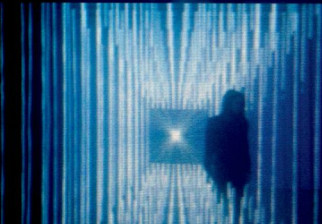
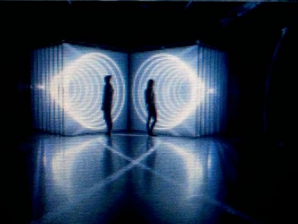
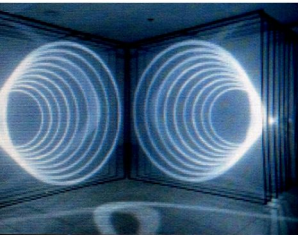
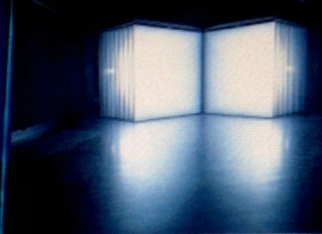


AFFECTIVE PUBLICS

*Sentiment, Technology,
and Politics*

Zizi Papacharissi



Affective Publics

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Affective Publics

SENTIMENT, TECHNOLOGY, AND POLITICS

ZIZI PAPACHARISSI

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To S. and A.

Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Prelude 1

1. The Present Affect 6

2. Affective News and Networked Publics 30

3. Affective Demands and the New Political 64

4. The Personal *as* Political: Everyday Disruptions of the Political
Mainstream 94

5. Affective Publics 115

Notes 137

References 141

Index 153

Acknowledgments

Every language is rich with terms that suffer in translation yet are unique in capturing the essence of things in ways that the same terms in other languages fail. I grew up bilingual so I frequently find myself using English words to describe things that are captured much more elegantly in Greek, and vice versa. I have been studying what newer media offer politics that is unique for some time now, and the ancient Greek word that I keep returning to time and time again is *διεγείρεσθαι*. The word describes ways in which energies, somatic and exosomatic, are reorganized, shaken up, and reimagined with the greater and abstract goal of transcendence, of movement toward something beyond that which previously was. This is how I would describe the ways that newer media energize people, their political routines, and the civic habitus. But you see how many words I had to use to describe that, and I probably still lost some of the essence of *διεγείρεσθαι* in translation. The closest I have come to capturing the heart of this word is through studying scholarly work on affect. *Διεγείρεσθαι* is a general feeling of movement subjectively experienced, an overall sensation of something that is in the making. It may produce emotions, or rationalizations, or new structures, or not much at all. The more I read about affect and affect theory, the more I came to realize that this was indeed the terminology I had to use, although I have to confess that affect is nowhere near as rich a word as my ancient Greek favorite. And so I wrote this book about what happens to publics when they materialize affectively through the discursive mediality of Twitter. I wanted to describe what form publics take on when they are rendered primarily out of a general sensation of *διεγείρεσθαι*. What is their texture like? What are the tendencies and tensions that characterize them?

It is a somewhat abstract notion, I know, and so I owe huge thanks to Andrew Chadwick, who encouraged me to work through this idea in the context of the Oxford Studies in Digital Politics series. I am also grateful for the support and valuable advice of Angela Chnapko at Oxford University Press. Maria de Fatima Oliveira and Sharon Meraz helped me apply my analysis to the networked infrastructure of Twitter, and I am deeply thankful for their generosity and insights. Stacy Blasiola and Indira Neill, my research assistants of formidable patience, talent, and perception, were there to support the analysis and offer a critical view of my interpretations. Finally, my deepest and most heartfelt thanks to S., who generously (always!) offered me the *Διεγείρεσθαι* connection in the first place, to A. who helped me make sure I was applying it correctly, and to both of you for showing me how to reimagine energies and practices in everyday life, time and time again.

Affective Publics

Prelude

... the first delegation of the drive in the psyche is the affect ...
Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (p. 282).

On November 14, 1973, students at the Athens Polytechnic (Πολυτεχνείο) barricaded themselves inside the university in protest of the military junta that had been in place in Greece since 1967. The coup d'état had been led by a group of colonels following a lengthy period of instability dating back to the aftermath of World War II. During the civil war that developed in the postwar struggle for political power, government forces backed by the United States and the United Kingdom had battled communist factions, a conflict that led to the defeat of the communists and the banning of the Communist Party in Greece. Greece became a part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Economic Community, a precursor of the European Union. Still, unresolved tensions accumulated and eventually led to a clash between liberal centrist reformers and the king in the 1960s. The colonels seized power and dissolved political parties during a vacuum of leadership in the spring of 1967. Politicians and citizens opposed to the junta were exiled or fled, while those who stayed were imprisoned and tortured.

The November 1973 student uprisings were preceded by a gradual series of protests against the dictatorial rule of the regime. These were led by vocal protestors, both in Greece and abroad, who spoke openly and raised awareness about the civil rights violations occurring in Greece daily. In addition to other authoritative measures, the military regime had enforced a law requiring that subversive youths be drafted into the army, and this prompted

the student protests. And so, the November 1973 uprisings were the culmination of a long period of resistance to the regime, aimed at increasing domestic and global awareness of the atrocities it was committing in Greece.

The students organized inside the university and constructed a radio station out of lab equipment, broadcasting locally to Athens. Their broadcasts were picked up and redistributed across Greece and abroad. The students spoke simply and earnestly against dictatorship and for democracy, and their ideas were heavily influenced by youth movements of the 1960s, and the May '68 movements in particular. Soon thousands of workers joined them, protesting the junta outside and inside the Polytechnio. This quickly turned into the largest protest mounted against the junta, and one that attracted the attention of global media. Under increasing pressure and in an attempt to dissolve the crowds and put an end to the movement, the colonels ordered a military tank to crash through the gates of the university. Using the radio station, the students addressed the soldiers directly, calling them "brothers in arms" and pleading with them to stop. In the early hours of November 17, 1973, the tank proceeded through the gates, at which point the emotional broadcasts of students reciting the lyrics of the Greek national anthem abruptly stopped. Film shot by a Dutch journalist showed people clinging on to the main steel entrance gates as the tank brought them down. This footage, along with the last radio broadcast, was shocking. It mobilized and unified sentiment against the junta within and beyond Greece. The escalating pressure became too much and the regime crumbled. Constantine Karamanlis was invited back from self-exile in Paris and was appointed interim prime minister. He was formally elected in the first free elections that followed a year later, on the anniversary of the uprising, November 17, 1974.

November 17 is now a national holiday in Greece. I was only a few months old in 1973. Growing up, I vividly remember listening to the broadcasts and watching the news films year after year, as our teachers retold the events at school. Some of my own teachers had been imprisoned and tortured by the junta. On these annual occasions for remembrance, media coverage revived our collective memories of the events, and we all reflected on the censorship, humiliation, and human rights violations that had plagued the country that invented democracy but also had a short track record with it. In the democratic tranquility that followed, commemorating the event became institutionalized. Collective memory of the event, imprinted in our psyches and recycled via the media, rendered it a permanent part of our history and identity.

In reference to this landmark, a revolutionary terrorist group adopted the name November 17th, reappropriating and remixing its ideology into vague anti-American manifestos that followed its numerous bloody attacks. Yet that did not seem to contaminate the purity of the November 17th movement in our minds, which was viewed as a separate event that affirmed our collective faith in democracy, punctuated by the yearly playbacks of footage of the military tank crashing through the gates against the pleading voice of the student radio announcer. Nor did it interfere with Greeks electing into parliament, a year or so short of the fortieth anniversary of the movement, the contemporary incarnation of the neo-militant, neo-fascist, anti-immigrant party of Golden Dawn. Conversations about the role of the uprising and the radio broadcasts in the downfall of the dictatorial regime persist forty years later, with the public still debating whether it was the university protests or mounting failures in economic and foreign policy that brought the military regime to its end.

What am I getting at here? There is an interesting, captivating connection between affect and ideology, feeling and belief, emotion and reason. These three groupings reflect imbricated yet distinct layers of engagement with public affairs. Conventional wisdom frequently drives us to separate reason from emotion, suggesting that we think with our brains and act with our hearts. Similarly, emotions may be considered fleeting but beliefs are more fixed, while ideology expresses conviction versus the overpowering, albeit occasionally ephemeral, sway of affect. The folklore surrounding our perceptions may prompt us to view these groupings as opposite extremes of a continuum. In fact, they are pairings of co-occurring tendencies. When co-present, they can be responsible for the most inspiring but also most confounding moments of human history. What reason, belief, and ideology suggest, affect, feeling, and emotion frequently overturn in favor of the irrational. Yet affect, feeling, and emotion also reflexively drive movements that express rationally focused expressions of ideological beliefs. Such was the case with the mobilization of sentiment against the Greek junta. Subsequent attempts to evoke that same feeling as the country moved on frequently repackaged it into something far removed from the sentiment of that historic moment.

I am interested in the balance between affect and ideology and how this balance enhances or entraps publics evoked through media. For the November 17th movement of 1973, radio was the medium that brokered widespread awareness and helped mobilize support for a burgeoning revolt. This was not

a radio revolution, but a revolution broadcast via radio. The radio broadcasts helped protesters coordinate and disseminate the message about oppression to broader publics. The affective attunement enabled through the radio broadcasts presented a way for diverse publics to tune in and emotionally align with the movement.

There are countless stories of how media serve as conduits for affective expression in historical moments that promise social change. These are typically stories of connection and expression. This book is about how newer media invite people to *feel* their own place in current events, developing news stories, and various forms of civic mobilization. The storytelling infrastructure of platforms like Facebook or Twitter invites observers to tune into events they are physically removed from by imagining what these might feel like for people directly experiencing them. Storytelling devices like photographs, YouTube or Vine videos, condensed descriptions of tension filled moments on Twitter, or live-blogged accounts of revolutions-in-the-making convey a sense of immediacy that makes us feel like we are *there*, wherever *there* may be. This capability is not new, nor is it specific to newer media. Broadcast journalism, and the 24/7 television news cycle in particular, has amplified our ability to affectively tune into events physically removed from us. Prior to that, print journalism enabled us to construct our own biased, subjective mental images of the lives of others, or what Walter Lippmann (1922) had famously pegged a pseudoenvironment—a blend of the world outside and the pictures in our heads.

Newer media follow, amplify, and remediate that tradition of storytelling. They permit meaning-making of situations unknown to us by evoking affective reactions. Tuning in affectively does not mean that reactions are strictly emotional; they may also be rational. But it does mean that we are prompted to interpret situations by *feeling* like those directly experiencing them, even though, in most cases, we are not able to *think* like them.

This point is key. Affective attunement is defined by its evanescent nature. We imagine what things might be like through affectively enhanced forms of storytelling, but we are not the Greek revolutionaries of the '70s, nor are we the Greek indignados of Syntagma square forty years later. We imagine what it might feel like for them, but our experience of their reality is precisely that: imagined. It lacks the gravitas of actuality. We feel for the Egyptian protesters fighting for and then celebrating the downfall of Hosni Mubarak first, and then Mohamed Morsi later. We imagine their feelings of excitement first, and disillusionment later, but we do not always know enough

about background, context, or history to have a full appreciation of their circumstances. Still we respond affectively, we invest our emotion to these stories, and we contribute to developing narratives that emerge through our own affectively charged and digitally expressed endorsement, rejection, or views. Technologies network us but it is narratives that connect us to each other, making us feel close to some and distancing us from others. As our developing sensibilities of the world surrounding us turn into stories that we tell, share, and add to, the platforms we use afford these evolving narratives their own distinct texture, or mediality. In doing so, media do not make or break revolutions but they do lend emerging, storytelling publics their own means for feeling their way into the developing event, frequently by making them a part of the developing story. It is this process of affective attunement and investment for publics networked digitally but connected discursively that I am interested in exploring further with *Affective Publics*, energized by sentiment and energizing a new political.¹

1

The Present Affect

In late January and February 2011, thousands of Egyptians coordinated online and offline to protest the prolonged and cruel rule of Hosni Mubarak. As protests culminated and generated global support, the movement was lauded for its persistence, passion, and lack of a single leader. The absence of any explicit allegiance to existing political factions in Egypt, especially Muslim ones, comforted Western publics uneasy with the ramifications of the uprising. But it also served to legitimize the movement; it communicated unity and distance from partisan, and potentially corrupt, politics.

Late September 2011 saw the first demonstrations of the Occupy movement in various cities in the US and Europe, protesting global economic and social inequality. By contrast, this movement was quickly criticized for being leaderless and not possessing a specific agenda. The lack of ideological definition that gave the movement in Egypt credibility seemed to have the opposite effect for Occupy. Concurrent *indignados* movements taking place throughout Europe were similarly critiqued as ideologically shapeless. All of these movements emerged out of different contexts but shared one thing in common: online and offline solidarity shaped around the public display of emotion. The emotion infiltrating the texture of political expression, or affect, was indignation with a set of circumstances that had gone on for too long (e.g., Castells, 2012). The circumstances were different, but the public display of affect united these publics despite and beyond ideological differences. In addition, affective expressions of indignation that were shunned as ideologically shapeless in some contexts were interpreted as signs of ideological solidarity in others. These personal and affective expressions accumulated and dispersed virally through digitally enabled networks, discursively calling into being further publics of support.

This book focuses on public displays of affect as political statements. I examine what affective intensity does for digital politics and networked publics. I do so by focusing on Twitter and employing three case studies: the Arab Spring movements, various iterations of Occupy, and everyday casual political expressions as traced through the archives of trending topics on Twitter. The focus is on Twitter, but given the interconnected nature of these media, findings are extrapolated to other ambient platforms affording social awareness in general, and affect in particular, including YouTube and Facebook. This volume is about the role of affect in politics and the ways in which online media facilitate political formations of affect. I am ultimately interested in what these mediated feelings of connectedness do for politics and publics networked together through the storytelling infrastructures of a digital age.

The Affect of Online Media

Online media afford visibility to voices frequently marginalized by the societal mainstream (Berry, Kim, & Spigel, 2010; Couldry, 2012). In this book, I examine the form publics take as they are networked together, through affectively charged discourses about events that command our attention in everyday life. Affect, as the sum of—often discordant—feelings about affairs, public and private, is examined as the energy that drives, neutralizes, or entraps networked publics.

The past few decades have witnessed the growth of movements that use digital means to connect with broader publics and express their point of view. Naturally, these manifestations of digital connectivity and networked engagement invite both utopian and dystopian speculation about the civic impact of internet-related technologies. Not unlike other media preceding it, the internet reorganizes the flows of time and space in ways that promise greater autonomy but also conform to the habitus of practices, hierarchies, and structures that form its historical context. Still, recent digitally aided waves of unrest, reaching from the various political movements of the Arab Spring to demonstrations of indignation with late capitalism spreading through the *indignados* movements in Europe, to the global Occupy movement, have prompted renewed interest in the impact of social media. Debates populating the mainstream are consumed with whether these are

indeed social media revolutions, and whether tweeting the revolutions can in fact make or break a revolution in the making. These questions make for compelling conversation, but they are questions that present little interest to researchers, for they have already been answered. More interesting questions remain. What do I mean by this?

Careful examination of the social phenomena at hand, coupled with extensive research, suggest that the internet pluralizes but does not inherently democratize spheres of social, cultural, political, or economic activity (e.g., Bimber, 1998; Papacharissi, 2010). Research reminds us that even though the path to mobilization is increasingly becoming digital, it is also more than simply digital (Couldry, 2010; Howard, 2011). While online media are utilized as resources that help accelerate mobilization, they present a necessary but not a sufficient cause for radical mobilization (Ingram, 2011; Tufekci, 2011). And so, impact is not determined by the technology but rather by the historically singular interplay of the various sociocultural, economic, and political conditions at work. A more interesting direction for researchers lies not in questions of impact but rather in questions of content. If online media do bear the potential of accelerating mobilization, then what form of communication do they tend to invite? As networked platforms increasingly present paths to social change, what do these digital paths look like? What is the texture of storytelling that fills online platforms as individuals mobilize online and offline, and what kinds of public formations of political expression does this texture support? What properties inform the texture of this expression, and what does this mean for emerging contemporary forms of political expression and civic engagement? I argue that networked digital structures of expression and connection are overwhelmingly characterized by affect. This book is about how digitally afforded affect informs the structure and potential of networked publics and crowds in societies democratic and non-democratic.

My argument is grounded in research suggesting that social media facilitate feelings of engagement (Dean, 2010; Gregg, 2011; Karatzogianni & Kuntsman, 2012; van Dijck, 2013). Most notably, they help activate latent ties that may be crucial to the mobilization of networked publics. Online activity, however, cannot be confused with impact. Yet, depending on context, online activity may introduce primary disruptions to the stability of powerful hierarchies that grant a movement momentum, which may accumulate over time. On a secondary level, online activity may energize disorganized crowds and/or facilitate the formation of networked publics

around communities, actual and imagined (e.g., Howard & Hussain, 2013). These publics are activated and sustained by feelings of belonging and solidarity, however fleeting or permanent those feelings may be. The connective affordances of social media help activate the in-between bond of publics, and they also enable expression and information sharing that liberate the individual and collective imaginations. This is perhaps why the influence of social media in uprisings that take place in autocratic regimes frequently persists despite attempts to shut down the networked infrastructure that supports them.

Dean (2010) draws attention to the notion of affect to describe the circulatory drive that characterizes networked publics, in that they become what they are and simultaneously “a record or trace” of what they are (p. 22). Sustained by ongoing reflexivity that is regenerated by singular moments of expression and connection deposited by individual users, the affective flow and affective links remain and resonate with networked publics even after the specific links to content have been shut down. Affective attachments to media cannot produce communities, but they may produce “feelings of community” (p. 22). Depending on context, these affective attachments may reflexively drive a movement that aims at community and/or capture users in a state of engaged passivity.

In this volume, I focus on the role of affect in politics and the ways in which online media facilitate political formations of affect. These questions are broad and are examined here in the context of one online platform, Twitter, and through tracing this form of communication across three case studies: the Arab Spring, the Occupy movement, and trending topics on Twitter. Using these case studies, I employ various forms of content, discourse, semantic, and network analyses to examine the form and texture of politically infused expression on Twitter. The findings are interpreted along with other concurrent research to present a theory on the form and texture that networked publics take on. I premise this analysis on the concept of affect, and begin with an explication of the term.

Affect

Affect has always energized rituals of public and private life, although discussions of its place in politics tend to assign it a backseat to reason. Placing the emphasis on rationality, conventional political thinking tends to view

feelings as something that ought to be organized by the cognitive processes of reason prior to entering the civic realm. It is common to think that emotions get in the way of rational decision-making and lead people to behave in ways they may regret later. Philosophy, political theory, and common sense tend to view emotion and reason as two opposite forces that must somehow be reconciled so that people can function as informed citizens. What is at stake here is the ability of humans to balance thought and feeling so as to progress through civic life ably, in pursuit of what philosophers have used many words to describe, but the most fitting in the civic context is that of *arête* (*ἀρετή*)—defined by Aristotle as the act of living to one’s full potential and what we nowadays refer to as happiness and well-being in everyday life. Without delving into a lengthy overview, two central issues drive a rich tradition of thought in philosophy and political theory, when it comes to what is at stake as people seek to balance affect and reason. First, the ability of people to decide rationally about their own fate or form of governance is at stake, should their judgments become swayed by emotions and distorted. Second, democracy as a form of governance is at stake, as it is founded upon the right and ability of people to make informed decisions about their own governance and well-being (Neuman, Marcus, Crigler, & MacKuen, 2007).

It is this conundrum that invites the introduction of rationalization into the ecology of civic life. Rationalizing—that is, using logic alone to deliberate and make decisions about what one desires for one’s life—is prioritized over emotion, which is generally viewed as “automatic (as opposed to deliberative), maladaptive (as opposed to useful), and innate (as opposed to learned)” (Spezio & Adolphs, 2007). The contention between affect and rationality dates back to Ancient Greece, with Plato emphasizing that reason should rule the psyche, Aristotle understanding humans as rational animals, and the Stoics later proposing more stark forms of self-control so as to overcome destructive emotions. It would appear that the Ancient Greeks highlight the distance between emotion and reason, but a careful reader of their work will also observe that they are keen on not dismissing emotion in favor of reason, but rather in finding ways to interpret emotions by using reason toward the advancement of general well-being and happiness.

The Enlightenment Age populates the affect/reason duality with diverse points of view, frequently removed from the teleological underpinnings of Ancient Greek philosophy. Descartes, for instance, rejects the notion of humans as rational animals and describes humans as thinking things, focusing on the process of thought and connecting it to our understanding of

language, truth, and knowledge. Much like Descartes, Hobbes emphasizes the connection between reason and knowledge, although he too suggests that nothing can ever fully be understood just with reason, in the absence of sense and memory. Locke and Hume develop these ideas further to pursue the connection between reason and knowledge, with Locke proposing a symbiotic relationship between reason and the passions, and Hume defining reason as an instinctive response, rather than a process. Kant counters some of this thinking and presents reason as a process that can advance general understandings of virtue, ethics, and morality. What we encounter in Western philosophical thought is not necessarily a dismissal of affective states as meaningful, but rather the tendency to associate rationality with knowledge-making and science. In the process of breaking the monopoly on knowledge held by the church and monarchies, frequently by affective means employed to control the masses, it became essential for scholars to prioritize reason and rationalization as means of intellectual empowerment and greater enlightenment. The work of Spinoza, in particular, and the application of his work in contemporary psychology emerge out of these tensions and seek to reconcile them (e.g., Yalom, 2012).

Eastern philosophy, by contrast, views emotion and rationality as potentially opposable but ultimately reconcilable states. Western thought, perhaps in the course of emancipating processes of knowledge-making from the stronghold of church and state, emphasized rationality in ways that inevitably cast the emotional as irrational. The tendency to view the emotional as irrational was further emphasized even as the most careful scientific writing on the rationality/affect duality became popularized.

Rationality, that is the process of using logic to organize and evaluate facts of reason, is further developed by Max Weber as a component intrinsic to societal systems. He distinguished between four types of rationality: purposive/instrumental, value or belief oriented, affectual, and traditional or conventional. This categorization gets around the duality between reason and feeling and suggests a symbiotic relationship between the two constructs. Affectual forms of rationality are especially meaningful to this analysis and are formed around an actor's own feelings or emotions. Unlike other forms of rationality that are more calculated (instrumental), or value/belief oriented, or habitual (conventional), affectual forms of rationality are even more subjectively determined and dependent on mood. Habermas criticized Weber's proposed categories of rationality for failing to take under consideration power structures and social systems. Typically

perceived as favoring rational discourse as the definitive means to democratic governance, Habermas emphasizes communicative rationality in ways that idealize past forms of civic engagement (Fraser, 1987; Calhoun, 1992), not because he wants people to forget about their emotions but because he is concerned about a public sphere that is sustained by media through content designed to appeal to the emotions. And so the central question revolves around how people may develop mechanisms for resisting systems of ideological exploitation and knowledge management that operate through means of affective control and manipulation.

I offer this admittedly brief and selective overview of the dualism between emotion and reason to show that (a) like most dualisms, it is imposed by explanatory convenience, and that (b) it simplifies complex questions by equating the emotional with the irrational. In this way, affect is defined as that which it is not: rational, leaving us with little sense of the meaning or the place of affect in politics. And yet recent research has sought to explicate the complex and contentious meaning of affect, marking what has been termed an affective turn in the analysis of politics and everyday life (e.g., Corner & Pels, 2003; Van Zoonen, 2004; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010; Chadwick, 2013; Coleman, 2013). This work defines affect in ways that temper its contest with rationality and present it on its own terms. It also provides the conceptual definition for affect to be employed in this book and follows next.

Affect presents a key part of how people internalize and act on everyday experiences. In psychology, affect refers to feeling or emotion. It is thus connected to the cognitive and the conative, and can be understood as the link between how we think and how we act. However, cognitive, affective, and conative processes are interconnected and overlap. Therefore, the affective is frequently considered to be part of the cognitive, as our feelings about things may give shape to how we process information. Moreover, the conative may be understood as part of the affective, given that not all thoughts result in actions, and that several behaviors take the form of emotional expressions or gestures. In philosophy, the overlap between these three states is integrated into how the concept of affect is defined. The concept thus appears first in the work of Spinoza, who wrote about it in his work on ethics and who defined affects as states of mind and body that include, but also extend beyond, just emotions and feelings to describe driving forces that are suggestive of tendencies to act in a variety of ways, or, to not act at all.

The potentiality embedded in the term is meant to emphasize how affect may connect to both action and inaction, as affects typically do not connect

to behaviors in a linearly causal way (e.g., MacKuen, Marcus, Neuman, & Keele, 2007). This point is essential and defines how the concept is employed in philosophy and further applied in the social sciences and humanities. Spinoza defined affects as variations produced in the body by interactions with other bodies, which may lead to increased or diminished activity. Specifically, he explained that “by affect I understand affections of the body by which the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections” (Spinoza, 1994, p. 154). Spinoza defined several forms of affect, which all derive from the three basic affects of desire or appetite, pleasure, and pain or sorrow. These three are defined as transitional states or modes that suggest activity associated with a state of greater or lesser perfection. Spinoza assumed that any affect that increases an organism’s power to be active will lead to greater perfection, although he specified that other affects of other organisms present forces that may negate this transition to greater perfection.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987/1980) expanded on the distinction between affect and emotion to further clarify how affect precedes the potential for activity. Affect, or affection as used by Spinoza, is not to be confused with personal sentiment, although it may be inclusive of it. Affect refers “to the ability to affect and be affected. It is a pre-personal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act” (p. xvi). Deleuze and Guattari (1987/1980) thus paved the road for understanding affects as dependent on, but also independent of, individual emotional reactions. As a result, affects can be understood as summative of moments in time, as understood via the concept of *kairos*, a Greek word referring to the singular context of space-time blocks. Affect is deeply contextual and associated with rendering time heterogeneous and “some events . . . regular and ordinary, whereas others . . . singular, marking turning points in a system’s history” (Protevi, 2009, p. xvii).

Massumi’s work is central to understanding how affect informs movement and sensation that cross real and virtual worlds, both of which are supported by technology. As translator of Deleuze and Guattari’s works, he helped underline the distinction between emotion and affect, and to further explore the potential for *emergence* that affect suggests. Emergence captures the sum of all possibilities. Conveying all fathomable potential, it presents imagined and actual possibilities. Massumi understands emergence as a two-sided coin, having a virtual and a real/actual side, and defines affect as

“this two-sidedness *as seen from the side of the actual thing*, as couched in its perceptions and cognitions” (2002, p. 35). Consequently, affect is “*the virtual as point of view . . . synesthetic*, implying a participation of the senses in each other: the measure of a living thing’s potential interactions is its ability to transform the effects of one sensory mode into those of another” (p. 35). As “*virtual synesthetic perspectives anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them*,” affects convey autonomy via their openness (p. 35). The state of emergence is filled with potential but is also confined by the physical environment within which it takes shape.

Simultaneously enabled and confined by the body, affect is both consumed with occupying the body and attaining autonomy through release from it. Its essence derives from variation, as it “moves as it feels and it finds itself moving” (Massumi, 2002, p. 1). It is connected to the body by means of the body experiencing events that trigger emotion, which then is further interpreted as a cognitive state. As Deleuze (1997) explains, the perception of a situation leads to a modification of the body, which then triggers the emotion of consciousness or the mind. The linearity in the sequence illustrates the connection of affect to the body, and the avenues through which affect is released from the body, into interactions with other bodies, as what contours a body is delineated by how it affects and is affected by other bodies. Thus affect is subjectified through its connection to a body, thought, or idea and desubjectified through (the potential of) interactions with other bodies, thoughts, or ideas. It is connected to bodies, thoughts, and ideas but is located in the midst of assemblages of drives presented by interacting bodies, “as the prime ‘interest’ motivator that comes to put the drive in bodily drives” (Tomkins, as cited in Seigworth & Gregg, 2010).

The bodily connection gives shape to and is shaped by affect. Our experience of an emotion is defined by affect, by a variation in a mind/body state. At the same time, the habituation of affect preserves associations between affects and objects within the body, so that we experience pleasure because something falls within our habitus of pleasurable practices (Bourdieu, 1972/1977). The relation to a corpus of habituated practices renders affect literal, and simultaneously maps more visceral direction to be pursued beyond this corpus, in the in-betweenness evoked by interactions, presented via what Seigworth and Gregg (2010) term *bloom-spaces* of promise and threat, inviting both activity and inactivity, the personal and the impersonal.

Emotion is subsumed within affect, and perhaps the most intense part of affect. Yet affect itself extends beyond feeling as a general way of sense-making. It informs our general sensibility toward the world surrounding us, which is inclusive of potentialities and “regimes of expressivity” . . . tied to “resonant worldings and diffusions of feelings/passions” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 8). Affect informs our sensibilities, theorized both in sense-making processes of the human body and in relation to the sense-making technologies that are affective driven (Ticineto Clough, 2007). The technologies facilitating affective formations are technologies that facilitate networked circulations of affective flows produced, distributed, and further remixed through mediated communication channels. These technologies may be understood as what Massumi (2002) terms *apparatuses of actualization* to include both the networks of school, family, and church that mediate affective flows, and the networks of “the affective economy, of consumerism, branding . . . and more generally, culture” (Wissinger, 2007, p. 247). It is fitting that affect resides in the fluidity presented by the convergence of actual and virtual, as it is aided by the confluent weave of reality and fantasy presented as technology suggests what is and what could be made possible.

Furthermore, if we are to understand technology as both material and generative, we then situate objects and events as inextricable from the apparatus or the technology that they are associated with (Haraway, 1991). Affect is thus not separate from the flows of technologies. Affect evolves concurrently with the flow of events technologies facilitate, adding to the ongoing movement of forces that intensify or subtract from co-occurring and interacting bodies, events, and ideas. Thus affect contributes to but also helps us to understand the set of moving forces that make any event what it is.

The effects of affect are implied by the dynamism embedded within affect, but they are not guaranteed nor are they of a linear nature. They are best described as deriving from a liminal nature. Affect precedes emotions and drives the intensity with which emotions are felt. Emotions may be understood as the *consciousness* of affect and present a means of translating “the ongoing life state in the language of the mind” (Damasio, in Protevi, 2009, p. 26). Affect contains a sociality and actualizes within the flow of social productivity. Effects of affect, including emotions, cognitions, and behaviors, are not predictable, at least not from the perspective of linear causality that empirical traditions suggest (MacKuen et al., 2007;

Neuman, et al., 2007). Affective variations from movement to stasis and back cannot be reduced to single stimuli and might best be understood as a “circus of affective responses” that are evoked at a given point in time, or *kairos*. Defined as the mood of the moment, *kairos*, a construct connected to affect, may further evolve as the given context of circumstances that give shape to *affect* shift (Sedgwick & Franck, 1995, p. 11). Emotional contagion, or shared affective states, supports empathy deriving not just from the specificity of corporeal representations but from more abstract formations of the general affects of pleasure, desire, or pain (e.g., Protevi, 2009). Thus, an affect can be intense but abstract in its focus at the same time.

The abstract fluidity of affect renders it theoretically useful yet vaguely open to a variety of interpretations. It is meaningful to humanists and social scientists because it fills the gap between content and effect, by providing a simple explanation that avoids the linearity of causal empiricism and integrates the complexity of networked drives or forces working with, alongside, or against each other. It further assists theoretical interpretations to overcome the dualisms implied by agency and structure, by explaining how affective flows can both gradually drive movement and obstruct it, thus inducing stasis. Affect is characterized by intensity, although the emotional root of that intensity will vary (Massumi, 2002). As it is released through interaction, it marks forces and non-forces of encounter, belonging and non-belonging, in-between-ness and “accumulative beside-ness” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). It is suggestive of but does not guarantee the in-between bond that Arendt (1970) notes as absent from contemporary, mediated public spaces. Yet, because it is suggestive of this irreplaceable bond, affect is inherently political. It provides a way of understanding humans as collective and emotional, as well as individual and rational, by presenting these states as confluent rather than opposite (Protevi, 2009).

Because of its *not yet* element (Spinoza, in Seigworth & Gregg, 2010), affect contains anticipation, promise, hope, and potential, or, what Seigworth and Gregg term “an inventory of shimmers” (p. 9). This liminality renders individuals powerful and potentially powerless at the same time because of its ephemeral and transient nature. The potentiality imparted through affective flows is communicative of affect’s futurity. Affect is habitually rhythmic, via the connected assemblages of habituated interpretations and practices. Yet it is also performatively evocative of would-be reactions, which become a “bridge of not yet, to the next” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 14). Affect is

performed, enacted via many sites, fluid and always in motion, and defined by its own variation (Massumi, 2002). Affective processes may breathe new meaning into the texture of a performance, frequently through linguistic play or reversal of norms (Sedgwick, 2003). It is through the interaction with further bodies, thoughts, and ideas that affect promises additional interpretive layers, thus suggesting potential actions. Thus, affect is frequently evoked in aesthetics, as it is more a matter of *manner* than of essence, thus lending itself to performativity (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010).

Given its fluid and visceral nature, the concept of affect may be criticized for being too abstract and vague. Empirically identifying, capturing, and connecting affect to related constructs via the conventional logic of causal empiricism can be complicated. However, affect may be a useful component in interpreting forces that drive co-occurrences moving in patterns defined by network complexity. The concept may be particularly meaningful toward understanding non-linear relationships and processes through which intensity augments communicative patterns in a manner that is not linearly causal, but non-linearly substantial.

Generally speaking, causal empiricism helps us isolate phenomena to a few concepts and studies specific relations between them. It is defined by a subtractive logic. The complexities of networks, on the other hand, are supported by additive patterns that increase and intensify complexities and flows. Massumi (2002) suggests that affect drives or annuls movement as a result of processes that are additive by nature, “in excess of the actually performed action and of its prescribed meaning” (p. 29). Whereas will and consciousness are subtractive, “limitative and derived functions that reduce a complexity too rich to be functionally expressed,” affect refers to traces of actions, past, present, and future that “[happened] too quickly to have happened, actually” (pp. 29–30). Affect thus describes the potential or virtual “pressing crowd of incipencies and tendencies,” which is “a realm of *potential*” (pp. 30). It presents a way of incorporating intensity into our interpretations of experiences, both qualitatively and quantitatively, as intensity augments, but it also drives and suggests. As such, affect can help understand networked logics that drive power distributions and emerging political formations that take shape through contagion and virality. As Seigworth and Gregg (2010) suggest, affect theory is a theory of mattering maps and moments, powerful and powerless. It is in the ephemerality of the virtual that affective claims to the political and power may be imagined, assembled, or suggested.

Affect, Power, and Contagion

In *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas (1966) contrasted the concepts of pollution, dirt, and contagion with the sacred, clean, and taboo to show how hierarchies of order are structured upon rituals devised to recognize the potency of disorder. Disruptions, caused by disorderly expressions that do not align with established rituals, attain power through contagion. Power takes form in the shape of contagion by polluting the established order through disruptions, which are ephemeral until they become ritualized and thus normalized into the ritualized order. In tracing these patterns, she explained:

Where the social system is well-articulated, I look for articulate powers vested in the points of authority; where the social system is ill-articulated, I look for inarticulate powers vested in those who are a source of disorder. I am suggesting that the contrast between form and surrounding non-form accounts for the distribution of symbolic and psychic powers: external symbolism upholds the explicit social structure and internal, unformed psychic powers threaten it from the non-structure. (p. 99)

Whereas formed symbolic structures are essential to sustaining hierarchical structures of power, Douglas explained that unformed, psychic, and internal powers are threatening precisely because they do not possess structure, nor are they part of a structure. While rituals frame and categorize experiences, thoughts that have not yet been put into words are not yet part of linguistic rituals, have not yet been framed by language, and have not yet been “limited by the very words selected” (Douglas, 1966, p. 64).

The unformed potential embedded within affective formations presents expressions that have not yet been limited by language. Yet, affect, Massumi (2002) tells us, “contaminates empirical space through language,” thus polluting the established order of rituals (p. 62). Understandably, once placed into words, affect takes a form and sacrifices some of the autonomy of the shapeless. It attains a consciousness, which transforms it into a feeling. Emotions or feelings may or may not be expressed through verbal or non-verbal means. What was once driven by endless potential has now been framed by words or expressions, which essentially transform affect into action. It is precisely at the boundary between embodiment, where affect is defined via its

own variation as it interacts with bod(ies), and embeddedness (which involves the framing of affect into emotions and expressions) that the potential for affective contagion is experienced.

By definition, because they are not yet framed, these boundary spaces are non-formed or marginal. Douglas (1966) suggests that margins are dangerous because that is where the structure of ideas, bodies, or thought is most vulnerable and less formed. Affective contagion is marginal because its *not yet* formed shape affords it potential for subversion. Once framed, contagion becomes categorized, formed, and embedded within a system of rituals. Unformed, it derives power from its potential, which is where affect lies. Marginality, “defined less by location than the evanescence of a momentary parodic rupture,” is what constitutes subversion and summarizes the process through which power becomes *available*, although not always *accessible* (Massumi, 2002, p. 69). The potential of momentary yet consecutive and cascading disruptions renders change gradual, and defines it as emergent relation. Post-emergence, the potential is captured, codified, and historicized. In marginality lies the ability to leave “history to reenter the immanence of the field of potential that change can occur” (Massumi, 2002, p. 77).

