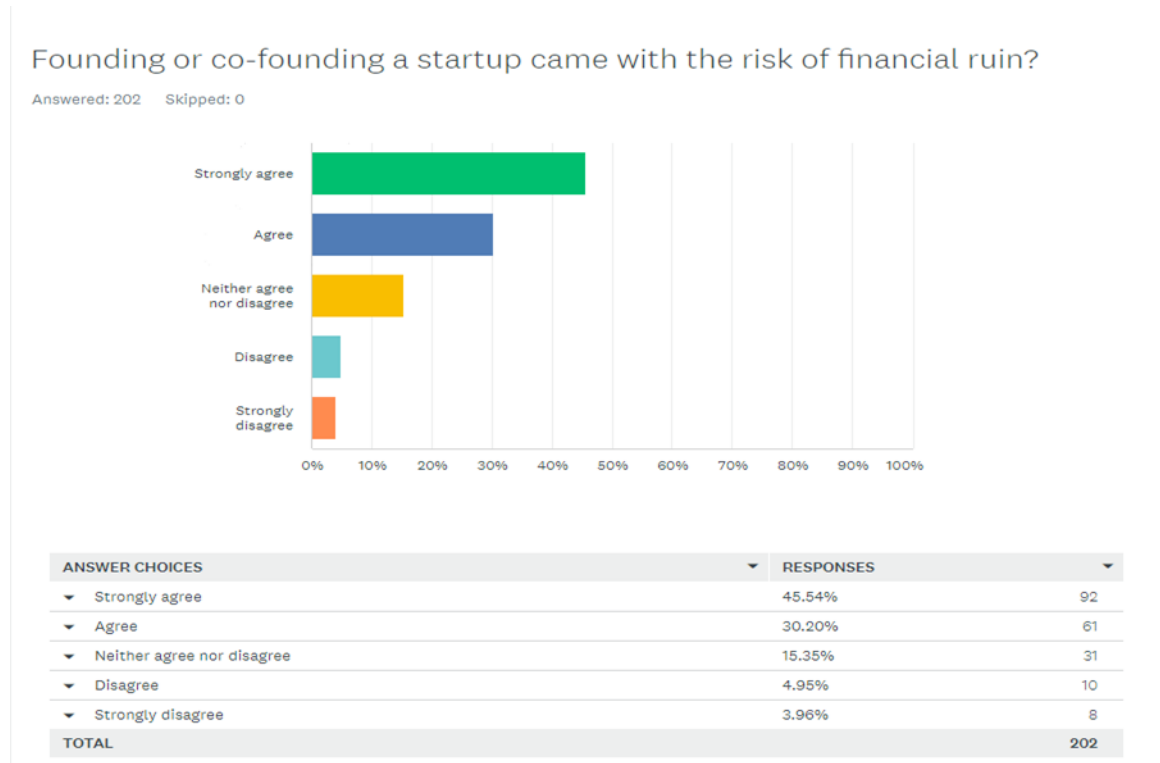
Figure 5. Financial Ruin

Approach to Action: Risk vs. Benefit



The potential benefits of founding or co-founding a startup significantly outweighed the potential personal risks?

Answered: 202    Skipped: 0
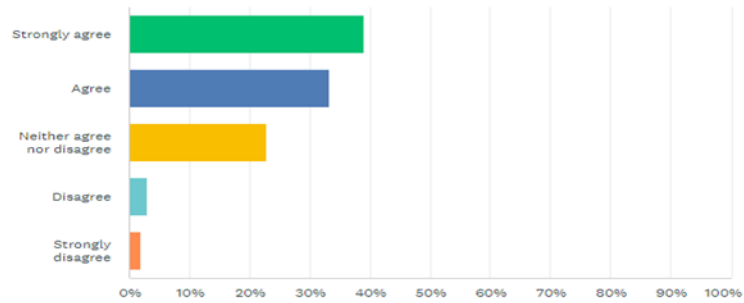
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 39.11% | 79 |
| Agree | 33.17% | 67 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 22.77% | 46 |
| Disagree | 2.97% | 6 |
| Strongly disagree | 1.98% | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 202 |

Figure 6. Risk vs. Benefit

Question five told a slightly different story than would be expected, given the results of questions four and six. Responses to question five do not offered the clear-cut support for the first hypothesis evidenced by questions four and six. An intrinsically, altruistically motivated individual would be expected to disagree or strongly disagree that founding or co-founding a startup came with significant financial risk to their loved ones. Such a response would indicate that founders' desire to act is inversely proportional to potential damage—financial damage, in this case—to loved ones. However, actual responses suggest that, in their approach to action, founders' desire to act has a more direct relationship with the well-being of loved ones. Just over 40% (40.10%) of respondents strongly agreed that their loved ones faced significant financial risk in the face of the respondent's decision to act (on founding a startup). That said, it is not insignificant more respondents disagreed (7.43%) or strongly disagreed (6.44%) with question five than did either questions four or six. This may suggest that, rather than operating in a sterile decision-making environment, startup founders—like boots-on-the-ground first movers—find themselves in, and are aware of, gray areas of competing risks and assessments thereof. That being the case, it would appear that founders lend greater weight to more selfless, altruistic concerns in the early stages of their crescendo toward action (or inaction).

Approach to Action: Risk to Loved Ones

Founding or co-founding a startup came with significant financial risk to my loved ones?

Answered: 202    Skipped: 0



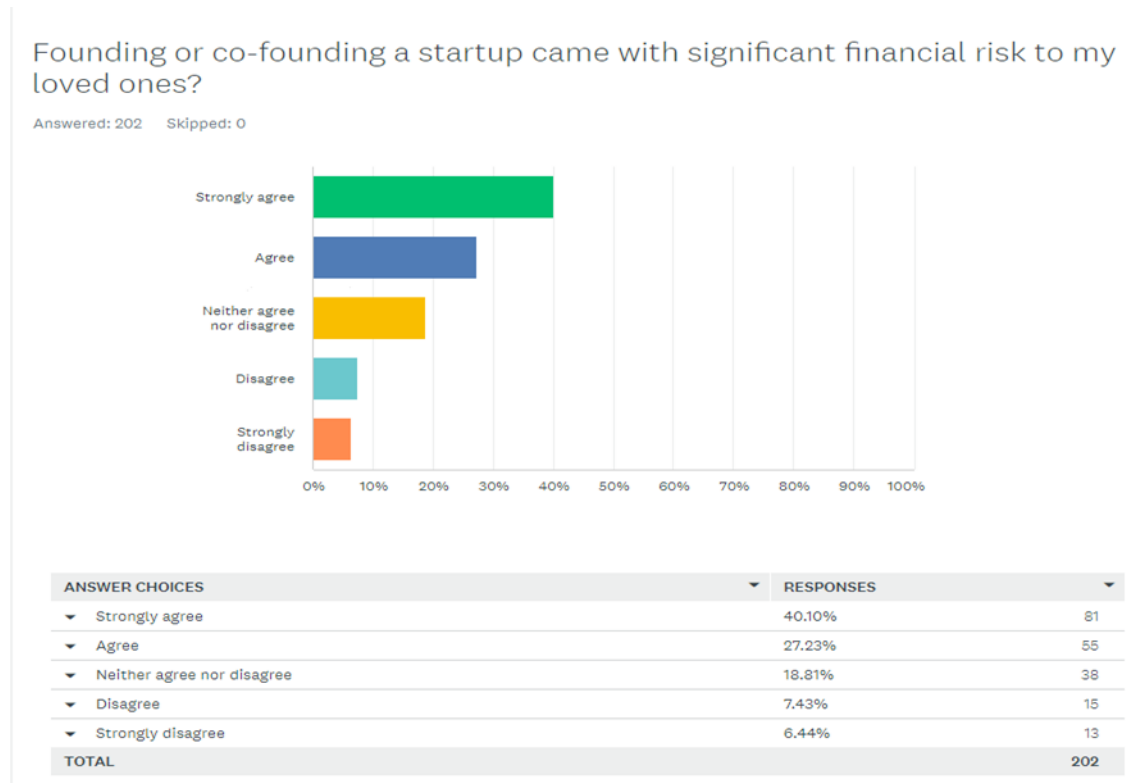| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 40.10% | 81 |
| Agree | 27.23% | 55 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 18.81% | 38 |
| Disagree | 7.43% | 15 |
| Strongly disagree | 6.44% | 13 |
| TOTAL | | 202 |

