FROM ARAB SPRING TO ZUCCOTTI PARK: DIGITAL MEDIA PRACTICES AND THE

SHIFTING POLITICS OF VISIBILITY

by

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(Under the Direction of James F. Hamilton)

ABSTRACT

Recent protest movements and projects of dissent have drawn attention to the ways that digital technologies and media practices create popular perceptions of political projects. This dissertation investigates the way that media practices, digital technologies, and strategies of self-representation overlap and form a "politics of visibility," or the means by which events, issues, individuals, and phenomena are made broadly sensible.

Traditional studies of media and journalism often focus on the level of professional practice, subsuming human agency to the workings of technology or relegating technology solely to the realm of inert practice. This projects attempts to keep both technological and human agency relevant by using the work of Michel Foucault, Bruno Latour, and Félix Guattarri as a theoretical foundation to argue that technologies, communication practices, and social action overlap in a way that makes events intelligible at moments of representation. By understanding visibility as something that is produced, this dissertation argues that observers can understand the shifting power relations embedded in that visibility. Furthermore, new forms of visibility may have consequences on the production of politics and the relations of power.

After an initial chapter that introduces the study and offers the rationale and theoretical genealogy of the "politics of visibility," the subsequent chapters deal with key moments in the production of the politics of visibility. Following chapters analyze the cell phone camera as a device implicated in the production of visibility, and posit both the Occupy Wall Street protests and the "Arab Spring" as key events made intelligible through shifting technological relations and communication practices. This dissertation concludes positing that visibility is a site of broadly conceived contestation, where informal rules of discourse may circulate, but the strategic apprehension of those rules and shifting technologies allows certain groups to articulate their own politics with strategic regard to their own political and historical moment.

INDEX WORDS: media, communication, technology, digital studies, politics of visibility, Bruno Latour, Felix Guattari, Michel Foucault, discourse, cell phone camera, Occupy Wall Street, Arab Spring

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DEDICATION

For Lucy, Wendy, and I.B., who were a constant and comforting presence during the

writing of this project. For Ida, whose well of support knows no bottom. And for all the family,

everywhere, with thoughtful questions, nods of encouragement, and sincere pats on the back.

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INTRODUCTION

I came to the idea for this study in mid-2011, struck by images of protests in the Middle

East and North Africa and very much caught up in the seemingly emblematic possibilities of the

"Arab Spring." As protesters gathered in New York's Zuccotti Park in September that year,

popular press reports linked the nascent Occupy Wall Street Movement with the persistent

dissent in Middle Eastern and North African countries, often citing the use of social media and

digital technologies as a common theme in both protests, despite divergent geographic, political,

and historical contexts.[1] Such media reports and discourses troubled me, as they betrayed a

casual techno-determinism and overt essentializing of liberal democratic values into the circuitry

of social media and digital technologies. Furthermore, these reports tended to posit the Arab

Spring and Occupy Wall Street movement as inevitabilities that extended from a democratic

subjectivity yearning to be expressed.

Still, these events seemed consequential, portending a shift in the way events are made

sensible via practices of media representation. A conceptual vocabulary that accounted for both

the role of technology and individual strategies of dissent, but did not sublimate one to the other

was needed. Though many media reports and coverage of these protests essentialized democratic

subjectivity to the technologies used in the protest, these technologies seemed to at least shift the

forms of representation available to dissenting groups. Furthermore, one could not ignore the

political, historical, geographic, and cultural factors presaging these protests, nor the tactics of

dissent deployed by the protesters. Most of all, many of the discourses surrounded these events circulated via journalism, whose practices created means for making these events publicly intelligible.

In order to account for Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring as events made sensible through public discourse, this dissertation posits a specific consequentiality to the technologies and practices of representation underscoring these events. As such, I posit the "politics of means by which certain practices of representation can have epistemological and political consequences. This study will explicate the politics of visibility in full, using the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street movement as case studies in particular aspects of the politics of visibility. As a concept, the politics of visibility posits that the practices that phenomena, events, and issues, and thus sensible, offer opportunities for disjuncture and possibility. For the purposes of this study, digital technologies, modes of self-representation, and forms of media practice offer the key sites of inquiry where discernible practices can be traced and explicated.

Method of Inquiry

This study seeks to examine the shifting politics of visibility as they are subject to changing communications practices by launching a series of case studies on the use of communications technologies and practices within the Occupy movement and Arab Spring protests.

To understand how these events were produced as objects of concern, this study addresses the general question of how communication practices give visible form to these events. More specifically, the study addresses the following related questions:

1)   What is the interaction between communication practices, digital technologies, and

        individual and group subjectivity in the production of visibility?

2)   How did social agents deploy communications practices and technologies as a strategy of

        representation?

3)   How did traditional journalistic practices create a grid of intelligibility for understanding

        these events?

Sources

I chose the Occupy movement and the Arab Spring as case studies because media

attention circulated heavily both around these events and the way in which news practitioners

covered them. These events act as the sites where a variety of practices, groups and discursive

objects converged to produce public knowledge.

This study will rely upon primary source documents, videos, images culled from

materials produced by amateurs and professionals across various digital and traditional media.

This analysis will also consider the capabilities of each digital platform where materials

appeared. From YouTube to Twitter to Tumblr, these platforms each have their own aesthetic

elements, barriers to access, and structure of communication, so they will be analyzed as specific

tools whose capabilities groups and individuals strategically utilize. I will focus only on objects

that appeared in public platforms and not venture into digital spaces guarded by personal

passwords and firewalls to harvest data for this project.

In considering the way that certain events become objects of public concern, it is

important to also consider materials produced by traditionally authoritative journalistic outlets

(*New York Times, The Guardian, NBC News, CNN, Slate.com, Salon.com, The Atlantic, The New Yorker),* which published articles that offer evidence of how journalism, as a discipline, created the knowledge surrounding these events. Also, trade publications (i.e. *Editor and Publisher, Society of Professional Journalists' Annual Report*, various reports from think tanks like the Nieman Foundation and Poynter Institute) and academic scholarship (i.e. published in journals like *Journalism*, *the Columbia Journalism Review*, *Journalism Studies*, and *American Journalism*) offer documents that further reveal the rationalities that guide the production of daily news.

Analysis

This study seeks to treat all sources as constitutive of a broadly defined and dynamically changing assemblage that produces visibility, a key moment at which certain phenomena are documented, made perceptible, and thus granted meaning and consequence. Locating each element with a network of relationships avoids the trap of ascribing absolute determinism to a single source. Instead, it allows the proposed project to argue that the politics of visibility are produced through the relationships between journalism as a discipline, shifting perceptive abilities enabled by technologies, and the particular political projects and texts created by certain social agents. This schema reveals an interplay between sources, theory, and analysis that renders shifting techniques of subjectivity and agency visible.

The work of this study is necessarily interpretive, and I intend to engage in a form of analysis and writing that is inductive and deductive in its reflexivity, so as to demonstrate how the texts and the methods of interpretation support the central claim of this research: that these

protests serve as moments where shifting practices of communication and representation are indicative of a changing politics of visibility. Practically speaking, this means engaging in a variety of rhetorical modes, including directly noting large themes from across the broad range of materials, using single objects as examples of the type of theoretical issue at hand, juxtaposing images, documents, quotes, and videos in order to elucidate broader theoretical points and apparent tensions between objects. Reading broadly and deeply will allow me to use the most appropriate examples to elucidate the key issues while keeping the other materials as an unarticulated backdrop that forms a broader understanding of the attendant theoretical concerns

Such methods are necessarily rooted in a legitimate and verifiable record, where calls for interpretive moves make more pressing the necessity for a clear logic of interpretation, where the explanatory power of particular texts is clearly evident and rooted in a logical schema that does not pull individual texts far afield of their original contexts. Speaking to a similar, rigorous genealogical method that is careful to consider certain epistemological contingencies, Foucault has said that such claims do not "obviate the need for traditional epistemological support including 'textual references, citation of authorities, drawing connections between texts and facts, suggesting schemes of intelligibility, offering different types of explanation."[2] This quote echoes the rigor involved in gathering texts, images, and documents into an archive, as similar studies have sought sources from a variety of contexts, used secondary analyses to establish historical and cultural contexts as well conceptual milieus while also working to locate particular documents within a broader interpretive schema that adheres to an intelligible rationality at play.[3]

This project will analyze these materials as they form the intelligible parts of a range of practices that produce visibility. While it is tempting to treat these materials as either the

inductive or deductive evidence of larger cultural and social forces, it is perhaps more productive to treat them as constitutive elements and practices within what Foucault calls a "grid of intelligibility" that gives discernible form to a range of subject positions from which a "politics of visibility" can be effectuated.[4] By understanding these materials in relation to a range of practices, this project may articulate the ways in which practices, aesthetics, individuals, and groups make certain subjects positions visible and in turn, gives rise to what appear to be new objects of concern, politics, and possibility.