Disorder, marginality, and anarchy present the habitat for affect, mainly because order, mainstreaming, and hierarchy afford form that compromises the futurity of affect. Because marginal spaces support the emergence of change, affect is inherently political, although it does not conform to the structures we symbolically internalize as political. Thus, per affect theory, empowerment lies in liminality, in pre-emergence and emergence, or at the point at which new formations of the political are in the process of being imagined but not yet articulated. The form of affective power is pre-actualized, networked, and of a liquid nature.

Affectively accessed power is particularly aligned with the practices networked publics develop, as they phatically come into being through their evolving interaction. Networked publics have been defined by boyd (2010) as “publics that are restructured by networked technologies” and therefore simultaneously are “(1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice” (p. 39). Networked publics include civic formations that develop beyond the model of the public sphere and permit us to consider the possibilities for engagement that the affordances of convergent technologies introduce. boyd (2010) argues that networked publics are not just “publics networked together, but they are publics that have

been transformed by networked media” (p. 42). The properties of social media lend networked publics particular affordances that can be traced in the ways individuals mobilized during the recent wave of uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. While social network sites like Twitter and Facebook certainly did not motivate the uprisings, they presented Lefebvre’s (1974/1991) ensemble of matériel, or material causes, around which conventional and innovative civic activities were structured (Tufekci, 2011).

On a primary level, social media facilitate engagement in ways that are meaningful. Most notably, they help activate latent ties that may be crucial to the mobilization of networked publics. Because they typically involve interactions that occur on societal supersurfaces, their impact is always subject to context, to how these supersurfaces connect to the infrastructural core of a regime, be that a democracy, autocracy, or a political system in transition.¹ On a secondary level, networked publics are formed as crowds coalesce around both actual and imagined communities. The connective affordances of social media then not only activate the in-between bond of publics but enable expression and information sharing that liberates the individual and the collective imaginations. To understand how this happens, we must examine how media technologies afford affect.

Affect and Mediality

Affect is frequently theorized in terms of the architectures that support it and make it visible. These include bodies, thoughts, and ideas but also technologies that support the interactions within and around which affect emerges. Scholars evoke the concepts of the affect economy and affective labor in order to explain mediated efforts to exploit and reproduce affective outputs. Hardt and Negri (2004) developed the relation of affect to value, to trace how immaterial labor is performed and produced via affect. Affective labor presents a particular variety of immaterial labor, associated with “labor that produces or manipulates affects” (p. 108). It is produced frequently in the context of material labor and can be identified, for instance, in the service industry and in professions that associate high performance with a good attitude (a smile), and adept social skills. The dominance of affective labor is evident in the emphasis several employers place in attitude, character, and pro-social behavior (Hardt & Negri, 2004). Unlike factory workers, who

produce material objects, immaterial laborers produce affects. Thus insurance providers produce safety, retirement funds managers produce security, and flight attendants produce comfort. The work performed typically combines both material and immaterial labor, but the emphasis is typically placed on the immaterial product provided.

For some professions, affective labor is integrated into formal processes of production and consumption and is thus compensated. Many forms of affective labor are routinely performed by non-compensated workers, including domestic work and family care. These forms of labor are institutionalized as non-compensated labor by virtue of their affective nature and lack of association with the production of material objects and capital. Advertising presents a prime example of institutionalized affective labor in mass culture societies. It engages potential consumers through the suggestion of a possible affective attachment they might develop for a product. Therefore, it directs audiences to produce particular affects that might align with the advertised product. The affective labor that audiences produce is not compensated and is further employed to add to the affective and material value of the advertised object.

Media typically invite audiences to consume content via affective relationships developed with particular media genres and media personas. These affective relationships may lead to the emergence and cultivation of particular feelings and emotions, but it is essential not to confuse affect with emotion and feeling. While affect contains a particular energy, mood, or movement that may lead to particular feeling, and possibly the subsequent expression of emotion, it both precedes and sustains or possibly annuls feeling and emotion. We might think of affect as the force that drives the unconscious tap of the foot to music, the bob of the head as we listen along to conversation, the rhythm of our pace as we walk.

Affect captures the intensity of drive or movement with a not yet developed sense of direction. We might understand feeling as a sensation that has been identified, categorized, and labeled, based on internalized schemata of experiences and predispositions, and further define emotion as the display of feeling (Shouse, 2005). Affect is a “non-conscious experience of intensity,” which permits feeling to be “felt” and subsequently transcribed into emotion (Massumi, 2002; Shouse, 2005). Psychologists frequently explain that infants rely on affect, because they do not possess the cognitive and linguistic skills with which to organize, file, and express feeling and emotion. But by linking together affective modalities, that is, intensities that develop

as infants interact with the world surrounding them, they begin to develop a sense of the world, a sense of self based on relations between sensations experienced (Stern, 1985). These amodal intensities can be understood as affects, and for infants are emotions, but for adults, they determine the intensity (quantity) with which a particular feeling (quality) is experienced (Grossberg, 1997; Shouse, 2005).

Affect provides and amplifies intensity because it increases our awareness of a certain mind or body state that we, as adults, learn to label as particular feeling and express as a given emotion. Without affect, feelings essentially do not “feel,” for it is affect that provides the intensity with which we experience emotions like pain, joy, and love, and more important, the urgency to act upon those feelings (Damasio, 1994; Tomkins, 1995). The affect mechanism amplifies our awareness of a given feeling, in a manner similar to that of the pain mechanism, as Tomkins (1995) explains:

If we cut our hand, saw it bleeding, but had no innate pain receptors, we would know we had done something which needed repair, but there would be no urgency to it. Like our automobile which needs a tune-up, we might well let it go until next week when we had more time. But the pain mechanism, like the affect mechanism, so amplifies our awareness of the injury which activates it that we are forced to be concerned, and concerned immediately. (p. 88)

Music presents one of the easiest ways of understanding affective relations and reactions. A given piece of music might move people in a particular manner, which in turn leads to pleasure derived from music prior to actual analysis of its cognitive and affective meaning. The subconscious humming or tapping along to music is an indicator of the intensity with which we experience the music, before or while we develop emotions associated with it. Similarly, affective attunement to a piece of music may be succeeded by cognitive dissonance from it, as we begin to listen to lyrics or the structure of music and interpret it in ways that leave us ideologically distanced from its meaning. At the same time, affective attunement to music sustains moods and modes of engagement for individuals of varying ideological orientations, leading to both a unifying effect and an impression of engagement.

Therefore, media are capable of sustaining and transmitting affect, in ways that may lead to the cultivation of subsequent feelings, emotions, thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. The intensity supporting these reactions can be

transformed into value, and the tendency to evaluate labor or play by virtue of the intensity behind the feeling with which it is performed produces an affect economy. While the affect economy is relevant to how power hierarchies are reproduced but also reorganized, of greater interest to the present analysis is the blending of play and labor that affective engagement invites. Because affect precedes any cognitive categorizations of engagements as play or labor, affective attunement supports activity that has the potential to be both (*playbor*) or, possibly, neither. Digital media invite affective engagement, through activities that both exploit affective and other labor and promise empowering forms of play (Scholz, 2012). Beyond and while being integrated into affective economies, the affective attunement afforded through online means also sustains, that is, *moves*, interactions between interacting bodies in plains that are social, cultural, and political, which sustain *affective patterning* (Grusin, 2010), or contribute to the sustenance of *matterings maps* (Grossberg, 1997).

The mediality afforded by film and sound media, Grusin (2010) explains, lends itself to affect modulation not only because of the ways in which it combines audio and visual sensation but also through its representation of the affective states of others. Interactive media, in particular,

would seem to work as modes of trans-modal or cross-modal affective and cognitive modulation by adding touch to sight and sound, so when you move your avatar in a game, for example, you are adding cross-modal patterns of touch to the coupling of sight and sound. That is, the haptic movement of hand on controller, say, along with other bodily/muscular movements involved, produces a change in the medial other, the avatar on screen and the others on screen, which provides a kind of intensification or re-duplication of affective interpersonal relations. (Grusin, 2010, pp. 95–96)

So digital, among other media, invite and transmit affect but also sustain affective feedback loops that generate and reproduce affective patterns of relating to others that are further reproduced as affect—that is, intensity that has not yet been cognitively processed as feeling, emotion, or thought. These experiences are not separate but are integrated into congruent media practices, habits, and rituals. Haptic, optic, and tactile, but also the computational capabilities of media invite particular modalities of affective attunement.

The connective and expressive affordances thus generated grant a given technology its own mediality, and this mediality invites particular *forms* or *textures* of affective attunement.

Affective Formations

The medialities of networked technologies enable affective processes that reflexively drive or nullify publics. Similar to the affective attunement invited by music, online media may facilitate affective connection of ideologically disparate viewpoints. Once affective connections are interpreted, homophilous spheres may emerge, as the intensity that led to the connection has been cognitively situated. But the intensity behind the act of connection or expression, sustained by the mediality of the technology, has already affectively urged a public into being. Affective gestures, of a textual nature, frequently constitute opportunities to call networked publics into being (Yang, 2009). In this manner, mediated technologies effectively construct electronic elsewheres—social spaces sustained through digitally enabled affective structures that support meaning-making and construction of marginalized viewpoints (Berry et al., 2010). These spaces can also be understood as *third places*, that is, informal meeting places away from the home and the workplace that are essential to community life, social capital, and civic engagement, and are sustained chiefly by conversation (Oldenburg, 1997). While third places have always characterized how individuals associate outside spheres of work and home, in modern times, third places are intentionally sought out and discursively established in spaces actual or imagined. The frequently idealized ancient Greek *agora* can be understood as a third place, as its use varied depending on historical context, and it frequently presented a hybrid space for the exchange of ideas but also goods and services, as well as the sharing of public news and announcements. But places sustained by material, binary, or discursively established architectures connect networks of people by going “where people are, not where we would like them to be” (Chadwick, 2008, p. 31).

Third places where social, cultural, political, and economic activities frequently converge give rise to political expressions aligned with individual repertoires of self-expression, lifestyle politics, and personal reinterpretations of the political (Bennett, 1998; Chadwick, 2013; Papacharissi,

2010). These activities are increasingly supported by hybrid spaces blurring public and private, civic and consumption-based, collective and personal narratives that assemble the story of who we are, and these stories are personal and political. Everyday life lived through, in, and around media (Deuze, 2012) is energized by hybrid domains that blend the aesthetics of commercial and alternative, public and private, entertainment and politics, work and leisure, individuation and collectivism, and countless other dualisms around which we have organized our everyday routines in the past, including of course, rationality and affect (Chadwick, 2013). These hybrid environments afford both opportunities and challenges for individuals wanting to think and feel their way into politics, and they are not unique to online media (e.g., Coleman, 2013; Corner & Pels, 2003; Van Zoonen, 2004). It is through these informal and hybrid avenues to civic participation that people look for the sense of participation or what Coleman (2013) has termed *the feeling of being counted*, the affective character of an experience that renders it fulfilling for individuals.

These hybrid spaces invite newer civic habits that deviate from the deliberative ideal but also democratize by inviting a turn to the affective, that is, by creating “a new grassroots outlet for the affective dimensions in politics” (Chadwick, 2008, p. 32). Thus, affective attunement demonstrated through liking a post on Facebook, endorsing an item in a news aggregator, uploading and sharing a YouTube video, or using a meme generator to create and share a simple message via a photograph is indicative of civic intensity and thus a form of engagement. Stories assembled through communicative means that include text, audio, or video blend deliberative and phatic, intentional and habitual, cognitive and affective means of expression. Responses to the organically developed Twitter hashtags, Tumblr sites, and images on #bindersfullofwomen, #muslimrage, and #bigbird include multimedia affective reactions by citizens whose sentiments, at the given point in time, were best captured by these expressive gestures. The conversations that are supported by electronic elsewheres bridge phatic and paralinguistic conventions of the everyday to afford expression, and possibly, agency claimed affectively (Schandorf, 2012). These affectively framed conversations may serve as the basis what Giddens (1999) described as *a democracy of emotions*, what Coleman (2013) discusses as the *mediation of democratic feeling*, and contribute to the logic that Bennett and Segerberg (2012) describe as connective rather than collective action.

Networked Structures of Feeling

This chapter began with an overview of the political place of online technologies in contemporary democratic and non-democratic societies. Research indicates that while online media pluralize avenues for civic engagement and political expression, they do not de facto generate democratizing developments. Given what we know about the political impact of online technologies, emphasis is thus placed on the texture of civic expression that online media afford. The notion of affect presents a way for understanding both the opportunities for *voice* that networked platforms invite, and the inequalities in expression that they frequently conceal or reproduce (Couldry, 2010). Affect is intensity, and intensity can both reflexively drive forward and entrap in constantly regenerated feedback loops.

Research on the impact of the internet frequently favors an examination of online deliberations in the context of the public sphere. Thus, research focuses on the rationality, purposefulness, and outcomes of online conversations for contemporary regimes. And yet, net-based communication frequently privileges the net savvy, fragments conversation, and occurs in commercially driven spaces, thus compromising the public sphere potential of the internet (Papacharissi, 2002). Comparative exercises focused on measuring the public sphere potential of net-related platforms further undermine and misrepresent the civic potential of the internet by retrofitting it into models for civic engagement that speak to the political economies of prior eras. More important, they overemphasize the theoretical model of the public sphere, Habermasian or otherwise defined, as the primary vehicle for interpreting the political relevance of a multi-faceted medium like the internet. Furthermore, reason and rationally driven discourse are accentuated as canonical elements of political conversation, thus prompting researchers to associate the absence of these elements with the lack of a democratizing effect. This approach assumes that democracies are rationally based when, in fact, they are messy affairs that are driven by aspirations of rationality, caught up in the daily *mise-en-scène* of ethos, pathos, and logos. It further expects rational reactions of citizens whose typical daily responses to political developments are a mix of emotion with fact-informed opinion. Finally, and most important, this approach marginalizes emotion as an important element of political expression.

My argument is that we frequently misunderstand or overlook much of the meaning of online platforms for civic expression in our quest for impact

or rationality in online specimens of political activity. Richer understandings of the place of the internet in contemporary political environments can be obtained by examining how networked platforms support affective processes. These processes produce affective statements that mix fact with opinion, and with emotion, in a manner that simulates the way that we politically react in our everyday lives. Hybrid forms of storytelling are prevalent online and frequently involve the remixing of mainstream content to affectively represent subjectivities (e.g., Chadwick, 2011a, 2013). Recent elections, in particular, featured several examples of subjectively produced or remixed content, which was posted on YouTube and prompted powerful affective reactions toward candidates (e.g., Chadwick, 2011b; Kreiss, 2012).

Taking a cue from these studies, but also from previous considerations of affect and blogging (e.g., Dean, 2010), and affect and movements (e.g., Sedgwick, 2003), I examine affect on Twitter. I focus on Twitter, because its organizational logic is defined by hashtags, which combine conversationality and subjectivity in a manner that supports both individually felt affect and collectivity. Moreover, tweets frequently link to other types of content posted on YouTube, blogs, and media, in general, which should permit me to capture the virality of affect as it spreads through and beyond the Twitterverse.

Using Twitter as the platform of interest, the next three chapters explore how affective processes are enabled in the online environment by examining the form and texture of communication. I examine political expressions produced within movements that recently employed Twitter as a prevalent medium for communication, focusing on how Twitter was used by Arab Spring movements and by the Occupy movement. I also examine how Twitter supports political expression that is less purposive and bubbles up in everyday practices by examining the affective processes that drive politically infused expression in trending hashtags on Twitter. I focus on Twitter because it is a contemporary medium for storytelling, enabling co-creating and collaborative filtering that sustains ambient and affective engagement for the publics it interconnects (e.g., Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012; Hermida, Lewis, & Zamith, in press). Moreover, Twitter serves as conduit connecting the information flows between publics and crowds, networked media, and general expressive tendencies and tensions in general (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). As such, the platform permits access not just to content generated and disseminated by Twitter, but also to content generated elsewhere and inadvertently channeled via Twitter. The case studies are

meant to capture conversations that are representative of what most people end up using Twitter for, but also indicative of moments of potential affective climax and disruption, connected to contemporary civic practices, online and off.

Affective gestures contribute to spheres of political expression in ways that pluralize, organize, and disrupt conversations. They sustain action that is connective and contains the potentiality of the not-yet formed affect. As publics are discursively and affectively called into being via Twitter, the following primary question drives this research:

What form do publics take on as they materialize textually via the medium of Twitter? The texture, form, and shape of communication sustained by these publics are informed by modalities of expression and connection that prevail on Twitter. The resulting virality, spreadability, or lulled loop of affectivity may disrupt dominant narratives, contaminating, in Douglas's (1966) words, orderly or cleaned structures of rituals, structures of reason, and structures of feeling. I begin by examining the patterns characterizing the modalities of connection and expression that emerge as these publics interact via Twitter, with an emphasis on who is talking to whom, and what they are talking about. A variety of theoretical frameworks are incorporated into examining each case study, so as to yield the most suitable tools and methods for examining the form of publics emerging out of different varieties of interaction. I utilize both my findings and those of concurrent research to draw some conclusions on the place of Twitter, and by extension, of the networked media that it interconnects, in contemporary modes of citizenship. Research is further organized by considering the following, secondary questions:

What are the tropes and modalities of civic engagement sustained via networked media?

How do these inform the texture of publics that are called into being via networked media?

Ultimately, I am interested in structures of feeling supported by the soft and networked architectures of online media, the social experiences in

solution that each generation produces and lives (Williams, 1961). The moods, contexts, and singular space-time blocks that mark *kairos*: the affectively sensed and internalized here and now, and the ways in which this is collectively, connectively, and digitally imprinted. The soft, networked structures of feeling that are affectively felt and lived prior to, or perhaps in lieu of, being ideologically articulated. The soft, networked structures of feeling that can drive powerful disruption, help accumulate intensity and tension, or simply sustain infinite loops of activity and inactivity.

2

Affective News and Networked Publics

In early 2011, a wave of political unrest swept through North Africa and the Middle East. In late December 2010, Mohammed Bouazizi, a twenty-six-year-old Tunisian college-educated fruit vendor set himself on fire in protest to corruption, bureaucracy, and pronounced income inequalities. Bouazizi had been publicly humiliated by a municipal officer who confiscated his apples and weighing equipment, while her aides subsequently beat him up. It has been reported that Bouazizi had repeatedly refused to bribe municipal officers and the police, and that the governor's office had turned a deaf ear to Bouazizi's attempts to file a complaint. On January 4, 2011, Bouazizi died from burns covering 90 percent of his body, but by then, his act had triggered mass protests throughout the country, leading to Tunisian president Ben Ali's resignation ten days later. Inspired by the fall of Tunisia's prime minister, Egyptian protestors took to the streets on January 25 to protest the thirty-year rule of then-president Hosni Mubarak, who was forced to resign after eighteen days of anti-government demonstrations. Heartened by these results, thousands of Algerians rallied on February 12, demanding democratic reforms. Subsequent protests erupted in the greater Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region, cascading through Jordan (January 28), Syria (February 4), Kuwait (February 6), Yemen (February 11), Iran (February 14), Bahrain (February 14), Libya (February 16), Iraq (February 16), Morocco (February 20), Oman (February 27), and Lebanon (February 28).

Much has been written about the role of social media in these uprisings. Some dismiss or downplay the existence of a causal relationship between use of social media and subsequent protests. People protested and brought down governments long before social media existed. Facebook and Twitter are simply places where revolutionaries congregate online (Gladwell, 2011; Morozov, 2011). Others maintain that use of social media accelerated the

development of social movements in those countries similar to the ways the printing press and other media facilitated revolutions in the past (Ingram, 2011; Tufekci, 2011). At the same time, it is important to remember that these are *human* revolutions, ultimately enabled by human cost and sacrifice, over grievances that had been accumulating over time (York, 2011; Zuckerman, 2011).

As revealed by the chronology of the recent wave of political unrest, demonstrations that make use of social media lead to a variety of outcomes, some of which include government upheavals, democratic reforms, violence, or further suppression of political freedoms and other consequences yet to be determined. Demonstrations protesting the outcome of the 2009 Iranian elections were accelerated by social media use but did not result in regime reform. Social media use in the Tulip Revolution facilitated information dissemination that, along with other factors, led to the overthrow of the Kyrgyz government. To date, regimes have been overthrown in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, and civil uprisings have escalated in Bahrain and Syria. Protests persist in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Sudan, and periodically resurface in Lebanon, Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, and Western Sahara. Nations in the region that are rich in oil and thus economically independent from global geo-political structures (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar) have had an easier time resisting regime change.

Without a doubt, context matters. Moreover, whether these uprisings will historically be claimed as revolutions can only be determined by long-term democratic outcomes. In the meantime, asking whether social media *caused* these uprisings misses the point. It also mischaracterizes the nature of the media employed in the context of these upheavals.

Looking for causal links between the use of social media and subsequent uprisings leading to political turmoil and potential regime upheaval assumes direct and somewhat linear media effects, which, as a little more than a century of media research informs us, do not exist. Media, along with a variety of socioeconomic, cultural, political, and contextual factors, contribute in variety of ways, some overt and some latent, to different aspects of individual and aggregate behaviors. As our experiences increasingly become partially or entirely mediated, in one form or another, media converge, reproduce, and become a part of the sociocultural habitus that we reference in defining ourselves. In other words, we live with media, and some argue, in media, that support always-under-construction identities, individual and

collective (Couldry, 2012; Deuze, 2012). Because media help us tell stories about ourselves, others, and the world we live in, more interesting questions lie in understanding which stories are being told, and how, and which stories are being concealed. Importantly, if these stories connect people in ways that make them *feel* like their views matter, how might this affective investment envelop and drive movements forward? For publics listening in to events from a distance, do these stories sustain a *feeling of being there*, wherever *there* may be, and what is the nature of that affective connection sustained through the stories told? Ultimately, looking at the stories told with or in media permits us to come full circle and return to questions of impact, only this time through a more complex framework that evolves beyond simplistic and linear relationships. It is these stories, collaboratively networked together through platforms like Twitter, that form structures of feeling. And it is these *soft* structures of feeling that may potentially sustain and mediate the feeling of democracy.

Rather than beginning by examining impact directly, this chapter and this volume focus first on what was being said via the platform of Twitter. Determining the impact of social media on Arab Spring presents researchers with a large set of questions that may be answered only with methodical and multiple studies and with the benefit of time. This volume began by posing two central questions, revolving around (a) the form that publics take on as they materially textually via Twitter, and (b) the related modalities of engagement thus supported via networked media like Twitter. To tackle these questions in the case of #egypt, I begin with a focus on content so as to study the stories that were told about uprisings in the making through Twitter. Emphasis is placed on content and storytelling with the end goal of understanding how these stories are situated within greater and parallel narratives. It is through better understanding of the formation of these narratives, dominant and liminal, that we may be able to form some intelligent conclusions about potential impact.

Moreover, it is often the case that generalizations about the revolutionary potential of social media and the Arab Spring tend to lump together a variety of digital platforms with varying properties, but more important, they also lump together distinct MENA countries with different regimes, histories, and cultures (e.g., Alhassen, 2012). This chapter focuses on one country in particular, Egypt, and tracks activity during the time period leading to and immediately following the resignation of Hosni Mubarak. The Egyptian protests that led to the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak were

organized through a complex network that combined heavy Twitter and Facebook use with other forms of interpersonal communication. During this period, access to mainstream media was variably blocked, foreign and native journalists were intimidated, and access to the internet was controlled and eventually shut down. Twitter, however, provided a continuous stream of events in real time throughout the crisis. This chapter explores the use of Twitter as a mechanism for news sharing and connection during the Egyptian uprisings that led to the resignation of Mubarak. The focus is on Egypt because not only was Twitter use heavy and globally dispersed, but also because it directly preceded an uprising and continued steadily throughout it and following the regime reversal. Network, content, frequency, and discourse analyses of randomly sampled tweets over a longitudinal time period are employed to study affective processes of broadcasting and listening on Twitter and the resulting stories these breed, reproduce, and remix.

Emphasis is placed on the form that communication and storytelling takes as it develops over time and on the texture that characterizes expressions that the platform invites. Findings are used to inform conclusions on who is saying what to whom and what that conversation might focus on as well as, and more important, the variety and texture of expression lent by the medium itself. Through the flow and content of stories told, I seek to understand what form they lend to the publics that are networked together through collaborative storytelling practices. What stories are being told about the movement through Twitter and what sorts of events do these stories begin to give shape to as simultaneous events on the ground, and abroad, attain further momentum? Through exploring the form and nature of stories told, along with the storytelling conventions that emerge, I am able to trace the tropes and modalities of civic engagement sustained via networked media like Twitter. These findings are connected and compared to uses of Twitter across the MENA region in uprisings of a varying nature frequently referenced under the Arab Spring term. Interpretations are drawn to offer an explanation for the place of the internet in democratizing movements.

Twitter as a Platform for (News) Storytelling

As a text-based microblogging service, Twitter permits approximately 555 million users to generate over 340 million tweets of 140 or fewer characters, a day (“Statistic Brain,” 2013). Twitter’s sociotechnical properties, as defined

by its addressivity and conversational markers, heighten its capacity to sustain flows of news streams during times of political crises (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009). Thus, Twitter is quickly emerging as a popular platform for news storytelling that facilitates co-creating, collaborative filtering, and curating of news content. News storytelling practices on Twitter combine the logics of news production and consumption in a manner that has been described by Bruns (2008) as “produsage,” a collaborative creation and extension of information that blurs the line between audiences and journalists. News feeds collectively *prodused* by citizens committing independent or coordinated acts of journalism present an important alternative to the dominant news economy, especially as many news organizations shut down international and national bureaus due to financial constraints. In addition, during times when access to mainstream media is controlled, restricted, or otherwise not trusted, Twitter and other net-based platforms quickly rise to prominence and facilitate information dissemination and coordination (Papacharissi, 2010; Howard, 2011).

Addressivity and conversational markers are essential to the formation and direction of information flows via Twitter. Networked publics are further textually rendered through the use of hashtags that define a topic or a direction for information sharing. Hashtags emerged organically as a way for users to organize content along themes or keywords before these markers or conventions were formally incorporated into the Twitter infrastructure. Organic or endogenous hashtags frequently possess the phatic nature of spontaneous interpersonal conversation and contain a mix of reports of, opinions about, and general affective reactions to news of social and informational relevance. Research generally indicates that content in select hashtags follows a power-law distribution in terms of popularity, time, and geolocation (Singh & Jain, 2010). Reciprocity, transitivity, centrality, and density of posts differ across *exogenous* tags, capturing an activity, interest, or event originating outside of the Twitter system (e.g., a natural disaster), and *endogenous* tags, capturing Twitter-only activities that do not correspond to external events (e.g., a popular post by a celebrity) (Naaman, Becker, & Gravano, 2011). Exogenous trends tend to generate more independent contributions whereas endogenous trends tend to be more symmetrical, possibly reflecting a presence of stronger ties. The only exception to this rule may be presented by local events, which, unlike other exogenous events, may feature a little more discussion and a little less forwarding of information.

Locality thus further shapes the tone and tenor of flows organized by hashtags. Local tags may display denser social connectivity between posting users (Yardi & boyd, 2010a). In conversations around controversial topics, replies between like-minded individuals tend to strengthen group identity, whereas replies between different-minded individuals reinforce in-group and out-group affiliation (Yardi & boyd, 2010b). “Who says what to whom on Twitter” analyses reveal the presence of homophily between different categories of users, suggesting that celebrities listen to celebrities while bloggers listen to bloggers, even though bloggers may be overall more likely to rebroadcast information than other categories of users (Wu, Hofman, Mason, & Watts, 2011).

Further research underscores the connection between shared geolocality and communal bonds strengthened via Twitter posts, permitting forms of “peripheral awareness and ambient community” (Erickson, 2010, p. 1194). The practice of following opinion leaders on Twitter has been likened to emerging disciplines of listening in social media, characterized by background listening, reciprocal listening, and delegated listening (Crawford, 2009). In this manner, the practice of listening may strengthen connectedness with others (Hennenburg, Scammell, & O’Shaughnessy, 2009), resemble the practices of conversation (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009; Steiner, 2009), and add elements of physicality to web design (Hohl, 2009). For burgeoning and ongoing movements, Twitter may serve as an always-on social environment that sustains conversations between homophilic and discordant publics, and these conversations frequently become more intense when driven by an endogenous shared connection, local or other.

Addressivity markers further enhance communication between conversation participants, by enabling phatic conventions of information sharing. *Retweeting* enables the rebroadcasting of information and, when occurring at a heightened pace, it fuels virality, meme propagation, and, in general, spreadability of information (Hansen, Arvidsson, Nielsen, Colleoni, & Etter, 2011). Retweet syntax may involve verbatim reposting of the tweet or editing the tweet syntax to include additional commentary in ways that may endorse or raise visibility of the content (boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010). Research points to a set of diverse reasons for retweeting by users, including amplifying and spreading thoughts, utilizing the retweet as a conversation starter, validating others’ thoughts, and making one’s presence as a listener known (boyd et al., 2010). Inclusion of URLs (uniform resource locators) and hashtags tends to improve the probability of a message being retweeted

(Suh, Hong, Pirolli, & Chi, 2010). Moreover, research suggests that affective tendencies frequently shape the flow of retweets, with negative sentiment enhancing the virality of news but not of non-news items.

As a variant of the RT (retweet) convention, the via addressivity marker is employed to attribute information to a source without retweeting the source's actual tweet. Much like the hat tip convention encountered in other networked platforms, the via marker permits the user to use her or his own words in rebroadcasting content. Even though the via convention is the least researched feature of Twitter, it enables actors and publics to connect their tweets to specific sources and in so doing to connect around particular sources that tweets point to. Finally, mentions enable users to converse directly with other specific users, draw their attention to particular content, or attempt to capture their attention in general. Mentions sustain a high level of interactivity and engagement among users who seek to connect and converse, and they serve a variety of functions, including addressing information specifically to the addressee, referring to others in conversation, and sharing a variety of specific details, including location (Honeycutt & Herring 2009). In comparing retweets and mentions, research suggests that mentions are driven in large part by name value, as compared to retweets, which tend to be driven by content value (Cha, Haddadi, Benevenuto, & Gummadi, 2010).

Addressivity markers and hashtags present the socio-informatic backbone of Twitter. Resulting information sharing and conversational uses of Twitter by journalists, news organizations, and individual users underscore the relevance of the platform as a social awareness system. News organizations typically use Twitter to deliver the same news over a different platform, with a touch of more multi-mediality (Armstrong & Gao, 2010), or in situations when the story is changing so quickly that TV or print media do not have the time to develop a fully sourced story (Armstrong & Gao, 2011). News streams generated through the organic use of hashtags, however, typically combine input from a variety of actors in ways that introduce hybridity into the news system. The resulting accidental or coordinated collaborations between journalists and users committing acts of journalism further blur boundaries between information, news, and entertainment and create "subtle, but important shifts in the balance of power in shaping news production" (Chadwick, 2011a, p. 6). Homophily and inraelite competition characterize these as hybrid news systems that reproduce some existing news values and newsroom hierarchies while at the same time enabling the

renegotiation of established norms and power distribution. To this point, Hermida (2010) suggests that the “broad, asynchronous, light-weight and always-on” aspect of platforms like Twitter afford individuals “an awareness system [with] diverse means to collect, communicate, share and display news and information, serving diverse purposes . . . on different levels of engagement” (p. 301). The ambience, homophily, and strengthening of bonds between those sharing a geolocal connection are essential in understanding the sociotechnical texture of Twitter, especially in situations that call for individuals to mobilize and show solidarity. They inform the *storytelling infrastructure* of the platform.

During protest, uprisings, or periods of political instability, Twitter is frequently used to call networked publics into being and into action. Understandably, the homophily encouraged by Twitter lends itself to calls for solidarity among publics, imagined or actual, that share a common set of goals. The enhanced connectivity experienced between Twitter users with shared geolocations may further help activate and deepen ties during uprisings. Ultimately, the ambient nature of this social awareness environment lends itself to providing an always-on, interconnected web of information that mobilized actors might utilize, serving as more efficient and “electronic word of mouth” (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009, p. 2169). At the same time, it permits individuals to change the dynamics of conflict coverage and shape how events are covered—and possibly, how history is written (Hamdy, 2010). A study of the linguistic construction of textual messages on blogs and Twitter in the Nigerian 2007 election revealed that citizens used these media to mobilize, participate in public discussions, and serve as watchdogs during the electoral process (Ifukor, 2010). Under these circumstances, platforms like Twitter force a radical pluralization of news dissemination and democratic processes (Dahlberg, 2009). In regimes where or during times when media are controlled, inaccessible, or not trusted, platforms like Twitter permit individuals to bypass traditional gatekeepers and contribute directly to the news process. They provide an always-on, ambient storytelling infrastructure that enables networked agents to presence¹ their own takes on events ongoing and in the past.

In recent protests following the Iranian 2009 election, Twitter permitted communication despite state censorship of other media coverage and access, affording citizens the opportunity to publish information and broadcast news, audio, and video accounts to other media and the world watching. Still, Twitter was accessible only to those with access to it and the skills to

use it. Moreover, Iran's censorship capabilities made posting information and having conversations via Twitter difficult. In fact, the majority of tweets during the post-election protests came from outside the country, with only a few updates coming from influential individuals inside the country (Christensen, 2009). In this case, the role of Twitter is better understood if reconceptualized "not in terms of whom the medium allowed to speak, but in terms of who could listen because of the medium" (Solow-Niederman, 2010, p. 35). As a result, Twitter is important because it allows a global audience to listen in on a conflict. The importance of listening to what is happening in distant parts of the world is heightened as access to other media is blocked and Twitter becomes the primary mechanism of connection with those remote publics. Finally, as Twitter becomes the only or primary channel of information we can tune in to, the form of news on Twitter and the values that define that form become of central importance. Given that the storytelling infrastructure of the platform invites certain tendencies, what stories are then told depending on how users avail themselves of the platform affordances? The mediality of the platform may invite certain storytelling tendencies, and the stories produced may attain elevated relevance in contexts where Twitter presents the primary platform for news sharing. Interpreting the meaning of Twitter as a storytelling infrastructure thus requires not just understanding its affordances but also developing a sense for how they interact with existing values that shape news storytelling.

News Values and the Form of News on Twitter

News values have occupied the interest of media scholars for some time now. From early theorizations of values that drive what is most likely to be covered (e.g., Galtung & Ruge, 1965), to seminal studies of what makes the news (e.g., Gans, 1984), scholars tend to find that the following values drive news content in most Western mass media: large scale of events, closeness to home, clarity of meaning, short time scale, relevance, consonance, personification, negativity, significance, and drama and action (McQuail, 2002). These differing news values are further reproduced, challenged, and negotiated by media professionals, routines, organizations, extramedia factors, and ideological perspectives (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Bennett, 1996; Schudson, 2003).

Still, of particular relevance to the context of this book is Hartley's work on news processes and values. Hartley (1982) explains that news values are ever-evolving and are about news *stories* and not news events themselves. He offers the following categories that are more fluid and inclusive of a greater variety of news cultures and thus, more fitting to the present context:

- News values prioritize stories about events that are recent, sudden, unambiguous, predictable, relevant, and close (to the relevant culture/class/location).
- Priority is given to stories about the economy, government politics, industry and business, foreign affairs, and domestic affairs—either of conflict or human interest— disasters, and sport.
- Priority is given to elite nations (the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe, etc.) and elite people.
- News values often involve appeals to dominant ideologies and discourses. What is cultural and/or historical will be presented as natural and consensual.
- News stories need to appeal to readers/viewers so they must be commonsensical, entertaining and dramatic (like fiction), and visual (Hartley, 2002, p. 166).

News values are what shape how events turn into news stories. News storytelling, then, becomes the process of turning news events into stories, practiced collaboratively through the accumulation of 140 character updates in the context of Twitter, where news may be broadcast instantaneously and stories develop organically and collaboratively. News frames may be constructed by citizens and journalists contributing to the feed of news in atomized yet networked mode, and news values may be similarly crowd-sourced to the values of the contributing publics. Or they may reflect enduring news values that are the products of institutions and ideologies that have long been in place. In the context of uprisings, these institutions and ideologies of course may come under question or attack. A first question that emerges, then, in exploring the meaning of Twitter as a news storytelling infrastructure for the diverse networked publics convening around the news shared on #egypt is this:

What news values were prevalent in the Twitter news streams capturing the events of the 2011 Egyptian uprising?

News values shape the form of news stories told. Events take on the form of a narrative relatable to a variety of publics and audiences, and this form is historically sensitive (Nerone & Barnhurst, 2001). The organization and presentation of news is a product of news values. It reflects and also suggests how news organizations relate to their publics, their perceived audiences, and how they balance market and news values. News organizations have a long history of slow and reluctant adjustment to the affordances of newer platforms, frequently employing technological innovations but not incorporating the new media “affect” into the dominant form of news (Barnhurst, 2010a, 2010b, 2011). Newer media require a reconsideration of market values and are often temporally incompatible with fact checking and other conventions of journalism. News institutions must reconcile market and news values, but what form does news storytelling take on when citizens and journalists construct narratives collaboratively in circumstances of political instability? How do the affordances of Twitter inform these pluralized narratives, and what do these narratives tell us about the form of civic engagement sustained via the platform? These questions further inform subsequent analysis.