Figure 7. Risk to Loved Ones

Questions seven and eight support acceptance of the third hypothesis. These questions were designed to assess risk assumption. This is a founder, or first mover's, ultimate decision to act based upon the manner in which their risk assessment informs their motivation. The majority of respondents (57.43%) stated that the most important potential benefit (to themselves) in founding or co-founding a startup was personal financial gain. Had a majority of respondents chosen answers aimed at the benefit of others, support for the third hypothesis would have been undermined. This illustrates a noticeable shift in mindset compared to questions four through six. A founder's free choice—something that is perhaps not a luxury afforded some first movers—of his or her "most important potential benefit" can, and should, be read as something of a tipping point: 'This is why I am (or am not) acting.' At that juncture, the decision to act has been made. Whereas founders were, largely, motivated by altruistic concerns in their approach to action, they were more self-interested in acting and assuming real risk. In this case, they were motivated by money.

Taking Action: Potential Benefits



What was the most important potential benefit to you in founding or co-founding a startup?

Answered: 202    Skipped: 0

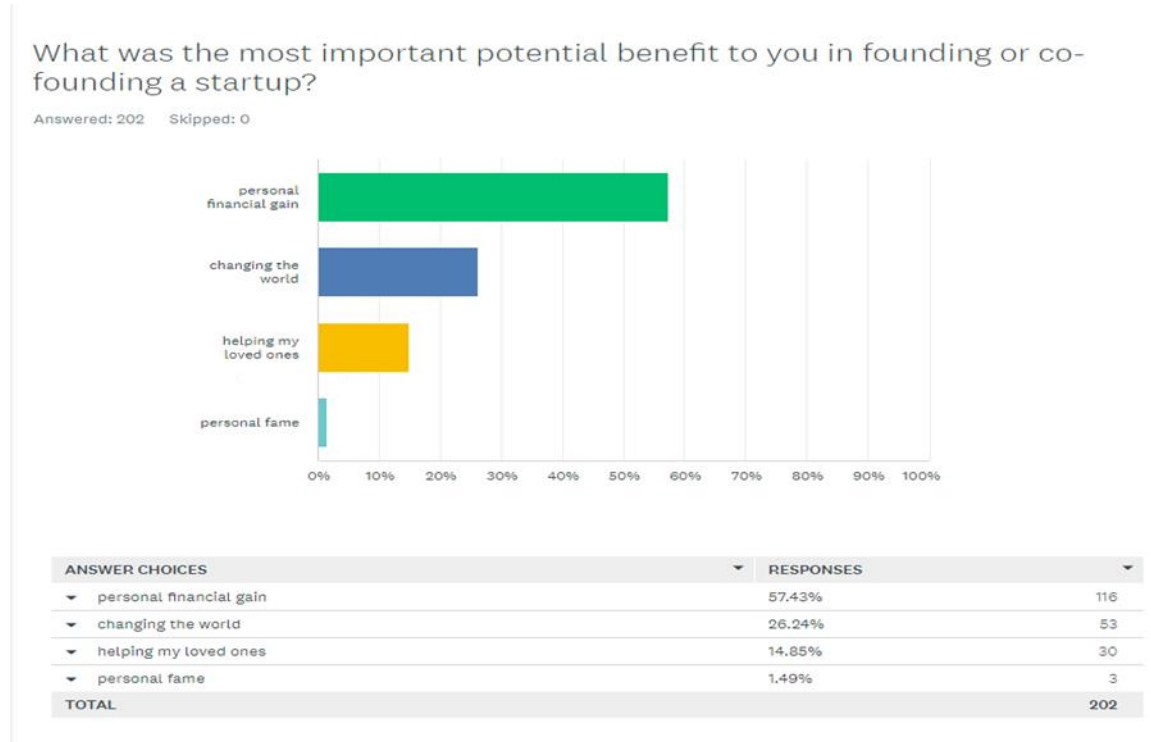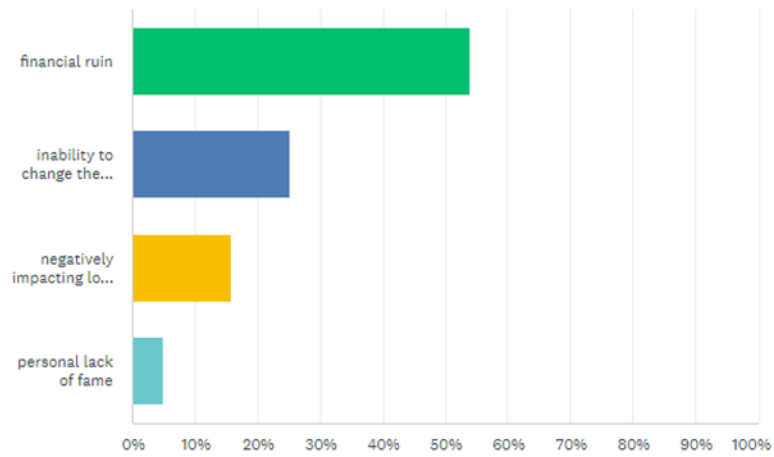| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| personal financial gain | 57.43% | 116 |
| changing the world | 26.24% | 53 |
| helping my loved ones | 14.85% | 30 |
| personal fame | 1.49% | 3 |
| TOTAL | | 202 |

Figure 8. Potential Benefits

Question eight was designed from the same perspective as that of question seven. Again, founders were motivated by self-interest in the form of money. A stronger interest in changing the world or helping others would have indicated a significantly lesser degree—and, perhaps, and absence altogether—of self-interest. A majority of respondents (53.96%) stated that financial ruin was the most important potential risk (to themselves) in founding or co-founding a startup. It is worth noting responses suggesting an altruistic approach to risk assumption—inability to change the world (25.25%) and negatively impacting loved ones (15.84%)—provided a substantively significant opposition to the most popular answer. In sum, the responses to questions seven and eight are suggestive of a tendency for first movers to contract their locus of interest and concern—from the populace at-large to the individual—as the moment of action (or inaction) nears, and the potential consequence begin to hit home.

Taking Action: Potential Benefits

What was the most important potential risk to you in founding or co-founding a startup?