Practices is an expansive term, but in the context of the following study should be understood as the modes of production, interpretation, and meaning-making that give a sensible form to what can be understood about events. A focus on practices allows us to assert that media texts, as historical artifacts, are implicated in the creation of popular understanding surrounding a certain event, issue, or object of knowledge. For instance, this approach means understanding journalism as a discipline and institution whose historical formation is linked to the conceptualization, production, and preservation of power in a liberal democratic society, and as such, provides a mode of discursive formation whereby publicly-held knowledge is produced, circulated, and inflected with the dominant relations of power, what Nolan has called "a mechanism through which various other disciplines and critical discourses enter into public dialogue and contestation."[5]

Outline of the Study

This study moves in five chapters, each explicating part of the broader politics of visibility at play. Chapter 1 explicates the politics of visibility by first recovering key concepts

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from communications research into digital technologies, the practice of journalism, and modes of dissent. The chapter's argument recovers visibility as a concept from theorists that have posited visibility and perception as stable phenomena linked to a discernible reality. This chapter uses post-structuralist theories to trace visibility and perception as the result of technologically-inscribed practices that make possible certain forms of knowledge and power.

With an understanding of visibility explicated in the first chapter, Chapter 2 turns to the cell phone camera as a key digital device implicated in the contemporary production of visibility. This chapter looks at the cell phone as a site where practices of representation and technological possibility converge, arguing that neither is deterministic of the other. As such, this chapter argues that in the practice of photography, the cell phone camera should be considered as similar to lens focal length, in that both provide productive, practical restraints on the capture of images, but do preclude the professional practices or regimes of meaning-making the resultant images are immersed within.

Chapter 3 then expands the scope of analysis, using the Occupy Wall Street movement as a case study for understanding the practices of self-representation that undergird the production of visibility. Such practices are multi-faceted, but this chapter looks at three aspects: the ways such practices made class relations and inequality sensible as an object of critique, the ways such practices made the exercise of police power visible, and the ways such practices were deployed to construct the movement as cohesive, yet dynamic.

Chapter 4 then incorporates the concerns of Chapters 2 and 3 into a broader analytic scheme that looks at journalism as a form of public knowledge production, where professional practices make events, issues, individuals, and groups broadly sensible within its meaning-

making regime. This chapter looks at how these practices are capable of shifting to accommodate new technologies and new forms of self-representation while preserving the discipline's epistemological authority, arguing that through these practices of representation, journalism is capable of articulating the consequentiality of an event or issue onto the broader relations of institutional power within a modern liberal democracy.

The conclusion, Chapter 5, offers a summary of the preceding chapters and the rationale for the study. It concludes the dissertation by taking seriously the notion of political failure in relation to the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, interrogating failure as a discursive category and the means by which political failure can be determined in relation to these movements, noting that such notions of political failure come with attendant assumptions about the way power is put to work. The chapter ends by looking at possible areas of future scholarship with a particular interest in how the "politics of visibility" can be used as a term for exploring and explicating other media-related phenomena.

Notes to the Introduction

[1] C.f. Peter Apps, "Wall Street action part of global 'Arab Spring'?" *Reuters*, October 11, 2011. http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/11/uk-global-politics-protest-idUSLNE79A03Z20111011.; Anne-Marie Slaughter, "Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring," *The Atlantic*, October 7, 2011. http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/10/occupy-wall-street-and-the-arab-spring/246364/.; Rebecca Solnit, "How the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street started with one Tunisian Man," *Mother Jones,* October 18, 2011. http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/10/arab-spring-occupy-wall-street-protests.

[2] Michel Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault," in P*ower: The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Fabion (London: Penguin, 2000), 242.

[3] C.f. Barbara Biesecker, "No Time for Mourning: The Rhetorical Production of the Melancholic Citizen-Subject in the War on Terror." in *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 40, no. 1 (2007), 147-167.; Ronald W. Greene, "Y Movies: Film and the Modernization of Pastoral Power." in *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. 2, no. 1 (2005), 19-36.; and Jeremy Packer, *Mobility Without Mayhem: Cars, Safety, and Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

[4] Michel Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College du France 1978-1979*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, NY: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2008), 3.

[5] David Nolan, "Media Governmentality, Howardism and the Hanson Effect," in *International Journal of Humanities*, 1, (2003), 1371.

CHAPTER 1

THE POLITICS OF VISIBILITY AS AN ASSEMBLAGE OF TECHNOLOGY, SELF-REPRESENTATION, AND MEDIA PRACTICES

In the wake of the "Arab Spring" protests, media commenters remarked on how protesters used mobile phones and social media such as Facebook and Twitter to engage in dissent in ways that seemed impossible before. *Time* magazine named the protester its person of the year, noting how the self-immolation of a Tunisian street-vendor gained global political currency in part because images taken by smart phones quickly made their way onto the Internet, where blogs and news reports alike appended meaning onto his actions.[1] As dissent spread from Tunisia to Egypt, Libya, Syria and beyond, protestors attempted to mobilize attention to their causes by using smart phones and Internet-based distribution software to distribute their political positions and the abuses of state power across global communication networks. American publications, websites, and television stations picked up these images of protests from regions where their reporters and cameras could not penetrate and, in doing so, granted these images legitimacy within American media.

Elsewhere, in Zucotti Park, New York City, a group of protesters took up residence along Wall Street in an act of dissent kicked off by a missive in *ADBusters*, which admonished people to make their way into Zucotti Park and "Occupy Wall Street."[2] Despite the organization's vibrant, affective ad depicting a ballet dancer precariously perched atop of Wall Street's symbolic

bull statue with an ominous mass of people in the background, the magazine has publicly denied any responsibility for the ensuing highly publicized protests, lending credence to the common assumption that the protests "came from nowhere."[3] Likewise, while protesters themselves did not make explicit demands nor state a specific political purpose, they used mobile and social media to establish a communitarian style of self-organization, articulate their particular style of dissent, establish the rules and models of dissent to share with other groups, and document and publicize the exercise of police power against these protests.

Despite their differences, the Occupy and Arab Spring protests were events where these power relations not only shifted in ways that could be traced through discourses surrounding these events, but whose effects can also be assessed through the myriad discourses, images, and practices surrounding these movements. In the study of media and communication, these movements typify concerns about the nature of representation that come with shifting technological trends in media and journalism. For the following study, I propose a perspective for understanding the ways that social agents, communication practices, power relations, disciplines, and technologies form an assemblage that produce visible phenomena in a way that has immediate consequences for contemporary political praxis.[4]

In order to study the ways that these protests typify concerns about politics, subjectivity, and changing modes of digital representation, I propose a theoretical argument that attempts to locate within the Occupy and Arab Spring protests a distinctive shift within what I call the "politics of visibility." I mean this term to label the conflation of a seemingly natural phenomenon (what is visible, and thus perceptible and intelligible) with the dynamically shifting power relations of political representation, deliberation, and social unrest. I will go into more

detail about the politics of visibility as the central problematic later on in this chapter, but, for now, I want to provisionally define the phrase as an assemblage where digital technologies, practices of self-representation, and forms of media practice cohere in order to create modes of intelligibility that configure certain events, phenomena, and issues as part of what Latour has called collective "matters of concern."[5]

Though it is easy to dismiss analyses of social media's role in 2011's protests as techno-determinism, this project attempts to account for the way technological agency emerges through interaction with human praxis. Though the dominant narrative presented across certain journalistic outlets touted the movements' use of social media technology to organize and distribute their positions, these narratives reflect more fully media-practitioners' concern about social media technology than actual revolutionary or democratic potential located in the technologies.[6] However, in the months following the surge of the protests, political relations did not seismically shift, and, as a journalist recently noted, "Many governments struggling with dissent appear to be using a double-barreled strategy to fight back against the so-called Facebook revolutions: classic repression and by promoting their own views using the very same platforms."[7] Aside from articulating a relationship between digital technologies, this study will also argue that one should not overtly discredit the importance and energy of the Arab Spring and Occupy movements because, as events, they opened up the possibility of articulating new modes of politics, dissent, activism, and forms of representation into globalized media systems where digital technologies provide a key site of disjuncture.