I focused on the period of January 25–February 25, the period during which popular uprisings forced the resignation of Egyptian president Mubarak. The analysis was organized around the #egypt hashtag, the most prominent tag used during this period of turmoil and the one featuring a majority of tweets cross-posted to other frequently used tags, such as #Jan25 or #Tahrir.² Programming scripts and filters were used to organize the dataset into a workable format and to address issues of noise and inconsistency in the Twapperkeeper files. A total of approximately 1.5 million tweets were collected from the #egypt tag.³

Sampling and Analysis Strategies

In order to track news values and the form of news, a variety of qualitative and quantitative techniques were combined to study who was saying what to whom and how. Emphasis was placed on patterns of storytelling between prominent actors who emerged and themes or tendencies in storytelling that attained prominence in the stream. The analysis was aimed at comparing these patterns against current and emergent news values and interpreting them toward understanding the texture and feel of news storytelling as it

was shaped through the interactions of multiple actors on Twitter. Analysis of the stream progressed across the following three stages combining a variety of methods.

First, preliminary analyses focused on identifying and describing prominent trends in the stream. As a first step, a frequency analysis mapped stream flow for 1.5 million multilingual tweets.⁴ The frequency analysis mapped what was being said and when it was being said, and it traced the progression of the news stream across the time period examined. Additional coding permitted the examination of the use of addressivity markers so as to understand what broadcasting tendencies became prominent in the stream and how they may have shaped news production practices, values, and form. Additional coding queries were run to determine which actors became more vocal on the stream, who they were interacting with, when they tended to become most vocal, and what types of addressivity markers afforded them this prominence.⁵ Finally, we examined which words occurred more frequently and tended to dominate the stream. This provided a preliminary overview of how a pluralized conversation began to form out of atomized, sometimes coordinated and sometimes distinct, contributions to the stream.⁶

Second, the preliminary computer-aided content analysis focused on subsequent network analysis, aimed at examining patterns between prominent actors and patterns between prominent words. Network analyses depicted connections between those participating in the stream, revealing leading figures who were retweeted, mentioned (@), and referenced (via) frequently, and enabling us to trace who they were communicating with and how.⁷ These analyses informed findings about what form the conversation took on and helped us interpret patterns of homophily, virality, and contagion or spreadability that may be present in the stream. In addition, using content/semantic analysis software, we further examined patterns/networks developing between words appearing frequently in the text. The software calculated how central or peripheral certain words were to the conversation, and through analyzing resonance and interconnectedness.⁸ This centering resonance analysis helped trace the shape and form the stream took on, as news of the events were broadcast via the Twitter application programming interface (API).

Third, qualitative textual analysis techniques were employed to verify, expand, and illuminate the quantitative findings of the content analysis. This study examined discourse as a text, using the Wood and Kroger (2000) definition of discourse as “all spoken and written forms of language use (talk

and text) as social practice” (p. 19). Therefore, the aim of this textual analysis was to understand the “systematic links between texts, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices” (Fairclough 1995, p. 17). Hartley (1982, 2002) defines news values as ever-evolving and reflective of news stories and not news events themselves. The goal was to understand how the medium of Twitter was employed in turning events into news stories. In analyzing the text, we referred back to this definition and prior categorizations of news values identified in previous research and detailed in the previous section.

The sample for the discourse analysis was assembled through a composite approach, using stratification first, and then random systematic sampling to construct a representative corpus of 150,000 tweets, or roughly a little more than 10 percent of the total sample; these were read and analyzed in greater detail for the purposes of the discourse analysis. The files were also extensively perused to get a feel for the pace and progression of the Twitter stream. The selected tweets were then read over, several times, to identify news values using the aforementioned framework. Notes were taken regarding language use, tone, presence or absence of traditional news values and news values previously identified in research, focus, and differences and similarities in how people shared information over Twitter. We looked for thematic patterns, repetition, and redundancy. Finally, notes and findings were categorized in light of previous research on news values and the form of news. The combined quantitative and qualitative approach sought to expand validity and reliability.⁹

After analysis, these findings were compared and contrasted with the studies and research recently completed or currently undertaken by other scholars interested in similar questions. Findings and conclusions were synthesized with the interpretations of other researchers, so as to confirm and extend interpretations and connect them to the specific historical, sociocultural, political, and economic context.

Hybridity of News Storytelling Practices on Twitter

The quantitative and qualitative data analyses both suggested that the stream of news produced via #egypt reflected a mix of traditional news values and values specific to the platform of Twitter. At first glance, the quantitative analysis indicated the prominence of a variety of actors, including mainstream media, who dominated the stream. The pace and practices of storytelling adopted by mainstream media—and frequently imitated by

independent actors—reflected moderate allegiance to news values we have come to understand as indicative of journalistic conventions. The discourse analysis further illuminated and confirmed these tendencies, revealing that the types of events covered and the tone of the coverage mimicked the tendency of traditional media to prioritize all of the following news values: large scale of events, closeness to home, clarity of meaning, short time scale, relevance, consonance, personification, significance, and drama and action. The only value identified in traditional media but not present in the Twitter feed was that of negativity. Otherwise, and at varying degrees, information and opinions featured regularly on the Twitter streams tended to revolve around larger-scale events in proximate locations, were intent on providing clarity and accuracy, prioritized more recent events, were reflective of drama and action, and associated specific persons with aspects of a story.

The stream gravitated toward news and opinions relevant to the uprisings, even though the architecture of the platform permitted deviation from the dominant focus. Comments that were irrelevant or unrelated were simply not retweeted or were ignored and thus were organically eliminated from the process of forming the dominant news frame or story. The topical organization of the hashtag, created specifically for the purpose of covering these events, further reproduced and enforced this focus. The nature of the events tweeted also facilitated the prevalence of the news values of ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, and moderatism, which have also been previously identified by Gans (1984) as characteristic of Western media. Several tweets reflected pride in the Egyptian ethnic identity; selfless declarations and actions in favor of democracy; and many urgent calls to cover events carefully, accurately, and without a rush to judgment. Altruism and a measure of national pride are not uncommon during political uprisings as these are processes that are aimed at challenging and reinventing dominant narratives about identity, individual and collective. Using the media at hand so as to communicate an accurate and authentic version of events transpiring is also typical during uprisings. During these occasions, individuals are recast as journalists. They emulate news canons so as to formulate news narratives, but they also adapt them to the context, what the situation calls for, and their own perspective.

Journalistic conventions and traditional news values thus did not prevent hybrid values from emerging. These hybrid news values combined new perspectives on what should be news and how it should be reported with remediations, or reinventions, of typical journalistic practices. Newer, remediated

news values emerged through the combined interpretations of qualitative and quantitative tendencies in the data analysis and were formative of the shape news broadcasting attained via the Twitter API. Following Hartley's view of news values as evolving constructs that shape news events into news stories, four prominent news values emerged: instantaneity, the crowd-sourcing of elites, solidarity, and ambience.

INSTANTANEITY

The term *instantaneity* is used to describe the drama of events unfolding, being recorded, and being reported instantly through processes that *instantly turn events into stories*. Instantaneity is not specific to Twitter only, as it is a trend that also characterizes 24/7 television news and online news practices. Yet instantaneity is further amplified through the affordances of Twitter, especially at times when mainstream media are restricted in their ability to report or disseminate information. It is also this instantaneity that exposes the temporal incompatibility of Twitter with our conventional definitions of what is news, what separates fact from opinion, and subjectivity from objectivity. Instantaneity, or the coverage of things that happen as they happen, reigned over #egypt. Instantaneity is evident in the pace and flow that the stream took on as it combined and rebroadcast atomized accounts of events on the ground and abroad. Figure 2.1 reflects the rhythms of storytelling on #egypt, shaped by an emphasis on instantaneity—that is, the tendency to tell stories that are temporally parallel to the events going in the ground through news storytelling practices that instantly turn events into stories.

The stream picked up traffic toward the end of January, hosting tweets from activists who sought to coordinate protests and divert the police. In those early days of protest, the platform served as a resource for mobilization: as a result, it, along with the rest of the internet, was shut down in an attempt to limit the information resources available to a growing wave of mobilized dissent. Traffic slowed down during the shutdown, and by the time the internet was turned back on, the stream had attained a different tone and had attracted huge numbers of followers who were producing massive amounts of content containing mostly news, updates, opinions, emotion, and expressions of support toward the growing movement. The frequency analysis illustrates these tendencies, with updates and retweets transmitted every second. High volumes of retweets reflect the tendency to

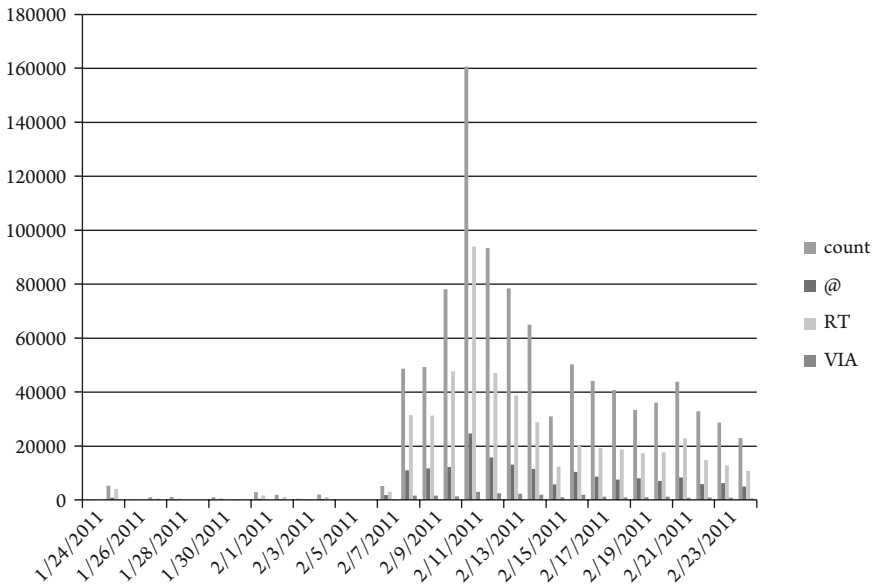


Figure 2.1 The rhythms of storytelling on #egypt.

instantly spread constant updates, and the tone and language of tweets used emphasize this tendency, with individuals retweeting and requesting instant updates.

The rhythms of updates posted reflected this infatuation with instantaneity, with updates streaming every few seconds and, during certain events, at every second. The peak of the stream was reached on the day of Mubarak's resignation, at 10,000 tweets every five minutes, or a total amount of approximately 160,000 tweets produced on that day. The tendency to instantly communicate to as many publics as possible was also reflected in the urgency of the language employed and the repetition of instant reports from the ground, in ways that sought to affirm and spread word of mouth retellings of what is going on. The repetition of events on the one hand mimicked the tendency of media to repeat breaking news; on the other hand it was enhanced by the platform, which permits endorsement of information through repetition and cross-postings. Tweets frequently used words that conveyed urgency, like "now," "live," "happening now," and they linked to sites that offered live streaming of the events. Moreover, the constancy of the updates combined with the tone of the language drummed up the heartbeat of a news feed that mediated the developing movement.

CROWD-SOURCED ELITES

It is common for news coverage to award priority to elite nations, organizations, or individuals. While there is no priority granting authority in the organically generated stream of news on Twitter, elite news organizations possess the resources to easily dominate news streams that develop online. This is typically facilitated via the logic of tweeting and retweeting stories or news that comes from prominent news organizations or individual citizens who provide constant news updates. Two groups of elites emerged in #egypt. The first group consisted of mainstream media that started to contribute to the news feed regularly and in particular once events and protests escalated. The tweets contributed from mainstream news sources typically assumed the objective and laconic tone of a headline, with the occasional exception of live tweets produced by journalists, through their individual accounts and not the generic outlet stream, as they were observing events taking place on site. Well-known examples included the tweets filed by journalists like Ben Wedeman (@bencnn), Ivan Watson (@ivancnn), and Nick Robertson (@nicrobertsoncnn), which were frequently integrated into the taped or live news broadcasts produced for the station affiliate. On occasion, these tweets would integrate fact with opinion, typically integrating reports of events with moderate and careful expressions of solidarity. For example, reporters frequently retweeted expressions of solidarity texted by Egyptians as a way of reporting public sentiment. These conformed both to the news values of the parent news organization and the evolving values of the news stream. While media elites frequently dominated blocks of the feed through constant tagged updates, they were only awarded leader status through retweets or mentions. Even though prominent, these actors occupied a peripheral position in the stream, as reflected in Figure 2.2.

A second, parallel and more vocal stream of opinion leaders emerged, consisting of bloggers, activists, and intellectuals with some prior involvement with online activism that was associated with the uprisings. These included senior Google executive Wael Ghonim (@ghonim) who had been secretly incarcerated and interrogated by Egyptian police for eleven days regarding his work as the administrator of the Facebook page, “We are all Khaled Saeed,” which had helped spark the revolution. They also featured citizens with little or no prior involvement with activism, as was the case with Gigi Ibrahim (@gsquare86) and Mona Seif (@monasosh), two activists/bloggers who rose to prominence through documenting events.

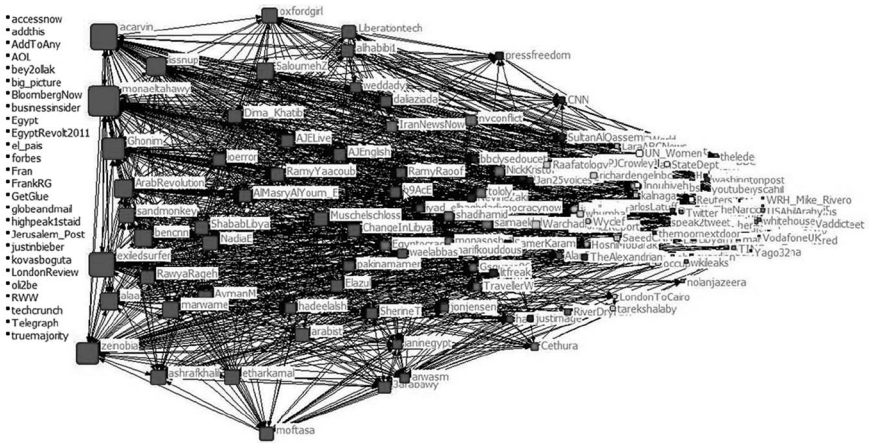


Figure 2.2 Crowd-sourced elites in #egypt.

And they also included individuals who were not in Egypt during the entirety of the uprisings but who received and retweeted reports, together with their own opinions and comments, as was the case of Mona Eltahawy (@monaeltahawy). The discourse analysis revealed that organically emerging leaders interacted with media elites through processes of retweeting, mentions, and commenting, but they differed in the form of their updates, with organic leaders frequently being more openly emotive and media elites trying to balance the values of the parent news organization with the drama of the reports forwarded on Twitter. The process of elite formation was not predetermined. Rather, through fluid and organic progressions of practices, it was claimed by the crowd and crowd-sourced to the various publics connecting to the movement through the storytelling infrastructure of the platform. These networked publics, enabled through ties of a transient nature, sustained a globally interconnected diaspora of translocal supporters.

By contrast, elite mass media, while present, were of peripheral prominence to #egypt. Furthermore, disconnected individuals, termed isolates (nodes appearing on the left side with no ties or lines to other nodes in Figure 2.2), included such elite offline actors as *Bloomberg News*, the *London Telegraph*, the *Jerusalem Post*, and the *London Review*. Other elite media were part of a core of less connected individuals, and these nodes included such actors as the *New York Times*, *CNN*, the *Washington Post*, and *NPR*, or elite international news outlets like the *Guardian* or the *BBC news*. Regional specific news outlets like *Al Jazeera English* were more highly connected than US-centric media outlets. Therefore, the resulting, networked sphere of

interactions reflected a hierarchy of relations that had been recalibrated by the crowd to produce a map unique to the texture of the movement. The resulting geography of connections evolved beyond national borders and the prevailing order of international relations to articulate the desired topography, digitally claimed.

The process through which crowd-sourced practices permit non-elite and elite actors to co-create and co-curate flows of information may be understood as a form of *networked gatekeeping* (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). Networked gatekeeping was devised to describe multiple levels of relationships and symmetries between variant news actors who hold diverse levels of power and positions (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008). The pluralized administration of news flows permits a variety of actors to have a say in how stories about an event are being told. As the event becomes a news story, and eventually, (hi) story, storytelling practices that are thus pluralized provide a way for bottom-up narratives to make it into historicized dogma. Gates that permit information sharing may be opened or closed by elites and non-elites alike, in ways that privilege some stories and obscure others. But the distributed management of information access afforded by networked gatekeeping lends networked publics decision-making autonomy. A hybrid set of news values allows dispersed and fluid storytelling hierarchies to emerge. This is markedly different from the conventional logic that permits elites to exert influence in a newsroom, in a mediated sphere, and in the sphere of international diplomacy.

Qualitative analysis of storytelling practices helped clarify how networked gatekeeping materialized. On a first level, the condensed nature of expression naturally shaped linguistic strategies for framing. Affect and ambience set the tone for the form of expression, as most of the content articulated took place in the premediated sphere of affect and made better sense when interpreted within the greater context of ongoing, ambient conversations within the feed. Second, actors using the platform to tell stories about their experiences created narratives by assembling imbricated layers of tweets, some authored by them, some remixed and re-edited, some redacted, and several retweeted. This process simultaneously fragmented and pluralized storytelling by crowd-sourcing it to actor nodes that sent, received, and remixed information, thus rendering a networked flow of information and activity.

Functioning as networked agents, different actors contributed to the subjective pluralism of storytelling on #egypt through various conversational

strategies associated with the degree of power and the position afforded them within the news stream. For example, tweets most retweeted tended to come from mainstream media and typically from the official account of the outlet. These tweets largely had a formal informative tone and did not contain any language that invited conversation. They took the form of news updates, focused on broadcasting information, and rarely retweeted others. They became part of the dominant refrain to the extent that they promoted news that supported dominant frames or contributed new information to them.

By contrast, actors ranked highly in the list of those receiving the most mentions adopted different discursive strategies. First, they were more directly conversational, asking questions, seeking information, and directly requesting the opinions of others. For example, Ben Wedeman (@bencnn), affiliated with CNN and a leading source of information in the stream, was markedly conversational in his approach, combined personal comments with reporting, and directly requested information updates from others tuned into the stream. His tweets about the Mideast lexicon, referring to a number of phrases used in Egypt by the government to say one thing but do another, lent him prominence, credibility, and gratitude from others. Similarly, Dima Khatib (@Dima_Khatib) produced timely and constant reports and frequently crowd-sourced inquiries to the stream. She integrated even more commentary and advocacy into her reports as she was crowd-sourced to a networked gatekeeper and provided updates that contained more local color and context, aided by the fact that she frequently reported events in five languages. Her presence on the stream was ambient, personal, and diverse, as she incorporated information, opinions, and reactions of Egyptians on the ground and abroad into her contributions.

Networked gatekeepers found themselves frequently combining personal reaction to live reports of events. This is not a new conflict for journalists who frequently traverse personal and professional boundaries, especially when reporting from the ground. But the ambience and instantaneity afforded by the platform augmented these tendencies, leading journalists and key gatekeepers to become more conversational and more personal in order to become more accurate. Thus the (fragile) premise of objectivity, foundational to Western dogmas of journalism, was abandoned in favor of more subjective yet more contextually informed thematic accounts. At the same time, networked gatekeepers transformed into curators of broad, cross-cultural conversations as opposed to impartial information disseminators.

Mona Eltahawy, frequently referred to as the woman who explained Egypt to the West, became a conversational interlocutor for people in Egypt and supported diasporic publics wanting to educate themselves and have discussions about the movement. Through her site, @monaeltahawy was personal and conversational, frequently circulating information in a language that Arab and Western media could relate to. Together with other prominent figures, she became part of a crowd-sourced elite of information curators, who afforded #egypt a cosmopolitan face that diasporic publics of support could connect with. This group maintained a fairly ambient presence on the stream, and their constant updates filled the stream with news that spurred further online and offline activity even when there was little new news to report.

By contrast, Wael Ghonim @ghonim was very active on the ground and more deliberately vocal on Twitter. The statements he made online were fewer but characterized by high contagion. As the administrator of the Facebook page “We are all Khaled Saeed,” which helped spark the revolution, he was frequently mentioned in reference to the movement. His own secret incarceration during the course of the movement naturally prevented him from being active online; yet he emerged as a prominent figure through his offline efforts and online influence. Dismissive of foreign media and coverage (“I don’t speak to foreign media about Egypt”), his actions and words rendered him a face or a signifier for the movement.

The storytelling infrastructure of the platform facilitated a hybridity of news values that blurred personal with objective, emotion with meaning, opinion with reporting, and affective with cognitive flows of information. Prominent network nodes acknowledged, intercepted, and often excluded mainstream media so as to filter and curate information from less prominent nodes more efficiently. This practice, in turn, allowed crowds to participate in collective and networked processes of framing and gatekeeping.

SOLIDARITY

Networked gatekeeping practices documented events and permitted opinion expression in a manner driven by an overwhelming show of solidarity. The emergent news streams of #egypt were characterized by a hybridity of news reports and solidarity, so much so that separating factual reports from expressions of camaraderie became difficult. Figure 2.3 reveals the arrangement of words by the centering resonance analysis, based on how influential or central they were.¹⁰

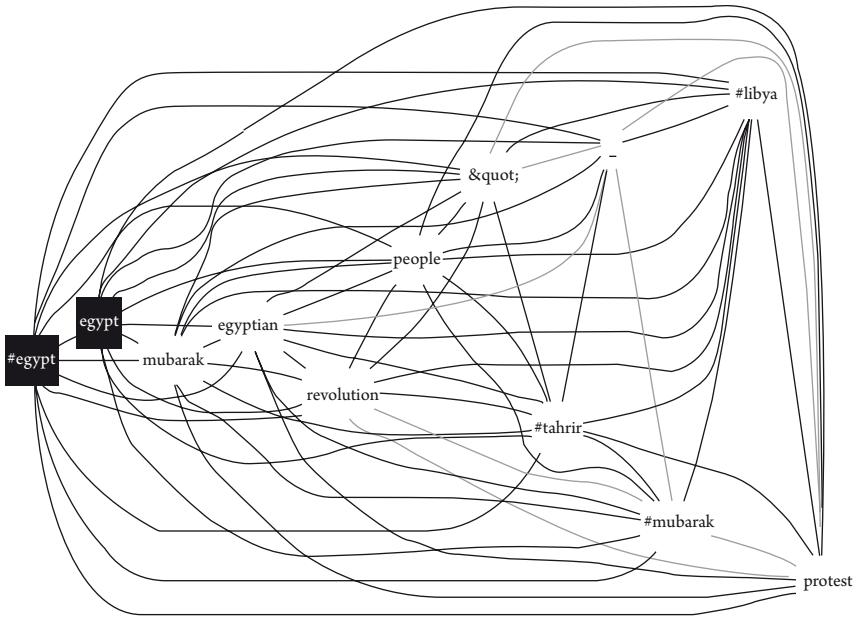


Figure 2.3 Networked framing: Centering resonance analysis of #egypt.

Interpretation of the network map of prominent words emerging in #egypt reflects the expression of solidarity with dense connections that place “revolution” and “people” in the core, connect them to sites of struggle (“tahrir”), and reinforce unity against the cause of the struggle (“mubarak” appearing both as a word and a tag) and for the greater good of Egypt. The centrality of “revolution,” compared to the presence but peripheral position of “protest,” suggests both the anticipation of revolution and the desire to frame the movement as revolutionary and thus distinguish it from protests that might connect publics but not result in decisive breaks with past hierarchies of governance. The frequency and prevalence of hashtags present in the map reflects the tendency to cross-post, cross-reference, and coordinate mobilization efforts, and to maintain high awareness of all concurrent movements and protests, which characterized this uprising.

Qualitative analysis findings support these interpretations. Many tweets in the stream consisted of a simple sequence of tags, presented as a gesture of solidarity and typically followed by a couple of encouraging words or just emoticons. The discourse analysis further revealed how collapsed, hybrid, and networked hierarchies of news production supported this confluence of solidarity and news sharing. For example, tweets frequently featured calls

like “Its time to come back NOW and join your fellow brothers and sisters,” or “If the dove is a symbol of peace the #Twitter Bird is a symbol of freedom,” or “Muslims and Christians Work Together in a New Egypt,” “#Libya and #Egypt one hand together, #Revolution until victory against all dictators.” These typically ended with a link to additional content: a photograph, blog-post, live stream, or just a list of several relevant tags and users to follow.

We may interpret these tendencies as collective attempts to frame a movement in the making as revolutionary well before the cumulative effect of years of regime resistance had resulted in regime reversal. These processes of networked framing operated in tandem with networked gatekeeping to sustain the information flows of the emerging movement and, in doing so, to further develop and advance the dominant narrative of the movement. This process involved a number of networked agents negotiating frames, and that process of negotiation involved conversation and endorsement by diasporic publics connected to the movement.

The significance of networked framing is further manifested through contrasting it with conventional newsroom framing practices: backstage negotiation between sources, reporters, editors, and other stakeholders are largely not visible to the audience. On #egypt, the framing process unfolded on the front stage as crowd-sourced gatekeepers interacted with mainstream and non-mainstream media and diverse publics to discursively elevate dominant frames. Ad hoc, emergent framing enabled salient frames to gain stickiness through the networked actions of both elite and crowd. Entman’s (1993) definition of framing may thus be reworked to propose networked framing as a process through which particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and/or treatment recommendations attain prominence through crowd-sourcing practices (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). Through what appeared as a messy and noisy process on the surface, the infrastructure of the platform actors enabled elite and crowd to engage in interdependent, symbiotic forms of storytelling that elevated high-level frames to the surface.

AMBIENCE

The constant pace, frequency, and tone of tweets contributed to the #egypt stream sustained an *ambient* information-sharing environment. This presents a news value because it influenced the structure and texture of news content produced. The always-on architecture of the platform invited the

constancy and continuity of ambience. Moreover, the resulting stream of continuous, even if redundant updates, contributed to the creation of an always-on news and social environment that sustained online and offline expressions of the movement. As the frequency analysis illustrated, on February 11, the day of Mubarak's resignation, thousands of tweets repeating the same news—before, leading up to, but also well after the event of the resignation—had been widely disseminated, even by mainstream news outlets. These tweets did not constitute news updates but sustained activity, social and news related, that sustained the movement and further supported expression for the movement, even when there was no new news reported.

The discourse analysis further revealed prominent tendencies in conversational patterns of participating in conversations, attaining influence, and further shaping the information flow through a variety of discursive gestures and mannerisms. Conversational gestures associated with practices of introducing and negotiating frames on #egypt were shaped both by affect and the platform ambience. Affect has been connected to processes of premediation, enabled by newer media, which frequently anticipate news or events prior to their occurrence (Grusin, 2010). Typically, premediation involves a variety of affective gestures or expressions made in anticipation of an event. It describes the form that events take on before they turn into stories, that is, before they have been mediated in some form. All three of the conversational strategies we examined through addressivity markers were filled with affect, meaning that most tweets were not just news or just opinion but typically a blend of emotionally charged opinions on news or news updates to the point that it was difficult to distinguish news from opinion or from emotion—and doing so missed the point. #Egypt was characterized by mounting, emotive anticipation, expressed through posts that were meant to inform but also meant to release tension that had been accumulating for years. These constant and repetitive streams of updates sustained a lively stream of news that is always on and thus mediated a networked movement that never went to sleep. Tweets conveyed news, solidarity, and emotion (“Proud of you Egyptians! Over 20k Ideas and More than 630k votes. Everyone is thinking what should be Egypt 2.0 <http://bit.ly/hF5F65>”); sustained cohesion even when there was no news to report (“Good morning sunshine . . . Good morning my sweet lovely Egypt:) #Egypt #Jan25”); communicated emotion, opinion, and affection in 140 characters or less (“Seeing amazing footage on AJA ppl are helping the army clean #Tahrir. Oh #Egypt I love u #Jan25 <http://dlvr.it/GQ53L>”); and also invited others to maintain

an ambient stream of news that is accurate (“Triple-check news before you retweet. At least today. This is not a video game #Jan25 #Egypt #Tahrir #jan24”).

Thus, the ambience of the stream was further enhanced by affective mechanisms. The repetitive pace of affective expressions, attained through retweeting, provided a refrain-like rhythm to the stream, supported through a chorus of users who collectively crowd-sourced prevalent actors and their tweets to prominence. Affect theory suggests that refrains, among other conversational signifiers, are employed to convey a sense of movement toward a particular, not yet clarified, direction. Refrains accentuate intensity and provide punctuation for a movement in a manner that “structures the affective into existential territories” (Deleuze, 1995 in Bertelsen & Murphie, 2010, p. 13). Retweets, as refrains, are important because by mode of repetition they acquire an intensity that provides the pulse for a growing movement. The force of repetition augments the disruption introduced by a single tweet into “an affective intensity capable of overthrowing the entire order of discourse in favor of transformation” (Deleuze, 1995 in Bertelsen & Murphie, 2010, p. 139). The subtle disruptions to the power hierarchy introduced by tweets and the process of retweeting them support possible contagion patterns that permit frames to float to prominence within a Twitter stream.

Refrains were also supported through use of the mentions and via addressivity markers. Users employed these to repeat previous utterances accompanied by brief comments or affective gestures indicative of endorsement, like, and general agreement. The use of the conversational markers and the general patterns and flow of information produced a process of negotiating frames that was not antagonistic. Tweets that were not reproduced in some form drifted into oblivion. Repetition of tweets supported a subjective form of pluralism in meaning-making and storytelling. Affective gestures further illustrated stories as they also elevated the dominant storytelling frame of revolution to prominence. The storytelling infrastructure of Twitter brought frame negotiation practices to the front stage, in contrast to conventional frame negotiation in the print or TV media backstage. Storytelling practices on #egypt emulated and blended conversational and conventional broadcasting practices, or oral and print traditions, in a way that introduced plurality and hybridity to the framing process. The repetitive rhythms of the stream gradually framed the movement as a revolution, adding intensity and sustaining the always-on life beat of a movement in the making.

The Form of Affective News

The texture of #egypt is reflective of a form that may be characterized as affective for a number of reasons. From its early days, the stream attracted tweets that resembled conversation openers, inquisitive and phatic in nature. The developing conversation was amorphous and anticipatory, with tweets like “#Egypt’s street awakening tomorrow #Jan25 #Revolution” or “Egypt is about to have a Facebook revolution,” both retweeting and endorsing the sentiment conveyed in a *Time* magazine article by the same title. With time, the rhythms of posting attained regularity, with hundreds of tweets posted first in a matter of hours, then minutes, then seconds, as reflected through the rhythms of posts depicted on the frequency analysis. Through the combined processes of networked gatekeeping and networked framing, opinion leaders emerged and the dominant frame of a revolution was reinforced. Retweets, mentions, and via references enhanced visibility of content and the credibility of actors that were collectively deemed important. Mainstream media chimed in but did not lead the stream. By the time internet access was reinstated or workarounds to internet access became available, the stream had transformed into a *live news event* with a pulse of its own, connecting and rebroadcasting voices from Egypt, neighboring countries, some countries in Europe, and primarily, from the United States.

We may in fact distinguish between different *events*, some rendered on the streets, others rendered textually via Twitter, and yet others mediated through TV and mainstream media. Alternatively, we may think of events that possess different forms of mediality and as a result, offer distinct, yet imbricated, views of an event. Lang and Lang (1953), in their seminal study of how MacArthur day was covered on television compared to how it was experienced by crowds on the streets, were the first to describe how the narrative infrastructure of television may in fact produce an event different from reality. Crowds experiencing the parade organized in honor of General MacArthur in the streets of Chicago were caught up in the chaos of a live and somewhat impersonal parade that left them feeling disoriented. By contrast, audiences watching the parade on their TV sets experienced the event differently, through a narrative structure of close-ups, sequential shots, and commentary provided by the announcer that together afforded a more immediate and intimate portrayal of the event. TV viewers experienced a more exciting event that overstated support for General MacArthur and his politics.

While I do not suggest that this was the case with #egypt, it might be meaningful to consider how affective infrastructures of storytelling turn an event *into* a story and how these stories may sustain a variety of distinct, yet imbricated, events. The events may be read as super-empirical events, blending the empirical with the virtual, and thus sustaining both accounts of actual and wanted, desired outcomes (Massumi, 2002). Through media, events become happenings, and happenings contain the potentiality of “in the making, in the midst, in the openness of outcome” (Massumi, 2002, p. 80). The sociohistorical place provided by the storytelling platform at hand provides a space where all operations, patterns of relations, and processes of meaning-making are simultaneously evoked, problematized, and coded into self-narrative in ways that render collaborative media transmission “*the becoming of the event*” (Massumi, 2002, p. 81). The ambient and social environment afforded through networked media enables appropriation of the event by networked publics (Karatzogianni, 2013). Affective appropriation of the event is further enhanced through the narrative infrastructure of Twitter and the stories broadcast through it.

Technologies of mood indicators and status updates are friendly to expressions of affect (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Tweets blended emotion with opinion and drama with fact, reflecting deeply subjective accounts and interpretations of events as they unfolded. Affectively driven personal accounts of an event globally experienced combined to form narratives, which in turn assembled events. This form of subjective pluralism both lends itself to and reproduces the sticky quality of affect (Bertelsen & Murphie, 2010), further enhanced by the narrative infrastructure of Twitter, which affords stickiness to nodes and story elements via networked consensus. Separating the subjectivity of the narrative from the feeling of belonging that is affectively rendered through the stickiness of intensity and from the narrative infrastructures that further invite and collapse self-narratives into affective streams of news is difficult. Perhaps this is what Massumi (2002) referred to when describing affect as self-narrative: affect as that which renders narrative personal and connected to processes of self-expression, self-affirmation, and association with others through gestures of belonging. Robinson (2010) described similar processes as a way of finding one’s own unique place in the story by comparing citizen-blogged coverage of Hurricane Katrina. The resulting sum of personal narratives produced “an individualizing of the Hurricane Katrina story, in which each person must discover his or her own enduring memory according to personal experience,” yet “taken as a whole,

these messages represented a patchwork of authoritative collective thought,” even though they may have been “stream of conscience, political, personal, emotional, sarcastic,” and yet somehow “always communal” (p. 181).

Affective gestures within #egypt permitted individuals to simultaneously access and release both personal and communal aspirations. Tweets were personal and emotive, blending opinion and fact to the point where distinguishing one from the other was impossible and where doing so missed the point. This narrative intensity frequently conveyed the perception that events were occurring at a pace faster than they actually were, or, as one individual put it on January 25, 2011: “amazing how #social media make #history happens faster . . . #egypt #Tunisia.” The affective gestures were articulated in premediation, that is, in anticipation of the revolutionary event. But because the actual regime reversal had not fully taken place, they also were caught in a loop between what had just happened and what was about to commence. They are textually rendered in the spatial proximity of the before and after, reflecting non-linear movement “in two directions at once: out from the actual (as past) into the actual (as future)” (Massumi, 2002, p. 58). The following two excerpts contained in Figure 2.4 and Figure 2.5 depict the tendency to move, simultaneously, in a variety of directions aimed at sharing news, opinion, sentiment, and conveying a sense of drama. In anticipating

Love It! Women of the revolution [#egypt #jan25](http://me.it/8q83K)
<http://bit.ly/gMHWKc> much more plausible theory than simply trying to hold onto power...
 RT @JimBeaupre: RT @aftwisconsin: RT @rweingarten amazing: Photo from Egypt in support of #wunion <http://twitpic.com/419nfm> @maddow
 #Gaddafi must be the worst dictator in the universe ! i wish I can fly to #Libya and help in kicking that dog out ! #Egypt #Jan25
 RT @sultanalqassemi: Source said "All of us Libyans are surprised that Al Jazeera is neglecting Libya. It seems that their cause was only for Egypt &am
 Bombs being dropped african mercenaries all over and people shot from helicopters #benghazi #libya today - #Yemen #Bahrain #Egypt #Tunisia
 #Journalists paying heavy price in ongoing coverage of turmoil in MidEast N #Africa www.HUMNews.com #Bahrain #Egypt #Yemen #Tunisia #Libya
 Celebrities holding a huge flag while marching to #tahrir saying: "We want Mubarak in COURT" #jan25 #Egypt <http://twitpic.com/41isna>
 @AJEnglish has done an outstanding job of keeping the world informed about #Libya #Egypt #Bahrain
 Watch the power of personal response-ability in action (Egypt) <http://bit.ly/gkyWqg>
 RT @sultanalqassemi: There is a clear neglect by Arab media organisations. A massacre is taking place now. Arab leaders must be fearful of Egypt ∓ Tu
 RT @NahlahAyed: Eye witness says protesters are back at courthouse in Benghazi despite that protest being dispersed last night.#tripoli #libya #egypt
 RT @CynthiaY29 Photo From Egypt: "Egypt Supports Wisconsin Workers." One world one pain <http://goo.gl/j6RP9> - That's tremendous.
 RT @davidshuster: RT @mikeelk @millbot Photo from Egypt in support of Wisconsin revolt - <http://twitpic.com/419nfm>
 @waelabbas #jan25 all curent reforms in Egypt are not due to the government's good intentions but rather a result of continuous protests
 RT @sultanalqassemi: Source said "All of us Libyans are surprised that Al Jazeera is neglecting Libya. It seems that their cause was only for Egypt &am
 It's only a gesture really but I'm glad UK-gov banned export licenses for teargas to Egypt ∓ Bahrain. Nice way to say don't oppress people.
 Whats happening in #lybia right now is by far more violent than what happened in #egypt #tunisia #bahrain #yemen #iran freedom is worthy
 IF U think MSM reporting frm #Egypt was Duranty/#Journalist on roids U ain't seen nothing yet! #WI #IstandwithScottWalker #tco #teaparty
 RT @mrmeit: follow @kshater the official account for Khairat Al-Shater #egypt #jan25
 RT @HUMNEWS: #Journalists paying heavy price in ongoing coverage of turmoil in MidEast N #Africa www.HUMNews.com #Bahrain #Egypt #Yemen ...
 Jadi pengen nonton Prince of Egypt. Bawa nggak sih gue DVD nya??? bentar di cek dulu~
 Egypt > Tunisia any day...
 RT @Misha44 - Wow. RT @DavidShuster: RT @mikeelk @millbot Photo from Egypt in support of Wisconsin revolt - <http://twitpic.com/419nfm>
 RT @samseder: RT @DavidShuster RT @mikeelk @millbot Photo from Egypt in support of Wisconsin revolt - <http://twitpic.com/419nfm>
 @jcoyer I'm movin to Egypt at least they free over there! #fakefreedom
 RT @sultanalqassemi: Source said "All of us Libyans are surprised that Al Jazeera is neglecting Libya. It seems that their cause was only for Egypt &am
 We are students and teachers workers and leaders we are sons and daughters mothers and fathers all working towards a better Egypt.
 RT @AbdallahSenussi: Bombs being dropped african mercenaries all over and people shot from helicopters #benghazi #libya today - #Yemen #Bahrain #Egy
 RT @jeeja: #Egypt #Tunis find a way to help Libya go there and donate blood in Benghazi and help those in tripoli gather. #Libya #Feb17
 RT @maggiesama: if you are against #mubarak mubarak has left. if you are against the regime it's still there it's not over still not over #Jan25 #Egypt
 @jrehor That's what Egypt said. #lookout
 RT @Misha44 - Wow. RT @HumanityCritic: RT @DavidShuster: RT @mikeelk @millbot Photo from Egypt in support of Wisconsin revolt - <http://twitpic.com>
 RT @evanchill: Regarding the Feb. 28 cover of Time magazine.. That's one face of #Egypt's revolt. Here's another: <http://ow.ly/32EBT>

Figure 2.4 Nonlinear affective narratives.