Answered: 202    Skipped: 0



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|---|---|
| financial ruin | 53.96% | 109 |
| inability to change the world | 25.25% | 51 |
| negatively impacting loved ones | 15.84% | 32 |
| personal lack of fame | 4.95% | 10 |
| TOTAL | | 202 |

Figure 9. Potential Risks

While survey results were a stark reminder that precious few endeavors in life—from changing careers to altering the collective conscious of the public at-large—are of a binary, black-and-white nature, they were substantively significant in assessing the motivations of first movers. Using startup founders and co-founders as a proxy for first movers provided instructive feedback, and ample opportunity for application of that feedback to real-life, historical popular movements. Such an application will be helpful in not only bridging extant gaps in scholarship regarding the understanding of the motivations of first movers, but in delineating between the point where instigation of a movement ends, and the effects of cascade models begin. In other words, this study may assist in determining how far, or to what degree, a first mover or group of first movers might carry a movement on their own.

Chapter VII.

Case Studies

Case Studies of Ted Kaczynski, Anders Behring Breivik, Vladimir Lenin have been selected for the application of the hypotheses set forth in this paper, and for examination of the survey data collected. Case selection focuses on four main areas: 1). Having clear, identifiable motivation; 2). Having clear, identifiable primary source literature or data. 3.) Having a clear, identifiable target, perceived problem, or perceived enemy; 4). Having clear, identifiable results. These criteria necessarily overlap, and speak to the real world, practical applicability of the hypotheses.

Excluded Cases

Some potential cases—some with even greater historical and cultural significance than those chosen for this study—simply did not align with the above criteria closely enough to warrant inclusion. However, given their importance in the broader picture on this subject, they should be afforded a few words. Mohamed Bouazizi kicked off the Arab Spring in 2010, Gavrilo Princip ignited World War I, and Razen Zaitouneh founded a literal startup to combat human rights abuses in Syria leading up to, and during, the still-ongoing civil war. One common thread between—one that might facilitate future study—is that their first mover actions ultimately cost them their lives, either voluntarily or forcibly.

Mohamed Bouazizi – 2010, Tunisia

Mohamed Bouazizi's case does not warrant inclusion, because it does not satisfy the first two selection criteria. Bouazizi, it would seem, was something of an accidental first mover. Did he intend, with his self-immolation, to set off a wave of protest and demand for sweeping governmental and governance change across north Africa and the Middle East? That seems unlikely, but a lack of primary source literature (from Bouazizi himself) prevents that question from being answered directly, and conclusively. Additionally, Bouazizi was unknown to the world community prior to his death. Even posthumously, details about his life are murky, competing assertions (and assumptions) abounding. Despite most news outlets describing Bouazizi as being university educated, his sister reported that he never graduated high school (Toumi, 2010, para. 5). Further, his mother noted their family was not a political one (Beaumont, 2011, para. 23). Given that, and coupled with the reactionary nature of Bouazizi's suicide, it suggests it would be nearly impossible to assess his approach to action, whether self-interested or altruistic (though his suicide would suggest the former). There was little contemplation, or purposive process, leading up to Bouazizi setting himself ablaze.

On the other hand, his action had two very clear, identifiable results: his death, and the eventual ouster of President Aine El Abidine Ben Ali. The latter is useful in that, irrespective of that result being termed either a success or failure, it is a result that would allow the case to be examined within the framework of this study (provided other selection criteria were met), or in future research. The former speaks to Bouazizi's ultimate risk assumption. He committed suicide. Having suffered numerous, repeated injustices—either directly or indirectly at the hands of Tunisia's government—Bouazizi

told a friend shortly before his death, "I'm so fed up and tired (…) I can't breathe anymore" (Lageman, 2020, para. 12). His final act was one of self-preservation in a certain way. Finding that his simply being alive was at odds with making a living, Bouazizi found the solution was to take his own life. In short, his ultimate risk assumption was decidedly self-interested.

Gavrilo Princip – 1914, Serbia

Gavrilo Princip's case does not warrant inclusion for failing to satisfy the first three selection criteria. Princip and, to a lesser extent, his co-conspirators—members of the Serbian nationalist terrorist group, The Black Hand—precipitated World War I with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Duchess Sophie Chotek of Austria. At his trial, Princip stated, "I am a Yugoslav nationalist, aiming for the unification of all Yugoslavs, and I do not care what form of state, but it must be free from Austria" (Sedley, 2011, para. 2). While this might qualify as a first mover altruistically motivated in his approach to action, several other factors preclude him this study. First, and most obviously, there is a dearth of primary source literature from Princip himself. Though there is a relative abundance of literature on, and from, The Black Hand regarding its philosophy and ideology with respect to its perceived adversaries it does not speak to Princip's own motivations and beliefs. The only way to assess Princip's motivation is in terms of that of The Black Hand. To the extent that The Black hand purported to address its cause—largely, Serbian independence—on the behalf of what it determined to be a greater good, it can be said that Princip was altruistically motivated in his approach to action.

Second, The Black Hand's adversary's—the targets of their actions—were somewhat nebulous. They included anyone and anything that might potentially pose a threat to Serbia, and Serbian independence, be socially, politically, or economically. That makes it difficult to distinguish between friend and foe. This is particularly apparent in Princip's specific case. His target, the Archduke, still being the heir to the Austrian throne, not the emperor, was relatively insignificant in terms of having the ability to exert influence over Serbia and Serbian independence. Princip killed a man who was more important in death than in life, and who was only obliquely connected to The Black Hand's—and, by extension, Princip's—cause. Additionally, there is some confusion and disagreement as to whether or not The Black Hand even authorized the assassination, or the plot was concocted by a rogue agent within the group (Dedijer, 1966). This type of uncertainty prevents accurate assessment of Princip's motivation in his approach to action.

Third, Princip's assumption of risk is difficult to properly gauge, chiefly because he attempted suicide immediately upon capture. Given that his plan entailed shooting an Austrian statesman in broad daylight in the middle of a large city, Princip had to have understood that his capture would be imminent. Whether he was instructed by leadership of The Black Hand—perhaps on the threat of violence or his loved ones—to swallow a cyanide capsule, or whether Princip took the poison willingly as a means of escaping punishment, is unknown. The Black Hand may have wanted to prevent Princip from providing information to authorities, or Princip may have simply wanted a way out. If he was not coerced, and his suicide were part of the plan, Princip's risk assumption might be viewed as self-interested in that he sought to spare himself from prison. Even if he was

coerced, and his suicide were part of the plan, it can be conjectured that his actions were something of a self-sacrifice to the cause; a form of martyrdom.

Lastly, and most importantly, Princip was a stooge, a patsy. He was a child. He pulled the trigger on the gun that started World War I when he was only 19 years old. It is difficult to believe that he fully understood what he was doing. That aside, Princip's case is reminiscent of that of Lee Harvey Oswald (though Oswald might not exactly fit the first mover criteria) in its lack of clarity. Abounding and competing conspiracy theories Oswald, his plans, and his actions lend an element of opacity that make distinguishing truth from fiction nearly impossible. But, like Oswald (by most accounts), Princip was merely an instrument for exerting the will of a puppet master collective.