Critical Literature Review

In order to begin this study, it is important to recover key concerns from the literatures that deal with communications and technology, media practice, and political dissent and self-representation. Underlying this range of scholarship are conceptions about the relation between communication, technology, representation, and individual agency. These conceptions need to be explicated so that this dissertation's proposed argument—that shifting strategies of communication and technology praxis belie a complex politics of visibility that escapes current theoretical formulations—expands beyond conventional paradigms of "agency," "structure," "technological emancipation," or "agenda setting." The following literature review will recover key concepts and approaches from each field of research in order to articulate a politics of visibility that does not privilege and reduce the terms of the project to a singular understanding of media practice, technology, or political dissent.

Communication and Technology

This section will recover notions of technologically mediated subjectivity and agency from within media research so that the larger project can make claims about technology that do not subsume it to human practice or posit technology as a key determinant in a broad field of communication practices. Recovering technology in this way opens up the possibility for conceiving it as part of a broader assemblage implicated in the production of visibility.

Communications research that deals with technology conventionally posits that changing devices, software, and interfaces as well as technologically-reliant modes of production, consumption, and distribution fundamentally shift the ways that communication functions in

society.[8] For instance, McLuhan's emphasis on the medium compared to the message belies an unabashed optimism and belief in technology that is easily countered by Postman's own deep pessimism about media technology's effects on human psychology and civil society.[9] While Postman's work has often been cited as a key argument against utopian technological determinisms, both he and McLuhan practice a way of thinking about technology that obscures any notion of human agency or possibility behind a veil of technical operations that in turn overdetermine human experience. Various other forms of communications research, rooted in paradigms such as uses and gratifications, media effects, and diffusion of innovations, preserve an ontological split between that reduces human/technological interaction to a clearly defined functionalism.[10]

Research that attempts to overcome the split between the human and the technological takes various conceptual tacks, often positing the role that technology plays in shaping communication as a practice. Some of the work that follows in this vein, such as that of Jenkins and what he calls convergence theory, may be wide and varied in its empirical range, but often these works continue to maintain an understanding of technology as a structure that determines forms of human interaction.[11] More recently, others such as Packer have tried to complicate this notion of technological overdeterminism by positing a communications-based materialism that looks at the logistical practicalities opened up by technological changes as historically and cultural contingent upon politics, regulation, and economic interest.[12] In doing so, researchers such as Packer offer a way of thinking about the material aspects of communication practices as phenomenal aspects that must be negotiated in order for communication to take form.

Materialist approaches of these kinds to communications technology, then, envelope technological practice in a way that keeps the devices from necessarily determining the forms that communication practice may take. Such approaches open up the possibility for writing and thinking about digital technologies not as deterministic structures or reactive tools, but as part of an emerging assemblage where new forms of interaction, communication activity, and information-sharing emerge. As Wiley, Becerra, and Sutko argue, a materialist approach to communications technology addresses communication in a network model that posits specific sites of interaction as constitutive of various communication-based relationships that capture the flow of various technological and social forces at singular moments of communication action.[13] In their argument, the materiality of communications networks creates a heterogenous range of possible subjectivities that are in flux, but are given form through the interactions that flow across information networks. From this approach, sholars such as de Souza e Silva and Frith to postulate that mobile technologies allow individuals to craft social geographies unique to their interests and identity and that the changing capabilities of these technologies have opened up new forms of interaction that engage people with the material world through a device that filters and expresses knowledge according to social networks and personal interests, as well as a wide range of digital tools that give rise to forms of interaction that bear immediate consequences for the individual's relationship to their material surroundings.[14]

These approaches offer useful ways of understanding how changing technological forms interact with human interests in a way that reveals possible new forms of agency and activity. Still, these approaches sometimes slip into a form of technological essentialism that may be liberating, but that also elides a wide field of social practice. Couldry has tried to overcome this

split by investigating the ways institutions and forms of power move across technological networks as well, giving form to the ways technologies, human activity, and structures of power emerge within a co-constituting structure that is rebuilt and remade at the level of individual practice.[15] He keeps from subverting technology to power structures by revising traditional social theories, arguing that digital media communication provides a range of empirical phenomena that complicate traditional understandings of mass communication phenomena in a way that necessitates revisions in many of the disciplines fundamental assumptions and theories. Couldry urges caution when talking about communication technology when he argues that a wide range of social and material formations need to be taken into account in order to describe and theorize the effects of digital technologies. Though he slips into post-positivist theorizing at times, he gets at an important point for understanding the role of technology in the production of visibility: that the field of phenomena to be considered when dealing with digital communication and technology must be multi-scalar, multi-vocal, and consider not just the shifting material realties, but also the historical, professional, social, and cultural configurations in which these technologies emerged.

Accomplishing a study with such aims is in many ways overwhelming, but it gets at the necessity of attempting to describe the range of forces, structures, and networks that individuals are configured within in order to understand the way that digital technologies change what can be seen as a meaning-producing assemblage. While recovering technological agency, there exists a corresponding need to recover human subjectivity and understand how it operates as a site where technological practices operate and converge. Several research projects have tried to recover human subjectivity, positing forms of technological practice as a discernible assemblage

of the material and the human. Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* is perhaps one of the most

influential works in this regard, in that it posits a complicated system of relationships between

the human and technological, relationships that complicate governing practices and structures of

power precisely because they trouble and destabilized the constitution of individual subjectivity.

It is in this sharply realized complexity that Haraway finds possibility:

> The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is
> oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence. No longer structured by the
> polarity of public and private, the cyborg defines a technological polis based partly on a
> revolution of social relations in the *oikos*, the household. Nature and culture are
> reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the
> other.[16]

By recovering subjectivity in a distinctly Deleuzian way, Haraway opens up the possibility for

understanding how an individual's creativity and singularity can allow her/him to operate as a

reordering agent capable of changing the organization of the assemblage in a way that causes

rippling changes across networks of technology and power.

Understanding technology as part of an assemblage where shifting forms of organization,

subjectivity, and meaning-making create new possibilities sharpens the scope of possible

questions as well as the analytic consequences of trying to respond to those questions. As Slack

has argued, "As the concept of assemblage suggests, what we have to offer is the recognition of

the co-constitutive work of the machinic and the enunciative, the consequences of

territorialization, and the possibilities of escaping territories that rigidify, block, and subdue. That

is what communication can become."[17] Configuring subjectivity within a dispersed network of

technological conditions and communications practices requires an understanding of how these

subjectivities interact with larger relations of power. As a means of representation and

perception, technologically-abetted agencies allow individuals and groups to apprehend and contest the means of dominant knowledge production.

Media as practice

In order to understand how media in general and journalism in particular operate as a field of knowledge production connected to the broader relations of power, this literature review will now look at how other scholars have conceptualized the practices that constitute journalism as discipline and position it as a discursive public sphere connected to the expression of democratic politics. Doing so moves this project beyond the assumption that journalism operates as a neutral and inert institutional practice that simply conveys objective information. In fact, it is this very claim of inert objectivity abetted by claims to an institutional mooring that is fundamental to the practice of democracy that has been historically contested.[18] This section will argue that broad concerns about journalism's professional practice reveal a deeper assertion that forms of knowledge produced by journalistic texts, practitioners, and institutions have political and epistemological ramifications deeply related to the way that liberal democratic power is conceived and exercised.