Gunshots heard in #Maadi Digla just now. Disturbing. #Egypt
 1 photo. 1 million words #World #Peace #Libya #yemen #bahrain #egypt #iran #feb17 #jan25 <http://bit.ly/htc7u2> #Solidarity #Wlunion
 wikileaks #Libya: Gaddafi's billions to be seized by Britain <http://is.gd/zTP4HU> #Egypt #25Jan #17Feb #sidibouzd #benghazi
 On my way to Paris so masalama for a short while masalama #Egypt #Tunisia #Libya #etcetera... Take care...!!!!
 Come back to Egypt to help and support our revolution - <http://come-back-to-egypt.com> #Egypt #Jan25 #ComeToEgypt
 RT @aldavida7 Forty-six activists arrested in #Zimbabwe for viewing video on events in #Egypt and #Tunisia
 What is the 6'clock curfew and where are the riots that caused this? #Tunisha #Bahrain #Nashville #Egypt #Libya
 RT @CopticNews: The monks apprehended/abducted by the army have been released #Coptic #Jan25 #Egypt Thank God!
 RT @EgyTweets: RT @exposingthelies: - The Most AMAZING video on the internet #Egypt #Jan25 <http://youtu.be/ThvBJMzmSZI> #NWO #freedom #de ...
 RT @CopticNews: The monks apprehended/abducted by the army have been released #Coptic #Jan25 #Egypt Thank God!
 @jennifermchase @chadnorman same here. #1 one side & #2 other side. ALSO 1st generation american on one side. dad was born in egypt
 Egypt protests more ex-Mubarak officials <http://f.ast.ly/qmrg2>
 RT @NewsNowBreaking: #Zimbabwe charges 46 with treason for watching videos of #Egypt protests
 RT @CopticNews: The monks apprehended/abducted by the army have been released #Coptic #Jan25 #Egypt Thank God!
 America should stand for democracy and liberty across the world whether in #Egypt #China or #Libya says Apoorva Shah <http://ow.ly/42Mut>
 Another guest to the PARTY! #GABON - <http://bit.ly/fqf6jk> #Egypt #Tunisia #IranElection #Libya #Bahrain #Yemen @cevmartinez
 RT @HidinginCanada: The rest of the world is fleeing #Libya and Egyptians are heading across the border in droves to volunteer. #Egypt ...
 @CopticNews @CyrilAlexander u must know nthing abt #Egypt army-farthest away frm any sectarian BS ur trying tostr3r 3 on high council #copts
 RT @AJELive: AJE: Ahmed Gadhaf al-Dam one of Gaddafi's top security official and a cousin defects to Egypt #Libya #Jan25 #Egypt ...
 Maybe one should just trust history and wait and see until the #Arab world will give real perspective to its people. #tunisia #egypt #libya
 By the way Ahmed Gaddaf-el-dam means Ahmed the blood ejaculator #Libya #Feb17 #Egypt
 @Pambazuka - #Egypt: Dozens dead and hundreds injured at the Shebin al-Kom #Prison <http://t.co/oY9O8z>
 RT @DialoguePTV: Tune in tonight at 8:30/7:30pm MT/PT for a show about the revolution in Egypt and the ripple effect it's having on the rest of the region.
 Activist Post - Egypt Internet Shutdown Should Serve As Warning To Americans <http://bit.ly/gJkCpl> #Activist #Rnw
 Egypt Internet Shutdown Should Serve As Warning To Americans: James McKibbenThe Publius FoundationLast month we... <http://bit.ly/gJkCpl>
<http://www.come-back-to-egypt.com/>
 @shahidkpoor happy birth day (fan from egypt)
 @MajaMischke breaking news in Egypt <http://tinyurl.com/4k53ony>
 RT @Cams2010 Zimbabwean police tortured alleged plotters of Egypt-style uprising lawyers tell court #zimbabwe #egypt
 RT @est4ng3d: Tomorrow is a million man march in #tahrir. #Jan25 is NOT over! #egypt will fight until the last ex regime figure is ousted.
 Egypt/Turkey: Breaking away from Israel | Dissident Voice: While Egypt's revolution was very much about domestic... <http://bit.ly/g4aW6T>
 RT @patrickingsley: Wisconsin protests: "inspiration came from student demonstrations in Britain & #egypt; protests in Tunisia and Egypt" [#demo2011](http://t.co/t0Zr0TF)
 Je parie que Ben Ali avait des costards pareils: Le salop adorait ses PinStripes <http://t.co/7swckBO> #Egypt #Tunisie #25Jan #Mubarak
 @_AmrKhaled_ to address Egyptians tomorrow: <http://t.co/badVRkF> via @cnn. Vid coming soon. #Jan25 #Egypt "He's our Oprah" - Yasmine 22
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Egypt/149534891770252> <http://fb.me/UaQ7hTS3>

Figure 2.5 Nonlinear affective news narratives.

the event, the intensity (affect) of these gestures also enables narrative appropriation of how a happening becomes an event.

The overall progression of tweets reflected patterns of repetition and mimicry that were similar to trends observed between and within mainstream news organizations (Boczkowski, 2010). It is important to emphasize that mimesis represents not just reproduction of content but also gestures, frequently of an affective nature, aimed at the intersubjective reproduction of the particular *feeling* produced by a particular news narrative or the construct of news (Grusin, 2010). Prominent and popular tweets were frequently quoted and endorsed, contributing to a stream that did not engage the reader cognitively but primarily emotionally. Frequently, the same news was repeated over and over again with little or no new cognitive input but increasing affective input, aimed at sustaining and reproducing the feeling of news. The tone of many tweets was deeply emotive but on occasion reflective of the expressive habits of Western media, as tweets from Western media were frequently quoted with commentary or simply retweeted. The result reflected a confluence of conversational norms, enacted through oral practices of conversation and specifically reciprocity and reflexivity in opinion sharing and listening.

Within mounting input from a variety of global and local nodes, #egypt became even more dense and emotion-filled, characterized by repetition, restating, reusing, and similar expressive patterns typically encountered in

This is definitely historic & a win for protesters...but ummm usually military rule ain't nothing nice. What happens next? #Egypt #Jan25
 RT @Zeinobia: Hosni Mubarak has stepped down :#Egypt #Jan25
 RT @cnbrk: #Mubarak has decided to step down from presidency of #Egypt Vice President Suleiman says. http://on.cnn.com/ek14HK
 RT @bilalr: Cairo erupts - watch Al Jazeera for live reactions: http://aje.me/ajelive #Egypt #Mubarakresigns
 [#Jan25 #Egypt]The Army is in Control !
 RT @AJEnglish: Breaking: Omar Suleiman announces that Mubarak has resigned - http://aje.me/ajelive #Egypt #cairo
 RT @RickTVnet: Crowds in Cairo cheering over news of #Mubarak's resignation. #Egypt #Jan25
 POWER TO THE PEOPLE. #Egypt
 @cesdrilon E
 RT @el_pais
 RT @nytimes: NYT NEWS ALERT: Mubarak Steps Down Vice President Says #Egypt
 RT @marwame: Mom is crying with joy! #Egypt
 RT @monaeltahawy: Is he gone?? Seriously?! Good riddance #Mubarak! Now the regime can follow him too! Yalla #Egypt! #Jan25
 RT @ColleenLindsay: HUGE NEWS! RT @AJEnglish Breaking: Omar Suleiman announces that Mubarak has resigned - http://aje.me/ajelive #Egypt ...
 RT @WorldForEgypt: getting goose bumps from cheers of #Tahrir crowd! #Egypt #Mubarak #Jan25
 RT @BBCBreaking: President #Mubarak has stepped down as president of #Egypt Vice-President Suleiman announces
 RT @bilalr: Cairo erupts - watch Al Jazeera for live reactions: http://aje.me/ajelive #Egypt #Mubarakresigns
 RT @AJLive: Cairo erupts - watch Al Jazeera for live reactions: http://aje.me/ajelive #Egypt #Mubarakresigns
 RT @ABC: RT @terrymoran: #Egypt. At the palace: Soldiers and crowd now waving and cheering each other across the concertina wire. #Jan25
 Victory in #Tahrir Square: http://www.youtube.com/aljazeeraenglish #Egypt
 Praying now for the people of #Egypt. May peace reign may your children be united despite differences.
 Praying now for the people of #Egypt. May peace reign may your children be united despite differences.
 RT @CopticNews: Good riddance #Mubarak. God bless #Egypt forever.
 RT @washingtonpost: BREAKING Suleiman: Hosni #Mubarak has decided to step down http://wapo.st/dMQYtv -- more details to come #Egypt
 Congrats to the citizens of #Egypt for taking a stand & NOT STEPPING DOWN!
 RT @cnbrk: #Mubarak has decided to step down from presidency of #Egypt Vice President Suleiman says. http://on.cnn.com/ek14HK
 RT @BBCBreaking: President #Mubarak has stepped down as president of #Egypt Vice-President Suleiman announces
 RT @el_pais: URGENTE: Mubarak dimite http://cort.as/OXAQ #egipto #Egypt
 Congrats to the citizens of #Egypt for taking a stand & NOT STEPPING DOWN!
 RT @cnbrk: #Mubarak has decided to step down from presidency of #Egypt Vice President Suleiman says. http://on.cnn.com/ek14HK
 viva o povo! mubarak calu! #egypt #egito
 RT @BBCBreaking: President #Mubarak has stepped down as president of #Egypt Vice-President Suleiman announces
 RT @pakinamamer: The Eagles are here!!!!!! Mubarak is down down down!! We won! We won! #Jan25 #Revolution #Egypt
 @NevineZak
 Mubarak afgetreden. Het werd tijd situatie onhoudbaar. Maar wat gaat er nu gebeuren? Geen eindpunt maar een tussenstap #Mubarak #Egypte

Figure 2.6 Oral and print cultures of storytelling combine in intersubjective reproducibility.

the oral traditions of phatic communication. Links to multimedia, mainstream, and independent media coverage resembled the interpersonal gestures of pointing, nudging, and affirming. They also featured insider Twitter jokes, like “A government that is scared from #Facebook and #Twitter should govern a city in Farmville but not a country like #Egypt #Jan25,” or “Deleting Dictator . . . Deleting Installation files . . . Some files could not be removed. Country still being used . . . Aborted.#Egypt #Mubarak,” that adapted cosmopolitan references to the local context. Blending humor, news sharing, opinion expression, and emotion is reflective of the affective patterns of interpersonal conversations. In this manner, the networked publics participated in the news stream appropriate to the idea of what should be news.

Atomized and subjective reproductions of news thus both gestured at news while at the same time allowing users to appropriate their own unique place in the story. The rhythms of the stream were constant, emotive, and phatic, punctuating the beats of a dominant narrative in the making. The intensity (= affect) of the intersubjective reproduction, through retweets and original content, supported the ambient chorus of the popular refrain: revolution. In unpacking the meaning of the refrain for affective attunement

with broader universes of reference, Guattari (1996) explains that this “is a matter of forging polyphonic interlacings between the individual and the social,” thus leaving “a subjective music to be composed” (p. 267). The affective rhythms of #egypt lent the movement its own musicality. This affectively informed tonality tuned in and tuned out a polyphony of reports, opinion, and general sentiment about the movement from actors directly involved with it, actors reporting and curating factors associated with it, and others listening in. This polyphonic tonality accompanied events on the streets in ways that were harmonious with the general objective of revolution and regime reversal. This tonality afforded the movement with its own digital footprint, an imprint that reflected, supported, and enhanced the efforts of the movement.

Affective News and Networked Publics

Affective news conveyed a dominant narrative in the making, collaboratively created through networked processes of gatekeeping and framing. The participation of global and local actors in the construction of a fluid stream that became a primary means of tuning into the movement was facilitated by the storytelling infrastructure of the platform. On a first level, networked actors collectively elevated atomized reports and other nodes to prominence in ways that organically, yet strategically, organized the flow of the stream. On a second level, the practices of networked gatekeeping and networked framing introduced new values that shaped how an event was turned into a story: instantaneity, the crowd-sourcing of elites, solidarity, and ambience. The affordances of the platform, together with the news values of the publics employing the platform, produced, on a third level, a form of news affective in nature. Affective news reconciled oral and print traditions of storytelling to produce a dominant narrative for a movement framed from its early days as a revolution. The dominant narrative enabled networked publics to lay claim to a happening, appropriate it as it turned into an event, and collectively render it into a story. Storytelling is a rhythmic, musical process. The most masterful storytellers pause for suspense, afford climax, and combine a plurality of complex character narratives into a story arc that invites and collects communal interest. Finally, dynamic storytellers liberate the imagination. They tell a story, and in telling it, they help those listening imagine the reality this story depicts. This is what #egypt did for the movement. It told

the kind of story that liberated the imaginations of those living the movement, those live-tweeting it, and those tuning in.

These findings are aligned with the results of concurrent studies on Arab Spring movements. Sieben (2012), for example, examined tweet content during uprisings in Egypt and Syria in 2011 and 2012 and found that Twitter was mostly used as an information-sharing tool and only to a lesser extent for organizational purposes. These findings do not negate the possibility of smaller publics coordinating and then spreading information through interconnected networks. However, they do point to information-sharing practices that, while perhaps driven by expressive and connective needs, are not always coordinated or planned. In this manner, these information-sharing practices may be interpreted as connective and not necessarily collective. Over time and working in tandem with offline efforts and a variety of multimedia strategies, social media can help broker relations between activists, broaden and globalize the reach of a movement, and help share information and other resources. To this end, Lim (2012) found that for several years, successful social movements in Egypt, including Kefaya, the April 6th Youth, and “We are all Khaled Saeed,” were able to put social media to such use and ultimately use social media to “shape repertoires of contention, frame the issues, propagate unifying symbols, and transform online activism to offline protests” (p. 231). These are aligned with the potential of organically formed networked framing and networked gatekeeping practices that were traced through the analysis presented in this chapter.

What is interesting about these practices of networked framing and gatekeeping is that they are less susceptible to the information control practices of both repressive and open regimes. In this manner, *new sources of information that could not be easily controlled helped citizens who used social media for interpersonal communication make individual decisions about participating in protests in Egypt* (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). Importantly, through modes of participation that featured collectively formed fluid hierarchies of information sharing, the story of a movement in the making took shape in the collectively negotiated front stage of Twitter. Unlike governmental newspapers that framed the protests as “a conspiracy on the Egyptian state,” social media news feeds propagated a human interest frame, which defined the protests as “a revolution for freedom and social justice,” a frame further reflected in hybrid frames emerging in independent newspapers (Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012).

Furthermore, this analysis underscores the importance of affect in understanding the role of media use during mobilizations. Media serve as resources

that facilitate organization, coordination, and information dissemination. Beyond that level, the mediality afforded by different platforms (a) provides parallel experiences of events that may mirror, amplify, or contradict the original event in the making and (b) invites affective gestures that provide the basis for how individuals connect and tune into the events in the making. Importantly, affective gestures convey the intensity with which emotion is felt and thus set the tempo for a movement. The news storytelling streams produced are labeled affective because they blend opinion, fact, and emotions into expressions verbalized in anticipation of events that have not yet gained (mainstream) mediality. The affective nature of message, together with the networked and ambient infrastructure of networked media, nurtured involvement, connection, and cohesion. Driven by premediation, affective news streams are filled with anticipatory gestures that do not directly determine the future but instead predispose it. In doing so, the cumulative streams, made up of atomized gestures, permit individuals to lay claim to latent forms of agency that may have been inaccessible in atomized mode.

In repressive regimes, courage is required to express dislike, hatred and anger, and affective statements thus become political statements. Moreover, affective expressions of courage, while inspired by solitary acts of heroes, are intensified as crowds chime in to support a chorus of indignation, expressed in anticipation of change. This chorus, through the force of repetition and the cumulative intensity reproduction affords, gradually becomes deafening, powerful, and disruptive. In the case of #egypt, this chorus was amplified by a majority of global online supporters, who added online intensity to the ongoing protests that climaxed around the events leading to regime reversal. Research has shown that links shared through Twitter streams supporting the movement studied were mostly clicked by people *outside* the country of origin, suggesting that “social media operated less as an organizing tool and more as a megaphone for broadcasting information” (Aday, Farrell, Lynch, Sides, & Freelon, 2012). The affective rhythms of news storytelling on #egypt reproduced and reinforced feelings of community for an existing public of indignant citizens who had had enough. A digital path to regime change was paved and further supported by connections to global and diasporic publics, sustained through an always-on affective news feed with a pulse of its own.

The connection between online and offline events is better understood as hyper-empirical rather than causal. Events occur and evolve on paths that are parallel and interconnected. These paths map out the contextual

complexity movements that cannot be easily interpreted through the linear logic of mono-causality. Instead, co-occurring events, and their affective re-interpretations, which in fact become part of both the event and the perception of it, afford hyper-empirical dimensions to how we experience realities and the stories told about them. Walter Lippman has famously used the term *pseudoenvironment* to describe the ability of mass media, and newspapers in particular, to construct environments for us that we were not able to directly experience on our own. Lang and Lang famously wrote about journalistic bias that conveyed a televised reality much different from that experienced on the streets. In collaboratively covered and curated events, however, the processes of networked framing and networked gatekeeping drastically alter these dynamics. Bias, of course, is never absent from the equation. Yet, contemporary generations of networked media do more than reproduce or portray an event; they build on previous capabilities of mediated storytelling to offer subjective yet pluralized narratives. Combined, these narratives allow us to not only watch and observe what we cannot directly experience but to also tune in to the feeling of this experience, and to contribute to it by becoming participants in the hyper-empirical realities we are tuning into.

3

Affective Demands and the New Political

By the spring of 2011, several uprisings across the MENA region were well under way, leading to escalated protests, civil war, and for several countries, full regime reversal and implementation of democratic electoral processes. Across the Mediterranean, however, some of the oldest democracies were starting to experience the toll of economic austerity measures brought on by the 2008 financial crisis. Whereas the cascades of protest commonly described as the Arab Spring were about expressing frustration with regimes that ascended to power in the absence of democratic infrastructures, the developing movements in Europe were about expressing indignation with democratic infrastructures already in place. If the earlier wave of unrest spreading through the MENA region was about the culmination of the long wait for democracy, then the subsequent surge of protests throughout Southern Europe was the result of the *longue durée* of democracy and its discontents in mature capitalist economies.

The Spanish Indignados movement began in the Puerta del Sol square in Madrid, in mid-May 2011, with protesters camping out in public squares throughout Spain as public expression of dissent with economic policy. Protesters in Greece, a country with a longer history of civil unrest spanning beyond the more recent financial problems, responded to the Puerta del Sol call for action by organizing camps in various public squares throughout the country. Portugal, one of the first European Union (EU) countries to adopt austerity measures, also responded to the call for action. Utilizing social networks, accessed through digital, analog, and face-to-face means, protesters coordinated locally and connected globally with further networks of support. Puerta del Sol called for a worldwide day of protest on October 15, 2011, a call heard throughout Europe but also in North America.

By the summer of 2011, the Canadian-based group Adbusters, known for its anti-consumerist and subtly subversive ethos, proposed a peaceful occupation of Wall Street as a way of protesting economic imbalances that persevere in contemporary capitalist democracies. Adbusters co-founder Kalle Lasn registered the occupywallstreet.org web address in early June 2011. Adbusters used this website, email, and a variety of social media feeds to issue a call for followers to join the protests by setting up tents, kitchens, and other peaceful barricades to occupy Wall Street. The first protest took place in Zuccotti Park in New York City on September 17, 2011, the tenth anniversary of the re-opening of Wall Street trading following the September 11, 2001, attacks. The protestors combined online and offline platforms for mobilization, quickly developing into a global movement with various local sites of protests. The phrase “We are the 99%,” originally launched through a Tumblr site dedicated to the movement, proliferated and soon became a popular slogan and point of affiliation with the movement. The popular refrain summed up imbalances in the global concentration of wealth and captured the disparity between the 1 percent making corporate decisions and the 99 percent living through the financial consequences of these decisions in the United States and the rest of the world.

By early October, 2011, the Occupy movement had grown, with interconnected protests and camps in over ninety-five cities across eighty-two countries and more than six hundred communities in the United States (Adam, 2011a, 2011b; Walters, 2011). Its expansion was met with a mixture of support and criticism. Mainstream media were not sure how to cover a movement that thrived on not having an agenda. A variety of publics celebrated this openness but many openly attacked the movement for lacking specific goals. Still, this ideological openness appealed to diverse publics and civilians, who deemed it important enough to simply “stand and be counted” as people opposing broad imbalances that characterize income distribution in contemporary capitalist democracies.

The “We are the 99%” slogan permitted the movement to lay claim to an ideologically open signifier that various publics could affiliate with and fill with their own meaning (Colleoni, 2013). This openness was further reflected in the direct democracy deliberative protocols adopted by Occupy, which were aimed at fostering open participation and equal representation of diverse interests. General assemblies frequently followed a progressive stack model, which permitted underrepresented groups to speak first. Assemblies made use of a variety of hand signals to foster open and direct communication

and to allow people participating in large meetups to express agreement or disagreement, request clarification, direct attention, request permission to speak, and oppose or block courses of action. Through inviting protesters within earshot to function as *human microphones*, repeating and reverberating words until the entire gathering could hear what was being said, speakers were able to communicate their messages to large crowds in cities that required permits for amplified sound. The mic check tactic permitted publics to both amplify sound and identify supporters when attempting to occupy spaces for protest.

Importantly, however, locally organized assemblies used online means to organize, mobilize, and connect nationally and globally; Internet Relay Chat (IRC) Facebook, Twitter, blogs, websites, and Meetup were among the technologies and platforms used prominently to coordinate events and disseminate information. Communities and organizations expressing support plugged into these channels, contributing diverse multimedia content that further enabled a global culture of protest, art, and expression. These online camps, connecting networks of support for the movement, persisted long after protesters were forced out of offline camps. This chapter thus focuses on the role that Twitter played for the Occupy movement by fostering communication during peaks of activity and long periods of inactivity for the movement. Whereas the previous chapter examined Twitter use in regimes in transition, this chapter examines Twitter use in contemporary democracies so as to understand the forms of political expression it supports. Evolving patterns of communication within and beyond the contours of the Occupy Wall Street movement are described, mapped, and interpreted as they developed around the #ows (Occupy Wall Street hashtag) and corollary or cross-referenced hashtags. The movement relied on its use of social media to attain visibility and tell its own story. Primary Twitter streams for the movement are tracked, covering the flow of communication from September 17, 2011, to June 17, 2012.

The theoretical premise utilized in the previous chapter is adapted to the context of #ows, one of the primary tags used by Occupy Wall Street. Tweets referencing #ows typically contain cross-posts to other prominent tags by the movement, thus providing an inclusive way of capturing Occupy streams. Drawing from previous research on the ambience, homophily, and identity formation processes facilitated by Twitter, this chapter utilizes network, semantic, and discourse analyses of Occupy tweets to study broadcasting and listening affective processes on Twitter. The theoretical framework is further

enhanced by exploring the extent to which the platform discursively sustains an electronic elsewhere and forms of connective action invited. These theoretical elements and methodological tools support this examination of the form networked publics take on as they materialize textually via #ows and the affective modalities of civic engagement that discursively convene these publics into being.

Electronic Elsewheres, Twitter, and Occupy

Previous research on Twitter indicates that the expressive affordances of the platform support identity formation and affinity among like-minded individuals. Moreover, shared geolocation frequently drives both online and offline expressions of solidarity, characteristic in the Occupy movement, which connects local and globally dispersed publics. Of particular interest to this research are the conversational practices that give #ows form and permit publics to tune in, speak up, and share information. These conversational practices are cultivated by a variety of structural forces operating within and outside of the movement and are further invited by the affordances of the platform supporting information sharing and opinion expression. For example, the information sharing and conversational practices that characterized the Occupy movement offline were structured around efforts to raise awareness of economic exploitation and solutions to the economic crisis that did not further disadvantage those already suffering financially. Assemblies were organized to invite and include all points of view. Online, information shared in the form of a link, video, image, or powerful slogan helped further sustain potential publics of support as it was circulated and affectively reinforced or challenged.

Concurrently, the internal fracturing of the movement, brought on by competing goals and mounting pressure from the police and local authorities, pushed the movement out of public space that had been claimed collectively to make a political point and facilitate engagement (Kain, 2011; Sonmez, 2011; Cagle, 2012; Moynihan, 2012). #Ows is of particular interest as a case study because it seeks to reproduce the bottom-up, non-hierarchical form of the movement (Gandel, 2011; Harris-Perry, 2011; Sorkin, 2012). In addition, as the multiple Occupy movements' claim on public space was challenged through evictions and mounting clashes with the police, the

online space afforded by Twitter may have presented an agonistic space of greater permanence.

Twitter has its own mechanisms of supporting electronic elsewheres that give voice to marginalized groups and sustain feelings of connection. Electronic elsewheres can be understood as social spaces that support the expression of marginalized, liminal, or underrepresented viewpoints (Yang, 2009; Berry, Kim, & Spigel 2010). In this sense, platforms like Twitter do not simply represent places that already exist but actually become the means for producing places that traverse the boundaries of home, community, work, and play (Berry et al., 2010). Previous research on Twitter suggests that the platform facilitates ambient co-creating and collaborative curating of information but explains that these processes are frequently driven by homophily and power hierarchies that form around likeness of opinion (e.g., Wu, Hofman, Mason, & Watts, 2011).

Twitter sustains feeds that enable local and global connectivity for a movement but also serves to circulate news about a movement undercovered and mischaracterized by mainstream media (Dumenco & Wheaton, 2011; Naureckas, 2011; Bellows, Bauml, Field, & Ledbetter, 2012). These tendencies and tensions introduce hybridity to formulaic information-sharing practices but also to the public spaces claimed by a movement and the form of voice these spaces afford. An electronic elsewhere is an environment accessible to many publics that do not share the same geographic location. Thus, diverse publics are able to pluralize this environment, telling stories that attain geo-social relevance, which “helps to conceptualise individuals’ physical, psychological and/or social connections to particular geographic territory without necessarily locating them within these physical spaces” (Hess, 2013, p. 49). The resulting geo-social, hybrid, and mediated environments can be understood as *elsewheres* that presence alternative viewpoints, voices, and stories. They mediate the feeling of a shared and supportive space, crucial for movements or publics that either lack or have difficulty claiming a space they can call their own. For Occupy, a movement with global aspirations, committed to leaderlessness and equal access, the particular form of conversationality presented through #ows enabled both influential and grassroots activists to negotiate voice and visibility across diverse territories geo-socially claimed. It supported the movement’s efforts to occupy public space literally—but also figuratively—on the public agenda. Finally, as the movement was gradually driven out of the public spaces it had occupied, #ows and concurrent feeds mediated an electronic elsewhere.

Therefore, the analyses focus on capturing snapshots of the evolving movement on Twitter as the platform sustained news feeds and provided an electronic elsewhere for the movement. Emphasis is placed on prominent actors and patterns of communication so as to understand the form these conversations take on and the mediality of discursive spaces sustained. Tweets are parsed for addressivity markers and further analyzed through manual and computerized content and semantic and network analytic methods for frames and word patterns as they emerge over a longitudinal time frame. Utilizing a mixed methodological approach, similar to that employed in the previous chapter, the focus is on the Twitter platform as it facilitates the burgeoning of alternative space for grassroots political activism during times of heightened political and economic crisis. Results are used to inform conclusions on who is saying what to whom and on what that conversation might focus. A combination of empirical methods and critical analysis of the present and concurrent research on Occupy are consulted to interpret affective processes at work on #ows.

Connective Action and Electronic Elsewheres

As an electronic elsewhere, Twitter facilitates an always-on, ambient social news environment, where news provided by mainstream media converges with news reports and commentary provided by citizens (Hermida, 2010; Hermida et al., in press). In the previous chapter, we saw how in situations where news is reported in anticipation of or during an event, citizen, journalist, and media organization reports converged into a hybrid and live news feed driven by instantaneity in reporting. These feeds capture events in premediation, that is, before they have attained the mediality reflected by dominant news values and news production practices that turn events into news stories, as discussed in the previous chapter. Feeds sustained by dedicated Twitter tags thus capture an event in premediation—before the event has turned into a story. In premediated form, Twitter feeds present a mix of reports and reactions that may constitute the dominant news environment, especially when access to other media is restricted, controlled, or somehow not trusted. The analysis presented in the previous chapter suggested that these feeds may be affectively charged, adding or augmenting intensity to the feed as news reports and reactions are further propagated through networks of users.

Twitter discursively actualizes as an electronic elsewhere through the use of tags as storytelling devices. The broadcasting capabilities of Twitter thus afford organically generated news feeds, which permit various publics to tune in and listen in on stories and conversations about events. Personal views and takes on events are woven into developing narratives through the organizational logic of hashtags. Tags present tweets related to that conversation in sequential order, but the coherence of the developing narrative varies, depending on how individual frames align. In the case of #egypt, affective and cognitive alignment of tweets produced permitted the developing narrative to elevate the collectively produced frame of a revolution to prominence. This in turn propagated a frame that labeled a developing movement a revolution well before it had actually effected regime reversal. The connective potential of the tag as a storytelling device materialized as distinct personal frames were collaboratively woven into a narrative that framed the movement as a revolution.

Such personal contributions to an emerging news stream about a developing event may be understood as personalized action formations. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) employ this term to describe action developing around individualized takes on developing issues. These individualized messages may be shared, propagated, and organically collated across networks in ways that reflect connection but not necessarily collectively formed consensus around an issue. Personalized action formations must be understood within the context of structural fragmentation and individualization that characterize many contemporary societies. The shifts from ideologically defined to issue publics, from group-based to individualized societies, and from emancipatory to life politics are changes that are absorbed variably by contemporary societies, yet inform the sociocultural and political landscapes within which citizens self-actualize (e.g., Giddens, 1991; Bennett, 1998; Bauman, 2000). Unlike collective frames, which must be reframed and adjusted to embody the consensus of the public at hand, personal action frames are “inclusive of different personal reasons for contesting a situation that needs to be changed” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 744). The cumulative, albeit possibly fragmented, organizational logic that filters aligned, cascading, or imbricated personal action frames presents an alternative model for movements, in contrast to the logic of collective action.

The connective model emphasizes network-based over group-based forms of mobilization that utilize digital means to sustain prolonged protests of a global scope. Sustainable collective action requires coordination, consensus

building, and leadership. Resources are mobilized across a number of organizations strategically so that a number of publics can collectively identify with a particular point of view. By contrast, connective action organically takes form as self-motivated actors share personally expressive messages across networks and as interconnected actors view, rebroadcast, and further remix them. Distinct from collective action, connective action develops out of personalized reactions to political issues, old and new, that turn into broader themes shared via various personal communication technologies. Whereas collective action frequently involves the more formal structures of non-government organizations (NGOs), connective action is encountered in recent protests mobilized by the *indignados* and Occupy movements and the various Arab Spring uprisings.

The logic of connective action is reflective of contemporary reluctance to associate with formal organizations and the gradual prevalence of large-scale, fluid social networks over group ties (Castells, 2012). Unlike conventional social movements, movements like *los indignados* and Occupy contained newer organizations, fewer of which had actual street addresses or offered formal membership possibilities. Bennett and Segerberg (2011) suggest that these networks “operate importantly through the organizational processes of social media, and their logic does not require strong organizational control or the symbolic construction of a united ‘we’” (p. 748). Because personalized action frames do not require reframing for attunement with a greater collective, they attain virality easily, as they are shared through informal conversational practices that resemble interpersonal communication. As was the case with #egypt, individuals imitate, repeat, and comment on tweets in ways that resemble the phatic conventions of nodding along, indicating agreement, and expressing opinion in informal social settings. Personalized action frames can be propagated affectively without necessitating a collective negotiation of what they mean, what their consequences are, and how they align with a particular ideology. Thus, connective action takes shape around practices of broadcasting, remixing, and listening to individualized action frames.

Movements that emerge out of the organizing logic of connective action may at first appear leaderless, specifically because they have been assembled through imbricated individualized calls to action. Self-organizing movements spread easily across networks in the absence of a central decision-making authority. Unlike collectively rendered signifiers that summon specific publics to ideological alignment, connectively rendered signifiers remain

open; their appeal depends on their ability to invite and contain personalized manifestos for action rather than dictate a single one. This of course confuses mainstream media covering open, self-organizing movements and looking for sound bites. As a result, mainstream media interpreted the openness of the Occupy movement as a sign of indecision and ideological lackluster. By contrast, the ideological openness of the Egyptian uprisings had served to legitimize the movement. By eluding ideological definition, the Egyptian protesters simultaneously distanced themselves from elements that may have led to corruption in other regimes and avoided alienating potential networks of support. Openness may serve to legitimize some movements and expose others, depending on cultural context.

Still, accessibility and a general lack of a top-down hierarchy does not preclude leading figures from emerging within self-organizing movements, in the form of actors who serve as interlocked nodes filtering information to prominence. Connective action attains its own rhythms and patterns, which, on Twitter, are activated through processes of networked gatekeeping and framing. The placement of these agents as nodes in a developing and evolving network can be integral to the pace or the rhythm of connective action that is articulated and attained online and offline. In the case of #egypt, this tendency was evidenced through a crowd-sourcing of elite nodes that emerged and gained prominence through discursive means. Curatorial practices characterized by immediacy, reciprocity, and conversationality enabled the manufacturing of trust between key nodes in #egypt and the online crowds that elevated them to prominence through the phatic use of addressivity markers. Elite nodes are thus afforded curatorial power, which is essential when mobilizing connective, over collective, action.

Applied to the Occupy movement and #ows, which connected both globally and locally active groups, these findings would suggest that social media use by those sharing a local connection might be characterized by both cohesion and plurality of opinion expression. Ambience, homophily, and strengthening of bonds between those sharing geolocal connection are essential in understanding the sociotechnical texture of Twitter, especially in situations that call for individuals to mobilize and show solidarity. The platform provides both amplification of “voice” and connective expression through organically formed and relatively autonomous organizing outside formalized structures of democracy and organizations (Creamer, 2011; Gautney, 2012). The logic of connective action might propel patterns of information sharing that permit individuals to digitally register their presence

and be counted while managing, at the same time, to elude the diverse trapings that constitute formal membership in a collective “we.” Still, homophilic tendencies reflective of ideological, professional, and other similarities may coalesce and actualize on Twitter. These tendencies may have the unintended effect of projecting ideational meaning onto connective signifiers that were intended to remain open. In the same vein, curational authority over the resulting stream may be further managed through processes of networked framing and gatekeeping, which permit a pluralized front stage negotiation of elite status. Open as the call for connective action may be, if it results in content creation, then it will undoubtedly invite the organization and curation of that content, albeit through the more pluralized processes of networked gatekeeping and networked framing. These are considered next.