Razen Zaitouneh – 2001-2013, Syria

Razen Zaitouneh's case does not warrant inclusion for having failed to satisfy the second selection criterion. Zaitouneh was a native Syrian, and a human rights lawyer, as well as an activist during the Syrian uprising and subsequent civil war. She was also a first mover; a founder, as it were. An Associated Press by Bassem Mroue (2018) report notes that "she chanted in protests against President Bashar Assad, but was also unflinching in documenting abuses by rebels fighting to oust him" (para. 2). According to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (2012), Zaitouneh "established SHRIL [Syria Human Rights Information Link] in 2005, the same year she co-founded the Human Rights Association in Syria (HRAS)" (para. 1). It is clear that, in both her approach to action, and ultimate risk assumption, Zaitouneh's motives were altruistic. By definition, human rights, and abuses thereof, is not a unitary issue. Human rights apply to all. Zaitouneh would have understood, and made the same assessment.

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Still, she shouldered the burden of action on behalf of others. In so doing, she made herself a target; an enemy of the state. In Syria, the state is, for all intents and purposes, the draconian Assad regime which had necessitated her action in the first place. As such, Zaitouneh must have intensely understood that her actions would likely precipitate harsh repercussions. In other words, her ultimate assumption of risk, was a selfless act.

For her efforts in abating human rights abuses seemingly endemic to the Assad regime and its rebel opponents alike, Zaitouneh earned the label "foreign agent" from Syrian state television in 2011 as tensions were building toward the eruption of the Arab Spring. She was, effectively, branded a traitor, and went into hiding. According to a Syria Direct post written by Noura Hourani, Tariq Adely, and Justin Clark (2018), just a month later "Zaitouneh founded the Violations Documentation Center (VDC) in April 2011—just after mass anti-government protests began in Syria" (para. 7). That same post notes that "on December 9, 2013, masked gunmen raided the offices of the VDC in Douma and kidnapped four of its members" (Hourani et al, 2018, para. 9), to include Zaitouneh and her husband.

The nature of Zaitouneh's human rights work, and the well-reported risks present in Syria at the time this case a highly visible one. That she noticed, even sought out, opportunity—in this case, to curb human rights abuses—demonstrates a desire emanating from without to do something. Her approach was altruistically driven; a form of selfless service that, in deciding to act and assume risks, became a form of self-sacrifice. Zaitouneh's choice to act in the face of terrible risk to right the wrongs she identified—after having been labeled a traitor and forced into hiding—demonstrates a will to do something, to assume risk on the behalf of those she tried to help.

Selected Cases

Other cases—the majority of cases—demonstrate the validity of the first and third

hypotheses. Among them are Ted Kaczynski, Anders Behring Breivik, and Vladimir

Lenin. There is abundant primary source literature available—particularly first-person

writings—for all of them. They all identified a clear adversary or adversaries as targets of

their cause and actions. Each witnessed a clear result to their approach to action, and

ultimate risk assumption. But, each case has representative differences that delineate it

from the others. Two or these first movers acted alone. One was aided by a group. Two

were concerned with a specific dimension of society, while one applied his philosophy

and practice to all. Each was influenced through different modes and methods. Still, their

motivations remained similar as they approached action, and ultimately took it.


Ted Kaczynski – 1978-1996, United States

Ted Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber, began making headlines under

his pseudonym as a first mover in the late-1970s. He wrote a manifesto detailing

opposition to what he asserted were pressing social and cultural ills—chief among them,

technology and leftism—that would, in his view, ultimately precipitate the unraveling of

not only society, but civilization as we know it. That, coupled with his actions taken to

combat what he viewed as his enemies, makes Kaczynski's case an optimal one for

inclusion in this study, and for the application of the hypotheses herein.  His manifesto

offers first-person primary source literature that speaks directly to his motivations, and

perceived ills and enemies. Kaczynski's approach to action is in alignment with the first

hypothesis in that his perceived adversaries, in his own mind, were also enemies of the

greater good. He believed his cause was one set upon on behalf of all of Western

civilization, and the preservation thereof. In terms of the third hypothesis, Kaczynski took

great pains in the name of self-preservation. He assiduously hid his identity, and

perpetrated his attacks from afar, indicating that his decision to act, and his assumption to

act were driven primarily by self-interest. In other words, if he believed his capture were

of high likelihood, it is unlikely he would have carried out his attacks, even at the

expense of his cause.

Between 1978 and 1995 Ted Kaczynski perpetrated series of mail and hand-

delivered bombings that left a tally of three people killed and twenty-three people injured.

He was apprehended in 1996, as a result of his brother's collaboration with the Federal

Bureau of Investigation (Waits & Shors, 1999). Kaczynski operated under the premise

that his violent actions were necessary for the purpose of directing attention to his cause:

That the use of modern technology required a form of mass organization that was eroding

the capacity to achieve freedom and dignity. In an essay entitled Industrial Society and Its

Future, which essentially became his manifesto, he argued that technology was

responsible for the elimination of human-scale communities. Kaczynski (1995) also

argued that:

> The continued development of technology will worsen the situation. It will
> certainly subject human beings to greater indignities and inflict greater
> damage on the natural world, it will probably lead to greater social
> disruption and psychological suffering, and it may lead to increased
> physical suffering even in "advanced" countries. The industrial-
> technological system may survive, or it may break down. If it survives, it
> may eventually achieve a low level of physical and psychological
> suffering, but only after passing through a long and very painful period of
> adjustment and only at the cost of permanently reducing human beings
> and many other living organisms to engineered products and mere cogs in
> the social machine. Furthermore, if the system survives, the consequences
> will be inevitable: There is no way of reforming or modifying the system
> so as to prevent it from depriving people of dignity and autonomy.

This is an exceptionally dire characterization of the evolution of technology, particularly as it concerns its influence on the social space. Kaczynski's highly detailed, pessimistic view of technology suggests a well-defined motivation, as well as a clear target, prompting him to carry out his actions. According to Kaczynski, the socio-economic order that developed as a result of the Industrial Revolution entailed a subjugation of human needs to those of the system. The main two casualties of this process were human freedom and the natural world (Waits & Shors, 1999). His actions were motivated by the need to raise awareness about the fact that humans served technology, rather than the other way around. His thinking and actions reflected the way he lived, relatively isolated from the rest of society in a small cabin in Lincoln, Montana.

His approach to action was altruistic—a confirmation of the first hypothesis—in the sense that he did not seek either financial gain or personal recognition. Instead, working anonymously, he sought to warn people about what he saw as the devastating effects of a heavy-handed reliance on technology. Kaczynski argued that the rise of technological society led to the consolidation of the power of big business and big government. His use of modern technology to perpetrate his violent acts allegorically represented the destructive capacity of modern society. Most importantly, his worldview revolved around the idea that his actions were meant to reinforce the need for action by all members of society to prevent technological advancement would lead to the complete physical and psychological subjugation of humanity.

Kaczynski was certainly interested in ensuring that his ideas would be known to the public at large. However, it does not appear as if Kaczynski was interested in personal gain in any one form or another. Kaczynski had suffered a number of psychological

setbacks in his youth. While a student at Harvard University, he participated in an experiment led Henry Murray, who developed a theory based on a system of needs, examining the different levels of systemic complexity that influenced an individual (Murray, 1938). The experiments that took place—to include mind-control techniques—under Murray's supervision involved a great deal of emotional and psychological abuse, leaving a significant impact on Kaczynski's psyche. These experiments were used by Kaczynski's defense team in order to justify his psychological development (Alston, 2000).