Concerns about the production of true, objective, or neutral information have been a part of journalism's professional configuration since at least 1915, when, Schudson asserts, objectivity was defined as a specific professional method that would enabled dispassionate individuals to produce more credible information.[19] Furthermore, in contrast to claims of journalism's neutrality, broader arguments about the public benefit of journalism have been a prevalent concern for the profession's major practitioners, scholars, and critics since at least the

early 1800s.[20] On the reverse side of journalism's avowed public benefit lies two centuries' worth

of press criticism that bemoans institutional, political, and economic developments that impair its

ability to deliver on its normative, liberal democratic function. Since the First Amendment

codifies the freedom of the press, many scholars and normative theorists have taken it as a

forgone conclusion that a dedication to the public good must be at the heart of journalism's

mission, but they have differed on exactly how to discern what the public good is or the best

professional practices that should be deployed when serving that good. Arguments about

journalism's role as a public institution often offer programmatic solutions for how professional

values like objectivity, verifiability, accuracy, and transparency are embodied in professional

practices, as most recently canonized in Kovach and Rosetiel's *Elements of Journalism*.[21] These

values, in their professional embodiment, offer key sites for normative intervention and

institutional vulnerability. Across various historical moments, those invested in a normative

model of a press devoted to the public interest voiced concerns about the impact that

commercialization would have on the integrity of news production as the demands of the market

caused individual reporters and editors to abandon principal values like independence and

objectivity.[22]

Alternative models of media organization offer a means for protecting journalism's

institutional role by protecting its operative values from corrosive market forces. Dewey and

other members of the Chicago School of sociology argued that a press could serve an amorphous

public interest by offering a cultural forum that allowed disparate regions to produce a national

public sphere where a sense of community could be built and common problems could be

deliberated.[23] As Crick has noted, Dewey's vision of the press hinged upon an understanding of

collective self-governance that was fundamentally different from Dewey's contemporary Walter

Lippmann and his understanding of a government run by elites that both draw their power from

public opinion and have the imperatives and tools to shape that opinion.[24] Whether or not Dewey

or Lippmann ended up winning the argument regarding the role of journalism is moot, because

underscoring both arguments is an assumption that the function and style of journalistic practice

also depends upon the way power as operating within society is conceptualized. For Dewey,

democratic power operates as an egalitarian common interest arrived at through informed, open

deliberation, while for Lippmann, democratic power meant that elites had to appeal to a

disaggregated form of electoral power dubbed "public opinion."[25] For both thinkers, journalism

and mass communication operated as an institution implicated in American government

precisely because it produced the raw information about events, issues, and phenomena that

democratic deliberation and public opinion relied upon in order to articulate broader visions of

the world at large, the value of democratic practice, and the role of individuals in that practice.

The notion that journalism must serve the public good so that American democracy may

function has had consequences for the daily practice of journalism over the course of American

history. While Dewey often expressed concern over the ways that commercial interests would

negatively impact the press's ability to impartially serve the public good, Lee was among one of

the first scholars to historically and systematically trace the ways that a reliance upon advertising

affected the quantity and quality of news reporting appearing in American newspapers.[26] He

traced changes in the press as being driven by myriad practical concerns, but concluded that a

reliance upon commercial sources of funding eroded the press's mission to serve the public good.

Both Lee's book and the 1947 Hutchins Commission report operate as key texts where

journalism's role in democratic government was asserted as antithetical to the profit-interests of owners that were often accused of distorting and sensationalizing the news in order to sell more papers.[27]

These texts serve a key discursive and historical function. They affix upon the practice of journalism the values of liberal democratic governance while also prescribing an ethic and a style of professional practice that served those values. Modern scholars continue to reassert this liberal critique of the dangers of journalism straying from its true purpose, warning readers of the specific corrupting interests that corporate ownership has on the institution of journalism. While Bagdikian updates the liberal critique to account for modern structures of media ownership and capitalization, McChesney and Scott's edited anthology shows that sustained, values-based critiques of American journalism have taken varied forms over the past century, but often criticizing professional practices in ways that reassert the press's role in liberal democratic governance.[28]

Such critiques and arguments about the nature of the press are less important here than their claims that the integrity of journalism's professional practices must constantly be defended against corrupting interests so that the values of liberal governance may be served. The very act of articulating these values onto the practice of journalism gives intelligible form to the relationship between journalism as a discipline and the broader exercise of power. Progressive critiques of journalism's resilience reveal the unique discursive power that journalism has been granted as the privileged realm of information distribution, but a broader understanding of media practice beyond immediate professional concerns is still needed.

Critiques that attempt to recover the values of the public good from the practice of journalism also serve to preserve its integrity as a key truth-producing discipline located within the larger relations of liberal democracy. For example, in their analysis of journalistic practices, Edy and Snidow argued that, "from a Foucauldian perspective, the institution of journalism is a set of social practices that produce and define knowledge and that legitimate ways of knowing about political and public life," and by necessity thus "generates both dominant and subjugated knowledges."[29] Journalistic practices represent the news primarily as a series of events whose meaning has yet to be fully articulated, but whose existence merits attention and the possible definition as an object of concern. Journalism marks events as objects of legitimate consideration and gives a way these events to enter into a larger range of governmental rationality and practice. Nolan's understanding of journalism clearly lays out how it fits within other techniques of government and self-government within modern neoliberal societies:

> Firstly, it constitutes one such 'positive and interpretive discipline' in its own right, with characteristic (albeit multiple) modes of knowledge production and transmission, that provides an ongoing critical commentary that is widely recognized to be a highly influential element in the 'dialogical self-critique' of liberal-democratic societies. Secondly, it also provides a mechanism through which various other disciplines and critical discourses enter into public dialogue and contestation.[30]

Journalism then, as a realm of practice, allows new forms of discourse and information to integrate within the practices of power within neoliberal societies precisely because a form of "dialogic self-critique" is part of the underlying rationality in its governmental practice. Put slightly another way, journalism is implicated in neoliberal rule precisely because it provides the milieu through which societies, political institutions, and diverse groups of citizens come to understand themselves and their relation to one another through events and issues reported in the broader media.

Such approaches take as a given that journalism acts as the repository of publicly held truth in American society and thus has the ability to effectuate power along the lines of that truth. Dent makes clear a conception of journalism as particular realm of discursive practices engaged in the production of truth. He writes that the "practices of journalists may be best understood as a set of behaviors limited by their understanding of…a central Truth to the sum of these practices —a Truth so fundamental to the discursive formation that it could not operate, in the same way, without that truth."[31] To bring the discussion to the level of practical experience, the shared, standardized, and codified working habits of journalists create the aesthetics of journalistic communication. It is at the level of cultural practice that the norms of communication are created, adhered to, and reproduced whenever a news story is printed, broadcast, or uploaded to the internet. These cultural practices therefore create information that is understood as legitimate, as well as an aesthetic threshold for how it is presented as intelligible, and thus, true.[32]

A focus on professional and institutional practices as they are tied to the concerns of the newsroom underscore the considered literatures. While a critical understanding of the discipline's professional and institutional concerns forms a necessary basis for interrogating the discipline, this project seeks to expand conceptions of American journalism as a particular aspect of democratic governance and deliberation by also positing that as a realm of discursive practice, American journalism also impacts the terms by which events, issues, and matters of concern can be understood. For the purposes of this dissertation, this understanding of journalism as a realm of public knowledge production rooted in the normative values and standards of professional practice recovers a necessary understanding of the forms that information and events must adhere to if they are to have any sort of efficacy or intelligibility. Positing journalism as a realm

of practice implicates it as a means for making events, information, and politics broadly intelligible so that they may become objects that might disperse aross and within existing relations of power. Furthermore, this perspectives accounts for how changing events, technological realities, and working conditions all adhere within a shifting assemblage that not only makes contested change possible, but also visible across the wider network of power precisely because the practices of journalism have been granted, and continue to maintain, an epistemological authority tied to the exercise of liberal democratic power. From here, this study will look at how dissenting groups may apprehend these standards of intelligibility in order to make their politics visible within the field of mediated knowledge, if only temporarily.

Communication and the politics of dissent

This section will argue that projects of political dissent rely upon a system of mediated self-representation in order to make their politics intelligible beyond the bounds of a particular movement or organization. Since this project deals empirically with two recent social movements, it is important to investigate existing literature on communication and dissent in order to develop a theoretical argument that is rooted in existing practices. One shortcoming of this strain of scholarship is that its extensive ethnographic and participant observation projects often provide richly documented texts describing dissenting events, groups and movements, but the bounds of these projects limit their arguments to their particular spatial and temporal contexts.

Still, thorough documentation of social movements and their use of media may beget rigorous theorizing. Downing's exhaustive cataloging of media use among dissenting social

movements offers an approach that considers how key forms of media-based dissent emerge among existing material and social relations.[33] For instance, in the Iranian revolution of 1979, people shared cassette tapes with instructions, messages, and information, in order to coordinate a movement against the shah.[34] Downing points out that in order for these cassette tapes to be utilized as effective tools for organizing social action, they had to move along existing social networks, organized by leaders who could determine what information and messages would most effectively mobilize followers. Here, we understand a communications technology as augmenting existing revolutionary and social practice in a way that allows the movement to achieve mobility against the forms of power it is attempting to resist. Since dissenting movements have access to the same grammars, aesthetics, ethics, and means of communication, that preserve existing structures and relations of power, these tools can be used to articulate dissenting politics and appeal to an amorphous disaggregated mass of publicly held "political will" whose meaning is apprehended across existing communication networks.