Networked Gatekeeping, Framing, and Connective Action on #ows

In the previous chapter, data analysis pointed to processes of networked gatekeeping at work, connecting variant news actors contributing to the rhythms of #egypt. The processes of networked gatekeeping were first described by Barzilai-Nahon (2008, 2009), who defined them as a form of gatekeeping pertaining to both the control and the selection of information, performed by various interconnected actors (Barzilai-Nahon, 2009). Networks add an important dimension to gatekeeping and render relations between gatekeepers and those gated more fluid. Thus, through collaborative organization of content rendered organically, agency is pluralized. Ordinary actor nodes create measurable impact through practices that blend broadcasting with social conventions (e.g., Watts & Dobbs 2007; Bakshy, Hofman, Mason, & Watts, 2011).

The analysis of #egypt showed how variant actors, functioning as networked agents, used a variety of conversational strategies to contribute to, curate, and react to the subjective pluralism of storytelling in #egypt. In this manner, networked gatekeepers engaged in storytelling processes that crowd-sourced actors and frames to prominence, through the use of conversational, social practices that symbiotically connected elite and crowd in the determination of information relevancy.¹ Processes of both networked gatekeeping and networked framing permitted the subjective pluralism that

dominated the stream to present a polyphonic yet coherent narrative against the Mubarak regime and for revolution and democracy.

Applied to the context of social movements—and #ows, specifically—networked gatekeeping processes may permit cascades of personalized action frames shared via Twitter to coalesce into networked and organic streams of information. Networked gatekeeping processes are compatible with the logic of connective action because they permit the loose organization of content while avoiding complex ideological negotiation with established gatekeeping hierarchies. In fact, networked gatekeeping practices elude these hierarchies altogether by facilitating the expression and sharing of stories that combine to form an organically shaped narrative. Networked gatekeeping specifically may define how cascades of personalized action frames are placed, organized, and affectively remixed within a greater connective action narrative presented by an evolving movement.

These pluralized narratives present the *modus operandi* for digitally enabled action networks. It is not uncommon for contemporary movements to cast a wider engagement net by refusing to brand themselves in specific ways. Movements like *los indignados* in Spain and Occupy in the United States utilized broader, “easy-to-personalize action themes, often deploying batteries of social technologies to help citizens spread the word over their personal networks” in ways that entail “technology platforms and applications taking the role of established political organizations” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 742). As these personalizable action themes form the base around which connective action is constructed, it becomes essential to understand how these themes are produced, shared, reinforced, and further remixed across networks of publics. Networked gatekeeping helps us track how modalities of connective action emerge. Networked framing may further illuminate how personalizable action themes are connectively blended into narratives that drive, annihilate, or punctuate action.

Framing is generally understood as a way of classifying information that allows people to identify, internalize, and label everyday occurrences (Goffman, 1974). Persistent patterns of selection, interpretation, emphasis, exclusion, and retention are symbolically communicated through frames that are frequently employed to organize discourse (Gitlin, 1980). For media scholars, the most useful definition of framing comes from Entman (1993), who suggests,

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to

promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (p. 52)

Frames influence how people understand, remember, evaluate, and act upon a problem (Reese, 2001) and therefore are of interest in understanding how the Occupy movement may have incorporated frames, personalizable or collective, in issuing calls for engagement over Twitter. The platform itself, designed to afford publicity to personal points of view, may further invite the collating of personal perspectives into connective narratives.

In the case of #egypt, broadcasting and listening practices harmoniously supported personalizable action frames revolving around the theme of a revolution. The affective and ambient nature of expression on Twitter further intensified these conversational tendencies, suggesting processes that we may describe as always-on or ambient framing. Furthermore, the platform enabled front stage frame negotiation, as actor nodes, crowd-sourced to prominence, interacted with mainstream and non-mainstream media and with diverse publics to produce resonant frames. Conversational practices that characterized this framing process involved ambient curation of content, immediacy, and directness in conversationality as well as multilingual/multicultural fluency that supported symbiotic interactions with diverse publics. This process was defined as networked framing: a process through which particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and/or treatment recommendations attain prominence through crowd-sourcing practices.

In the context of digitally enabled action networks that support diverse and pluralized movements, like Occupy, processes of networked framing and networked gatekeeping permit publics to identify broad themes they may connect around without having to micro-negotiate the finer points of these frames. Instead, through expressing their own views and aligning with the views of others, they “organize social and political meaning around their lifestyle values and personal narratives that express them” (Bennett, 2004, p. 103). Increasing numbers of citizens turn away from conventional and collective forms of civic engagement in favor of personally defined citizenship (e.g., Putnam, 2000; Bennett, 2004). Net-based platforms amplify and further enable these tendencies (e.g., Scammell, 2000; Papacharissi, 2010). Despite their deeply personal context, lifestyle politics do not prohibit connection around points of common interest, which may be negotiated through

organically enabled processes of networked framing. Networked framing is frequently affectively driven, given that phatically informed gestures of retweeting, endorsing, and otherwise propagating tweets add intensity to the manner within which a frame resonates within a public.

Networked gatekeeping and networked framing thus drive processes through which networked publics convene and materialize discursively. The connective thrust of expressive actions that presence underrepresented points further informs the modalities of civic engagement enabled through #ows as a discursive elsewhere. The subsequent analyses are aimed at understanding Twitter as an electronic elsewhere, one that invites and further sustains modalities of connective action, articulated and managed through the symbiotic processes of networked framing and networked gatekeeping. The questions that direct the interpretation of findings therefore continue to revolve around the form and tonality these network publics attain as they engage discursively through #ows.

Analyses

Stratified random sampling provided snapshots of the movement, drawing 10 percent of Occupy tweets from the #ows hashtag on a weekly basis, beginning from October 8, 2012 (approximately three weeks from the movement's September 17th inception), through July 15, 2012. Data were collected from the Twitter API through a partnership with TNS Political and Social and Vigiglobe, a firm specializing in social media analysis. This permitted us to track prominent actors and prominent frames as they developed over time. The sample spanned a ten-month period and included 279,597 tweets, enabling a broad, representative, and randomized generation of Occupy content.

A variety of network and content analysis methods, similar to the processes employed in the previous chapter, were combined to study broadcasting and listening practices on #ows. A computer program was written to automate the parsing of each tweet into a database according to significant metadata components such as addressivity markers (@, via, and RT) and hashtag use, as these co-occurred with the #ows hashtag. SQL queries were written against the database for frequency counts of tweet volume and progression, user popularity according to addressivity markers, metadata, and

hashtag usage. Manual and computerized content and network analytic methods permitted the exploration of frames beyond those presented by hashtags in order to study word patterns as they emerged over a longitudinal time frame. The analysis further enabled the tracking of who is saying what to whom, thus leading to a mapping of modalities of connective action articulated via #ows.

Quantitative findings were used to track prominent actors and conversations and identify instances or incidents through which actors began to converse, cross-reference each other, and receive attention via retweets, mentions, or references. A smaller sample that reflected episodes of heightened interactivity was generated in this manner and examined more closely through the method of discourse analysis. Given the orientation provided by previous research, we examined discourse (as defined by Fairclough, 1995; Wood & Kroger, 2000) as a text, using the Wood and Kroger definition of discourse as “all spoken and written forms of language use (talk and text) as social practice” (p. 19). The aim of this textual analysis was to understand the “systematic links between texts, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 17). Thus, the selected tweets were read over several times, and notes were taken regarding language use, tone, and differences/similarities in how actors conversed with each other. The discourse analysis focused on looking for thematic patterns, repetition, and redundancy in these trends. Conversational practices that permitted actors to frame coverage and to become influential in those conversations as gatekeepers were further analyzed, looking for performative tendencies that sustained modalities of connective action.

Networked Content Production and Connective Action on #ows

As a first step, the data were analyzed in order to study content flows and spikes in content production. These content flows were also compared to a timeline of Occupy events, which was constructed by carefully monitoring news headlines and numerous Occupy news feeds available through the movements' web and social media presence. The totality of 279,597 tweets sampled for analysis in this study were mapped in this frequency analysis, which noted three spikes in tweet activity.

A first spike in activity was noted in early October 2011, between October 8 and October 11, the dates following the first solidarity marches in New York, escalations of protests, and clashes between local police and protesters, resulting in coverage of the movement by mainstream and alternative media. Additionally, known public figures, artists, musicians, and intellectuals expressed their allegiance with the movement, visited campsites, and spoke at general assemblies in ways that generated interest and further civic engagement with the movement. Importantly, the movement and its numerous growing local affiliates began to develop their own vernacular of slogans, conversational conventions, and information-sharing practices. Occupy introduced itself to broader audiences and publics, utilizing an open and collaboratively generated news feed that could be used to initiate others into the movement. Unlike conventional movements, however, the literature that was presented to members seeking to affiliate with Occupy was marked by the polyphony of multiple members contributing to the numerous news feeds sustained by the movement.

The subjective pluralism that drove these news feeds sought to connect a number of individual contributions to Occupy, often producing tweets like “Stand with #OccupyWallSt and demand real democracy! Send a message of support to #OWS here: <http://t.co/INwGaic1>.” The movement itself did not collectively seek to mold these contributions into a consensus that would represent a formal identity with the movement. This effectively permitted individuals approaching the movement through online means to affiliate affectively and to join in and be counted alongside other Occupy supporters, thus adding intensity to the movement without having to enter into a complex negotiation of how their personal politics aligned with the ideology of the collective. Instead, individuals could simply express allegiance with the general idea of resistance, mobilization, and occupying capitalist structures through tweets including the following: “I am in love with an idea. #ows #OccupyDC #occupytogether #occupytheglobe.” Affective engagement is typically presented in the form of refrains and other signifiers that are semiotically compatible with everyday practices, political and other.

A second spike in activity was noted in mid-October and was sustained throughout the following month and until December 9, 2011. This was perhaps the most active period for the movement, as it took form in the United States and the Northeast and connected with growing protests throughout the country and in Oakland and Los Angeles, in particular.

In events marking the one-month anniversary of the movement on October 17, protests erupted in over 1,500 cities worldwide, frequently leading to clashes with the police and arrests of several participants, including celebrated feminist author Naomi Wolf (#ows). On October 25, events erupted into violence at Occupy Oakland as police forces raided camps and arrested numerous participants, using excessive physical force, tear gas, and dangerous projectile rounds. Scott Olsen, a former Marine and two-time Iraq War veteran, sustained a skull fracture after being shot in the head with a police projectile; a subsequent vigil was held for Olsen on October 27, followed by a march attended by thousands during the general strike in Oakland on November 2 (#occupyoakland). On November 15, members of the New York Police Department in full riot gear raided Zuccotti Park, beginning the process of evicting occupiers. In response, on November 17, over 30,000 occupiers took over Foley Square and Brooklyn Bridge (#ows, #nypd). On November 30 in California, police attacked Occupy LA, following a long struggle by occupiers to successfully defend Solidarity Park in the preceding days (#occupyla). On December 6, the 99% movement instigated Occupy Homes Nationwide and worked with the Brooklyn Community and Occupy Wall Street to help the homeless reclaim vacant houses foreclosed by Bank of America (#occupyhomes). Protests escalated in Washington, DC, as thousands shut down K Street and marched toward the White House and the Supreme Court (#occupydc); in San Francisco, following raids and re-occupation of public space (#occupysf); and in Boston, where the occupiers were facing midnight eviction (#occupyboston).

The flow of information on #ows and related tags reflected these activities and invited general support, conversation, and commentary from participants and listeners. These included tweets that expressed solidarity toward the movement (“I really wanna go to Ny to #OccupyWallStreet today,” or, “@occupyoakland I CANNOT BELIEVE what is going down out there. Everyone please stay safe, solidarity is key! Love from @OccupyPhilly #OWS”), requests for information (“Who in our network has gone down to #occupywallstreet ? Tell us what you saw!”), accusations of police brutality, (“#occupywallstreet NYPD Planted Drugs on People to Meet Drug Arrest Quotas <http://t.co/AXydvCPb>”), ongoing reports of activity and calls to join (“Marching down B’way to Washington Square Park in under 5 minutes. #ows”), calls for action combined with reports of ongoing events (“Tell Mayor @jeanquan: Rubber bullets & tear gas on #OccupyOakland are not OK.

Condemn & investigate brutality! <http://t.co/X2Nubzg1> #ows), and general reports of events and atmosphere, frequently accompanied by links to text, audio, or video and attempts to get the attention of mainstream media (“@maddow Clear VIDEO fromLastNight’s #policebrutality @OccupyOakland. <http://t.co/h125MXpI> #OWS #DemocracyInUSA???”). These reports offered news updates and mobilized resources but utilized language that intensified feelings associated with the movement, whatever the direction of those feelings might have been.

At the same time, however, the movement stream consistently received content injections from individuals who dissented with the movement, initiated earlier in October and gradually becoming more frequent (“Dear #OccupyWallStreet : I paid my student loans, so should you,” or “If you protest make sure you know what you are protesting against . . . lol idiot #OWS nitwitts that means you!”), alongside hopeful reactions to escalating violence (“The spark of revolution has now begun in earnest with the first casualty <http://t.co/yMUYegyf> #ows @OccupyWallSt’). Some compared the movement to the Tea Party and others quickly dismissed these comparisons. These exchanges further prompted regular content injections aimed at delegitimizing the movement, which were cross-posted to a variety of conservative hashtags (#ows and the Progressive Fantasy. <http://t.co/0odw3Qys> #tcot #teaparty,” or “BIG SURPRISE: 64% of #OccupyWallStreet are UNDER the age of 35 <http://t.co/jfoNw0J8> #tcot #tlot”). Several tweets considered the minimal or misguided mainstream media coverage the movement was receiving (“The media wants a clear, simple, mission statement. Something that can have a clear, simple, counter-argument. This isn’t simple. #Occupy,” or “CNBC talking shit about #OWS now”). The plethora of ideological causes by now affiliated with Occupy began to prompt statements of dissonance from numerous supporters (“Dear #occupywallstreet pick a cause this protest schizophrenia is driving me nuts,” or, “I feel like a goddamn pinball. ~boing~ Yeah #OWS! ~Boing~ #OWS is stupid ~boing~ yay OWS! ~boing~ OWS IS STUPID. #headache #p2 #TFY”). These statements cumulatively served to contest the factual premise of Occupy, even though they rarely were supported by factual evidence themselves.

The last spike in activity was noted around the period from April 28 to May 4, 2011, and included the culmination of activities and protests leading up to and following May Day declarations of solidarity from around the globe. The stream had finally regained its rhythm following a long winter

and short bursts of activity earlier in the spring. The content volumes during this period are consistent, although lower than those noted earlier in the fall. Shows of solidarity persist (“Stand up or Shut up. #MayDay #ows <http://t.co/Sh7xA8Hq>,” or “Yes to life! May Day general strike across North America <http://t.co/M49qSqN3> #occupywallstreet”), followed by expressions of endorsement and excitement (“3 words are back on my TL: Occupy Wall Street! #OWS”) and links to further information and live feeds (“occupy live streams <http://t.co/2nNQA6oK> #Anonymous #Occupy #OWS #news #usa”). Voices of dissent appear less frequently but continue to interrupt the stream regularly, with counter-arguments that seek to discredit the movement (“MayDay may be the #OWS’s day, but Election Day will be ours! All true patriots must vote the against tyranny and communism of the democrats!” or “Have the #Occutards shut down the country yet? I can’t tell . . . #tcot #Occupy #corporategreed,” and “If only there were a way to look into the future and see what our country would look like if we listened to #Occupy. Oh right . . . #Cuba”).

Figure 3.1 provides a chart of the frequency of total tweets and the frequency of usage of addressivity markers during the time period under investigation. Across all periods reflecting spikes in tweet activity, tweets containing conversational markers were also elevated, suggesting that web publics utilized these addressivity indicators to sustain informational flows and engage in networked content production. Figure 3.1 also presents graphically the significant differences in the usage of the three conversation markers ($f(2, 789) = 248.5, p < .05$), revealing that web publics tweeting about the Occupy movement were more likely to utilize the mention marker ($M = 408.41, SD = 390.66$) as opposed to either the RT ($M = 3.38, SD = 4.65$) or the via ($M = 52.75, SD = 54.78$) markers. The via marker, generally the least utilized by Twitter web publics, appeared more frequently than the RT sign. This is a unique attribute of this stream, indicating perhaps an overall tendency to attribute information to respective sources without necessarily elevating these sources to a position of prominence that would somehow enforce an information hierarchy and restrict the openness of the movement and its stream. In other words, for users of the Twitter platform, greater value was placed on utilizing this technology to converse with others or attain their attention through mentions. RT signs are typically employed to elevate thought leaders to prominence (boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010; Hansen, Arvidsson, Nielsen, Colleoni, & Etter, 2011; Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). At

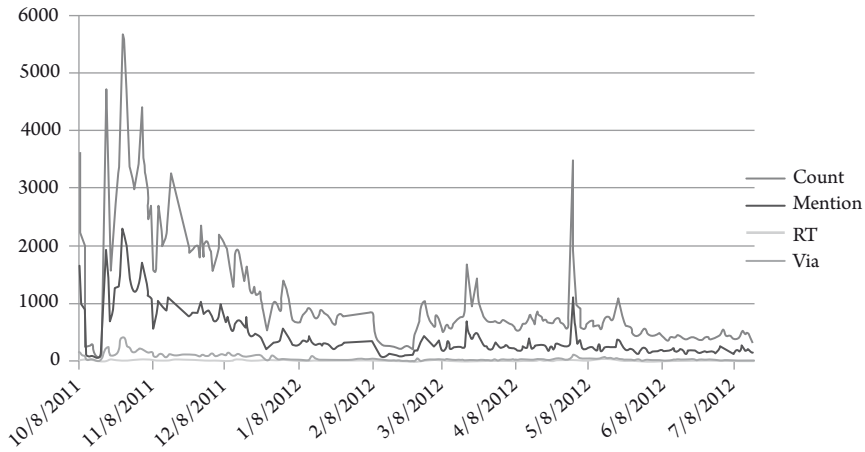


Figure 3.1 The networked rhythms of content production on #ows.

the same time, tweets containing mention and via markers may also contain partial quotes, thus presenting variations of retweets, encountered more frequently within this stream. In retrospect and collectively interpreted, these tendencies reinforced the subjective pluralism that characterized the form of the stream and reflected a general reluctance to crowd-source influentials, opinion leaders, or authoritative individuals to conversational positions of prominence.

Overall, a first look at the rhythms of content production and flow on #ows reveals a stream that is ambient, open, and inclusive of variant actors and voices. The ideological latitude of Occupy invited a wide range of supporters and dissenters. Some of the former expressed fervent support while others monitored the stream and dangled in ambivalence. Of the latter, several questioned the open nature of the movement, which they interpreted as amorphous and scattered, while others imagined and ascribed an ideological premise to the movement, which they directly attacked and sought to delegitimize. The connective structure of the stream, as afforded by the architecture of the platform and how people put it to use, worked against instituting hierarchies. Individuals conversed some, but mostly they shared their opinions and information and tried to get the attention of policymakers, stakeholders, and the media. The flow of the stream was ambient and diverse, sensitive to the rhythms and tendencies of several local movements coalescing under #ows. But at first glance, the stream appeared energetic, polyphonous, and discordant. Further analyses delve deeper into the form and meaning of the #ows stream.

Networked Gatekeeping and Networked Framing on #ows

Addressivity markers and content flows were examined more closely to detect possible patterns that characterize the polyphonous form of #ows.² The preliminary analyses revealed that power laws were sharpest for the via marker. Even though a total of 3,029 users were referenced 13,925 times, the top 10 percent of users (303) were responsible for 76 percent (10,561) of the via references. By contrast, power laws were less steep across the RT and mention marker. For the mention addressivity marker (the most utilized of the three), 33,582 unique users were mentioned 107,821 times, with the top 10 percent of users (356) responsible for 37 percent (39,679) of the mentions. For the RT marker, 650 users were RT'ed 946 times, with the top 10 percent of users (65) responsible for 34 percent (322) of the RT'ed references. Interestingly, this movement seemed anchored in less elitism, specifically in reference to the mention and RT markers.

Table 3.1 presents the top twenty users for the time period under study. Formal and informal organizations, institutions, groups, and gatherings of people dominate these lists, reflecting actor nodes that the movement is expressing solidarity toward or seeking to get the attention of. No users appeared in all three indices, and very few Twitter accounts recurred across two or more markers. Left-leaning political blogs (Huffington Post and Think Progress) appeared as top RT and VIA accounts. Occupy Twitter accounts created to capture the unfolding events (#occupywallstnyc and #occupywallst) also emerged as top nodes in the mention and VIA indices. Al Jazeera English was cited as a top news source in the VIA and RT categories while filmmaker and activist Michael Moore was a top-mentioned and RT'ed user.

The prominence of several politician twitter accounts (indicated by **)—namely, the US president (BarackObama), the Republican nominee (MittRomney), and mayor of New York City (MikeBloomberg)—also reflected the movement's general attempts to capture the attention of specific political actors and to direct specific content to them. Thus, expressive tendencies, when it came to the use of addressivity markers, were different for the publics networked together via #ows. Whereas the publics networked together via #egypt elevated an alternative group of thought leaders to prominence through the use of addressivity markers, the publics discursively convened

Table 3.1 Top 20 Users across Addressivity Markers

<i>Mention (@)</i>	<i>VIA</i>	<i>RT</i>
Barackobama (2006)	Youtube (1958)	mrcurious2011 (46)
Occupywallstnyc (1873)	Moveon (1102)	Occupywallstnyc (21)
Occupywallst (1591)	Addthis (907)	eggpatroll (17)
Cspanwj (1407)	Egyptbot (339)	Occupywallst (16)
Mmflint (742)	Huffingtonpost (312)	Thinkprogress (9)
Timcast (636)	Guardian (248)	Thenewdeal (8)
OccupyOakland (539)	Thinkprogress (211)	Allisonkilkenny (7)
OccupyChicago (518)	Ckboss (201)	Oakfosho (7)
Oakfosho (468)	Dailykos (182)	Huffingtonpost (6)
OccupyLA (464)	Occupyofficial (150)	Mrdaveyd (6)
Buddyroemer (442)	Twitpic (144)	OccupyLSX (6)
Youranonnews (409)	Gatewaypundit (140)	Unclerush (6)
Keitholbermann (370)	Credomobile (129)	Charlesbivona (5)
Cnn (352)	Wordpressdotcom (128)	eggpatroll2 (5)
Occupytogether (315)	Sharethis (110)	iain2008 (5)
Whitehouse (308)	Livestream (107)	Mmflint (5)
Ustream (305)	Motherjones (107)	Occupykauai (5)
Mittromney (299)	Ajenglish (92)	theother99 (5)
Mikebloomberg (296)	Theblaze (88)	Ajenglish (4)
Foxnews (292)	Yahoonews (86)	Brentnhunter (4)

via #ows employed addressivity markers to attribute responsibility, reference sources, and attempt to attract the attention of public figures or engage them in conversation. It is important to underline here that Twitter is a resource for mobilization and storytelling; as such, its use is subject to the character (and the affect) of unique movements and publics.

The quantitative analysis of resulting power laws as present in the distribution and use of addressivity markers indicated that Occupy publics were watching and guarding information gates and were reluctant to elevate any elites to positions of prominence via pure broadcasting mechanisms of retweeting. It is possible that the tendency to underuse the retweet marker could be associated with the broad and open character of #ows, a tag used to express the main goals of the movement and to connect various locally based

expressions of Occupy. Analyses of locally specific tags reveal greater use of the RT addressivity markers through local networks (Hemsley et al., 2012). Locally mobilized networks were more likely to make use of the retweet function, although it is not clear whether in doing so they also elevated thought leaders to prominence.

Unlike #egypt, which was characterized by a set of influential individuals crowd-sourced to prominence through the curational practices of networked publics, #ows presented the digital embodiment of Occupy, a movement that was ideologically open and diverse. Actor nodes contributing content signaled to other groups, parties, and institutions but did not do so in a way that created a hierarchy or afforded prominence to specific actors. The #ows tag remained ideologically open and flat so as to invite those supporting to tweet, show their support, and stand and be counted. The various publics tuned into the movement assimilated these practices of openness, whether against or for the movement.

By contrast, power laws were more prevalent in frame generation, suggesting a greater community-wide consensus emerging from the networked framing of the movement.³ Figure 3.2 presents a network visualization of the top, most utilized hashtags within #ows, indicative of the simultaneous sustenance of multiple narratives or frames sustained by a variety of nodes operating as networked gatekeepers. Hashtags #ows (occurred 212,157 times), #occupy (occurred 71,476), and #occupywallstreet (occurred 41,174) are marked by larger nodes and labeled because they occurred more frequently and their persistence reflected that they served as bridges to disparate flows of content within the stream. The movement was bound by territory to both local (#occupyoakland, #oo and #occupydc) and global hashtag iterations (#usa and #uk). Hashtag prominence also worked to capture the central concerns of the protesters through reference to existing US political movements (#teaparty, #anonymous), US political parties (#tcot, #p2, #gop, and #tlot), US political officials (#obama), and US tactics toward restraining US protestors (#ndaa). Collectively interpreted, these tags echoed and amplified expressed dissent toward organized US politics and the US economic system. Yet, as the qualitative analysis further reflects, cross-references with #ows also served to connect conservative publics and direct criticism at the Occupy movement itself.

The quantitative analysis of #ows focused on frequency, content, and semantic analysis that revealed prevalent tendencies in networked framing and gatekeeping. These tendencies afforded the movement its own online rhythms

offline climaxing of the Occupy movement. Networked gatekeeping practices were aligned with the ideologically open structure of the movement. Similarly, the prevailing logic of networked framing on #ows reproduced the open signifier of the 99%, and with that, it also reproduced a variety of interpretations and responses to it. The stream enabled pluralized formations of support and dissent with the movement, and use of the conversational affordances of Twitter suggested a general reluctance to crowd-source leaders to prominence and a tendency to involve multitudes of diverse actors in processes that produced frames of an ideologically open nature.

Modalities of connective action on #ows

A discourse analysis focused on episodes of heightened interactivity, as identified through frequency, content, and semantic analysis, and analyzed conversational tendencies that characterized these interactions. This qualitative analysis was aimed at attaining a closer, detailed look at trends identified through the quantitative analysis.

CONNECTIVE POLYSEMY

At first glance, the analysis revealed an always-on and persistent flow of information, steered by the sharing of links pointing to content on blogs, YouTube, Tumblr sites, independent media, and mainstream media content. The pace of the stream was fervent and energetic. The stream quickly filled with expressions of solidarity toward the movement, typically punctuated by the popular refrain of We are the 99%. As indicated by the quantitative analysis, there was an abundance of content shared but also a sense of ideological flatness to the stream. The openness of the 99% refrain was meant to resonate with a variety of diverse publics and reinforce a call to solidarity and awareness.

Low barriers to entering and joining a movement online have been associated with civic activity that may be of a thin nature, like contributing to a tag on Twitter or propagating a popular meme (e.g., Graeff, 2013). Thin modalities of civic engagement may not necessarily lead to action that we conventionally term impactful, but they do enable gestures that carry symbolic weight for individuals, typically by giving voice and affording visibility to issues generally marginalized (e.g., Zuckerman, 2013). The stream positioned

itself as an accessible point of affiliation with the idea of Occupy, thus enabling a variety of connective gestures that, while not thick with impact and ideology, carried symbolic meaning for a variety of publics and individuals. The polysemic nature of the refrain and the resulting stream of information afforded the movement its own, unique, digital footprint, even though at first glance the movement did not appear to step toward a particular direction—except, of course, that of inviting and enabling diverse, disparate, and diasporic publics to connect with it. Engagement of a more directed and dense nature was pursued on the local level and surfaced through the locally referenced hashtags. Still, at first glance, the stream was characterized by a welcoming of openness and disorder. This form of connective polysemy presents the first theme identified through the discourse analysis. A polyseme is a word or phrase that conveys a variety of different yet related meanings or senses to variant publics. Cultural theorist John Fiske (1987) has famously used the idea of polysemy to explain the variety of interpretations and feelings audiences ascribe to particular varieties of media content as they seek to make meaning of this content and thus “mobilize its polysemy to serve their cultural interests” (p. 118). The ambivalence of polysemy also invites individuals to form coalitions across differences (Polletta, 2006). The polysemic mobilization of open signifiers of both Occupy and We are the 99% permitted publics to affectively connect around, against, or in favor of these ideas, online and offline.

CONNECTIVE CONTINUITY AND DISRUPTION

As the stream and the movement evolved, the form of connective polysemy shifted. Initially, general disinterest in organizing the Occupy discourse sought to affirm the movement’s marginality, that is, its opposition to the mainstream. The absence of ideological labels hailed a number of disaffected publics, permitting them to show and be counted as part of the movement without having to enter into complex negotiations of ideological affiliation. A general reluctance to frame the conversation beyond its general opposition to inequalities in income distribution precipitated expressions of allegiance over gestures of deliberation. The form of connective polysemy was thus declarative and not deliberative.

Linguistic conventions and conversational practices were predominantly of a phatic nature, aimed at sharing information and declaring support or lack thereof for Occupy. These were typically topped off with the inclusion

and cross-referencing of a multitude of tags so as to maximize the reach of the movement. Thus, the evolving stream of #ows was characterized by a general lack of specific deliberation or the escalated arguments that we usually encounter in other online political conversation environments. A cascade of information and opinion sharing dominated the stream, which gradually evolved into two broad opposing frames: the first one expressing solidarity with the movement and the second one, less frequently but consistently encountered, seeking to delegitimize the connective premise of the movement. Conservatively inspired, dissent with the movement was made visible through the use of the various prominent tags, enabling a form of contestation that may be termed ideological trolling. These expressions were presented in milder terms (“Our financial system is undoubtedly a disaster and needs immediate change. But these people dont even have a common cause or thought #occupy”) or with more explicit sarcasm (“Wondering when all the ‘occupiers’ will burn all of their sick leave/annual leave and return to work? Expensive hobby they have. #occupy”). The accessibility of the movement invited unintended audiences, which further contested the very premise of openness that afforded them a place in this conversation.

Thus, these closer examinations of evolving modalities of solidarity and contestation began to unveil a second theme characterizing the stream of the movement. If we are to interpret how the stream of #ows actualized online, it is essential to understand that it functioned, like the movement that created it, as an empty signifier, enabling the *presencing* of personalized action frames through the connective and expressive affordances of Twitter. The resulting conversation, combining distinct iterations of information sharing and opinion, successfully connected but did not collectivize personalized frames for action. Collectivizing would entail negotiating a specific ideological identity, which, however pluralized, would still fill the signifier with specific and organized meaning. By contrast, the stream derived strength and potential impact, by its ability to mobilize *connective action*. The affective intensity that the popular refrain, *We are the 99%*, acquired as mounting choruses of supporters chimed in to the stream was regularly disrupted, however, by persistent content injections seeking to delegitimize the openness of the movement. This mediated a feeling of stop-and-go motion for the stream, and arguably, for the movement itself. The syncopated rhythms of #ows, composed and driven by the affective intensity of Occupy, We are the 99%, and similar refrains, never attained harmonious continuity. The content disruptions affectively broke up the pace of the

stream, preventing a discursive progression or climax. Contesting frames further affectively mobilized antagonistic publics. These sought to discredit one another rather than compete for attention agonistically in the spirit of democracy and civility (Mouffe, 2000).

PERFORMANCES OF CONNECTION AND CONTESTATION

Specific tendencies emerged as allegiance to and contestation of the popular chorus of frames of the movement were expressed. Two dominant performative tropes dominated the stream. Information sharing presented one of these emerging modalities, expressed typically through the posting of links pointing to content in support of the movement. These links were displayed in tweets that were engaging, conversational, casual, and phatic in nature with a moderate measure of performativity, typically demonstrated through the inventive use of a tag. Links punctuated the pace of the stream, producing a stream with unusually high levels of information sharing as evidenced through the pronounced use of the *via* addressivity marker.

The second expressive modality revolved around opinion sharing characterized by lack of link sharing and the tendency to cross-reference conservative tags. Opinion sharing in this stream employed a variety of affective claims that contested the premise of the Occupy movement and sought to thus delegitimize it. Even though these tweets were much more performative in nature, utilizing humor, sarcasm, cynicism, and general word play, they rarely contained links to information or support of the claims made. For example, tweets like “Have the #Occutards shut down the country yet? I can’t tell . . . #tcot #Occupy #corporategreed” or “If only there were a way to look into the future and see what our country would look like if we listened to #Occupy. Oh right . . . #Cuba” are reflective of disruptive content injections of this nature. They did not contain any factual information, typically cross-referenced conservative tags, and were dismissive and pejorative in nature. These claims appeared with increasing frequency as the stream further developed, typically interrupting the flow once for approximately every five supportive tweets present in the stream. The effect that they produced was disruptive and reinforced a stop-and-go motion for the stream, reflective of the mounting challenges posed to the movement offline as well. These affective claims effectively rendered publics and counter-publics within the stream within and beyond the textual contours of tag articulation and extending to the offline geographies of the movement. While some

publics strived agonistically and were driven by elevating visibility and awareness, other publics coalesced around antagonistically motivated tweets that sought to affectively discredit the premise of Occupy. Massumi (2010) suggests that “the affective tainting of objects or bodies implicated in a threat-event can go so far as to functionally substitute the affective fact of the matter for what is accepted as the actual fact,” so that the actual fact “is neither directly contested nor completely forgotten, yet it is disabled.” While the volume and intensity of #ows still resonated with supporters, the affective intensity of the event may have been thus disabled without directly contesting or annulling the actual occurrence of the event itself.

Connective Action and Traction on #ows

The qualitative analysis further clarified the physiology of #ows as one of the digital arms utilized by Occupy. The statements populating #ows were overwhelmingly declarative and rarely discursive. It is possible that more focused conversations developed in the locally affiliated tags. Still, this is an important feature of the digital imprint of #ows. Unlike #egypt, where conversations afforded an immediacy and reciprocity that permitted the manufacturing of trust, in #ows, discursive practices invited the manufacturing of dissent that ultimately interrupted the rhythmic continuity and coherence of the movement. The polysemic nature of the signifiers utilized to denote affiliation with the movement spread fluidly across networks fueled by subjective pluralism. At the same time, a growing chorus of dissenters interrupted efforts of an agonistic nature aimed at elevating visibility for the idea of Occupy and for practices that reproduce inequality and injustice. Thus, the mobilization of polysemic signifiers, networked gatekeeping, and networked framing resulted in modalities of connective action and connective traction. Networked consent and dissent produced and amplified modalities of connection, but in this case they also reproduced existing rifts.

Here, it is worth pointing out that for many, the function of Occupy *was* declarative. Its impact cannot be measured in legislative, economic, or immediate change. These processes are gradual and involve multi-layered systemic adjustments that take time to observe and measure. The objectives of Occupy and the indignados movements that preceded it involved breaking up the dominant narrative and declaring resistance to acts of injustice. The

act of declaration is not insignificant. Support cannot be directed toward that which has not been verbalized. The act of declaring affords voice, and voiced declarations are calls that signal other individuals or publics to join in or keep their distance. In the absence of a declaration, connective action has no axis around which to form. The more open and inclusive the declaration, the greater the net that connective action may mobilize.

Further studies of the flow of information throughout #ows support these interpretations. In studying levels of brokerage and closure in Occupy networks sustained via Twitter, Sajuria (2013) found high values of brokerage in the #occupywallstreet dataset. Closure refers to the level of tight connections between particular members of groups within a broader network while brokerage refers to the existence of particular gaps within a network that are bridged by a particular member or set of members. Closure encourages the formation of trust, although it is an equilibrium between the two that ultimately permits the cultivation and sustenance of social capital. While levels of closure and brokerage were generally low in the Occupy Wall Street dataset, levels of brokerage were slightly higher, reflective of the overall tendency to share information with users outside one's regular groups of interaction (Sajuria, 2013). These patterns of sharing and connection varied across the numerous networks affiliated with Occupy and activated via Twitter, but they provide evidence that the primary utility of the platform lies in providing fast and efficient means of connection and expression.

Connective action is further supported through the practices of networked gatekeeping and networked framing. Front stage negotiation of prominent gatekeepers, gatewatchers, and curators affirms the pluralized force of connective action. This does not necessarily ensure that leading nodes will emerge, or that if and when they do they are born out of the same set of circumstances. In #egypt a crowd-sourced elite of leaders helped propagate a similarly crowd-sourced frame of revolution. In #ows, networked publics were reluctant to elevate any actor to prominence. Similarly, they were reticent to crowd-source prominent frames beyond those that had afforded the movement a premise for connection: Occupy, We are the 99%, and a variety of locally affiliated tags. Connective action, networked gatekeeping, and networked framing work in tandem although the manner under which they are mobilized is different and sensitive to the sociocultural context that shapes each movement.

In this particular context, the spirit of the movement was agonistic; it was about giving voice to growing discontent and using offline and online means

to amplify expressions of this emotion. Agonistic pluralism is not about the creation of a consensus but about democracies affording space where conflict, as the result of the right to articulate different opinions, may occur (Mouffe, 2000). Unlike antagonism, agonism is marked not merely by conflict but by a mutual admiration of other points of view and the unequivocal right of those points of view to be expressed. Thus, content injections to #ows may be interpreted as antagonistic, in the sense that they sought to delegitimize not just the movement but also its right to speak.