Fleming (2022) states that Kaczynski's ideology was a synthesis of "ideas from three well known academics: French philosopher Jacques Ellul, British zoologist Desmond Morris, and American psychologist Martin Seligman" (p. 207). The radical environmentalism espoused by Kaczynski responded to some of the concerns raised by green activists and policymakers during the second part of the twentieth century, who warned about the potential damage that could be done to the environment if economic progress was to continue unabated. Again, this points to an altruistic philosophy and approach to action, which supports the first hypothesis.

Alhumaid (2022) makes a case for Kaczynski's self-interested risk assumption and demonstrates the validity of the third hypothesis. He states that, "Kaczynski's use of the devices also serves to consciously reinforce the text's scientific and academic pretentions. This distinguishes the Manifesto from other forms of discourse produced by criminal or marginal groups and distinguishes Kaczynski as a marginal actor who attempted to justify his actions through appeals to logic and empirical reasoning" (p. 1). In other words, Kaczynski sought to separate himself from his actions (as well as

philosophical competitors) both theoretically, and in practice. Kaczynski's actions—the end product of his assessment of risk aversion and assumption—targeted the most immediate, tangible enemies of his cause: Individuals whom he viewed as proliferators and defenders of technological advancement. Kaczynski could, perhaps, have chosen to target "bigger fish"—individuals, corporations, or institutions that impacted his cause more greatly that the individuals he ultimately singled out. Instead of mailing a bomb to a university computer science professor, he might have parked a van loaded with ammonium nitrate fuel oil in the garage at Apple headquarters, thereby bringing far more notoriety—and increased intensity and immediacy—to his philosophy and cause. But, that manner of scrutiny brings with it increased risk. Specifically, it would have increased the likelihood that Kaczynski would be identified and apprehended. Rather than attacking a tech giant, Kaczynski chose relative nobodies. That is not to dimmish the loss of life, or the severity of suffering inflicted upon those individuals, but rather to highlight the fact that Kaczynski selected his targets as a matter of self-serving, self-interested convenience. Again, Kaczynski's behavior supports the third hypothesis.

Kaczynski believed that damage visited upon the environment at the hands of technology, and in the name of technological advancement, would eventually reach critical mass, and become irreversible. These beliefs, from his perspective, justified the killing and maiming of others, even if incidental and innocent (by Kaczyinski's standards). Again, acceptance of this manner of collateral damage—damage that could precipitate negative public backlash toward his cause—suggests a degree of self-centeredness and self-interest. In sum, Kaczynski chose specific actions that could logically result in harm being done directly to the cause which he hoped to further.

Though not explicitly stated, it is obliquely implied, and perhaps subconsciously

embedded, that recognition of his ideas was more important than the cause itself.

Similarly, Kaczynski's behavior when seeking publication of his manifesto also

supports the third hypothesis. Kaczynski insisted that his manifesto be printed in what he

deemed a 'respectable' periodical. Kaczynski's self-interest is again evident in the form

reputational self-preservation. Knowing that he was the sole author of the manifesto,

Kaczynski wanted to ensure that his message to the world stood on the defacto

endorsement of a reputable publication. This also functioned as insurance, not only of the

standard of his ideas, but of his own reputation as someone fit to proffer advice to the rest

of the populace.

As time wore on, Kaczynski became less concerned about the result of his

actions. Instead, he focused on the effect that his actions had in raising awareness about

the issues that prompted him into action in the first place. Skrbina (2009) argues that

"Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier*, Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*, Illich's *Tools for*

*Conviviality*, Ellul's *The Technological Society* —all these recognized the imperative of

taking direct action to gain the upper hand on the technological system" (p. 191).

Kaczynski, in his risk assessment and final assumption, embraced that idea. Particular

attention should be afforded the influence exerted on Kaczynski by Illich's Tools for

Conviviality, which details the deleterious effects of specialized knowledge and the

influence of mainstream thinking on the individual. At the core of the body of thought

espoused by Kaczynski, there is a belief that institutionalization of knowledge creates the

basis for lack of autonomous thinking among individuals and communities. This

transmogrification of both the community, and the individual as the elemental functional

unit of the community, is compounded by the hegemonic role of the technocratic elites in the industrialized part of the world, which deprived the average citizen of the opportunity to acquire and retain practical knowledge to lead and independent life (Illich, 1973).

To some extent, the influence of this work contributed to Kaczynski's radicalization, paving the way for the series of attacks that took place over a period of twenty years. Ellul (1954) highlighted the problems that emerged as a result of the influence of technology on the individual and the state of "dissociation" with nature, turning "man into fragments" (pp. 801-802). Kaczynski was significantly impacted by Ellul's ideas, and the (negative) possibilities created by the influence of technology on modern society. Ellul (1954) argued that "modern society is moving toward a mass society, but the human being is still not fully adapted to this new form" (p. 814). This is likely one of the reasons why the Kaczynski relocated to Lincoln, Montana, retreating into a wilderness unblemished by the encroachment of technology's rapid advance tried to live a life more conducive to the preservation of the natural habitat. Additionally, the relative isolation of the Montana wild offered Kaczynski a buffer between himself and apprehension. In other words, that isolation and its attendant anonymity were a function of the self-interest defined in the third hypothesis.

In the end, Kaczynski failed. His apparent concern for humanity—as described by the first hypothesis—in his approach to action ultimately proved impotent, at least partially undone by the self-interest manner in which he expressed his concern, which directly supports the third hypothesis. He identified a clear enemy; not just a personal one, but an enemy of the greater good, of all. He committed his philosophy to paper and sought its broadcast for the benefit of the collective, not for his own. However, his

actions told a different story. Kaczynski made clear sacrifices of the wellbeing of his

cause. He demonstrated little regard for the furtherance of his own cause in focusing his

attacks on relatively inconsequential individuals rather than technology as an institution,

and in his acceptance of injury and suffering inflicted upon innocents. He executed his

attacks from the safety of anonymity and great physical distance. He sought the

protection of his own reputation, and that of his ideas. In short, despite his adherence to a

core system of beliefs, he eschewed those beliefs in the name of self-preservation.


Anders Behring Breivik – 2011, Norway

        The case of Anders Behring Breivik is also indicative of the validity of the first

and third hypothesis. Like Kaczynski, Breivik also targeted a clear problem, stated in his

manifesto, in the form of social concerns—namely, what he viewed as the slow

strangulation of (white) European culture at the hands of Islamization. His problem

(Islam and Islamization) and goal (preservation of European culture) statements were

crafted around the interests of the latter, not just his own. As such, his approach to action

was born, in his mind, of altruistic concerns, and supports the first hypothesis. Breivik, a

Norwegian white supremacist far-right domestic terrorist, killed 77 people on 22 July

2011. Most of them were children. Knowing that he would be apprehended—he

essentially gave himself up without a fight—might make it tempting to view his risk

assumption as (strangely, and somewhat counterintuitively) altruistic; sacrificing himself

for the cause, a martyr. However, Breivik stated that his main objective in carrying out

the deadly attacks was to call public attention to his manifesto (Kremer, Stigset, Treloar,

S., 2011, para. 5). Additionally, Breivik stated that his actions were born or good, not

evil, and were a pre-emptive measure against what he viewed as further Islamization of

Europe (Siddiqui, 2012, para. 10). As such, Breivik's decision to act was driven by self-interest, and supports the third hypothesis.