Though it is easy to view dissent as a mode of resistance to established structures, forms of communication-based dissent also emerge in places where there are no obvious forms of restriction, regulation, and power. Breen has noted that where regulatory gaps exist in the practice of communication, subcultures and transgressive communities tend to emerge, often building their own structure of interaction in a way that creates a minority public or interest group that relies upon media forms and infrastructures, but is also overlooked by the institutions that establish and enforce normative behavior across media.[35] A key takeaway from Breen's work that informs this study is the understanding that normative institutions and practices do not overtly overdetermine all media interaction. Instead, gaps and oversights exist, and groups

outside of the traditional sphere open up new forms of practice that at least portend the possibility of new social realities.

Still, the focus on possibility from within existing media systems may beget an overly optimistic if not utopian forms of communication. For some, the possibilities that digital communications portend only hasten an inevitably progressive new reality.[36] To support such claims, some scholars essentialize open access as inevitably ushering in a progressive and open political system. Others revel in a distinct split between the possibilities of digital technologies and the political aims of various groups, often taking a view that power flows from the technology itself in a way that supersedes the political efficacy of dissenting groups or the various forms of power that dominant groups hold.[37] Instead, rationalities are seen to determine the deployment of these technologies as a part of a larger system of strategies aimed at maintaining the status of power. Kellner has coined the term "technopolitics" to denote the strategic uses of technology to both engage in democratic politics by expanding the public sphere, as well as attempts by those in power to use communications technologies to limit the modes of communication and dissent while also attempting to produce and police the public activities of citizens. He is careful to note that "if revolution is to have a future in the contemporary era it must incorporate technopolitics as part of its strategy, conceiving of technopolitics, however, as an arm of struggle and not an end in and of itself."[38] This quote marks a refinement of Kellner's earlier work, where he notes that particular corporate and political limits on broadcasters prevented truly free information from reaching the public.[39] It is no wonder then, given the deserved pessimism directed toward traditional media outlets by Kellner and others, that they in turn find democratic possibility within the seemingly limitless

technological potential of new media technologies. From within technology, dissent represents a practical tension as individuals attempt to move beyond the bounds of state-restricted activity. As Dyer-Witheford succinctly notes, "the possibilities of virtual play exceed its imperial manifestations."[40]

To understand something as a form of possibility means to also take into serious consideration the way blossoming forms of organization and politics take as their fertilizer the multitudinous practices and modes of communication that already exist. Doing so keeps the current project from veering into appeals to broad essentialisms by noting that these essentialisms become embodied by practices and concepts that are themselves contested. By looking at practices of self-representation as a form of that contestation, this study can investigate how digital technologies, existing media practices, and projects form an assemblage that makes sensible, through modes of representation, new political and ontological possibilities--i.e. a politics of visibility.

The Politics of Visibility

The following section is an attempt to understand the specific ways that visibility has been philosophically constructed as an ontological category. This is important for this study, in that visibility's tacit claims to truth allow phenomena that have been rendered visible to be move across the sphere of politics. In order to understand how the perception and sensibility of events can have material and political consequences, we must find a conceptual language that pushes beyond celebrations of perception alone and that moves toward a language that explains how

disparate political events like the Occupy and the Arab Spring movements are made perceptible

and treated as either consequential or inconsequential.

Merleau-Ponty makes an early stab at recovering the possibilities of visibility when he

notes that objective reality is of little consequence because human perception gives rise to forms

of reason and rationality that offer a productive understanding of the world. He notes that "the

perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all

existence." [41] Yet, such a claim relies upon a key dualism in Western thought since Plato's

allegory of the cave: the difference between objective reality and human perception and

representation of that reality. Thus, from the perch of perception and understanding, the sciences

and knowledge-producing disciplines then go about "communicating with a real world."[42]

Interrogating this distinction between a real world and a represented world forms the

theoretical crux of this study. Contrary to claims regarding perceptual immediacy and

transparency, I posit that it is through a changing collection of communication practices that

these events are made visible and thus perceptible. In doing so, visible events enter the realm of

politics via communication networks and are thus made consequential.

Perception and Power Relations

Taking perception as a philosophical given can be dangerous. Power relations that

produce the modes of seeing, as well as the forms of knowledge that emerge from these modes of

seeing, remain unquestioned whenever one uncritically accepts perception as physiological and

objectively neutral. Benjamin has described mass culture as a type of perception-laden machine

of ideological creations, whose purpose is to maintain dominant power structures that keeps

propelling towards "War, and only war," and thus "makes it possible to set a goal for mass movement on the grandest scale while preserving traditional property relations."[43] Benjamin saw a fascist logic embedded in the modes of production that created the aesthetics of mass culture, traced in not just its content, but in the totality of its style. Consequently, those thinking that mass culture uniformly increases democratization in social thought and understanding find little solace in the writings of Benjamin. As Benjamin states, "The increasing proletarianization of modern man and increasing formation of masses are two sides to the same process. Fascism attempts to organize the newly proletarianized masses while leaving intact the property relations they seek to abolish. It sees its salvation in granting expression to the masses -- but on no account giving them rights."[44] What is perhaps most beneficial in Benjamin's work, though, is the notion that these ideological consequences exist on the aggregated surface of cultural artifacts and forms, as he perceives an emergent logic of class domination in the way that cultural objects render it visible to those aware of its presence and trained to look for it.

For Benjamin, cultural production projects a form of false consciousness onto society at large through its access to the broader visual grammar and vocabulary. This order of images suggests that individuals have the ability to act and engage in a society where, in reality, mass culture expresses democratic values without forcing any material changes by limiting their expression precisely to the realm of culture and images. As Buck-Morss notes, Benjamin's work, particularly *The Arcades Project*, provides a method for intuiting and perceiving the relations of power in the aesthetics of mass-produced culture, itself a project in training the reader to perceive the problems of modern class relations in the expressions of culture.[45] Granted, Benjamin perceived capitalist power relations on the surfaces of French advertising and

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architecture, but Buck-Morss points out that Benjamin's work does not ascribe automatic

aesthetic determinism to the economic base. She instead argues that Benjamin understood power

relations and the aesthetics of mass culture as simultaneously and dialectically constituting one

another. Simply speaking, the aesthetic form of visible phenomena serves as evidence of the

social and political conditions underlying its production, but also creates the ideological realm

where these relations are envisioned, expressed, and taught, thus neutering the potential to resist.

Berger attempted to popularize Benjamin's thoughts on visibility and the relations of

power, and in doing so, brought Benjamin's work to bear more directly upon the production of

mass media texts and images. Like Benjamin, Berger traces power relations within the aesthetics

of art and finds productive power in images, noting, "If the new language of images were used

differently, it would [...] confer a new kind of power. Within it, we could begin to define our

experiences more precisely."[46] Because Berger finds a specific and historically constructed

relation of power within the aesthetics of the visible, he can trace in turn the development of

classical aesthetics into modern mass culture while also illustrating accompanying political

shifts. He notes a contemporary visual order in which "publicity is essentially *eventless*. It

extends just as far as nothing is happening [...]. Publicity, situated in a future continually

deferred excludes the present and so eliminates all becoming, all development. Experience is

impossible within it. All that happens, happens outside it."[47] Berger's argument bridges the

distance between Benjamin and Baudrillard as he envisions the way that the modern mass media

create a simulacrum of capitalist consumption, where "no other kind of hope or satisfaction or

pleasure can any longer be envisaged within the culture of capitalism."[48] It is here that we began

to see the visible as an alternative to actual politics, as if the representation of differing opinions and dissent neuters the possibility of real political change.