The spirit of the movement was also affective; it was about giving voice to an emotion and placing emphasis not on the direction of the emotion itself but on the intensity with which it was felt. Affect is non-rational and non-directional (Gould, 2010). It does not possess an agenda but it does possess intensity, and intensity allows it to feel. Modalities that mobilize affectively charged connection across networks are likely to reproduce existing rifts. Declarations of assent or dissent are bound to evoke affective reactions, especially when presented through platforms that already are affectively predisposed. Antagonistic content injections did in fact interrupt the affective flow of #ows by disrupting its intensity. We may interpret the role of #ows as supportive of the movement in this case. It amplifies the intensity and reach of a movement. In some ways, Twitter plays a part similar to the role music used to play for movements—by enabling affective attunement with the movement itself. Songs that reflect the general aspirations of a movement allow publics and crowds to feel, with greater intensity, the meaning of the movement for themselves. Affective attunement permits people to feel and thus locate their own place in politics. Antagonistic content injections interrupted the affective harmony of #ows, creating an effect similar to that of noise interrupting a song.

4

The Personal *as* Political

Everyday Disruptions of the Political Mainstream

I have nothing to say and I am saying it.
—John Cage

Online technologies thrive on collapsing public and private boundaries thus affording opportunities for expression that may simultaneously empower and compromise individuals. Moreover, the convergent nature of online media creates confluence between the social, political, economic, and cultural, realms, leading to expressions that blend and borrow from all of the above spheres of activity. Twitter affords a platform for potentially rich and variable public or private performances of the self through condensed statements that frequently manifest a converged response to sociocultural, economic, and political issues. This is not a new phenomenon as everyday political commentary that develops in casual conversation will possess this confluence. The platform of Twitter, however, arguably makes this confluence more visible, and this chapter looks for that which is political in the everyday expressive statements individuals make in the context of trending Twitter conversations.

Research indicates that Twitter users are ethnically and culturally more diverse than the greater US population (Pearson-McNeil & Hale, 2011), thus rendering it a platform that potentially affords visibility to points of view that may be marginalized elsewhere. Studies have focused on expressions of identity and forms of social connection on social network sites for some time; their results indicate that individuals balance social benefits with privacy costs when performing identity and sociality in this context (e.g., Livingstone, 2008; Ellison, Lampe, Steinfield, & Vitak, 2010). Marwick and

boyd (2010) focused specifically on identity expression on Twitter, suggesting a variety of performative approaches that resemble micro-celebrity, personal branding, and strategic self-commodification. These personal performances of the self, which take on the form of statements, presentations, or representations of the self, potentially traverse political elements as they make visible, conceal, or mask cultural processes. In those cases, performativity of cultural identities is crucial to the visibility and survival of identities frequently marginalized (Brock, 2012). Moreover, research points to a measure of playfulness critical in how individuals approach performativity on Twitter. The playfulness invites the acting out of micro-, meso-, or macro-fantasies of experimenting with potential of behaviors in an “as-if” mode, which is not too removed from how we integrate role-play and role modeling in our daily rituals. In this sense, we may interpret play as a strategy for dealing with the fixity of norms. This would direct us to think about the ways in which the performative contexts afforded by social media reproduce social norms so that we have the opportunity to engage and reverse them through our personally political performances.

It is in these affective gestures of performativity that the casual, everyday political resides. Affect allows us to examine emotive gestures that blend opinion expression, phatic communication, and emotion into one, not unlike many of our utterances in everyday life, which typically involve a number of orientations rather than being strictly emotional, rational, political, cultural, or social. Using an ongoing content and discourse analysis of trending topics on Twitter, along with critical theory and concurrent research on Twitter as cultural practice, the findings of this chapter help to locate the everyday political in personal renderings of the self, supported through affective processes. This chapter is specifically focused on understanding the political meaning embedded in tweets that are presented in a context other than that of current news and public affairs—a context that is both personal and public at the same time.

The Political, Performed in Person

A performance involves the practice of doing but also the practices of pointing, underscoring, and displaying the act of doing (Schechner, 2002). Tweets present socially informed reactions to news and current events, but they are also part of the everyday context of presenting the self. These condensed

reactions accumulate to form not just digital imprints of social movements or current events but also of political performances of the self, articulated one tweet at a time. Goffman (1959) broadly defined a performance as “all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants” (p. 15). People rarely self-identify as performers in everyday acts of self-presentation even though they frequently adjust or adapt behaviors to different social settings, situations, and audiences. Social roles associated with gender, race, and class as well as those involved in professional, family, and social circles are performed through repeated behaviors. Different combinations, reproductions, and further remixing of these behaviors may produce variant effects. These performances potentially invite new interpretations as more audiences, overlapping or distinct, imagined or actual, become involved in renderings of them. Twitter presents a publicly private stage for these renderings, which frequently blend cultural, social, political, and personal performances and contexts. People use the platform to tell stories not just about news and current events but also about themselves, sometimes in the context of reacting to current events and frequently in the context of responding to the publicly available conversations hosted through trending hashtags.

Every human being is a collection of actual and potential selves that further evolve as we progress through different stages in life. Every human is thus a collection of stories that are rendered as literal, figurative, representational, or more abstract presentations of who we are, and what we do at given points in time combine to form performances of the self. In late modernity, performances of the self are indicative of the shapes individuals take on as they claim agency and negotiate power within social structures and imaginaries. They are part of the ongoing story or the reflexive project of the self (Giddens, 1991). In this manner, they acquire or imply political meaning. They are about contrasting personal narratives with dominant ones and are representative of the tensions and tendencies that emerge as a result. Friction and acquiescence are integrated into self-narratives, channeled into performances that are telling of both what we want to be and what we cannot be. Contemporary performance theory suggests that individuals now more than ever live by means of performance (Madison & Hamera, 2006).

Goffman (1959) was the first to describe precisely how this has come to be. In everyday cycles of self-presentation and impression formation, individuals perform on multiple stages, creating a *face* for each interaction and developing *faces* for a variety of situational contexts. Patterns of action

unfolded during a performance become known as “parts” or “routines” and tend to reflect dominant narratives about appropriate behavioral norms and expectations. In subsequent work on performance theory, these are referred to as “restored” behaviors: “twice-behaved behaviors [or] performed actions that people train for and rehearse” (Schechner, 2002, p. 28). Restored actions include the mechanical and conscious activities that become part of the performative repertoire marking identity. They include learned behaviors both linguistic and non-verbal, the performance of which reflects behavioral fluency, sociocultural status, and general background. As these behaviors are repeated, compiled, and combined, the individual is able to perform roles or aspects of roles. Restored actions are both mechanically reproduced and consciously recalled and remixed into practices that make up the performative repertoire of identity, political and personal.

Language is an essential enabler of performativity as it both describes and communicates a form of doing. For a textually based platform like Twitter, language is employed to convey both verbal and non-verbal performative gestures. These performative utterances serve the purpose of conveying the doing of things in ways that support the phatic habitus of communication (Austin, 1962). In this manner, the use of words not only communicates a material act but is also reiterative of conventions and customs that reflect context and established ways of doing and speaking about things (Derrida, 1967/1978).

It is the stylized repetition of restored acts that makes performances seem natural. At the same time, such repetition attains and evokes a naturalized historical context, thus reproducing conventions and dominant narratives (Butler, 1990). Still, whereas restoration and repetition of behaviors reproduce “the Other as the Same,” performativity enables a reproduction of the Other in which “the Same is not assured” (Phelan, 1993, p. 3). Thus, while performativity enables individuals to “do” social or gender roles, it also permits, even if ephemerally, subjective claims to symbolic capital via both habitually performed and reinvented identities. These behaviors form the narrative of the self and sustain particular narratives by connecting, integrating, and sorting external events (Giddens, 1991; Gauntlett, 2002). In this manner, performativity enables reproduction and remixing of dominant and other narratives, thus presencing their political potential.

It is not just the performance itself but also the subjunctive mode wherein individuals imagine behaviors *as if* they were performing them that is potentially empowering for the individuals, for it permits social actors to rehearse

and reinvent behaviors. Play thus affords make-believe performative space to be used for the trying on of roles and identities by combining, remixing, and rehearsing restored behaviors. Play enables experimentation with language and aesthetics toward the construction of everyday narratives that support the lifelong storytelling of the self (Hamera, 2006).

Autobiographical performances, in particular, aimed at sustaining self-storytelling reflexively employ performativity to traverse from private to public and back. Such performances frequently produce staged personal narratives, which construct interpretive audiences and are further remixed through the interpretations of those audiences (Miller & Taylor, 2006). This is not uncommon in platforms that invite the user to self-narrate the experience of the moment, thus amplifying tendencies already present in the autobiographical mode. Twitter, for example, prompts users getting ready to construct a post with “What’s happening?” whereas the Facebook status update prompt most recently inquires “What’s on your mind?” In this manner, performativity enables both everyday doing and the rhetorical construction of a personal narrative of the self (Langellier & Peterson, 2006). These platforms are integrated into our everyday arsenal of props for reproducing and reinventing personal and dominant narratives.

Play is central to staging a performance aimed at disclosing a previously concealed aspect of oneself (Muñoz, 2006). It is also important as a way of rehearsing or trying on a new performance, part, or role in a variety of contexts—public, private, or a mix of both (Nakamura, 1995; Grazian, 2007). Performance then becomes disclosure through play or “a public way to show private stuff” (Schechner, 1977/2003, p. 265). Performances thus enable individuals to traverse from private to public but also, potentially, from the personal to the political or from the individual to the collective and back. It is this potential that leads Schechner to suggest that performing is a form of public dreaming (1977/2003, p. 265) and thus a way to publicly explore thoughts that previously occupied the realm of private fantasy. Sedgwick (2003) clarifies, however, that such traversals are further supported by affective processes that infuse new meaning into the texture of a performance, frequently through linguistic play or reversal of norms. Potentialities for being, then, are both reproduced and multiplied through play and interpretation.

Information communication technologies generally augment the potential for performativity by saturating the self with ever-expanding networks of people, relations, and performance stages. They populate the self with multiple distinct, overlapping, or conflicting potentials for being, presenting a

form of *social saturation* (Gergen, 1991). As a result, each self contains an ever-increasing multiplicity of other selves or voices. The effect is both empowering and daunting as it can amplify the potential for play but at the same time invite performative incoherence. Contexts that lack situational definition present a further challenge to individuals seeking to harmoniously weave multiple performances into a coherent narrative of the self (Meyrowitz, 1985). In seeking to understand and combine these multiple potential performances into a coherent narrative of the self, individuals become increasingly self-reflective and self-aware. Understanding one's multiple potentials requires constant, intense self-reflection and self-monitoring, potentially leaving the self, in postmodernity, slightly more narcissistic and styled as a result (Lasch, 1979; Gergen, 1991).

The sociotechnical affordances of networked, always-on platforms like Twitter further challenge the public/private premise of performance and play. Because they typically lack the situational definition inherently suggested by private and public boundaries, they invoke a sense of “context collapse” (boyd, 2008). The potential for performative incoherence increases but so does the potential for theatricality and drama as audiences expand and are always tuned in (Parks, 2010). Individuals thus find themselves crafting polysemic performances that must convey some form of meaning to all without compromising their own sense of who they are. In this manner, people communicated and sustain a networked sense of self (Papacharissi, 2010). Performances of the self here are ultimately rendered in data and thus are persistent, replicable, and easily scalable and searchable (boyd, 2010). They are difficult to erase completely, are easily replicated, are available to large scales of known and unknown audiences and publics, and are easily searchable. Last, they are presented in architectures that are driven by information sharing, emphasizing information sharing by default (Papacharissi, 2010; Raynes-Goldie, 2010). Thus, performances of sharing—and thus, of the self—sustain interconnected webs of sociality that can only be as lively as the information flowing through them.

Having described the sociocultural nature of Twitter and the greater family of technologies that it represents, I would like to return to my interest in the affective gestures of performativity that allow restored performances to be infused with new meaning in ways that disrupt dominant narratives and evoke the casual, everyday political. My interest here is in tracing affective gestures that locate the political within our everyday vocabulary of phatic rituals, habits, and utterances, allowing us to feel our way

into a *personal politic*. This chapter first examines Twitter as a social awareness platform that affords networked and condensed performances of the self, performances that are social, cultural, and political at the same time and with no ability or interest in distinguishing between these lines. Whereas the previous chapters examined stories people tell about news, events, and things that are typically labeled political, in this chapter the focus is on stories people tell about themselves in the context of organically generated trending conversations on Twitter. Emphasis is placed on storytelling of the self and how this storytelling may attain political relevance as micro-performances of the self are rendered visible through the everyday conversational context of trending tags. The questions that drive this volume remain prevalent here, but the analytical mode is adjusted to examine performative strategies for self-presentation, given that most of the expression encountered in the tags examined is self-referential. Consequently, this chapter delves into the form networked publics take on as micro-representations of the self imbricated within the conversational context of trending tags. Prevalent performative tendencies are examined as individuals simultaneously engage the personal and the political and traverse from private to public.

To address these research directions, a randomly drawn sample of tweets from trending hashtags was manually coded to reveal elements of performativity including strategies for play and performance complexity. The sample, drawn from exogenous topical threads, excluded tweets from celebrities, public relations professionals, and others using Twitter for a commercially related or educationally driven purpose. As a second step, a discourse analysis was combined with the content analysis to examine the texture of performativity in greater depth and to examine performative strategies through which the personal is rendered political and the political becomes the subject matter of personal interest.

People tweet for a variety of reasons, which include fulfilling needs for expression and social integration and relating to others in general (Zhao & Rosson, 2009). Frequent Twitter users report gratifying a need for connection, fulfilled by posting tweets and @replies, and retweeting others' public posts (Chen, 2010). Still, the majority of Twitter posts are "me-now" status messages, which place the emphasis on the self and expressing personal perspective (Naaman, Boase, & Lai, 2010). These posts are presented either as distinct messages or in the context of greater conversations that are situationally defined by hashtags. Whatever the case may be, these posts are

publicly broadcast and as such they present expressions of the self and calls for further connection into loosely formed, imagined, or actual, publics. The context of the tag informs the orientation of the public that is thus discursively and possibly ephemerally rendered. Topics of conversation vary although exogenous or organically formed conversations tend to generate more independent contributions and seem capable of sustaining stronger ties (Naaman, Becker, & Gravano, 2011). But what is of interest to this study is that the nature of engagement on Twitter is dual-faceted: personal and collective at the same time, sustaining the sociality forms of a networked individualism (Wellman, 2001; Gruzd, Wellman, & Takhteyev, 2011). Consistent with the practices of everyday expression and conversation, the form of connectivity on Twitter engages that which is privately imagined and collectively aspirational, personally defined and politically directed, individually motivated and civically inclined, phatically presented but also reflective of a deeply personal ideology of a *networked* self.

A discourse analysis was conducted to generate a more in-depth interpretation of the performative strategies identified through the content analysis and to specifically examine the performative practices constructed around polysemic and affective gestures that are invited by the platform. The discourse analysis followed a process similar to that described in the preceding chapter, with emphasis placed on the media text as a discursive artifact reflective of sociocultural context, identity expression, and power hierarchies (e.g., Fairclough, 1995). In particular, the discourse analysis focused on the types of performative tendencies that are most prevalent in tweets that reference trending tags. Drawing from the *as if* context of performance as play, the discourse analysis investigated how the networked self is performed via social awareness streams that simultaneously heighten autonomy and require constant self-monitoring. In technosocial environments of social hypersaturation, what shape does performance of the self take and how does it balance needs for publicity, privacy, and sociality? How are performances of the self on Twitter part of the ongoing story about the self? Do they resemble public dreaming? Are polysemic tendencies and affective gestures employed to infuse tweets with meaning that renders them personal and political, privately motivated and publicly oriented, individualized yet containing civic potential?

A total sample of 2,807 tweets was manually coded and analyzed for the content and discourse analyses. The sample, drawn over a six-month period, was chosen from endogenously determined topics of conversation that

achieved trending status. The research team randomly selected one such topic every other week during this period, collecting tweets from a total of twenty-five trending hashtags. We used a sampling interval that varied depending on the length of the tag and also used a random starting point.

Content Analysis

For the content analysis, we manually coded for a number of descriptive features of the tweets sampled. The total number of tweets sampled from each tag varied, typically ranging from 100 to 300 depending on the size of the tag. Average word count was 11 ($SD = 6.2$), ranging from 1 to 31 words, and average character count was 67 ($SD = 31.20$), ranging from 2 to 140 characters. Average number of accounts followed by each user was approximately 605 ($SD = 2,930.76$), ranging from 0 to a maximum of 76,198 accounts followed, with a modal value of 106. Average number of followers per user approached 648 ($SD = 5,011.59$), ranging from 0 to a maximum of 216,204, with a modal value of 81 followers. Out of all the tweets coded, the majority (53.4%) did not contain @ mentions or replies. Some tweets contained mentions (32.5%) and replies to previous tweets (22.2%), and very few were blind retweets with the absence of a mention (3.8%); very few (7.3%) included links, the majority of which were to photos or video. We also manually coded for the following performative strategies that are prevalent in performance theory and adapted to the present context. Initial results reveal that the users in this sample were less likely to blindly retweet and less likely to include links when tweeting—and especially much less so when compared to the users whose tweets were analyzed in the preceding two chapters. For this particular population and category of tags, the emphasis was on the presentation of the self through a series of personal statements.

MAGNITUDES OF PERFORMANCE

Magnitude refers to the complexity of a performance. Schechner (1977/2003) presented the following magnitudes of performance, which describe the transformational steps, stages, or elements that performances advance through: brain event (prebehavior), microbit (smallest trace of behavior), bit (smallest unit of restored behavior), sign (composition of bits), scene (sequence), drama (complex system of scenes), and macrodrama (large-scale social actions

viewed performatively, or social drama) (pp. 325–326). The magnitude of the performance provided an understanding of how individuals attempted to condense loquacious everyday performances into the restricted context of 140 characters or fewer. These were adapted to Twitter and coded on a scale ranging from 1 (brain event) to 7 (macrodrama).

Brain events were rare. Microbits were frequently short tweets of an emoticon or a single word (“#69FactsAboutMe 35. sappy”). Bits were slightly more expressive (“#69factsaboutme 4—I loveeee fish”), signs more developed (“#69FactsAboutMe—im so short with so much heart !“RT!”), scenes further evolved (“#69factsaboutme I’m muslim and I’m not a terrorist. Xoxo’), and drama or macrodrama inclusive of a variety of interconnected behaviors leading to an outcome (“#69FactsAboutMe 7. Sometimes my family make me feel like shit when they tell me I need to do more exercise and be skinner #BadFamily”). Most performances were signs (34.1%) or scenes (31.4%); fewer were characterized as bits (13.9%) or dramas (10%) with intercoder reliability reaching .80.¹

PLAY

Following Schechner (2002, 1977/2003), we coded the presence or absence of play in the tweets sampled by defining play as the restructuring of other behavior to impart a light-hearted or playful context. We coded play as present if messages alluded to or involved the restructuring of restored behaviors. Examples of such instances included plays on phatic conventions, variations of social ritual, and variations of established everyday social routines. The majority of tweets were playful (57%), with reported intercoder reliability at .88 (“#illNeverUnderstandWhy girls make the duck face in every picture,” “#69FactsAboutMe 8. Belieber”). Many endogenous and trending tags are frequently devised as games so it is difficult to imagine them not being playful. Still, almost a third of statements coded were not playful. Examples of such tweets included “#HonestlyHour you piss me off, a lot. but i still care for you, and will always be here if you need me,” or “#69factsaboutme 3. I hate when people talk back to teachers for no reason. Makes me wanna smack their face off the wall. Don’ . . .”

We also adapted Schechner’s (2002; 1977/2003) strategies for play to the context of Twitter and coded for reordering, exaggeration, repetition, fragmentation, exaggeration, repetition, and (in)completion. *Reordering*, which referred to rearranging the sequence of restored behaviors, was present in

40.6 percent of the messages coded. In the context of Twitter, reordering involved playing around with syntactical or grammatical rules, rearranging conventional sequencing of words to form sentences, and generally going against the norm of presenting thoughts into a written sentence ($Ir = .82$). *Exaggeration*, employed in 44.7 percent of the tweets sampled, had to do with the use of hyperbole in the sequence of restored behaviors and included affective statements that used word selection, syntactical placement, and punctuation to convey overstatement ($Ir = .85$). *Repetition*, which appeared in 8.1 percent of the sample, captured the tendency to repeat certain movements within a sequence unusually frequently, including repetition of words, thoughts, and punctuation that produced redundancy and/or rhythm in a sentence ($Ir = .88$). *Fragmentation*, found in 34.2 percent of the sampled tweets, is the breaking off of a sequence altogether by introducing irrelevant activities ($Ir = .75$). In the condensed context of Twitter, this referred to a tendency to abbreviate words, use incomplete words or fragments of words, or otherwise break up the stream of the tweet. *Exaggeration and repetition*, present in 5.3 percent of tweets, referred to textual movements both exaggerated and repeated ($Ir = .85$). Finally, *incomplete movements* characterized textual movements within the sequence that were unfinished or interrupted, referring both to the beginning of a movement (the *intention element*) and to its ending (the *completion element*). Incomplete movements appeared in 40.1 percent of the tweets coded ($Ir = .78$). For example, a tweet like “#WhenIWas13 fireworks fireworks fireworks!” was coded as playful, as including both repetition and exaggeration, as incomplete, and as fragmented. By contrast, a tweet like “bored. as. fuck. #undateable” was coded as playful, incomplete, fragmented, and inclusive of exaggeration and reordering. “#WhenIWas13 . . . Wait I’m not 13 yet . . . #WhenIWas12” was coded as playful, incomplete, and inclusive of reordering and repetition.

Mini-Performances of the Self: The Politics of Authenticity

The content analysis results revealed several performative tendencies characterizing the sample of tweets studied. Moderate yet significant correlations were noted between the number of accounts followed and followers ($r = .46$), and between the total number of tweets to accounts followed

($r = .25$) and to followers ($r = .11$), indicating a connection, albeit not of a defining nature, between these three variables. Similar tendencies were noted between general word/character count and the three listed variables.

PLAY, THE NETWORKED SELF, AND AGENCY

The majority of the tweets were self-focused. Interestingly, and consistent with previous research that distinguished between “me-formers” and “in-formers” (Naaman et al., 2010), most tweets in the sample contained no mentions or replies. Mentions or replies are frequently interpreted as indicators of conversationality and demarcated the evolving rhythms of global conversations on Twitter, examined in the preceding chapters. Still, it would be inaccurate to read these tweets as non-conversational simply because they contained no mentions or partial retweets. They were categorized by their authors into specific conversational categories through the inclusion of the hashtag. Declarative in nature, these tweets (re)presented the self in reference to a general conversation, exhibiting a certain measure of networked individualism. Different conversational strategies adopted were aimed at better presenting particular thoughts meant to affirm one’s sense of self. A first glance at these data thus reveals that this variety of conversation is particularly performative in a manner that supports the presentation of the self in the context of a public conversation. This is further supported by the findings of the discourse analysis, which further explores how these personal declarations of the self also contain collectivist and civic aspirations.

Certain trends were prevalent for the majority of these mini-performances of the self and were examined systematically through quantitative analysis of the variables coded. The magnitude of the coded performances correlated positively and highly to word ($r = .74$) and character count ($r = .55$), and correlated modestly to tweets containing no mentions or replies ($r = .14$).² This suggested that the more complex a performance became, the greater was the likelihood that it might become more wordy and reference other actors or co-conversants. Play was a dominant performative strategy for presentation of the self in this context with the majority of tweets featuring some form of play.

Reordering tended to be the preferred method for play within this context, possibly as a way of working around the condensed expressive context of Twitter. The majority of authors rearranged words in ways that reinvented and poked fun at syntax and grammar rules. They employed innovative

spelling and adopted other expressive strategies and humor in condensing their thoughts into 140 or fewer characters. Fragmentation and incomplete movements were also prevalent play strategies, supported via the affordances of the platform but also reflecting attempts to playfully engage readers. The interruption of sentences and words fragmented expressive gestures, leaving them unfinished and thus open to the interpretive imagination of potential audiences. Polysemy and thus interpretive latitude were attained by leaving thoughts incomplete for imagined audiences to fill with meaning. Language use and tone, as traced via the discourse analysis, further support this interpretation. These strategies present an interesting departure from the networked framing and gatekeeping logic that drove #egypt and #ows. The self-centered tweets contributed to these tags never attained the performative unity of #egypt nor did they evolve into the divergent polyphony of #ows. Each of these personal statements followed a tune of its own, but the sum of them together, loosely organized by the tag, lent the tag greater prominence and meaningfulness as it grew.

Correlations noted between performative strategies and structural features of coded tweets indicated additional tendencies characterizing these mini-representations of the self. Specifically, the presence of play and strategies for play were negatively associated with word and character count and also with total number of followers and accounts followed. All correlations were statistically significant and modest, the highest being noted between character count and repetition ($r = -.23$), exaggeration and repetition ($r = -.15$), and exaggeration ($r = -.14$). Most hashtags begin as games, so findings pointing to play are unsurprising.

However, these results suggest that the lengthier the message and the broader the circle to which it is presented, the less is the likelihood that the message will be playful in its nature. This form of self-monitoring and redaction is what we might expect in a socially saturated environment. As social circles multiply and overlap, increasing the possibility of context collapse, individuals hesitate to venture into play, possibly concerned that their intent may be misinterpreted. The likelihood of performative incoherence increases as audiences become more populous and communicative contexts more broad or diverse. The paradox at work here, of course, is that the decision to reference a trending tag de facto exposes these tweets to larger audiences. It is possible that users connected to larger circles of followers and accounts followed may begin to conform to what they perceive as communicative strategies that minimize the risk of misinterpretation, articulating

their own personal variety of messages perceived by their audiences as “politically correct.”

Still, the quantitative findings overwhelmingly underscore the prevalence of play as a performative strategy, with the tendency to use play as a way of adjusting self-performance to the condensed expressional context of Twitter. What is of interest, then, is that when individuals are confronted with restriction, they seek to overcome it through imaginative strategies that include play. This is a choice of political and sociocultural relevance. This interpretation is supported by the relationships between play, performative strategies for play, and the magnitude of the performance, all of which indicated that the shorter the message, the more playful it tended to be. The correlations were modest but statistically significant, connecting magnitude of performance inversely with play ($r = -.17$), reordering ($r = -.23$), exaggeration ($r = -.11$), repetition ($r = -.17$), exaggeration and repetition ($r = -.13$), and incomplete movements ($r = -.14$). The quantitative findings suggested that as individuals perform the self across varied audiences, they utilize play to conform to the expressive restrictions of Twitter and maintain performative latitude at the same time. Play becomes the game plan for maintaining expressive autonomy and, potentially, performative agency on Twitter. This tendency is explored and supported further by the qualitative findings.

PLAY, PERFORMATIVITY, AND POWER

The *as if* aspect of play supports a premise for the convergence of private fantasy and public disclosure that may make individuals more comfortable expressing thoughts they would otherwise withhold. Play thus enables this practice of *public dreaming*, but should this practice be misunderstood, the premise of play can be used to reclaim and reframe that performance. Here play both rhetorically establishes space for public dreaming and offers an excuse for any performative incoherence or misunderstandings that may ensue as a result of it. Importantly, play thus paves the transition from private to public. It becomes a strategy for connecting personalized takes or frames to conversations collectively assembled through the organizational logic of the tag. The act of referencing the tag renders the personal political, civic, and social in that it allows it to leave the private sphere and enter the public realm, through a path that typically involves play.

Gergen (1991) suggests that when confronted with the tensions of social saturation, self-presentation frequently evolves from play into carnival. Carnival avails an array of performative strategies that underscores both the importance and the impossibility of authenticity across audiences that are diverse and collapsed. Self-reflexivity, irony, and play are central themes in performing the sel(ves) in realities that are relational. Subjects are likely aware that they are unlikely to transition private thought into the public realm without some risk of being misinterpreted. Play is the result of increased reflexivity, awareness of the self and its surroundings, and a desire for security.

The discourse analysis sought a deeper understanding of these tendencies by examining dominant trends in text, language, tone, and performance. Overall findings supported the playful performative context prevalent in the content analysis. Playful expressions were frequently humorous, although not always. Typically, they involved rearranging norms for expression and going against what might be expected in conventional conversational settings. Tweets like “#incomingfreshmanadvice don’t talk to me,” or “#incomingfreshmanadvice give a blowjob. the guys will love you” are intended as playful or provocative and become even more so when read alongside less playful tweets like “#incomingfreshmanadvice Do what makes you happy. Whatever the cost” or “#incomingfreshmanadvice ALWAYS do your homework. Every night. You’ll be golden.”

Irony was combined with provocation as these statements of the self became ways of actualizing inner thoughts and fantasies. Occasional profanity, incivility, or simple broaching of risqué subject matter was adopted for the sake of being utterly frank and thus possibly more authentic. Likewise, “#whenIwas13” prompted users to tweet “#WhenIWas13 girls blew bubbles instead of boys,” or “#WhenIWas13 I was the baddest bitch in middle school,” or “#WhenIWas13 I waz watchn porn n spankn my monkey.” These tweets may be interpreted as deliberately offensive but they were frequently presented from a premise of playfulness that made it difficult to do so. Instead, I would argue, tweets like “#whenIwas13 i rode rides not boys,” or “Any guy is #undateable if they say #idesehead,” among other, similar tweets dominating this sample, can be seen as exercises in affirming the self. They present impromptu forays into topics that are taboo in some environments.

While these statements might be inappropriate for general conversation in a professional or other social setting, the thematic context provided by the hashtag invited them. In this manner they are understandable within the

greater context of *as if*, that is, of playing out the fantasy of saying shocking or potentially provocative things in public. The premise of play renders the public stage of Twitter a safe platform for expressing these private thoughts. But these are also statements intended to provoke as they transition from the private realm into the public and, as such, they present a gesture of dissent with what has been established by others as appropriate. It is not accidental that these personalized messages seek to presence behaviors contrarian to dominant narratives of what is appropriate, allowed, or expected. They digress from the dominant narrative in a manner that is public and are thus inherently politicized.

Provocation is a political act, even if in this case it is presented as a way of crafting a performance that is more authentic. Autobiographical statements include the presentation of private thoughts to a public setting as a way of creating a bond of intimacy with an imagined audience and simultaneously affirming the authenticity of the performance. Thus, audiences validate the performance as authentic because the person has shared a truly private thought, no matter how uncomfortable and potentially compromising this disclosure may be. At the same time, the individual has employed performativity to stage a narrative that conveys authenticity, creates intimacy, and presents a political statement. Interviews with those tweeting and further research would be necessary to determine the connection between impromptu behaviors, authenticity, and occasional expressive vulgarity.

The tone of tweets is further informed by the thematic orientation of the hashtag. Naturally, most profane or uncivil messages were found in tags that invited uninhibited self-disclosure, like the #honestlyhour, #juststopright-there, or #insecuritynight. These messages were more directly political because they occurred within conversations that were more likely to be controversial. By contrast, #whenIwas13 and #iwish contained messages with a nostalgic and wishful yet playful tone, and although profane or uncivil messages were still present, they were less frequent. The author's predisposition and the topic of conversation shaped the inflection of the performance. The act of tagging thus evolved into a performative and political act as authors consciously decided to include their comments in a conversation by tagging them in such a manner.

In public art cultures like graffiti, tagging is an act of signing an art performance, and artists develop specific tags that eponymize their works among known crowds. For those tweeting, a tag presents a similar signature that situates a behavior within a sociocultural and political context. Moreover,

tagging both categorizes the performance and makes it accessible to wider audiences. It thus affords performative statements of the self greater visibility, effectively eponymizing them. Eponymizing an original speech act through one's real name or moniker claims ownership of the opinion stated.

Finally, a recurring theme in the performances rendered through tweets involved the presence of affect, that is, the rendering of intensity through textual gestures incorporated in the tweet. It is common for ambient platforms that enable social awareness to host expressions that frequently combine opinion, emotion, and fact to release emotion through the act of expressing it. The act of expression thus both presences a thought and releases tension by means of expression. This form of emotional release simultaneously invigorates and exhausts tension, a phenomenon that in Lacanian terms is labeled *jouissance*, translated (imprecisely) in English as affect. Affect is also embedded in the texture of expression, however, as decisions on what to say, what to conceal, and how to say it—that is, how to perform the speech act textually—may convey different levels of intensity. In a tag like #insecuritynight, the act of eponymizing private thoughts like “#insecuritynight my weight holds me back from everything. I'm not like the other girls. It makes me feel ugly,” or “Sometimes I think nobody even cared who I was until I put on the mask. #insecuritynight,” is an act of personal political relevance for the individual, even if these statements find themselves in a discombobulated narrative that also features statements like these: “#insecuritynight sounds like an excuse for people to get compliments and denials that they are not whatever they feel insecure about #yeah.”

The practice of making an affective statement in front of an actual and imagined audience is potentially empowering and it becomes even more so in the context of tags that invite provocative statements. For example, statements like “I'm #undateable,” or “Your a follower #undateable,” or “I hate when people all like ‘aye you remind of . . .’ #JustStopRightThere I'm original; not a copy thank you very much” were declarative and affective expressions aimed at presenting and affirming a sense of self. As such, they reordered grammar and syntax rules and employed profanity, as in “If you don't like me, #juststoptightthere and go stand in line with everyone else waiting on me to give a fxck.” or “#WhenIWAs13 I was living like no concern.” They ventured into the contemplative or nostalgic, as was the case with “#WhenIWAs13 I was in the present, not the future, nor the past.” They delved into the casual poetry of Twitter, as in “im on drugs, now #letsmakelove,” or, “Oh by the way, Get in my bed? #letsmakelove.” Tweets also involved affective

statements of self-pity, like “#honestlyhour I hate wearing swimsuits. I wish I was skinnier.” But they also featured powerful statements like “#wheniwas13 i was gangraped.” These affective statements employed emotion to locate private thoughts in a public setting. The act of publicly or visibly intimating thoughts one has only imagined articulating can be a self-empowering act, evocative of performance as public dreaming. It is not necessarily the act itself but rather the feeling it is infused with that grants the statement its own unique texture.

The improvisational character of Twitter, which thrives on impromptu form, invites such affective statements. At the same time, the condensed nature of expression may require redaction on the author’s end, presenting performances that are potentially *deliberately improvised*. This can also be understood as a form of deliberate spontaneity meant to produce an “episode noteworthy enough to be incorporated into [a] repository of lively narratives” (Grazian, 2008). Deliberate spontaneity presupposes a reorganization or reimagining of restored behaviors, planned by virtue of its reliance on restored practices and improvised through remixing them.

While present in a variety of everyday performative practices, on Twitter, deliberate spontaneity enables the private preparation of thought meant to be publicly expressed. Performance theory suggests that all authenticity and intimacy derives from restored behaviors and is thus performed. These performances, or more precisely, these *statements* of the self are deliberately improvised in the same way that rhymes are improvised in poetry circles, or B-boys showcase a dance move in breakdancing circles. In such cultures of staged yet impromptu public performance, some private preparation is typical prior to the spontaneous enactment of previously restored behavior. Performances are only convincing when they fuse restored actions into fluid presentations so that “audiences do not, in fact, see actions as if they are performed” and “endow them with verisimilitude, so that scripted actions seem spontaneous and real” (Alexander, 2011, p. 81). A successful performance is convincing because it appears authentic.

Rehearsed movements are thus further enhanced through improvisation or accented with a touch of profanity or vulgarity that does not offend (as it might in a less performative context) but instead surprises. These performative gestures may be interpreted as underscoring but also mocking the pretense of authenticity of what Gergen (1991) terms the mutable self, or as what we might understand as the chores of a reflexive self striving for authenticity. The search for safe space where authentic expression, privately

prepared, may be presented is a political act. The claiming of safe space, ephemeral as it maybe, where these thoughts may be released to the public is also a gesture of political import.

The Personal as Political on Twitter

The act of making a private thought public bears the potential of a political act. While not all acts of speaking are capable of generating political impact, the process of traversing private to public territory affords political potential. Impact is derived from context, so a statement that is perceived as ordinary in one context may appear provocative in a different one. Similarly, the nature of the impact will vary depending on context, so statements that bear political potential may generate actual or symbolic impact. This chapter focused on mini-narratives that people develop about who they are through their contributions to trending conversations on Twitter. Tweets are interpreted as expressive gestures, aimed at representing the self in the context of public conversations about the practice of everyday life. In this context, tweets are self-referential attempts to connect the private to the public and the personal to the civic. By articulating private thoughts, people presence the personal and by doing so infuse it with political potential. Representative of a variety of identity politics, they reflect the political because “they involve refusing, diminishing, or displacing identities others wish to recognize in individuals” (Calhoun, 1994, p. 21). As publics assemble around these popular conversations that are assembled out of self-referential thoughts, I am interested in the potency and tonality these conversations attain and the texture and form the resulting publics take on as a result. It is not possible to understand these issues without taking a look at what lies at the core of the conversations: the self, performed and extruded. And so this has been the lens through which personal as political on Twitter has been examined in this chapter.