Breivik launched a series of domestic terrorist attacks in Oslo, the Norwegian capital, and the island of Utøya, on which participants of the Workers' Youth League were attending a summer camp (Turrettini and Puckett, 2015). The bombing in Oslo's government district result in eight people being killed, with sixty-nine people being killed in Utøya island. Breivik was sentenced to twenty-one years in prison (the maximum civilian penalty in Norway), with additional preventive detention time as a possible supplement to the sentences if deemed a continued danger to society. Breivik remained defiant throughout the trial, failing to recognize the legitimacy of the court, and continuing to embrace Nazism and Germanic Neo-Paganism. Breivik's main motivation appeared to be the preservation of Europe's monoculture, which he believed was threatened by the mass arrival of immigrants from what he deemed "Third World countries," and what he branded as "cultural Marxism" (Seierstad and Death, 2015).

Breivik, in his own mind, took up the cause of first mover on behalf Europe and European lines of heredity saying that "the [O]rder [of the allegedly resurrected Knights Templar] is to serve as an armed Indigenous Rights Organization and as a Crusader Movement (anti-Jihad movement)" (Lannin & Ahlander, 2011, para. 6) to prevent further Islamization of Europe. Further demonstrating his perspective as one of service to other, and to their collective cause, Breivik stated, "I spent thousands of hours doing this over a duration of more than six months (from two Facebook accounts) and I, alone, managed to send the compendium to more than 8,000 dedicated nationalists" (Lannin & Ahlander, 2011, para. 12). Again, this supports the first hypothesis.

The case of Breivik (and the Unabomber for that matter) attests to the importance of social psychology when it comes to assessing the implications of political action. American psychologist Henry Murray (1938) noted,

> personalities constitute the subject matter of psychology, the life history of a single man being a unit with which this discipline has to deal. It is not possible to study all human beings or all experiences of one human being. The best that can be done is to select representative or specially significant events for analysis and interpretation. Some psychologists may prefer to limit themselves to the study of one kind of episode (p. 3).

This means that first movers, while appearing to be altruistic, are often carried away by social and cultural mores that are generated in some areas of the social space, and the conversation that takes place within it. Breivik's motivations and the identification of a target or enemy group—largely, Islam and multiculturalism—was highly influenced by the social milieu in which he operated. In this context, his actions seem to replicate those undertaken by other far right political groups.

Since the advent of the age of the Internet, there has been a significant amount of disinformation and "fake news" in open circulation regarding the alleged "replacement" of the population of European origin with geographical and cultural migrants. Klein & Muis (2019) argue that "far-right groups increasingly use social media to interact with other groups and reach their followers. Social media also enable 'ordinary' people to participate in online discussions and shape political discourse" (p. 1). Breivik was likely radicalized because of his interaction with other individuals and groups that were similarly interested in setting the intellectual foundations for the reversal of the liberal order that characterizes democratic societies. Additionally, Breivik's motivations were also influenced by the onset of political opportunity since none of the main right-wing

political parties addressed issues regarding multiculturalism and the influence of Islam in the manner desired by the far right.

Additionally, Breivik might have been radicalized by the wave of misogynist sentiment that has been unleashed by extremist elements that spread its hateful message over the internet. The evidence gathered by the police authorities indicates that Breivik had been exposed to far-right literature and was engaged in communications with nationalist groups in other parts of Europe. These are important elements in order to rebut the second hypothesis (Seierstad and Death, 2015). That Breivik was influenced by exogenous far-right forces suggest, at least obliquely, and external locus of assessment in his approach to action. That is, his approach to action was altruistic—and aligned with the first hypothesis—in that he adopted a cause its own behalf.

Breivik's case also corroborates the third hypothesis, which states that the first movers' risk aversion and risk assumption is self-interested. In the case of Breivik, his credo and scheme of action was directly influenced by the circulation of far-right material on the internet and the process of radicalization that affected his views regarding women, immigrants, and other disenfranchised social groups in Western societies (Seierstad and Death, 2015). Ultimately, it was publicity for these views—Breivik's personal cause, rather than the broader cause—that drew him into action.

Breivik remained unflinching throughout the trial in his convictions, and adherence to his doctrinal beliefs. During his trial, Breivik's psychologists noted that he has "shown no sign of cognitive lapses. He has created an identity in order to convince other right-wing extremists and fascists, and this does not fit in with his natural expression and with who he really is - but not in a psychotic way" (Bevanger, 2012, para.

12). In other words, Breivik's actions were an attempt not to bring himself notoriety for its own sake, but to make a name for himself among the far-right. One of the most significant features of far-right radicalization is the volatile environment that influences the actions of first movers. Bailey & Edwards (2017) states that, "a rethinking of 'radicalisation' as a process with no definite beginning or inevitable endpoint (…) Thus, the term radicalisation should encompass any movements towards greater conflict, both commonplace and rare, small and large, driven by a potentially infinite range of motives, encompassing all political outlooks, and made by individuals, groups, societies and states" (p. 255). Additionally, to fully appreciate the reasons why the far-right made inroads into the political space, there is a need to appreciate the conduits of mutual reinforcement and the micro-radicalizations that take place across the social spectrum, which contribute to foment hatred towards—as is the case with Brevik—ethnic minorities, among other relevant disenfranchised groups.

This means that it is important to consider the salience of exogenous factors when it comes to appraising the actions undertaken by Breivik, who did not succeed in catalyzing a large-scale movement in favor of his cause. Nevertheless, his case is of paramount importance for understanding the support given to far-right political parties in various parts of Europe. Onnerfors (2017) argues that the spread of far-right ideas has led to entrenching, "electoral support for right-wing populist parties such as the Front National in France, the Alternative für Deutschland in Germany and the Sverigedemokraterna in Sweden" (p. 159). From this perspective, it is expected that the actions undertaken by Breivik could be replicated by individuals with a similar personality in the future if the digital diaspora of radicalization is not significantly curbed

in the future. Actual far-right violence might not have the same level of dissemination in real life as its online presence would suggest.

However, with the recrudescence of political extremism in Europe, there is bound to be more ideological justification for the exercise of violence by people who are associated with, or given to, some of the tendencies exhibited by Andreas Breivik. Given that, Breivik's case provides some context and, perhaps, predictive value in assessing the current political climate and landscape. His case is a somewhat peculiar one in that his particular brand of self-interest made him appear, at least superficially, as a martyr for a cause. He campaigned electronically against multiculturalism and Islamization on behalf of what he believed to be the greater good, which aligns with the altruism described by the first hypothesis. When apprehended, he did not resist, giving the appearance of forethought of sacrifice for the cause he espoused. In reality, as he stated himself, he acted in self-interest (and self-righteousness), and demonstrated the validity of the third hypothesis. He committed murder seventy-seven times in order to bring notoriety not to the cause, but to himself, his manifesto, which were his cause.