The Spectacle, the image, and the obscured reality

Similar in some key ways to Benjamin's concern with the way that the capitalist relations of power produce the visible aspects of culture, thinkers such as Debord and Baudrillard argue that media and the tools of seeing reality have become so deeply ingrained in the modern condition that it is no longer possible to differentiate objective reality from images and spectacles —and, indeed, that the very distinction itself has eclipsed its explanatory power. While such assertions have a faddish air about them now, they mark an important moment in conceptualizing the relationship between power relations, reality, and the visible. In *Simulacra and Simulations*, Baudrillard posits an order of images that in their aggregation function to blur the distinction between reality and representation.[49] For Baudrillard, the proliferation of language and images carried by an expanding media system presage a veil of ideology obscuring ontological reality, but the consequences of the simulacra are less important to the purposes of this proposed project than its conditions of production. With Baudrillard comes the claim that images of reality make up the ontological mass of social life, and in so doing, the visible is produced by and therefore represents a specific ontology and political possibility that precludes actual material changes.

A similar current of thought runs through Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, though he more directly impugns spectacles as being overtly ideological and nefarious phenomena that override any sense of political effectivity.[50] Debord's focus on the political aspects of the spectacle posits a sense of affective hyperreality similar to Baudrillard's, where individuals and

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social agents are locked inside of an ontologically empty system of representation that precludes any actual political effectivity for individuals or groups. Debord argues that political effectivity may be gained by wrestling the production of perceptibility and intelligibility free from the control of bourgeois ideals. What distinguishes Debord's arguments from those that have come before is an emphasis on the visible producing forms of political agency and alienation as opposed to existing as the discernible evidence of forces that imperceptibly produce political and material conditions. For Debord and his broader political project, visible culture and its aesthetic codes form a battlefield upon which ideology can be fought once the resistors apprehend the spectacle as a cultural form and subvert its ideological potential to a more egalitarian cause.

From somewhat different theoretical positions, Ewen and Boorstin also recognize a similar political nature embedded within the image, and in doing so, link the production of images and visible reality to a distinctly pragmatist and, at times, neoliberal political and philosophical context. Even so, they are not precluded from finding contradictions inside the production of the visible that are tied to the specific historical moment and the cultural conditions they are writing within. "The 'new age' rhetoric of endless possibility, which cloaks the high tech information industries, inspires a smooth beige, nearly organic fluidity in the casings of home computers...the tacit claim made by this technical aesthetic is democratic; it asserts that the prerogative of technical of technical perfection is available to everyone, in their homes, for the right price," writes Ewen, noting how an emerging aesthetic of technological efficiency linked democratic politics and consumption in a way that provides a veneer of progress to static and unequal social relations.[51] In the wake of the Occupy protests, such arguments have been picked up in the

popular press as commenters seek to apprehend technological progress in a way that does not perpetuate continued material and economic inequality.[52]

By ascribing a sense of power and consequentiality to the perceptible, these disparate authors recognize that social reality is deeply connected to the way that things are perceived, and that perception is tied to technologies and practices of seeing. "A studiously crafted personality profile of an individual, institution, corporation, product, or service […] is a value-caricature, shaped in three dimensions, of synthetic materials," Boorstin writes of images, locating in their form their direct relation to systems of power.[53] Images and the modes of image production gain their power precisely because the culture at large has become image saturated, creating an ideological totality that further alienates society from observable reality. Through the alienation of meaning from physical apparatuses of power, the image/spectacle/simulacrum gains its power precisely because it gives an aesthetic form to objects, making them perceptible and capable of articulating across an entire regime of images at the core of modern social life.

But, as Jay rightly notes, a claim that images alienate individuals from reality retains a necessary rationalist split between reality and perception, and thus preserves an ideal of objectivity that locks social agents and individuals within a strictly structural and fabricated reality from which there is no escape.[54] What is needed here is an understanding of not how images are themselves productive agents, but how practices, techniques, and technologies of seeing interpolate individuals and objects within a visual regime whose practices are very much connected to the exercise of power.

Visibility and the production of Power: Surveillance and disciplines of seeing

In order to grapple more substantively with the split between reality and perception, and in the process recover a sense of subjectivity for social agents ostensibly locked within visual logics, this argument will turn to Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, and Latour in order to theorize possible alternative politics embedded in the production of visibility.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault presents a genealogical understanding of surveillance as a particular tactic tied to the specific strategies of power and embodied in techniques, technologies, and material arrangements. As a practice, it creates particular subjects and imposes the working of power onto individual bodies precisely because it gives individual citizens and subjects the knowledge that they and their behavior are being watched.[55] Power is the key factor here, and Foucault's understanding of power is quite different from the theorists previously mentioned. He offers a notion of power that is diffused through the society and observable in the form that surveillance practices take and their subsequent impact upon social relations.

Though surveillance tends to be treated as a one-way gaze reinforcing the relations of power, Foucault's understanding of power as diffuse and contingent helps open up the possibility for understanding the creation of visibility as a particular strategy with political and cultural consequences. As power exists "everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere, individuals may engage in "complex strategic situation[s] in a particular society."[56] From here, an individual's visibility is in part constituted by the regimes of knowledge and discipline that inscribe the individual within observable practices. For instance, in the case of the Arab Spring and the Occupy movements, these very terms give cognitive form to the diverse events, thus ascribing a coalesced meaning upon varied political projects and

tactics of dissent in a way is made sensible within the larger regime of communication practices.

Specifically, the terms "Arab Spring" and "Occupy" have the linguistic advantage of denoting

certain types of political dissent in a way that can be articulated across various media and

contexts at the cost of obscuring the specific antecedents and consequences of the events that

these terms contain.

It is in this meaning-making function of power that we can come to understand how these

terms and concepts produce new possibilities. In "Truth and Power," Foucault claims, "the West

has insisted for so long on seeing the power it exercises as juridical and negative rather than as

technical and positive."[57] Foucault is attempting to shift critical attention away from the

repressive character of power relations, instead pointing out that mechanisms of power maintain

their existence and stability precisely because they produce and reproduce the forms of relation

that keep the power systems stable. Foucault points out that despite political revolutions, power

relations tend to remain stable, precisely because the systems that produce knowledge and truth

continue to reproduce the conditions of existence, which are in turn linked to the emergence of

dominant power structures. For Foucault, power has a concrete and specific existence:

> It becomes a matter of obtaining productive service from individuals in their concrete lives.
> And, in consequence, a real and effective "incorporation" of power was necessary, in the
> sense that power had to be able to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts,
> attitudes, and modes of everyday behavior.[58]

Truth is an integral part of these concrete configurations because, as opposed to the negative and

restrictive character of ideology, truth as "a thing of this world" is produced by the "forms of

constraint" enacted by power.[59] Caspar and Moore's work on the micropolitics exerted upon

human bodies typifies this kind of Foucaultian approach. They investigate forms of scientific

knowledge and political practice that simultaneously mark bodies as a collection of biological

phenomena and symbols of social practice like citizenship, exclusion, and war.[60] Their project treats power and the forms of body-related knowledge and visibility as a type of control, but as a counter-point. Apprehending the apparatus of visibility also opens up the possibility of affecting the relations of power that produce and are produced by the forms and aesthetics of contemporary imagery and techniques of seeing.

Thinking of the constraints of power as productive rather than restrictive conceptualizes truth as existing within the practices of political, economic, and institutional regimes. This practiced and reproduced truth is articulated by a specific subject position, which Foucault identifies as the intellectual. The types of truth the intellectual can enunciate are embedded within the context of class position, work and life positions and the intellectual's relation to historically specific "politics of truth."[61] Such power can be strategically deployed in order to appeal to values embodied within collective notions such as "popular opinion" and "political will." In this respect, the creation of the visible and the deployment of particular aesthetics constitute a strategic appeal to the de-centered mass of democratic power. For the individual appealing to dispersed democratic power via the communication practices and technologies, Foucault invites us to investigate the ways that these practices construct subjects as intelligible while also giving them a negotiated autonomy amid the relations of truth, knowledge, and power. In the cases of the Occupy and the Arab Spring movements, by understanding the practices and technologies that make up internationally networked media institutions, dissenting groups communicate their politics in a way that makes these politics intelligible using the aesthetics and forms of knowledge already embedded within the forms of communication practice.

Deleuze also offers a way of thinking about injecting a sense of possibility into the techniques of visibility. For Deleuze, the creation of visibility as a technique for perceiving the world and articulating specific meaning onto objective reality is configured with a complex assemblage of relations that include human practice, shifting material realties, and the technological possibilities that make that reality perceptible.[62] Each of these elements is fluid and shifting, thus constituting open possibilities. For example, in Egypt during the Tahrir Square riots, shifting modes of image and video capturing and distribution enabled by the Internet and smart phones helped produce a shifting politics of representation within Egypt that escaped state apparatuses of communication control, thus articulating these politics within a media system beyond the borders of Egypt.