Performing a networked self requires the crafting of polysemic presentations that make sense to diverse audiences and publics without compromising one’s own sense of self. Understood within the greater paradigm of the ongoing, reflexive storytelling project of the self, networked selves assemble via practices of authorship, listening, and redaction (Papacharissi & Easton, 2013). Twitter presents a performative platform for the networked self in the greater context of the habitus of the new—a social architecture that is in

constant flux. The personal renderings of the self performed via Twitter lay claim to space that can be political, social, and cultural. The performative architecture presented through Twitter is everyday space where dominant narratives are reproduced and can be challenged through performances that are both personal and political. In the course of this case study, several performative tendencies emerged that underscored the personal and political texture of expressive gestures observed.

First, play in everyday life was formative in individuals' approaches to the particular performative stage of Twitter. Confined to expressing the self in fewer than 140 characters, individuals used play to craft performances that both adapted to and expanded these semantic confines. Interestingly, play rested upon both the reproduction and the reversal of social norms, and reproductions and reversals of norms were mutually reflexive. In this manner, the political relevance of play emanates from its ability to serve as a strategy for dealing with, negotiating, or reversing the fixity of norms. Naturally, the ability to do so requires digital fluency. Tellingly, digitally literate behaviors on Twitter required reversal of the grammatical and syntactical norms that typify literacy offline. The performance of digital fluency thus necessitated deviation from the literacy norm, and this in turn also attained political gravitas of a symbolic nature, especially in the context of the culturally diverse population of Twitter. Therefore, the presencing of such deviation signals disagreement with dominant norms of expression and renders visible expressive behaviors that are not considered normative. The process of reversing and reproducing literacy norms thus involved *disembedding* and *re-embedding* (Giddens, 1991). Expressive elements were removed from a system of literacy norms, disconnected, and reconnected in a manner that infused them with new meaning. Consequently, publics collaboratively-but-not-collectively assembled the dominant vernacular for Twitter out of these personalized and self-referential contributions to everyday conversations. Beyond performances of the self, these become performances of power, and the level of power attained is connected to the rigor of the performance itself (Alexander, 2011).

Second, emotional release, and thus affect, is an important part of the expressive and connective gestures afforded via Twitter. Affect infuses the phatic utterances of everyday life with intensity. It is non-directional, meaning that it is distinct from emotion, which communicates the direction of a particular mood state. Affect conveys the intensity with which an opinion is felt, and when expressed, it can intensify the sense of empowerment experienced by

the individual releasing a thought, emotion, or act to the public. It is declarative and not deliberative. It declares intensity, and expression of how intensely something is felt can be a potentially powerful political act. It marks the difference between saying something and shouting it loud, crying quietly or crying violently, and in this particular context, making some private thoughts public, or reversing norms to infuse a provocative statement with intensity. Affective gestures infuse the storytelling of the self with emotive impressions that enhance performances of the self but may also entrap the self in a continuous loop of (mediated) affect. Understanding these connective and expressive practices in environments that are networked—and frequently converged—can help us situate and find a place for performative platforms like Twitter or public dreaming in everyday life.

Finally, affect and play are important elements in integrating fantasy into the everyday and are helpful for thinking through ways in which emotive gestures may reproduce and reinterpret our habitus of predispositions for publicity, civic engagement, and connection. It is through these affective gestures that practices of personal expression and connection are improvised and edited into the connective context of Twitter. As a performative stage, Twitter affords opportunities for presentation, visibility, play, and fantasy. Trending conversations, in particular, present a stage that people can claim to render a personal thought public. As privately motivated actions attain a public orientation, they are infused with political potential *and* personal style. Style is performance and performance is power. Performative gestures, play, and affective intensity present the means with which individuals find their place in these loosely convened evanescent publics and claim a spot in these organically generated and affectively driven conversations. Agency is semantically and affectively accessed, and claims to power are performed.

The Soft Structures of Engagement

This book is concerned with newer modalities of civic engagement sustained through networked media and how these lend form to emerging publics. At the core of this book lies a strong interest in structures of feeling and how these soft structures form the texture of online expression and connection. It is through understanding the soft structures of feeling, expression, and connection that I approach questions revolving around the impact of social media, specifically Twitter. I borrow the term *structures of feeling* from Raymond Williams, who employed it in *The Long Revolution* (1961) to describe the potential that lies in that which is emergent and the power or agency that may derive from the volatility of social experiences in the making. The term appeals to me for two reasons. First, it permits us to examine forms of engagement that exist within and beyond the structured sphere of opinion expression. Second, it suggests how spontaneous and organic responses accumulate into formed yet volatile structures that envelop an ever-developing habitus of civic engagement. Williams (1961) understood this structure of feeling to be “as firm and definite as ‘structure’ suggests, yet [operating] in the most delicate and least tangible part of our activities” (p. 64). Described by Williams as *social experiences in solution*, structures of feeling reflect the culture, the mood, and the feel of a particular historical moment. As such, they capture articulated thought but also suppressed narratives in ways that combine expressions of realized outcomes and unrealized potential.

Structures of feeling can be traced back to forms and conventions shared by those living through a particular era, but they should not be reduced to what is frequently idealized as the spirit of an age. They could be potentially

understood as structures of experience in that they are derivative and referential of experiences, but they really pertain to “characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought; but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelated continuity” (Williams, 1977, p. 133). Williams points to the industrial novel of the 1840s as an example of one structure of feeling that emerged out of the development of industrial capitalism and summed up middle-class consciousness. In this manner, structures of feeling represent feeling that is organized and patterned but in ways that do not compromise its fluidity, that is, its ability to connect (and divide) differentiated classes of people and complex relations of structures. The deliberate contradiction between structure and feeling is meant to capture “a structure in the sense that you could perceive it operating in one work after another which weren’t otherwise connected—people weren’t learning it from each other; yet it was one feeling much more than of thought—a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones” (Williams, 1979, p. 159). In the same manner, we may understand and further interpret collaborative discourses organized by hashtags on Twitter as structures of feeling, comprising an organically developed pattern of impulses, restraints, and tonality. Virally circulated YouTube videos or images rendered into memes as they are shared from person to person present structures of feeling. They are organized enough to facilitate sharing, yet open enough to permit differentiated classes of people to locate meaning in them and further infuse them with meaning. They are loosely demonstrative of the mood of the time, or *kairos*, and as such, are *socially solvent*.

Public Feelings and Affect

As a first point, I emphasize that in order to be accurately understood, the discourses produced via Twitter must be interpreted as such soft structures of feeling. They may not be confused with the deliberative structures presented through rationally organized modalities of civic engagement. This does not necessarily mean that they may not contain or allude to rational discourse or that rational discourse is not inclusive of affective elements. What it suggests is that sentiment, pre-formed and mediated, leads the way

into locating one's own place in a converged sphere of activity where socio-cultural, economic, and political tendencies and tensions are collapsed. The work of Raymond Williams and the emphasis on structures of feeling anticipated affect as the active ingredient that infuses structures of feeling with different measures of intensity.

As a second point, I emphasize that public feelings, articulated via soft structures of feeling, populate diverse and interconnected public spheres that function as affect worlds (Berlant, 2011). Emotion and feeling define modalities of belonging that are articulated as strangers connect and attach to each other. Within and beyond the contours of rational and deliberative thought, these affective tropes of belonging “[rethink] publicness by looking at . . . cases in which the body politic in the politically depressive position tries *not* to enter reflective opinion while seeking a way, nonetheless, to maintain its desire for the political” (Berlant, 2009). Collaborative discourses generated through the logic of hashtags on Twitter may be understood as fostering tropes of belonging that evolve beyond the conventional mode of rational thought and deliberation. As affect mini-worlds, they invite a publicness that is politically sensitized yet generally dismissive of normatively defined political consciousness.

The publics that connected around the hashtags supporting the Egyptian protests that led to the resignation of Hosni Mubarak were populated by individuals within and beyond Egypt. These people felt their own way into that particular event by contributing to a stream that blended emotion, drama, opinion, and news in a manner that departed from the conventional deliberative logic and aligned with the softer structure of affect worlds. Networked publics that connected and disconnected around #ows articulated a vernacular of political performativity that permitted citizens to simply stand and be counted without having to enter into complex ideological negotiation of a collectively shaped identity. The transient publics that drive daily trending topics of conversation on Twitter draw from a repertoire of playful performance strategies that rethink the personal as political, and the political as that which is personally felt. The question that drives this book and this last chapter revolves around modalities of engagement that develop within structures of feeling and how these modalities support liminal or transient public spheres that function as affect worlds. In short, what is the form that publics take on as they are called into being through the connective structures of feeling?

Affective Attunement and Networked Publics

Publics that actualize within the affect worlds sustained by Twitter are affective in form. Streams generated through the collaboratively discursive logic of the hashtag function as affective mechanisms that amplify the awareness of a particular feeling, the intensity with which it is felt. Tomkins (1995) specifically explains that by amplifying intensity, affect mechanisms permit us to obtain a sense of the urgency with which a particular symptom needs to be addressed. Similarly, news streams generated on Twitter function as affect modulators for people using them to connect with others and express their understanding of a particular issue. The connective and expressive affordances thus generated grant a given technology its own mediality, and this mediality invites particular *forms* or *textures* of affective attunement. Media sustain and transmit affect, and so a developing discourse via Twitter can sustain and transmit that form of intensity although the direction toward which it will develop depends on the focus of the particular stream. I understand the publics called into being by the discursive affordances of Twitter as *affective*: networked publics that are sustained by online media but also by modalities of affective intensity.

Affective attunement permits people to feel their way into politics. Publics assembled out of individuals feeling their way into a particular news stream generated via Twitter engage in practices of rebroadcasting, listening, remixing content, and creatively presenting their views—or fragments of their views—in ways that evolve beyond the conventional deliberative logic of a traditional public sphere. These practices permit people to tune into an issue or a particular problem of the times but also to affectively attune with it, that is, to develop a sense for their own place within this particular structure of feeling. The case studies addressed in this volume present different iterations of how distinct cultures or subcultures internalize repression and affectively react to it, utilizing Twitter as the platform for the expression of dissension.

Arguably, these manifestations of dissent take on a different character depending on the political, sociocultural, and economic context. While these expressions may occasionally inspire each other, they are shaped by the locality of their collective aspirations. So it becomes important to appreciate the global visibility these expressions attain via Twitter but not to lose sight of the local context from which they emerge. The various Arab Spring movements

were generally directed against authoritarian regimes but evolved in different ways and with varying outcomes. The *indignados* of Spain camped out in public squares just like the *Aganaktismenoi* of Greece, but the outrage they conveyed was the result of different sets of circumstances. Occupy congregations networked globally but were locally politicized by a mix of broader and geographically specific aspirations. Finally, the everyday expressions of the political found in trending Twitter topics blend public with private, and personal with political, to introduce affectively charged casual disruptions of stabilized cultural hierarchies. Still, three common threads characterized all movements:

1. A networked digitality. This permits publics forming around affective statements to self-actualize online and offline as they develop their own voice(s) and connect to diasporic publics around the globe. These formations of publics may be actual or imaginary, but they are meaningful in promising visibility and collectivity to previously marginalized voices. This networked digitality is sustained through practices of networked gatekeeping and networked framing that produce connective forms of action.
2. A generalized expression of indignation, discontent, or disagreement with ongoing, reinforced, and reproduced regimes.¹ These expressions are typically affectively rendered and can be interpreted as affective claims to agency. They are meaningful as shapeless sources of disorder that do not align with and may potentially pollute articulated structures.²
3. An algorithmically rendered materiality. Algorithms render affective gestures embodied, permitting them to attain discursive materiality and thus potentially develop into narratives of connection and discord or the in-between. This materiality is the product of the interaction between the affordances of each platform and the habitus of practices and predispositions toward technology that characterizes a given era.

Affective statements can potentially allow access to fluid or liquid forms of power that are meaningful to publics seeking to break into the ideological mainstream. In repressive regimes, affective statements communicating dislike or discontent with a particular regime of repression can result in surveillance or imprisonment for those expressing them. For marginalized cultures, affective statements are part of performing identities that otherwise become further repressed. In the contemporary political environment, affective

expressions communicate frustration with the inability to change a capitalist economic hierarchy that pre-determines privilege and organizes access to it in ways that are fixed and non-negotiable. Over time, affect may lead to subtle disruptions of power hierarchies, which cumulatively may produce considerable energies of resistance and renegotiation of boundaries.

At the same time, affect may also dominate expression and distract from factuality, as is the case with the affective structures that support the growth of the Tea Party movement in the United States. Affective mechanisms increase awareness of an issue and in so doing amplify the intensity of that awareness. They do not inherently enhance understanding of a problem, deepen one's level of knowledge on a particular issue, or lead to thick forms of civic engagement with public affairs. These things may indeed occur, but they present outcomes of other cognitive and behavioral processes that are connected to—but are also distinct from—affect mechanisms. This is why context is key in interpreting the meaning of affective mechanisms and the potential impact affective publics may generate. In the next few paragraphs, I synthesize my findings and existing research to present general parameters around which affective publics and the people populating them may lay claim to power and agency and the specific form that power and agency take on.

Affect, Granularity, and Liminality

Describing the impact that platforms like Twitter have on expression, engagement, and ultimately democracy requires locating them within the historical continuum of technology out of which they have evolved. Twitter and similar net-supported platforms inherently engage users in ways that are cultural—by expanding sources and means of information and learning, tools for cultural production and innovation, and the spaces where communication takes place (Yang, 2009). Each platform of course contains its own affordances that invite particular uses and thus lend the platform unique cultural significance within a historical or geographic context. For most users, political interest is activated through avenues that are of a cultural nature, and these involve offering access to more information, providing ways to remix and play with information, and supporting spaces where people may discuss this information further. This does not constitute a characteristic unique to our era or net-supported platforms. Many of the

idealized public spheres of the past (Habermas, 1962/1989) consisted of social environments that sustained political engagement in ways that were deeply ingrained in the cultural ethos of the society. The agoras of Ancient Greece blended commerce, politics, and casual philosophizing into the culture of everyday routines. Similarly, coffeehouses in eighteenth-century Europe emerged out of a particular cultural context to support various forms of social interaction in ways that aligned with the rhythms of everyday work and life routines of the era. Spaces that stimulate political interest, expression, and engagement work best when they invite impromptu, casual, and unforced forays into the political. The spaces of politics have always merged activities of an economic, political, and sociocultural nature, and the spaces rendered by networked platforms further amplify this convergence (Papacharissi, 2010).

The premise is simple. To understand the civic import of such technologies, we need to interpret them not as forces that bring about change, do activism, or enact impact. They are networked infrastructures that present people with environments of a social nature, supporting interactions that are aligned with the particular cultural ethos deriving from historical or geographic context. As socioculturally shaped architectures, they sustain activities that are organized around information sharing and learning, creativity and innovation, and discourse—or more specifically in the case of the latter, specific varieties of storytelling. What is of particular interest here is the form of sharing and learning, the nature of creativity and innovation, and the texture of conversation that take shape within the environments formed by networked platforms—in this case, Twitter.

Rich literature informs our understanding of the meaning of technology in contemporary societies, drawing our attention to the ability of net-related platforms to pluralize expression (e.g., Bimber, 1998; van Dijk, 2012) in ways that may lend voice and visibility to underrepresented points of view (e.g., Couldry, 2010) but that may also compartmentalize opinion tropes into homophilous silos (e.g., Sunstein, 2001).

Yet speculation on the potential impact of technology commonly draws from soft to stark determinism, which misunderstands the place of the net-related platforms (e.g., Curran, Fenton, & Freedman, 2012). These deterministic tendencies view net-related technologies as *forces* that bring about change rather than as environments that invite particular varieties of behaviors, depending on their affordances *and* the sociocultural context within which these affordances are utilized. And while many net-related platforms

bear the potential of allowing conversations to be more porous, this will not always be the case, particularly when conversations take place within groups that are ideologically padlocked, such as the extremist Nazi or racist silos that self-organize through a variety of online resources. Those conversations have never been nor will they ever be pluralized, regardless of the technological platform they reside in. By contrast, collaborative narratives that form out of established and fairly homophilous spheres of interaction may evolve into more open and pluralized deliberative structures; this was the case with all three studies of Twitter streams examined in this volume. Yet at the same time, these pluralized conversations take on different meaning and serve different functions depending on context, which is why it was essential to examine and compare three case studies that were similar but also different enough to let us examine the interplay between affordances, cultural context, and, in this particular case, affect.

The role of sociocultural context in shaping the outcome of digitally enabled expression and connection cannot be emphasized enough. This is a simple enough point to make and one that is illustrated in abundant research—most notably work that illustrates how social media have been utilized by recent social movements in the MENA region and Europe (e.g., Howard, 2011; Castells, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2012). What requires further explication, however, is the role of sociocultural context in shaping whether, which, and how affordances of technologies will be deployed by networked publics. In this manner, sociocultural context informs the conditions under which people utilize the affordances of technologies to lay claim to agency and potentially to power. What may function as a digitally enabled path to agency in one sociocultural context may produce radically different results under a different set of social circumstances. In all three case studies examined, the discursive affordances of Twitter supported diverse practices that developed in a variety of directions because they were born out of singularly combined sociocultural conditions. Digitally enabled paths to agency and power are activated variably based on the interplay between human agency and structure that defines sociocultural context.

This is a simple enough point to make, yet it gains explanatory gravitas when theorized through the lens of the *habitus*. The construct was developed by Bourdieu to overcome a number of binary divisions in the social sciences and in particular to address the duality of structure and agency. Human agency both renders and is rendered through social structure, demonstrating how “social structures are both constituted by human agency,

and yet at the same time are the very medium of this constitution” (Giddens, 1979, p. 121). Broadly defined as a set of durable dispositions that enable structured improvisations of individuals, all guiding social life, the habitus invites both ambiguity and flexibility in terms of how it is interpreted, perhaps by design (Park, 2009). Regardless, it is useful because it does not separate structure from agency, explaining how “embodied dispositions . . . are generated by structural features of that same social world” and “agents’ dispositions to act are themselves *formed* out of preexisting social contexts” (Couldry, 2004, p. 358).

Bourdieu (1990) suggests that “being the product of a particular class of objective regularities, the habitus tends to generate all the ‘reasonable,’ ‘commonplace’ behaviours,” which provides a comforting homogeneity for the individual. The habitus is the product of long and ongoing processes of socialization that impart practices taken for granted. These practices do present habituated actions but are exercised through patterns that may be more organic and less codified or obedient to these structures. At the same time, these practices gain meaning as they are enacted within communities of practice, thus referencing structural context. As a result, the habitus informs the manner in which the capabilities of a particular platform are utilized and thus informs the texture of digitally enabled forms of expression and connection. Because the notion of the habitus contains all tendencies and tensions deriving from articulated practices that affirm and seek to negate structure, it affords emerging streams of expression and connection online their unique digital imprint. The dialectical and relational practices adopted as people express themselves and connect online are the product of what the technology invites and of pre-established practices that people feel comfortable engaging in. Moreover, the affordances of the technology itself are the product of a habitus, that is, a prevailing understanding of habituated practices that are part new and part habitual. The construct of the habitus is meaningful because it historicizes the new by drawing attention to the practices that connect it to the present.

While the affordances of a particular technology emerge and are utilized within a habitus of wonted and recurring practices, they also suggest ways in which familiar practices may be remediated. In mediated architectures of everyday sociality, like those presented by social network sites, social beings’ behaviors emerge out of the social context they find themselves in. Agency claimed challenges pre-existing structure but is simultaneously reproduced by and reproductive of structure. In the context of technological

convergence, the properties of online media afford the duality of structure and agency an accelerated reflexivity. This accelerated reflexivity is both sustained and remediated by something we may understand as a habitus of the new, a set of dispositions invited and regenerated by and via a state of permanent novelty (Papacharissi & Easton, 2013). This constantly-in-flux mode may also be characterized as the permanently beta ethic of continual change (Neff & Stark, 2004). The habitus in and of itself embeds reflexivity, first because it describes how practices are constantly yet subtly evolving in ways that affirm and extend our comfort zones, and second because the agency contained within these practices is constituted within and in reaction to structure. Within the habitus of the new, this reflexivity that grants habituated practices both meaning and potential for agency is accelerated in a way that reorganizes our expectations, reduces stability, and sustains the feeling that something new is about to happen. The rhythms of accelerated reflexivity are driven by an almost obligatory anticipation of the new (Papacharissi, Streeter, & Gillespie, 2013). This state of constant transitionality, marked by design that anticipates and invites that which is new, reinforces a state of permanent liminality.

Liminality refers to events, processes, or individuals pertaining to the threshold of or an initial stage of a process. The anthropologist Victor Turner drew from the work of Arnold van Gennep (1909) on rites of passage to present a theory of liminality meant to describe stages of transition and in-between positions that liminal individuals occupy. Turner understood liminality as a position of social and structural ambiguity or as “the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in some sense the source of them all, and, more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise” (1967, p. 97). A group of liminal actors is characterized by a lack of social markers and an in-between stage of social heterarchy that renders all actors equal for the time being. Users participating in news gathering, listening, and disseminating are engaged in these processes from a liminal point of access. Liminality is a middle point in a dialogue about what is news in a society. It is a transitional but essential stage in finding one’s own place in the story and doing so from a position that allows autonomy and potential for agency. In order for this dialogue to be rendered liminal, all previous hierarchy about what makes news must be abandoned, and therein lies the empowering potential of liminality. At the same time, the very function of liminality is to abandon structure so as to permit activity that will result in the birthing of a new structure, and therein lie both

potential empowerment and disempowerment. Turner understands “liminality as a phase in social life in which this confrontation between ‘activity which has no structure’ and its ‘structured results’ produces in men their highest pitch of self-consciousness” (1974, p. 255).

Individuals participating in liminal forms of news storytelling engage in a variety of practices that both reproduce and forget past conventions of news production and consumption. I describe these stages of collaborative news co-creation as liminal because engagement relies on the temporary dismantling of news rituals so as to be able to collectively (re)produce new ones. It is easy to read these as processes of news production. But they are primarily about utilizing tools of news production and consumption to find one’s own place in the story (Robinson, 2009). Liminality affords the opportunity for actors engaging and making meaning out of the story to approach the event on equal footing and to feel their own place in the story. Engaged in various stages of *produsage*, storytelling audiences occupy a liminal space, a space of transition, as they contribute to turning an event into a story. But liminality is a temporary state, defined as the midpoint between beginning and end. It is set into motion as an initiated action attempts to undo social structures or conventions, and it ends as the initiated action is (re)integrated into social structure. The ambient, hybrid, and *prodused* practices of liking, retweeting, liveblogging, endorsing, and opining that are frequently blended into social reactions to news events are also liminal. They present personal and temporary content injections that play their own in part in turning a news event into a story. As such, they are inspired by the potential of what the *prodused* story might look like, however temporary the lasting effect of these subjective content interpolations may be. In the next few paragraphs, I explain how their form is affective.

Affective Publics

Drawing from research presented in the previous chapters, I suggest that crowds become mobilized via online networks of support in ways that discursively render *affective publics*. I define affective publics as networked public formations that are mobilized and connected or disconnected through expressions of sentiment. Resting on boyd’s (2010) understanding of networked publics, I interpret affective publics as publics that have been transformed by networked technologies to suggest both space for the

interaction of people, technology, and practices and the imagined collective that evolves out of this interaction. boyd (2010) presents the properties of persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability as the four defining affordances of networked publics. Persistence avails digital permanence to the discursive iterations of networked publics. Replicability makes it easier to reproduce and further remix discursive material. Scalability lends the potential of virality to discourses spreading through networks and networked media. Searchability permits loosely organized lines of commentary to transform into indexable and evolving narratives, organized through tags or the innate organizing logic of algorithms.

Importantly, however, the architecture that enables networked publics to attain discursive materiality is an architecture that thrives on, invites, and rewards *sharing*. Shareability evolves out of these four affordances but also functions as an affordance that invites and discourages particular genres of social activities. Networks are only as active as the information flowing through them. It is not that networks do not exist without information sharing, but it is the act of information sharing that renders them visible. In this sense, actor nodes materialize digitally as they share information. If it is the act of information sharing that presences actors, then this act can be read as an act of agency and we can begin to understand networked publics as publics defined by the sharing of information.

The construct of affective publics builds on the idea of networked publics to explicate what publics look like when all they render and are rendered out of is the sharing of opinions, facts, sentiment, drama, and performance. We know that these publics are networked. All publics are networked although the mediality of the networks may differ. What do these publics sound like? It is the form of mediality that supports and invites a particular tonality of expression. The pressing question revolves around the texture of expression that an architecture anticipates and rewards but also the ways in which expression, understood as information sharing, brings that architecture to life. How do these iterations of networked publics talk, what are prevailing practices, and as these tendencies and tensions are absorbed into our habitus of civic practices, what avenues for engagement, agency, and power do they avail *and* normalize?

The research presented in this volume leads to the following five points, which present defining tendencies of *affective publics*. These tendencies and tensions summarize the tonality that these publics attain as they discursively materialize through the organizational logic of online platforms like

Twitter. They present five propositions for how we may interpret the civic gravitas that technologies of premediation and remediation afford.

1. *Affective publics materialize uniquely and leave distinct digital footprints.*

The digital texture of publics engaging with an issue online will vary depending on what that issue is, the sociocultural context, a variety of political economy system factors, and the mediality of the platform itself. This may strike some as an obvious point, and indeed it is meant to be. It is emphasized because despite its pedestrian nature, it is frequently forgotten in favor of rhetoric that either overestimates or minimizes the impact of social media. It is frequently assumed that Twitter and the variety of social platforms it interconnects will yield the same results for all publics utilizing it, but it does not. The research findings presented in this volume revealed how use of the platform supported different discourses. These were collaboratively curated into narratives that harmoniously united publics around #egypt and the affective frame of a revolution. In a different context, they reproduced existing political divides that affectively stalled the polyphony of #ows. And in the setting of everyday trending tags, they temporarily and loosely connected publics by virtue of connecting deliberately spontaneous performances of the politics of the self. These publics materialized uniquely and in ways that generated distinct digital footprints. What all these publics have in common is that their engagement online via Twitter permitted them to feel more intensely. The affective intensity of the platform, expressed through mobilized support, release of tension, and general opinion expression, amplified awareness of a particular event, issue, or conversation.

For publics tuning into and being connected through the discourses of #egypt, the resulting streams presented a mix of news, opinion, fact, and drama, all driven by a fixation with instantaneity and intense anticipation of what might happen next. These streams supported an affectively driven form of news, *produced* via the hybrid logics of networked gatekeeping and networked framing. The publics contributing to #ows functioned as networked gatekeepers and collaboratively framed the stream into an open signifier for the concept of #occupy. Networked actors were reluctant to elevate anyone to prominence, thus producing a crowd-sourced hierarchy of leading nodes, and they were reluctant to suggest a particular direction beyond the sheer *movement* of Occupy. In this sense, #ows was keenly affective for it was presented in ways that stated its potential without seeking to define it. For

this particular context, however, the Occupy chant invited both affective attunement and discord with the movement. And yet in the end, this may have not been disruptive for a public interested in generating affective intensity, that is, in providing supporters an opportunity to stand up and be counted under the idea of #ows. Finally, the atomized contributions to trending conversations that typically fly under the civic radar and do not count as formally political permitted networked actors to presence their own politics of the self. Seemingly non-important, because they often did not pertain to issues that hierarchies of knowledge identify as current affairs, they referenced the poetry and poignancy of the ordinariness of everyday life. In so doing, they are political because they challenge our habitus for what should be considered public affairs. They are affective because they suggest a particular movement toward a certain direction but have dissolved by the time that direction has formed and have already transformed into something else. The networked rhythms of content produced a different tonality for each public or set of affectively interconnected publics.

2. *Affective publics support connective yet not necessarily collective action.*

Connective action emerges out of personal frames on current affairs coalescing via the expressive and connective affordances of networked platforms, including Twitter. Bennett and Segerberg (2013) see connective action as a normative predisposition for individuals who align with issue publics on the basis of life politics. As a natural outcome of individualization tendencies that require people to structure and reflexively restructure their own lives, connective action practices permit people to express interest in or allegiance to issues without having to enter into complex negotiation of personal versus collective politics. Online and convergent platforms like Twitter serve as conduits that link together personalized interests, thus enabling people to connect around commonalities without having to compromise their own belief systems. The streams studied in this volume sustained such forms of expression. They connected individual viewpoints and in so doing organically assembled collaborative but not collective narratives.

#Egypt may have produced the shared frame of a revolution in the making well before the movement had resulted in regime reversal, but this frame was not the result of collective deliberation. The frame of a revolution in the making emerged as individuals affectively tuned into the developing stream to express support for the idea of the revolution without entering into a

conversation on what the pragmatics of a revolution would entail. Tellingly, the movement has produced a couple of regime reversals since then but has yet to yield reforms that many Egyptians would term revolutionary. #Ows embraced the principle of connective action from the onset of the movement, issuing an open call for alignment with the broad idea of Occupy. The resulting expressive tendencies were affective in nature and divided the stream into cohorts of support or opposition that were far from deliberative. The playful and personalized contributions to everyday trending tags did not aim at conversation but at deliberately improvised showing off of the self. The tendency was connective but similar to the connection formed between a performer and an ever-evolving, partially imagined, audience.

There is something inherently democratic and surficial about connective practices. On the one hand, they pluralize interaction and make developing narratives more porous. On the other hand, they facilitate thin or monitorial varieties of engagement that may—but do not necessarily—morph into deeper forms of civic involvement. In earlier work, I described online environments as *supersurfaces* (Papacharissi, 2010). I borrowed the term from architecture to describe the spatial possibilities that open up when space is cut up, folded, and woven into new patterns. I explained that online environments function much like supersurfaces; they extend space but attain meaning and potential impact only if they are somehow connected to a core structure. Similarly, the affective intensity these streams lend becomes meaningful when it elicits feelings of community and identity; without this direction, it revels in its own feedback loop. In order to reach its full potential, affective intensity must be released.

3. *Affective publics are powered by affective statements of opinion, fact, or a blend of both, which in turn produce ambient, always-on feeds that further connect and pluralize expression in regimes democratic and otherwise.*

Aligned with the logic of connective action, affective publics produce and are driven by streams that are collections of opinions, facts, and emotion blended into one effusive stream to the point that it is difficult to discern one variety of expression from the other—and doing so misses the point. The point is that these streams enable diverse distant publics to connect with, monitor, and affectively tune into an evolving event or issue. The resulting feeds sustain an ambient, always-on environment supportive of social and peripheral awareness for the people and publics connected. For a stream that

is structured around live broadcasts of events going on, like #egypt or #ows, this ambience is essential in providing constant updates, even when not much is happening or other media are not covering the story. What becomes particularly interesting is the type of storytelling these streams sustain and the extent to which the stories told via Twitter align or diverge from the stories told via other channels. We may understand each stream as generating its own event and thus we can distinguish between different events sustained via the affective intensity of Twitter, the mediality of TV, or the affect of newspapers. The mediated texture of these events, that is, their mediality, provides listening publics with a different lens for relating to these events, a lens consisting of varying or overlapping assemblages of images, words, video, audio, and other affective stimuli that we use to turn the world outside into the pictures in our heads (Lippmann, 1922).

Lippmann used these words to describe the way in which people weave together information from mediated reports of events to construct their pseudoenvironments of worlds too distant, complex, or big for them to experience directly. People live in the same world, Lippmann (1922) had suggested, but “they think and feel in different ones” (p. 20). The texture of storytelling on #egypt permitted previously unconnected publics to feel their way into what the movement meant for Egypt at that moment. The open and polyphonous nature of discourse on #ows was aligned with the spirit of the movement but it reaffirmed that discordant publics living in the same world feel and think in markedly distinct ways. Finally, the playful discourses of trending tags collapsed multiple pseudoenvironments into one, reinforcing the politics of subjective pluralism: we feel subjectively but project those feelings publicly with aspirations of collectivity, striving for diverse recognition of that subjectivity. We feel our way into the softer, ambient structures of affect worlds.

4. *Affective publics typically produce disruptions/interruptions of dominant political narratives by presencing underrepresented viewpoints.*

Inevitably, platforms that afford broadcasting capabilities invite pluralized narratives, provided of course that they are accessible to diverse publics. The softer storytelling structures afforded by Twitter invite immediate and improvised contributions to developing stories about events and issues. Stories engage through their potential for affective attunement by persuading “through their appeal to emotion rather than reason, through an affective identification that supersedes logic and evidence” (Polletta, 2006, p. 82).

The condensed nature of these contributions collapses storytelling conventions that distinguish fact from opinion and from emotion into subjectively narrated realities. These affectively charged micro-narratives typically produce disruptions or interruptions of dominant political narratives, inviting others to tune and feel their way into their own place in politics. Cumulative and cascading expressions of such forms of connective action may result in more substantial forms of political impact, depending on context.

The potential for disruption or interruption derives from the fact that these narratives amplify visibility for viewpoints that were not as prevalent before. The developing narratives blend print storytelling practices, described by Ong (1982) as a secondary orality, with the traditions of oral forms of storytelling understood as a primary orality. The resulting streams blend news facts with the drama of interpersonal conversation and combine news reports with emotionally filled and opinionated reactions to the news in a manner that makes it difficult to discern news from conversation about the news—and doing so misses the point. The more deliberate and self-conscious storytelling invited by print and electronic media is thus reconciled with the additive and participatory nature of oral storytelling practices, producing a form of orality we may understand as digital. The *liminality* inherent in these streams, which occupy the in-between space where primary and secondary oralities meet, makes them ambiguous: they contain both empowering and disempowering potential for those participating in them. It is this ambiguity, however, that also affirms their polysemous nature and potential for contagion.

5. *Ambient streams sustain publics convened around affective commonalities: impact is symbolic, agency claimed is semantic, power is liminal.*

Affective publics are convened discursively around similarities or differences in sentiment. The additive architecture of platforms like Twitter compiles these discourses into organically developed narratives of a granular texture. These narratives take the form of ambient streams that sustain engagement with a particular issue, event, or public, primarily through permitting citizens to feel their place into a developing story. Such ambient streams sustain publics convened around affective commonalities, leading sometimes to the affectively charged claims of the Tea Party or the broad ideological refrains of the Occupy movement or, in tandem with offline activities, to regime reversals.

The impact created through these streams as they develop into granular narratives is first and foremost symbolic. When combined with a number of independent or coordinated activities, these streams can help sustain movements that may yield political impact of a specific form, like a regime reversal, a call for elections, or a shift in the balance of power that may produce further legislative, social, economic, and cultural changes. Change is a gradual process, however, and the futurity of any impact is always susceptible to context. #Egypt sustained a movement that had commenced long before the advent of Twitter and perhaps the Internet; it presented a digital iteration of a movement that was released through a number of political avenues and activities, including digital pathways. The impact was sizable and the iteration was political, sociocultural, economic, and rich in symbolic meaning. However, it has yet to yield a democratic form of government that the majority of the people of Egypt are content with.

Unlike #egypt, #ows did not produce a reversal of the economic regime that it confronted. Still, the impact of a movement like Occupy derived from its ability to semantically renegotiate some constants, some fixed aspects of a particular field, and the terms of a particular habitus and make them more fluid and flexible. For the supporters of Occupy, the stream facilitated their claim to semantic agency and it also invited attempts from opposing publics to semantically delegitimize the movement's core message. The impact generated by Occupy and #ows is primarily symbolic and is substantial in its symbolism as it presents the most widespread and effective effort to counter the prevailing logic of late-modern capitalism to date. It remains to be seen whether the attempt to semantically modify the terms on which the economics of global capitalism play out will evolve beyond what it has been so far: a (firm) challenge. Yet the connective affordances of a platform like Twitter, together with other civic pathways for connection, permitted that semantic challenge to attain affective intensity.

The evanescent publics that convene around daily trending topics revel in the symbolic, the semantic, and the liminal. It is through semantic means that they seek to define the personal as political and thus lay claim to agency. The impact generated through playful and deliberately improvised tweets is symbolic for actors who toy with the idea of making private thoughts public. Performativity permits affective publics to assemble semantic claims of agency, although the nature of the performance is sensitive to sociocultural context and the politics of the self. Empowerment for these actors is liminal—transitional and capable of a lengthier duration only to the extent

that the synergy of systemic factors will permit these disruptions to become contagious and thus pollute established hierarchies of order.³

The practices of these publics present a departure from the rationally based deliberative protocols of public spheres and help us reimagine how we may define and understand civic discourse among networked crowds in a digital era. While emotion has never been absent from the construction of political expression, romanticized idealizations of past civic eras magnify the significance of rational discourse and skim over the affective infrastructure of civic engagement. My effort here involves synthesizing research findings to present a theoretical model for understanding affective publics—public formations that are textually rendered into being through emotive expressions that spread virally through networked crowds.