Vladimir Lenin – 1917-1924, Russia/Soviet Union

As the face, and philosophical leader, of the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin is perhaps the most well-known first mover of the 20th Century. "Revolutionary" is quite likely one of the first few words—if not the first—that come to mind when describing Lenin. Revolutionary is simply a first mover by another name. Like Kaczynski and Breivik, Lenin wrote prolifically, penning books, theses, pamphlets, providing ample primary source literature. And, like the former, Lenin identified clear enemies: Capitalism, classism, and the Tsar. Where Kaczynski and Breivik's causes focused

largely on impacting social issues, it is difficult to disentangle Lenin's cause from any particular dimension of society. Whereas there are clear cleavages between social, economic, and political elements with respect to the philosophy and practice of both Kaczynski and Breivik, Lenin's case is more nebulous. Obviously, there were both economic and political elements, and trickle-down effects, in the cases of Kaczynski and Breivik. But, Lenin's motivation was clear in that he viewed capitalism as the root of all evils, to include social, political, economic ones. Either incidentally, or purposively, Lenin offered a panacea that spanned all societal dimensions.

He and his case offer a departure from both Kaczynski and Breivik in terms of circumstance and tactics employed in approach to action, and risk assumption. Lenin had the benefit of a cadre—boots on the ground to do the heavy lifting and wet work—to aid him, whereas Kaczynski and Breivik acted alone. However, Lenin's motivations in his approach to action and risk assumption were that same as those of Kaczynski and Breivik. As such, Lenin is a prime candidate to evidence the applicability of the first and third hypotheses. Lenin sought, essentially, a cure for all evils in dispensing with capitalism. This supports the first hypothesis. However, his self-interest—in alignment with the third hypothesis—is clear in his purposeful physical separation from the actions he directed.

Implicit in the view that capitalism—or anything else for that matter—is the root of all evil is the idea that the evil itself, as well as any curatives aimed at its amelioration, applies to all without discrimination. In other words, Lenin's opposition to capitalism, and the Tsar, was founded on behalf of, and for the benefit of, the masses. The Bolsheviks did not have the support of vast segments of the population. Additionally,

Lenin understood that his actions would potentially prompt rapid and severe backlash from Western powers unwilling to support and recognize the establishment of a socialist state in such proximity to Europe (Volkogonov, 1994). Still, Lenin proffered, propagandized, and popularized ideas rooted in the economic (and latent social) possibility space represented by the poorest segments of society—a class among which he was not counted as a member. He sought to elevate—through avenues of what we today know as "equity" rather than equality—the economically indigent, whose condition had not improved since the emancipation of the serfs. Lenin promised that they would have access to land and to basic public services (Lee, 2003).

Lenin also acknowledged that the conditions that affected the working class required the expansion of communist ideology throughout the world; and in particularly, the capitalist countries of the Western world (Sandle, 1999). But the Tsarist regime was wholly disinterested in creating a more democratic system of government; one that would be able to address some of the problems generated by late industrialization (Lee, 2003). To some extent, the ideological tenets of Marxism-Leninism were influential in legitimizing the political and, thereby, economic actions that were undertaken in the context of the October Revolution (Gellately, 2007). As such, Lenin and the Bolsheviks approached action from an altruistic standpoint. It has been argued that,

> unlike moderate socialist thinkers who came to stress the potential for workers to take over the existing bourgeois states peacefully via national elections and then gradually legislate socialist reforms, Lenin, from his early days, put the emphasis on why the class struggle and the transition from capitalism to socialism would be anything but smooth (Chretien (ed.), 2014, p. 16).

Lenin's actions were also influenced by the spread of imperialism in the underdeveloped areas of the world and the manner in which contributed to entrench the

capitalist mode of production in the international order (Lih, 2011). From this perspective, one could argue that Lenin's political actions were motivated by events that were taking place in the world at large. Although he recalibrated the Marxist credo in order to focus on the conditions that affected Russia, Lenin also envisaged a situation in which communism could become an international force that would challenge the primacy of the capitalist system of production (Lih, 2011).

Lenin's actions—his ultimate risk assumption—are useful for the purpose of corroborating the third hypothesis. Lenin had a decided interest in ensuring that the actions to be carried out by the Bolsheviks would lead to the toppling of the Provisional Government (Pipes, 1990). This is a situation that had attached to it significant risks. The Bolsheviks acted in the face of the knowledge that they would likely be met with significant backlash by the Western powers, which wanted to arrest the expansion of communist governments in the eastern flank of Europe (Sandle, 1999). Lenin's self-interest here is two-pronged. Not only did Lenin have something to gain—power—he something to potentially lose: His freedom, or his life. As a result, in his drive for power, he stayed far from the action and physical conflict.

Moreover, events taking place in the international order are also important when it comes to assessing actions for the purpose of seizing power and entrenching a communist system of government (Ryan, 2012). The spread of military conflict and economic competition among the capitalist countries was an element that dictated the philosophical tenets that motivated the actions of the Bolsheviks. At the same time, their actions were facilitated by the identification of essential objectives, and an enemy that was regarded as relentless and willing to bring about the demise of the nascent Soviet Union (Cliff, 1986).

The state of turmoil that prevailed in Europe during World War One was also a propitious background for the seizing of power by the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, the Bolsheviks were able to entrench a socialist system of government as a result of the high level of commitment to the cause in the midst of dangerous circumstances (Sandle, 1999).

As the Bolsheviks engaged in bloody action, putting themselves in harm's way, Lenin enjoyed the safety afforded him by great physical distance. This is a strong indicator that Lenin was highly self-interested in his risk aversion, and risk assumption. During the February Revolution of 1917, when social unrest and the potential for violence increase in direct proportion to one another, causing the Tsar to abdicate (Rice, 1990), Lenin was tucked away in Switzerland. He delivered his "April Theses" denouncing the provisional government in the stead of Nicholas II from Finland. Lenin remained in Finland for the July days, the occasion of armed clashes between the Bolsheviks and the provisional government (Fischer, 1964). Only when something approximating a détente between the provisional government and the Bolsheviks had been established, facilitating official political recognition and defacto legitimacy of the latter, did Lenin return to Russia. This paved the wave for Lenin and the Bolsheviks to seize power without significant armed opposition in the October Revolution, during which the provisional government was toppled in a single day.

While Lenin sought on behalf of the masses a panacea for the ills he identified, he ultimately shied away from action personally. He spoke out against capitalism, classism, and governmental elitism against the backdrop of the threat of Western reprisals—demonstrating the altruism described by the first hypothesis—but he also chose to hide

himself from potential violence as a matter of self-interest described by the third

hypothesis. However, unlike Kaczynski and Breivik, the impact of Lenin's self-interest

on the broader, altruistic cause was somewhat muted, given that he had a Bolshevik cadre

to do the dirty work for him. In other words, Lenin's movement had already scaled

beyond those of Kaczynski and Brevik, allowing him and the Bolsheviks to attain their

ultimate goal: Revolution

Chapter VIII.

Conclusion


Revolution is, far too often, viewed and portrayed as a collective fight-or-flight instinct; an autonomic response to existential crisis that, once set in motion, follows an automated domino-effect process to reach a pre-destined conclusion. Such is the case with cascade models of social movement. Aside from the beginning and end, cascade models possess no mechanism by which logical (or rational) starts stops and starts within a given movement can even be theorized, let alone practiced. In other words, once first movers act, momentum takes care of the rest, and the movement in questions acts as an irresistible force without equal. As cascade models would have it, the actions of first movers are effectively a means, in and of themselves, of guaranteeing a particular outcome—usually mass popular movement or full-scale revolution. There is no middle ground, or even the potential for failure. This exposes the fatal flaw of cascade models: they describe, very broadly, events of the past but offer no predictive value. They trace revolution recursively, from the end to the beginning, rather than formulating an understanding of how and why a revolution began in the first place.