Furthermore, Guattari offers a way of understanding how the intelligibility of mediated events exist within an assemblage of linguistic, political, technological, and psychological practices that gives form and effectivity to the way the events are understood, and in doing so, grants representations consequentiality. He states that, "technological machines of information and communication operate at the heart of human subjectivity, not only within its memory and intelligence, but within its sensibility, affects and unconscious phantasms," and in doing so link the semiological reality of media-based representations to the material, political, and technological conditions that delimit those representations.[63] It is at the level of the individual that these multiple practices converge, and in their complexity and convergence can be apprehended and made new in a way that affects the broader structures of meaning making. For Guattari, and Deleuze as well, there is a certain creative capacity at the level of individual, a form of subjectivity that is never completely determined by the regimes of language, images,

ideology, or epistemology that converge at the individual. This capacity does not essentialize individual subjectivity, but allows for the manifestation of new lines of flight and changes in social arrangement and practice, for better or worse.[64]

Along these same lines, Latour offers a way to understand that strategies of perception and visibility exist contingent upon without being determined by shifts in technology and knowledge production. Latour's key move is to dissolve the distinction between idealized, transcendent reality and human modes of perception, instead arguing that the distinction between material reality and the ability to perceive that reality matters less than how the tension between reality and perception produces real political projects.[65] This is a fundamental move that accounts for the consequentiality of communications practices in the construction of political projects and strategies of dissent. Picking up Latour's own schema of political consideration, assembly and discourse as laid out in the politics of nature, communication and media practice become the realm of public meaning-making, where phenomena and events are constructed, made sense of, and taken into account within the larger scheme of social relations. Yet, for something to start making sense within the realm of social relations, there must also be a system, grammar, ethic, or aesthetic by which it can be understood and its potential consequentiality considered.[66] Communications technologies and practices circulate around events and make them perceptible, and in doing so, create new "objects of concern" that must be considered and dealt with directly by the disciplines charged with creating and curating publicly-held knowledge.[67]

Objects or matters of concern seem appealing as accessible terms because the terms precisely denote the contingent relationship that phenomena have with modes of perception. In

Latour's schema, though, objects of concern operate in a very specific way, emerging in the interactions between what he callas "actants," or the broad collection of human and non-human actors and phenomena. This is an important distinction for this dissertation, because Latour's assertion holds that non-human actors possess an agency that grant them the potential to reorient practices and thus social reality. By translating Latour's terms from the production of science to the broader realms of public knowledge production, like journalism, this dissertation hopes to show how certain mediated events enter into the realm of public consideration and have the potential to affect politics in their contemporary practice. As an actant may "modify other actors through a series of" actions, there exists in the interaction between actants the potential for new objects and matters of knowledge to emerge, with the potential shift broader practices and orders of knowledges in a variety of fields.[68]

The key precept here, though, is the fact that changes in perception, i.e. changes in what is made visible, have real ontological and political consequences for human society precisely because the images we see no longer form a veneer over objective reality. Instead, they give new form and complexity to what seemed stable and determined precisely because they unsettle seemingly static understanding of global events and power relations. Thus, the assemblage of technologies, communication practices, and social action makes events intelligible. It is in relation to the use of communication practices to create objects of concern that I would like to situate "the politics of visibility." By understanding visibility as something that is produced, we can come to understand the shifting power relations embedded in that visibility, and the consequences that new forms of visibility may have on politics and the relations of power.

Conclusion

In order to take up the "politics of visibility" as an assemblage of technology, practice, and politics that grant apprehensible meaning to events and phenomena, this chapter interrogated visibility and image production as a theoretical concept, locating within the image a political effectivity that ties directly to the relations of power either through ideological manifestation or technological procedure. Doing so has allowed this chapter to consider how visibility has been taken for granted in contemporary mass communications in order to put forward a schema that identifies technology, individualized practice, and institutionalized meaning-making as simultaneous and constituent parts of an apparatus that produces received and seemingly whole and settled objects of knowledge.

The chapters that follow isolate and interrogate key instances of this assemblage, isolating indicative, synecdochical case studies that are thematically interrelated. Though the structure of the following project isolates technology, individual dissent, and institutional meaning-making within the broader narratives of "Occupy Wall Street" and "The Arab Spring," the thematics, practices, histories, and power relations uncovered in the analysis should be thought of as part of a simultaneous series of relations. It is here, in thinking of how these practices reflexively circulate around the individual instance and subject that one can begin to see how new possibilities of subjectivity can be produced, but such is a project reserved for the conclusion to this dissertation.

Notes to Chapter 1

[1] Kurt Andersen, "The Protester," *Time*, December 14, 2011. http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2101745_2102132,00.html

[2] Martin Kaste, "Exploring Occupy Wall Street's 'Adbuster' origins," *National Public Radio*, October 20, 2011. http://www.npr.org/2011/10/20/141526467/exploring-occupy-wall-streets-adbuster-origins

[3] Ibid.

[4] Bruno Latour, *The Politics of Nature*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[5] Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik: How to make things public," *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (Boston, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 26.

[6] C.f. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where New and Old Media Collide*, (New York: NYU Press, 2006) as an exemplar of a certain type of discourse attempting to ascribes shifts in media practice to shifts in the functionality of new media technology.

[7] Jennifer Koons, "When dictators tweet," *Salon.com,* March 19, 2012. http://www.salon.com/2012/03/19/when_dictators_tweet/singleton/

[8] For an overview of the role technology has played in the historical conceptualization of communication, see Daniel Czitrom, *Media and the American Mind: From Morse to McLuhan* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

[9] Marshall McCluhan, *Understanding Media* (New York, NY: McGraw HIll, 1964).; Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1992).

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[56] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1,* trans. Robert Hurley, (New York, NY: Vintage, 1990, originally published 1979).

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CHAPTER 2

APPARATUS OF VISIBILITY: INVESTIGATING CELL PHONE CAMERAS AND THE

PRODUCTION OF IMAGES

With a theoretical perspective defining the politics of visibility now defined, this chapter will investigate the particular cultural context of the cell phone camera as a device enmeshed in the production of visibility. The following analysis investigates discrete practices of image capture, production, and distribution masked by the cell phone camera's interface while also considering the attendant cultural legibility that grants these produced images meaning and currency once they are distributed. The purpose of this analysis is two-fold: first, it offers a foundation for the ensuing chapters by investigating a key component in the creation of visibility while, secondly, giving a voice to the productive tension between technological capability and cultural practice that makes new objects of knowledge possible. By closely analyzing the shifting mechanics of the cell phone camera and its practices of images capture, production, and distribution, I will argue that the seemingly sovereign and whole images it produces are in actuality situated amid a variety of practices open for shifts in style, sensibility, and technological praxis that give rise to new possibilities of visibility.

As a way of digging into these concerns, I would like to begin with an example that typifies these processes in action. At the height of the Occupy protests in America, a video from a protest at the campus of University of California-Davis began to circulate across blogs,

message boards, and social media platforms, eventually making its way to the front pages of news websites like *The Atlantic*'s Wire news blog and *Salon.com.* In the video, a campus police officer clad in riot gear and wielding a large red can of pepper spray begins to spray orange mist into the faces of dozens of sitting, nonviolent protesters.[1] Students, who had been protesting tuition hikes by setting up an Occupy-style tent encampment, had been warned of arrests and other police action if they did not end their protest and remove their tents from campus.[2] However, in the ensuing blast of pepper spray, all context was lost as cell phones opened and attached cameras began recording the officer stand before the students, display his canister of pepper spray to the crowd, shake it up, and proceed to spray it into the sitting protesters' faces.