Affective publics materialize and disband around connective conduits of sentiment every day and find their voice through the soft structures of feeling sustained by societies. Twitter serves as a conduit of interconnected structures of feeling, lending rise to not just sentiment-driven publics but connecting and redirecting expansive meme-plexes of expression deriving from a variety of media, social and not. Affective publics drove the tag #NSAPickUpLines, convened via Tumblr and Twitter, in response to news that National Security Agency officers sometimes abuse domestic intelligence privileges to monitor love interests (top retweeted: “I bet you’re tired of guys who only pretend to listen. #NSAPickupLines” and “I know exactly where you have been all my life #NSAPickUpLines”). Affective publics assembled behind the tag #MuslimRage in response to *Newsweek*’s cover image exploiting protests in the Middle East and popular stereotypes about Muslims. Readers responded playfully and sarcastically, mocking the premise of shock journalism and cultural stereotyping with photos and texts that spread virally through Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook. US citizens watching the 2012 Presidential Election debates affectively gathered around tags like #FireBigBird, #BindersFullofWomen, or #horsesandbayonets, with playful commentary that released pent up sentiment through memes spreading via Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook. The top tweeted photograph in 2012—and ever, at the time—showed Michelle Obama hugging her re-elected husband; it was tweeted before he took the stage to affirm his election victory and retweeted, favorited, or reposted heavily in affectively expressed support of his victory. Twitter use during the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting helped grieving publics cope, express support, and seek to understand how an event like that can take place.

These are just a few examples of countless occasions for affective attunement to pressing issues and events. What they all have in common is engagement that is sentiment driven and that forms around *structures of feeling*. Affective publics are not specific to Twitter. Radio broadcasts sustained a contagious structure of feeling during the Greek student uprisings against the military regime in the 1970s, as illustrated through the example that introduced this volume and the concept of affective publics. Songs, music performances, and genres interconnect crowds and lend form to publics that bond around shared affective intensities. Television series and genres present structures of feeling emblematic of the affective intensities of a given era. The platform of Twitter was employed as a starting point. As its own structure of feeling, it helps focus this volume around issues, cultural artifacts, and discourses that are specific to the present era. Convergent or spreadable media become meaningful as they disperse content through formal and informal networks (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013). Twitter served as an apt starting point for this analysis, because it interconnects and remediates a variety of communicative conduits that further disperse content across other platforms, like Facebook, Tumblr, YouTube; similar social network sites; and broader meme-plexes that are activated online and offline. Affective publics evolve within and beyond Twitter.

While sentiment-driven modalities of civic engagement may invite a politics of sympathy and frequently empathy, they should not be construed as being devoid of rational thought or reason. The main point is that affective attunement is driven, and by driven, I mean *energized* or *powered* by sentiment-driven modalities. These do not favor emotion over reason; and affect should not be mistaken for emotion, for it is not that. It is the intensity with which we experience both reason and emotion. Structures of feeling invite affective attunement with *thought as feeling and feeling as thought*, thus not prioritizing one over the other but striving toward a meaningful balance between the two that is specific to a certain era. Popular discourses about normative forms of civic engagement frequently set emotion against reason and feeling against thought. Thus, certain forms of civic engagement are termed inadequate for being too emotional and lacking rational foundation while others are termed too logical and stripped of emotional engagement. And yet logic and emotion can and do co-exist. In quintessential Spinozian terms, logic helps interpret emotion and emotion gives meaning to logic. They are not opposite endpoints of a continuum but are meant to work together and inform one another toward structures of feelings (e.g., Gould, 2010); they are organized and open at the same

time in a loose, evolving, and fluid narrative that seeks to make meaning of events populating our everyday course of life.

Structures of feeling open up and sustain discursive spaces where stories can be told. There are particular storytelling practices that become prevalent in the discursive spaces presented by convergent and spreadable media, and these practices invite certain varieties of engagement. Networked framing and networked gatekeeping explain how interconnected people collaboratively curate and co-create narratives. Affective attunement clarifies how individuals first approach these discourses as actors preparing to engage in discourses as narratives. Connective action describes the modalities of action that shape and are shaped by these structures of feeling wherein impact generated is symbolic, agency is semantic, and power is of a liminal and granular nature. Promising areas of future work lie in explicating the mediality of different discursive spaces and the form of affective attunement and engagement these invite. Affect explains the intensity with which something is experienced; it refers to just that: intensity. Feeling with great intensity does not necessarily lead to deep understanding or engagement with an issue. Affect is capable of supporting thin, moderate, or thick forms of engagement or deep understanding of issues. It represents the way in but does not guarantee a particular outcome; it “greases the wheels of ideology, but it also gums them up” (Gould, 2009, p. 27). To this end, we may examine particular varieties of narratives that facilitate deeper understanding of issues—for example, slow- versus fast-paced news narratives and varieties of literacies that help us generate deeper readings and meaning-making of the many structures of feeling populating our everyday world.

Structures of feeling afforded by convergent and spreadable media are liminal structures: fluid and always in flux, in a state of permanent novelty, transitionality, and reflexivity (Papacharissi, Streeter, & Gillespie, 2013). Affect is the key variable in measuring the symbolic impact of these stories as we try to understand the intensity with which their symbolism is anticipated, felt, and processed. Still, in order for these stories to generate impact that is beyond symbolic, a variety of contextual factors—better described as *the longue durée*, or the long haul of history—must be considered.

At the same time, the power of evolving stories and the media we use to tell and spread them should not be undermined, as these stories gradually form *the longue durée*; and in the short time frame of the present, they present ways for individuals to claim semantic agency by telling their own story and thus potentially making meaning of and contributing to how a greater

narrative is formed. To a certain extent, people have always sought agency of a semantic nature by wanting to tell their own stories of who they are and how they relate to the world surrounding them. They seek agency by trying to determine how their personal narrative connects to normative and evolving narratives for understanding the world—that is, social experiences in the making. The orality of storytelling has evolved from being primary and interpersonally motivated to secondary and print oriented to digital.⁴ The evolution of oralities and their respective interfaces for telling stories generate their own literacies, which further include and exclude storytellers and their stories. For students of evolving oralities, every artifact tells a story—if one knows how to read it.

Notes

Prelude

1. Political, used here and throughout the volume in the noun form, refers to emergent expressions, orientations, environments, and general modalities of a political nature.

Chapter 1

1. The term *supersurfaces* is popular among architects, as a way of describing spatial possibilities enabled by the technique of folding, so as to show how flat surfaces can be transformed into volumes through cutting, weaving, twisting, winding, and further manipulating woven forms (Vyzoviti, 2001, 2003). I use the term to describe how the discursive spaces rendered by net-based platforms relate to the materiality of physical spaces (Papacharissi, 2010). They extend and pluralize spaces for conversation and mobilization organically, in ways that feel empowering and meaningful. At the same time, without direct connections to the systemic core of civic institutions, their ability to effect institutional change is compromised.

Chapter 2

1. The term “presence” refers to making things visible, and is used elsewhere in relevant literature, most recently in Couldry, N. (2012), *Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice*. Cambridge: Polity.
2. Archives were obtained from the online archive service Twapperkeeper, an online tool for capturing public timelines, or archives, of tweets more extensive than the ones provided by the Twitter API, at the time of data collection. The archives constructed included tweets generated during the aforementioned time period and contained the text of tweets, hashtags, keywords, date and time stamps, and miscellaneous bits of backend information based on user set preferences. Usernames were also included, but were removed from the file for further analysis.
3. Unfortunately, because Arabic characters were not recognizable by the content analysis tools, the approximately 400,000 tweets containing them had to be dropped from the subsequent content and discourse analyses. Nonetheless, given that the focus was on global news, listening practices, and news values, the sample fit the study objectives in spite of this limitation. A total of approximately 1.1 million tweets

utilizing Latin characters, some of which were multilingual, were used for the content and discourse analyses.

4. The frequency analysis was conducted using R and open source scripts available online.
5. SQL scripts were written for the most frequent users addressed by the @ sign, the RT function, and the VIA marker across both the entire time period and on a day-by-day basis. These queries sought to locate and compare individuals, groups, or institutions who became prominent news storytellers across the RT, via, and @ signs.
6. SQL queries against the database provided frequency counts of hashtag usage in tweets across the entire period. These hashtags were mapped against real-world events as they unfolded in the Arab Spring region and were compared with the findings of the centering resonance analysis.
7. Actor-to-actor data matrices were created based on ties of addressivity, and network visualizations were generated through UCINET and Netdraw on subgroups of prominent actors in an effort to further examine the density of ties and the nature of connections among these prominent individuals.
8. A sample of 9,000 tweets was drawn from the #egypt corpus using stratification to ensure the generation of a representative sample. This sample was analyzed using centering resonance analysis (CRA), a mode of computer-assisted network-based text analysis that represents the content of large sets of texts by identifying the most important words that link other words in the network (Corman & Dooley, 2006; Corman, Kuhn, McPhee, & Dooley, 2002). CRA calculates words' influence within texts and sets of texts, using their position in the textual network and specifically the coefficient of betweenness centrality, defined by Corman et al. (2002) as "the extent to which a particular centering word mediates chains of association in the CRA network" (p. 177). Node aggregation of the most influential words is indicative of authors' storytelling practices and preferences, regarding word choice and message construction. The concept of resonance also permits within and across texts comparisons, so as to detect similarities and differences. The more two texts frequently use the same words in influential positions, the more word resonance they have, meaning that communicators tended to these words more, and that these words were prominent in structuring the text's coherence.
9. Preliminary findings from the analysis have been reported in Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira (2012), and Meraz and Papacharissi (2013).
10. The quantitative approach adopted in this analysis—centering resonance analysis—is designed to back out patterns of meanings found on precise mathematical rules, avoiding in this way coder bias (Oliveira & Murphy, 2009). The most influential words are those in black boxes; words with slightly lesser influence have gray boxes; and less influential words are unboxed. The lines in the map depicted levels of associations among words, with darker lines depicting stronger associations (Corman & Dooley, 2006).

Chapter 3

1. See also Meraz and Papacharissi, 2013.
2. Initial findings were first reported in Papacharissi and Meraz, 2012.
3. During the time period that the Occupy movement was monitored in this study through the #ows tag, we noted 40,569 instances of unique hashtags that were used 773,102 times. The top 10% of hashtags, or 4,057 hashtags, were responsible for 92%, or 712,855 of the 773,102 usages, with the most predominant hashtags being #ows, #occupy, #occupywallstreet, #p2, and #tcot. See also Meraz and Papacharissi, 2013, for further detail on these analyses.

Chapter 4

1. Reliability for all content analysis variables was calculated using the Perreault and Leigh (1989) reliability index: $Ir = \{[(Fo/N) - (1/k)][k/(k-1)]\}^{.5}$, for $Fo/n > 1/k$, where Fo is the observed frequency of agreement between coders, N is the total number of judgments, and k is the number of categories. This index accounts for coder chance agreement and the number of categories used and is sensitive to coding weaknesses. Reliability scores range from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating greater intercoder agreement.
2. All correlations reported in this article are statistically significant at $p < .05$, $.01$, or $.001$ levels.

Chapter 5

1. For more extensive documentation of these trends, see Castells (2012), *Networks of Outrage and Hope*.
2. See Douglas (1966) and Chapter 1, where the relationship between form and non-form, structure and disruption, and contagion and affect are explicated.
3. See Douglas (1966).
4. See Ong (1982), but also Galloway (2012).

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Index

Figures and tables are indicated by "f" and "t" following page numbers.

- Actualization, apparatuses of, 15
- Adbusters, 65
- Addressivity markers, 34, 41, 81–84, 82f, 84t
- Affect, 6–29
 - affective formations in, 24–25
 - contagion and, 18–20
 - defined, 12–17
 - effects of, 15–17
 - emotion vs., 13, 15, 21–22
 - granularity of, 120–125, 131–132
 - habituation of, 14
 - ideology and, 3
 - intensity and, 21–22, 118
 - liminality of, 16, 19, 124–125
 - mediality and, 20–24
 - networked structures of feeling in, 26–29
 - of online media, 7–9
 - philosophical understanding of, 9–17
 - potentiality in, 12–14, 17
 - power and, 18–20
 - public feelings and, 116–117
 - as self-narrative, 56
 - value and, 20
- Affect economy, 20, 23
- Affective attunement
 - driven by sentiment-driven modalities, 134
 - evanescent nature of, 4
 - as form of engagement, 25
 - to music, 22
 - narratives and, 135
 - networked publics and, 118–120
 - via radio broadcasts, 3
- Affective demands and the new political, 64–93
 - analyses of, 76–77
 - connective action and electronic elsewheres, 69–73
 - connective action and traction on #ows, 91–93
 - electronic elsewheres, Twitter, and Occupy movement, 67–69
 - modalities of connective action on #ows, 87–91
 - networked content production and
 - connective action on #ows, 77–82, 82f
 - networked gatekeeping, framing, and connective action on #ows, 73–76
 - networked gatekeeping and networked framing on #ows, 83–87, 84t, 86f
- Affective feedback loops, 23
- Affective flow, 9
- Affective formations, 15, 24–25
- Affective gestures
 - affective formations and, 24
 - algorithms and, 119
 - during mobilizations, 57, 62
 - in networked structures of feeling, 28
 - of performativity, 95, 99–100
 - in personal tweets, 101, 110, 114
 - in premediation, 53
 - in refrains, 54
- Affective labor, 20–21
- Affective links, 9
- Affective news, 30–63
 - ambience of, 52–54
 - crowd-sourced elites in, 45–50, 46f
 - form of, 55–60, 57–59f
 - hybridity of news storytelling practices on Twitter in, 42–44
 - instantaneity of, 44–45, 45f

- Affective news (*continued*)
 networked publics and, 60–63
 news values and form on Twitter in, 38–40
 sampling and analysis strategies for, 40–42
 solidarity of, 46, 50–52, 51f
 Twitter as platform for (news) storytelling
 in, 33–38
- Affective patterning, 23
- Affective power, 18–20
- Affective publics, 115–136
 affect, granularity, and liminality in,
 120–125
 affective attunement and networked
 publics in, 118–120
 affective statements and, 129–130
 defined, 125–126
 defining affordances of, 126
 defining tendencies of, 126–133
 digital footprints of, 127–128
 disruptions/interruptions of dominant
 political narratives by, 130–131
 persistence of, 126
 public feelings and affect in, 116–117
 replicability of, 126
 scalability of, 126
 searchability of, 126
 shareability of, 126
 soft structures of engagement and, 115–116
 structures of feeling in, 115–116, 134–136
 support of connective action by, 128–129
 unique materialization of, 127–128
- Affective relationships, 21
- Affective statements, 110–111, 119–120,
 129–130
- Affective variations, 16
- Affect modulation, 23, 118
- Affect shift, 16
- Affectual forms of rationality, 11
- Affect worlds, 117
- Aganaktismenoi*, 119
- Agency, 105–107, 122
- Agonistic pluralism of #ows, 68, 91, 92–93
- Agoras*, 24, 121
- Algorithms, affective gestures and, 119
- Altruistic democracy, 43
- Ambience, 52–54, 131–133
- Analysis strategies, 40–42
- Anarchy, 19
- Apparatuses of actualization, 15
- Arabic characters in tweets, 137–138n3
- Arab Spring movements, 7, 27, 30–31, 32, 61,
 118–119. *See also* Egypt uprising
- Archives for Twitter, 40, 137n2
- Arendt, H., 16
- Arête*, 10
- Aristotle, 10
- “As-if” mode, 95, 107, 109, 114
- Atomized accounts, 39, 41, 44, 60, 62, 128
- Authenticity, politics of, 104–112
- Autobiographical performances, 98, 109
- Barzilai-Nahon, K., 73
- Belief, feeling and, 3
- Belonging, affective tropes of, 117
- Ben Ali, Zine El Abidine, 30
- Bennett, W. L., 25, 70, 71, 128
- Bias, 63
- Bits, 102–103
- Bloom-spaces, 14
- Body, affect and, 14
- Bouazizi, Mohammed, 30
- Boundary spaces, 19
- Bourdieu, P., 122–123
- boyd, d., 19–20, 125–126
- Brain events, 102–103
- Brokerage on #ows, 92
- Bruns, A., 34
- Cage, John, 94
- Carnival, 108
- Causal empiricism, 17
- Censorship, Twitter to bypass, 61
- Centering resonance analysis (CRA), 41,
 50–51, 51f, 138n8, 138n10
- Chorus, 54, 62
- Civic engagement, soft structures of, 115–116
- Closure on #ows, 92
- Coffeehouses, 121
- Cognitive processes, affect and, 12
- Coleman, S., 25
- Collective action, connective action vs.,
 70–71
- Collective engagement on Twitter, 101
- Communicative rationality, 12
- Completion element, 104
- Conative processes, affect and, 12
- Connection, performances of, 90–91
- Connective action
 affective publics and, 135
 collective action vs., 70–71
 electronic elsewheres and, 69–73
 logic and, 25
 modalities on #ows of, 87–91
 networked content production on #ows
 and, 28f, 77–82
 networked gatekeeping and framing on
 #ows and, 73–76
 self-organizing movements and, 71–72
 support by affective publics of, 128–129
 traction on #ows and, 91–93
- Connective continuity and disruption on
 #ows, 88–91

- Connective polysemy on #ows, 87–88
- Contagion, affective, 16, 18–20
- Content analysis, 41, 76–77, 102–104, 139n1 (Ch. 4)
- Content production on #ows, 28*f*, 77–82
- Contestation on #ows, 88–91
- Context collapse, 99, 106
- Continuity on #ows, 88–91
- Conversational markers, 34, 81–82, 82*f*
- Conversational practices of #ows, 67
- Courage in repressive regimes, 62
- CRA. *See* Centering resonance analysis
- Cross-posts, 66
- Crowd-sourced elites, 46–50, 47*f*, 72
- Cultural engagement, 120–121
- Declarative statements on #ows, 91–92
- Deleuze, G., 13, 14
- Deliberate spontaneity, 111
- Democracy of emotion, 25
- Descartes, René, 10–11
- Digital fluency, 113
- Digital footprints of affective publics, 127–128
- Direct democracy deliberative protocols of Occupy Wall Street, 65–66
- Disconnected individuals, 47
- Discontent in movements, 119
- Discourse analysis, 41–42, 51–52, 53, 77, 101–102
- Discursive statements on #ows, 91
- Disembedding, 113
- Disorder, 19
- Disruption on #ows, 88–91
- Dissension, 80, 81, 88–91, 118–119
- Douglas, Mary, 18, 19, 28
- Dramas, 102–103
- Dreaming, public, 98, 107
- Dynamic storytelling, 60–61
- Eastern philosophy, affect vs. reason in, 11
- Egypt uprising (#egypt), 30–63
 - 2011 protests in, 6
 - ambience of, 52–54, 132
 - connective action in, 128–129
 - crowd-sourced elites in, 46–50, 47*f*
 - form of, 55–60, 57–59*f*
 - hybridity of news storytelling practices on Twitter in, 42–44
 - instantaneity of, 44–45, 45*f*
 - leadership in, 6, 46–50, 47*f*
 - networked publics and, 60–63
 - news values and form on Twitter in, 38–40
 - protests leading to resignation of Mubarak in, 32–33, 40
 - public feelings and affect in, 117
 - sampling and analysis strategies for, 40–42
 - solidarity of, 46, 50–52, 51*f*
 - Twitter as platform for (news) storytelling in, 33–38
- Electronic elsewheres, 24–25, 67–73
- Elites, crowd-sourced, 46–50, 47*f*, 72
- Eltahawy, Mona, 47, 50
- Emergence, affect and, 13–14
- Emotion, 3, 10, 13, 15, 21–22, 25. *See also* Feeling
- Emotional contagion, 16, 18–20
- Emotional release, 110, 113–114
- Endogenous hashtags, 34
- Engagement, 8–9, 115–116
- Enlightenment Age, affect vs. reason in, 10–11
- Entman, R. M., 52
- Eponymizing, 110
- Ethnocentrism, 43
- Events, 55–60, 62–63
- Exaggeration, 104, 106
- Exogenous hashtags, 34
- Faces, 96
- Fantasy, 95, 107, 109, 114
- Feeling. *See also* Emotion
 - affect vs., 21–22
 - of being counted, 25
 - of being there, 32
 - belief and, 3
 - networked structures of, 26–29, 115–116, 117, 134–136
 - soft structures of, 32, 117, 133
- Fiske, John, 88
- Fragmentation, 104, 106
- Framing, networked. *See* Networked framing
- Frequency analysis, 41, 138n4
- Gans, H. J., 43
- Gatekeeping, networked. *See* Networked gatekeeping
- General assemblies of Occupy Wall Street, 65–66
- Geolocality, 35, 37, 67, 72
- Gergen, K. J., 108, 111
- Ghonim, Wael, 46, 50
- Giddens, A., 25
- Goffman, E., 96
- Granularity of affect, 120–125, 131–132
- Greece, military junta and student uprisings in, 1–3
- Gregg, M., 14, 16, 17
- Grusin, R., 23
- Guattari, P. F., 13, 60
- Habermas, J., 11–12
- Habituation of affect, 14

- Habitus
 algorithmically rendered materiality and, 119
 of civic engagement, 115, 126
 of communication, 97
 defined, 123
 of internet, 7
 #ows and, 128, 132
 personal as political on Twitter and, 112–114
 of pleasurable practices, 14
 reflexivity and, 124
 of social media, 31
 sociocultural context of technology and, 122–124
- Hardt, M., 20
- Hartley, J., 39, 42, 44
- Hashtags
 #egypt, nature of, 43, 51
 endogenous vs. exogenous, 34
 locality of, 35, 88
 within #ows, 66, 70, 85, 86*f*, 138*n*3
 play and, 106
 provocation in, 108–109
 retweeting and, 35–36
 as storytelling devices, 70
 trending. *See* Trending hashtags
- Hat tip convention, 36
- Hermida, A., 37
- Hobbes, Thomas, 11
- Homophily
 affective connections and, 24
 in content analysis, 41
 on #ows, 66, 68, 72–73
 technology and, 121–122
 Twitter as platform for storytelling and, 35–37
- Human microphones, 66
- Hume, David, 11
- Humor, 106, 108
- Hurricane Katrina, 56–57
- Hybrid environments, 25, 42–44
- Ibrahim, Gigi, 46
- Ideology, affect and, 3
- Immaterial labor, 20–21
- Immediacy, storytelling and, 4
- Improvisation, 111
- In-between bond, 9, 14, 16, 20
- Incomplete movements, 104, 106
- Indignados* movements, 6, 7, 64, 119
- Indignation, 6, 119
- Information control, 37–38, 61
- Information sharing, 61, 67, 90
- Instantaneity, 44–45, 45*f*
- Intensity, affect and, 21–22, 118
- Intention element, 104
- Intersubjective reproducibility, 58, 59, 59*f*
- Iran, 2009 elections in, 31, 37–38
- Irony, 108
- Isolates, 47
- Jouissance*, 110
- Kairos*, 13, 16, 116
- Kant, Immanuel, 11
- Karamanlis, Constantine, 2
- Khatib, Dima, 49
- Knowledge, reason and, 11
- Kroger, R., 41–42, 77
- Labor, affective, 20–21
- Lang, G. E., 55, 63
- Lang, K., 55, 63
- Language in personal performances of self, 97, 106
- Lasn, Kalle, 65
- Leaders
 in collective action, 70–71
 in Egypt uprising, 6, 46–50, 47*f*
 in Occupy Wall Street, 6, 68, 71–72, 87, 92–93, 127
 opinion, 35, 46, 55, 82
 thought, 81, 83, 85
- Lefebvre, H., 20
- Leigh, L., 139*n*1 (Ch. 4)
- Lim, M., 61
- Liminality of affect, 16, 19, 124–125, 131
- Lippmann, Walter, 4, 63, 130
- Live news event, 55
- Locality on Twitter, 35, 88
- Locke, John, 11
- The Long Revolution* (Williams), 115
- Macrodramas, 102–103
- Magnitude of performance, 102–103
- Marginality, 19
- Massumi, B., 13–14, 15, 17, 18, 56, 91
- Mattering maps, 23
- Media elites, 46, 47–48
- Mediality, affect and, 20–24
- Mediation of democratic feeling, 25
- Megaphone, social media as, 62
- “Me-now” status messages, 100–101, 105
- Mentions
 on #ows, 81–82, 82*f*, 83, 84*f*
 in personal tweets, 102, 105
 on Twitter, 36, 54
- Microbits, 102–103
- Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region, 30, 32, 33, 64, 122
- Mimicry, 58

- Mini-performances of self, 104–112
- Mobilization, 8, 61–62
- Moderatism, 43
- Mood indicators, 56
- Moore, Michael, 83
- Morsi, Mohamed, 4
- Movements, 71–72, 119
- Mubarak, Hosni
 downfall of, 4
 protests against, 6, 30, 32–33, 117
 resignation of, 40, 45, 53
- Music, 21, 22, 93, 134
- #MuslimRage, 133
- Mutable self, 111
- Narratives. *See* Storytelling
- Negativity, 43
- Negri, A., 20
- Network analyses, 41, 76–77
- Networked content production on #ows, 28f, 77–82
- Networked digitality, 119
- Networked framing
 in affective news, 60–61
 always-on or ambient, 75
 defined, 74–75
 on #ows, 73–76, 85–87, 86f
 solidarity and, 50–52, 51f
 structures of feeling and, 135
- Networked gatekeeping
 in affective news, 60–61
 by crowd-sourced elites, 48–50
 defined, 48, 73
 on #ows, 73–76, 83–87, 84f
 personal reactions in, 49–50
 structures of feeling and, 135
- Networked publics
 affective attunement and, 118–120
 affective news and, 60–63
 affective publics as, 125–126
 defined, 19–20
 defining affordances of, 125–126
 on #egypt, 39, 47, 59
 formation of, 8–9, 20, 24
 hashtags and, 34, 100
 networked gatekeeping and framing and, 48, 76
 on #ows, 85, 92, 117
 sociocultural context of technology and, 122
 Twitter and, 37
- Networked self, 99, 101, 105–107, 112–113
- Networked structures of feeling, 26–29, 115–116, 117, 134–136
- New political, 5, 137n1 (Prelude)
 affective demands and. *See* Affective demands and the new political
- News, affective. *See* Affective news
- News frames, 39
- News organizations, Twitter use by, 36–37
- News storytelling, Twitter as platform for, 33–38, 42–44
- News values, 38–40, 42, 43–44
- Nigeria, 2007 election in, 37
- 99% movement, 65, 79, 86–87, 88, 89, 92
- Nongovernment organizations (NGOs), 71
- Nonlinear affective narratives, 57–58, 57f, 58f
- November 17 movement, 2–3
- #NSAPickUpLines, 133
- Obama, Michelle, 133
- Occupy (movement generally), 6, 7, 27
- Occupy Boston, 79
- Occupy Homes Nationwide, 79
- Occupy LA, 79
- Occupy Oakland, 79
- Occupy Wall Street (#ows), 64–93
 agonistic pluralism of, 68, 91, 92–93
 ambient streams on, 132
 analyses of, 76–77
 background of, 64–67
 brokerage and closure with, 92
 connective action and electronic
 elsewheres with, 69–73
 connective action and traction on, 91–93
 conversational practices of, 67
 declarative vs. discursive statements on, 91–92
 direct democracy deliberative protocols of, 65–66
 dissenters on, 80, 81, 88–91
 electronic elsewheres and Twitter and, 67–69
 information sharing on, 67, 90
 leadership in, 6, 68, 71–72, 87, 92–93, 127
 modalities of connective action on, 87–91
 networked content production and
 connective action on, 77–82, 82f
 networked gatekeeping and networked
 framing on, 73–76, 83–87, 84f, 86f
 opinion sharing on, 90–91
 principle of connective action in, 129
 public feelings and affect in, 117
 solidarity with, 80–81, 88–91
 technologies and platforms used by, 66
- Offline events, 62–63
- Olsen, Scott, 79
- Ong, W. J., 131
- Online events, 62–63
- Online media, affect of, 7–9
- Opinion leaders on Twitter, 35
- Opinion sharing on #ows, 67, 90–91

- Organizational purposes, Twitter for, 61
 #ows. *See* Occupy Wall Street
- Parts in performance, 96–97
- Performances of self, personal. *See* Personal performances of self
- Perreault, W., 139n1 (Ch. 4)
- Persistence of networked publics, 126
- Personal action frames, 70–71
- Personal as political. *See* Personal performances of self
- Personal engagement on Twitter, 101
- Personalizable action frames, 74–76
- Personalized action formations, 70–71
- Personal narratives, 98
- Personal performances of self, 95–102
 actual vs. potential selves in, 96, 99
 affective gestures of performativity in, 95, 99–100
 affective statements in, 110–111
 agency in, 105–107
 autobiographical performances in, 98
 content analysis of, 102–104, 139n1 (Ch. 4)
 context collapse in, 99, 106
 definition of performance in, 95–96
 discourse analysis of, 101–102
 faces in, 96
 language in, 97
 magnitudes of performance in, 102–103
 mini-performances of self in, 104–112
 networked self in, 99, 101, 105–107
 parts and routines in, 96–97
 performative incoherence in, 99, 106, 107
 performativity in, 107–112
 play in, 95, 98, 103–104, 105–112
 power in, 107–112
 provocation in, 108–109, 110
 public feelings and affect in, 117
 repetition in, 97
 restored actions in, 97
 social benefits vs. privacy costs of, 94–95
 social saturation in, 98–99, 106, 108
 subjunctive mode in, 97–98
 on Twitter, 112–114
- Personal politic, 99–100
- Phatic communication
 addressivity markers in, 35, 72
 affective gestures of performativity in, 95, 97, 99, 101, 113
 affectively accessed power and, 19
 in affective news, 55, 59
 connective continuity and disruption in, 88, 90
 endogenous hashtags in, 34
 in networked framing, 76
 personalized action frames in, 71
 play in, 103
 in third places, 25
- Plato, 10
- Play
 content analysis of, 103–014
 defined, 103
 length of message and, 106–107
 networked self, agency and, 105–107
 performativity and, 98, 107–112
 power and, 107–112
 as public dreaming, 98, 107
 on Twitter, 95
- Pluralization
 of administration of news flows, 48
 affective gestures and, 28
 by connective action, 92, 129
 of conversations, 41, 122
 by internet, 8
 of narratives, 40, 48, 63, 74, 130–131
 by online media, 26
 by #ows, 68, 73–75, 87, 89, 92
 subjective pluralism in, 48–49, 56, 78
 by supersurfaces, 137n1 (Ch. 1)
 by technology, 121–122
- Political, defined, 5, 137n1 (Prelude)
- Political actors on #ows, 83–84
- Political impact of personal tweets, 112–114
- Polyphony
 of affective news, 60
 networked gatekeeping and framing and, 73–74
 of #ows, 78, 82, 83, 106, 127, 130
- Polysemy
 of affective publics, 131
 on #ows, 87–88, 91
 of personal performances, 99, 101, 106, 112
- Potentiality in affect, 12–14, 17, 28, 56
- Power, 18–20, 107–112
- Power laws for #ows, 83–85, 84t, 86f
- Premediation, 53, 57, 62, 69
- “Presence,” 37, 137n1 (Ch. 2)
- Prodisage, 34, 125
- Profanity, 108–111
- Progressive stack model of Occupy Wall Street, 65–66
- Prominent actors, 41, 46–47, 77, 138n5, 138n7
- Provocation in personal tweets, 108–109, 110
- Pseudoenvironment, 4, 63
- Public dreaming, play as, 98, 107
- Public feelings, affect and, 116–117
- Public figures on #ows, 83–84
- Publics. *See* Affective publics; Networked publics
- Public sphere, 26

- Puerta del Sol call to action, 64
Purity and Danger (Douglas), 18
- Qualitative textual analysis techniques, 41–42
- Radio broadcasts during military junta and student uprisings in Greece, 1–3, 134
- Rationality, 3, 9–12, 26–27
- Re-embedding, 113
- Reflexivity, habitus and, 124
- Refrains, 54, 62, 78
- Rehearsed movements, 111
- Reordering, 103–104, 105–106
- Repetition, 58, 104, 106
- Replicability of networked publics, 126
- Replies in personal tweets, 102, 105
- Repressive regimes, courage in, 62
- Reproducibility, intersubjective, 58, 59, 59*f*
- Restored actions, 97, 103, 111
- Retweeting (RT)
 on #egypt, 35–36, 54
 on #ows, 81–82, 82*f*, 83, 84–85, 84*f*
 in personal tweets, 102, 105
- Robertson, Nick, 46
- Robinson, S., 56–57
- Role modeling, 95
- Role-play, 95
- Routines, 96–97
- RT. *See* Retweeting
- Saeed, Khaled, 46, 50, 61
- Sajuria, J., 92
- Sampling techniques, 40–42
- Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, 133
- Scalability of networked publics, 99, 126
- Scenes, 102–103
- Schechner, R., 102, 103
- Searchability of networked publics, 99, 126
- Sedgwick, E. K., 98
- Seeger, A., 25, 70, 71, 128
- Seif, Mona, 46
- Seigworth, G., 14, 16, 17
- Self
 actual vs. potential, 96, 99
 mutable, 111
 networked, 99, 101, 105–107, 112–113
 personal performances of. *See* Personal performances of self
- Self-narrative, 56, 98
- Self-organizing movements, 71–72
- Self-presentation and performance, 96
- Self-referential tweets, 100, 112, 113
- Self-reflexivity, 108
- Shareability by networked publics, 126
- Shared affective states, 16, 18–20
- Sieben, J., 61
- Signs, 102–103
- Social awareness platform, Twitter as, 100–101
- Social experiences in solution, 115–116
- Social saturation, 98–99, 106, 108
- Sociocultural context, 121–122
- Soft structures
 of engagement, 115–116
 of feeling, 32, 117, 133
- Solidarity
 in Egypt uprising, 46, 50–52, 51*f*
 geolocal, 37, 67, 72
 in movements, 6
 of networked publics, 9
 with Occupy Wall Street (#ows), 78–81, 83, 86–91
- Solidarity Park (Los Angeles), 79
- Spain, *Indignados* movement in, 6, 7, 64, 119
- Spinoza, Baruch, 11, 12, 13
- Spontaneity, deliberate, 111
- Status updates, 56
- Storytelling
 in affective attunement, 4–5
 as dynamic process, 60–61
 hashtags in, 70
 hybrid forms of, 27, 42–44
 nonlinear affective narratives in, 57–58, 57*f*, 58*f*
 qualitative analysis of, 48
 subjective pluralism of, 48–49
 turning event into story via, 55–60
 Twitter as platform for, 33–38
- Stratified random sampling of #ows, 76
- Structures of feeling, 26–29, 115–116, 117, 134–136
- Subjective pluralism, 48–49, 56, 78
- Subjunctive mode in personal performances of self, 97–98
- Supersurfaces, 20, 129, 137n1 (Ch. 1)
- Tagging, 109–110
- Tea Party movement, 80, 120, 131
- Technologies
 affective gestures and, 119
 affective publics and, 125–127
 habitus and, 123–124
 impact of, 7–8, 120–122
 medialities of, 24, 118
 of mood indicators, 56
 narratives and, 5
 networked publics and, 19
 of news organizations, 40
 in Occupy movement, 66, 71, 74, 81
 in personal performances of self, 94, 98, 99
 that facilitate affective formations, 15, 20

- Textual analysis techniques, 41–42, 77
- Third places, 24–25
- TNS Political and Social, 76
- Tomkins, S., 22, 118
- Tonality
 - of affective publics, 116, 126, 128
 - of networked publics, 76
 - of personal tweets, 106, 109, 112
 - polyphonic, 60
- Trending hashtags
 - affective processes that drive, 27
 - affective publics and, 127, 129, 130
 - in personal performances of self, 96, 100–102, 103, 106
- Tulip Revolution, 31
- Turner, Victor, 124–125
- Twapperkeeper, 40, 137n2
- Twitter
 - addressivity and conversational markers on, 34
 - affect on, 27–29
 - ambience on, 52–54
 - Arabic characters on, 137–138n3
 - archives for, 40, 137n2
 - to bypass censorship, 37–38
 - crowd-sourced elites on, 46–50, 47f
 - electronic elsewheres and Occupy movement on, 67–69
 - hashtags on. *See* Hashtags
 - homophily on, 35, 37
 - hybridity of news storytelling practices on, 42–44
 - for information sharing vs. organizational purposes, 61
 - instantaneity on, 44–45, 45f
 - locality on, 35
 - mentions on, 36
 - networked publics and, 37
 - news organizations' use of, 36–37
 - news values and form of news on, 38–40
 - opinion leaders on, 35
 - personal and collective engagement on, 101
 - personal as political on, 112–114
 - as platform for storytelling, 33–38
 - prominent actors on, 41, 46–47, 138n5, 138n7
 - reasons for using, 100–101
 - retweeting on, 35–36
 - as social awareness platform, 100–101
 - solidarity on, 46, 50–52, 51f
 - via marker on, 36
- Values
 - affect and, 20
 - news. *See* News values
- van Gennepe, Arnold, 124
- Via addressivity markers, 36, 54, 81–82, 82f, 83, 84f
- Vigiglobe, 76
- Virality
 - of affect, 17, 27
 - ambient streams and, 133
 - networked structures of feeling and, 27, 28, 116
 - of #ows, 6
 - of personalized action frames, 71
 - scalability and, 126
 - Twitter as platform for storytelling and, 35–36, 41
- Vulgarity, 108–111
- Washington, D.C., Occupy movement in, 79
- Watson, Ivan, 46
- “We are the 99%” slogan, 65, 79, 86–87, 88, 89, 92
- Weber, Max, 11
- Wedeman, Ben, 46, 49
- Williams, Raymond, 115–116, 117
- Wolf, Naomi, 79
- Wood, L., 41–42, 77
- Word frequency on Twitter, 41, 138n6, 138n8
- Zuccotti Park (New York City), 65, 79