The aim of this paper is to disentangle the actions of first movers from their ultimate results—to understand why first movers do what they do, and how their decision-making process is informed. I expect to find that the decision-making process is far more rational, and perhaps less self-interested, than the autonomic responses characterized by cascade models. Not only might this elucidate the radical psychological

and emotional drivers of popular movements, if applied to later adopters, it may lend a degree of predictability to the ebbs and flows (and ultimate outcomes) of momentum within those movements.

This paper has argued that first movers in popular uprisings are altruistically motivated in their approach to action, and self-interested in their risk aversion and ultimate risk assumption. Because they operate in volatile, high-risk, low-reward environments similar to those faced by first movers in real world popular uprisings, startup founders and co-founders were employed as a proxy. Those founders and co-founders were surveyed in order to assess their motivations at different points in their startup journey. In so doing, this paper has demonstrated a correlation, in terms of motivation, between startup founders and proper revolutionaries (both failed and successful), and that their motivations in approach to action are altruistic, which their ultimate assumption of risk (taking action) is governed by self-interest. Additionally, this paper has evidenced the portability of the theory that first movers are altruistically motivated in their approach to action, and self-interested in their risk assumption by applying findings of the study to the case studies of Ted Kaczynski, Anders Behring Breivik, and Vladimir Lenin. These cases demonstrate that the theory persists, and is equally applicable, across both space and time. It is also applicable to individuals and groups and spans all societal dimensions.

While this paper establishes first principles in the understanding of first mover motivations at different points in the process of a popular movement, it begs several questions of future research. Chief among them, perhaps, is the effect of technology and technological advancement. Specifically, how does technology influence first mover

approach to action. In other words, how technology informs, or assists in informing, first

mover problem identification and philosophy. Eltantawy and Wiest (2011) claim that,

"computer-savvy activists use the Internet to initiate and organize a broad spectrum of

dissention activities, including consumer boycotts and public protests and

demonstrations" (p.1207). It is possible to argue that the instruments provided by

common technology have been of paramount importance for the purpose of showcasing

the grievances that affect individuals and social groups throughout the world. Eltantawy

and Wiest (2011) further point "to new communication technologies—particularly social

media like short messaging services (SMS), social-networking sites, and blogs—as being,

collectively, an important new resource for the successful organization and

implementation of social movements" (p. 1207). It is worth noting the ironic and

somewhat paradoxical case of Ted Kaczynski in this context. If the idea that technology

functions, essentially, as the mode and means of revolution is correct, Kaczynski's

movement would have effectively undone itself.

Future research may also concern itself with means of radicalization in the context

that radicalization implies the existence of a broader movement. This may be especially

salient in terms of outcomes for a given movement, or potential movement. Breivik's and

Lenin's cases may be particularly instructive here. Breivik was radicalized by a broader

movement that, ultimately, did not birth a full-scale revolution. But that movement

persists, visibly present on the fringes of society, with the potential to scale at some point

in the future. On the other hand, Lenin became the face of a broader movement that was

successful in achieving its goals and effecting full-scale revolution. The availability of

mass means of communications suggests that there will be more actors willing to make

the first move in order to initiate meant movements to bring the attention of the public

grievances pertaining to social, political, and economic issues. At the same time, it is also

important to understand the relevance of the diffusion of ideas as a mechanism for social,

political, and economic actions. More attention, and more participants generally

privileges success over failure in popular movements.

This study employed startup founders and co-founders as a proxy. That same

group may be useful in determining outcomes—how popular movements grow, spread,

and reach critical mass. In other words, how they scale. In the startup world, scale is,

effectively, synonymous with success. First movers in the social arena are affected by the

events that take place in the political sphere, both in terms of approach to action, and

ultimate risk assumption. Startups are no different. To some extent, these events appear to

inform first mover philosophy and approach to action. These actors are motivated by the

desire to change the circumstances that affect the world, in one way or another

(Meadows, 2008). It seems that the first movers, as they approach action, are not overly

concerned with the moment of "ruin" described by Taleb in Skin in the Game (Taleb,

2018). To a large extent, this first mover modus operandi is determined by the exposure

to the ideas that circulate in the wider world.

While first mover motivations may be better understood, more can be done to

deepen that understanding. And, that is only the initial piece of a popular movement.

Subsequent elements of a popular movement also require finer definition. It is my sincere

hope that further contributions to the body of scholarship on popular movements will

attend to the manner in which those movements scale, with a focus on outcomes. Present

geopolitical turmoil, heavily abraded social fabric, widespread economic hardship, and an increase to activism (as well as access to it) demand it.

Appendix 1.

Survey Questions


1). Why am I being invited to take part in a research study? We invite you to take part in

a research study because you are a current or former startup founder or co-founder. What

should I know about a research study? Someone will explain this research study to you.

Whether or not you take part is up to you. Your participation is completely voluntary.

You can choose not to take part. You can agree to take part and later change your mind.

Your decision will not be held against you. Your refusal to participate will not result in

any consequences or any loss of benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive. You

can ask all the questions you want before you decide. Why is this research being done?

Existing scholarship on first movers is focused retrospectively on the effects they produce

or their social networks, and how first movers' actions generate momentum rather than

why first movers act to begin with. Most scholarly works—of which there are many—

that tout lessons from, or understandings of, first movers or early risers rely on forward

causal inference in answering reverse causal questions. Such scholarship fails to account

for first movers, and their actions, as independent actors without the knowledge of what

events might eventually arise from their actions. In other words, existing scholarship

tends to hold the implicit view that first movers know and understand the future sequence

of events born of their own, and go about their first mover business with that sequence of

events in mind as an end goal. In order to understand motivations of first movers under

high risk-low reward conditions, such as those presented in MENA during the Arab

Spring, startup founders and co-founders will be used as proxy for first movers. The goal of this study is to provide a modest contribution to the understanding of motivations of first movers on something of a lowest common denominator level in order to provide a foundation for future research. How long will the research last and what will I need to do? We expect that you will be in this research study for less than 10 minutes. You will be asked to 5 to 6 Likert scale questions about your experience in founding or co-founding a startup. Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me? We don't believe there are any risks from participating in this research. Will being in this study help me in any way? There are no benefits to you from your taking part in this research. We cannot promise any benefits to others from your taking part in this research

2). Are you at least 18 years old?

3). Are you a current or former startup founder or co-founder?

4). Founding or co-founding a startup came with the risk of financial ruin?

5). Founding or co-founding a startup came with significant financial risk to my loved ones?

6). The potential benefits of founding or co-founding a startup significantly outweighed the potential personal risks?

7). What was the most important potential benefit to you in founding or co-founding a startup?

      a). personal financial gain

      b). changing the world

      c). helping my loved ones

      d). personal fame

8). What was the most important potential risk to you in founding or co-founding a startup?

     a). financial ruin

     b). inability to change the world

     c). negatively impacting loved ones

     d). personal lack of fame

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