The image of the officer walking in front of the protesters, pointing his canister downward with orange spray coming out spread virally in the days after the incident, eclipsing coverage of the issues undergirding the protest. Stills from video recordings of the officer were cut and merged into classic works of art, as Lt. John Pike, the pepper spray-wielding officer, began appearing on canvases, spraying orange mist in the faces of Michealangelo's God, Wyeth's Christina, and into the faces of figures in Picasso's "Guernica," a trend that shows the singular image's power to contain a certain, mimetic meaning of an event transformed via audience appropriation.[3]

The popularity of the above mentioned image came from not just the stark difference in power between the officer and the sitting, docile protesters, but also from the technological abilities to capture the moment, produce it and transform it in various ways, and then distribute it. Multiple videos of the pepper spraying incident exist, shared across the popular commercial video-sharing platform YouTube, thus revealing the presence of several cameras, and several

perspectives, in the crowd. YouTube user Andy Baio used four separate videos from the crowd to create a single video showing four separate perspectives simultaneously.[4] The separate perspectives run in separate quadrants of the screen, and reveal the protest as a narrative while also contextualizing the popular pepper-spray moment, with two videos showing the lead-up to the spraying, all four showing the minute-long spraying from four separate angles, and two videos lingering in the minutes after the incident as the crowd begins to chant, "Shame on you," and the police back away from the protest.

The video itself reveals a certain narrative of the incident, but its existence is incumbent upon a variety of other factors. Individuals in the crowd had to own small cameras, be competent in not only their use but also the software systems that allow their production and sharing across platforms. Furthermore, users such as Baio had to find these videos and use consumer video-editing software to create a single video before uploading it again to YouTube. Beyond technical tools and competencies, each video creator also has an almost assumed understanding of image aesthetics that gives rise to a sort of *ars technica* capable of taking on a collective cultural meaning. These images circulate as objects that reveal to an audience details about the operations of power in such contexts. The protest itself gathered a certain kind of attention, yet it gained an emblematic form through an intelligible image of a police officer using his power against civilians engaging in civil disobedience and exercising rights to free speech and assembly. The image itself is contingent upon a variety devices capable of capturing, producing, and distributing the image as well as a range of aesthetic and political concepts that give the image meaning. It is here, in the image and its shifting permutations across digital platforms, that politics of visibility converge.

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The UC-Davis video is a touchstone text for this dissertation because it embodies a wide variety of practices converging around a single event through a singular device: the cell phone camera. As a primary condition, the existence of images emanating from these protests relied upon the ubiquity of camera phones as a consumer device. As such, the ensuing chapter will attempt to unpack images produced from camera phones, both in their technical existence and cultural use, in order to explore how particular devices are used in the production of visibility. As this chapter will explain, these images have an existence beyond the range of their immediate devices and temporal contexts, instead existing across a broad range of image capturing, production, sense-making, and distribution practices.

While the following analysis focuses on one device in the production of visibility, it should be noted that several other devices also work to produce various forms of visibility configured within specific networks of technical and social relations. By looking at the cell phone cameras, this chapter will help explain how a particular device produces certain kinds of images capable of moving across existing digital and social networks in ways that make these images culturally legible. To claim that images and videos of protests have a particular effectivity means considering in practical detail the practices that produce images and allow them to be distributed and understood.

Image Capture

As a discrete technological process, the capturing of images relies upon a confluence of technical capabilities and strategies of image capture that converge into an understanding of images as a form of communication. This section will interrogate the aspects of the cell phone

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camera that distill reality into an image, but are often taken for granted and elided into the click of a single button, arguing that these practices of capture are reliant upon an intentional and strategic deployment of technology that is in turn influenced by its capabilities.

While it may seem natural from this specific historical moment to consider cell phone cameras singular devices within a broader media landscape of other singular devices, they in fact represent a convergence of processes and practices within an individual device that, over time, has become closely tethered to the human body.[5] However, to assume the naturalness of this device elides the constituent practices that result in its existence, and more importantly, the capabilities that people and groups have put to use. The size and ubiquity of the device offer opportunities of capturing images in ways popularly unconsidered in the years before the camera phone existed. Mendelson has noted that the spread of the camera phone has given rise to a "snap shot" style that is historically rooted in the commercialization of camera technology, but has also provided a challenge to the way that image style partially constitutes journalistic authority.[6] As such, the device represents a material shift in the means of image production that present strategic opportunities for individuals and groups interested in revealing events, issues, individuals that seemed invisible before.

The primary practice that gives the camera phone its specific form of reality-creation is the ability to capture images by refracting light, and then convert that refracted light and shadow into a digital file that can be easily sent across digital networks. Furthermore, as a device, the camera miniaturizes image capture into a smaller space than other cameras provide, sacrificing image fidelity for the sake of mobility. The camera phone also automates and simplifies the image capturing process into a few buttons, thus lowering the barrier of expertise that individuals

to need operate the device. As a result, the quality of a produced image may not be up to professional standards, but the content of the image may be revealing in a way that lends a different sort of value and cultural importance to the captured image. As *The Guardian's* head of photography Roger Tooth has said, "Camera phone material is invaluable for difficult-to-get-at, breaking news stories...[The existence of] higher quality camera phones doesn't mean better journalism – the number of megapixels is probably one of the least important things about a news picture."[7]

Ubiquity and Granularity

With the mobility and lowered cost that comes from attaching the camera to the cell phone, the potential for ubiquity—i.e. the presence of cameras and capable camera users in a wide range of situations—presents the necessary condition for the strategic exploitation of that ubiquity. Still, the ubiquity of the camera phone is a material condition that must also be made sense of. By understanding ubiquity and its attendant concept granularity as specific phenomenon related to camera phone, we can see how the device is in turn deployed within existing practices of image capture.

In 2003, the year that cameras were first available as part of cellular phones, news articles and consumer technology reports bemoaned the presence in situations where cameras had been previously absent. Gym owners, theater patrons, and school officials, for example, had to plan for the ramifications of cameras where there had been no cameras before.[8] With the advent of smart phones and increased computer-processing power compressed into a smaller space, the cellphone camera is a dynamic device whose capabilities improve with technological advances.[9]

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While shifts in technology refine image-capturing practices and improve the aesthetic potential

of images, the primary dynamic remains the same: an image capturing device with a low

competency threshold tethered to both a human body and a digital network.

It is in the camera's ubiquity and its potential for both ordinary citizens and working

journalists to capture and distribute mediated reality, that the device's greatest potential exists to

reveal the granular workings of power. The U.S. Department of Defense and American military

officials have released reports analyzing the ubiquity of cameras, often noting that military

groups must take into account that their movements, images, and words can now be easily

captured.[10] This ubiquity becomes a material condition that must be managed and strategically

engaged even in the more mundane routines of daily journalism, as captured in the words of

Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer Stanley Forman:

> "The problem was and is that as a long-time news photographer I cannot beat the
> competition anymore. The competition is anyone who has a cell phone, smart phone, or
> any other portable device that takes stills of video. The other problem is that practically
> everyone has the technology and knows how to use it."[11]

Underlying Forman's quote is an understanding that the act of capturing an image has become so

easy that, in practice, it is divorced from the technical workings of the device itself. As David

Labelle notes in his guide to amateur photography, once the technological aspects of picture

creation are hidden, the aesthetic components become more apparent and thus easier for novices

to master.[12] Furthermore, consumer guides to cell phone photography published in popular

magazines reveal the emergence of a widespread practice proliferating precisely because the

device hides the technical aspects of image creation.[13] Once the technical barriers behind the

production of images are reduced to the push of a few buttons, aesthetic categories like framing,

color, composition, shading, light, perspective, and timing are more closely connected to the individual's body and their own perceptual abilities when using the camera.

All of the practices and rationalities outlined above attempt to make sense of the camera phone's increasing ubiquity. Inherent in the cell phone camera's ubiquity is the understanding that by its very omnipresence the device can capture images that matter, fitting it within a cultural history of amateur images that represent perspectives not often present in the broader culture, but important because of the events they capture. Comparing digital images of Saddam Hussein's execution with the Zapruder film recordings of President Kennedy's assassination, Agger writes, "they both testify to the power of first-person witnessing, and how a digital copy of that witnessing can upend neat narratives and certainties. We'll see the best of things, we'll see the worst of things, we'll see everything," and in doing so captures the importance of making sense of not just the images, but the process of capturing images in the first place.[14]

In the case of the cell phone camera, ubiquity becomes a social phenomenon that industry experts and practitioners make sense of in order to explain how these image fit within existing professional practices. Such statements make sense of the cell phone camera as a device by applying a professional logic to its deployment and capability. For instance, Kenny Irby of the Poynter Institute has said, "The proliferation of cell phones and digital cameras… has led to a great deal more documentation added to the news stream...Digital cell images provide a unique voyeurism...The intimacy comes out of the spontaneity."[15] Since Irby is an expert working for a major national journalism training foundation, his statement reveals a professional rationality at work, one that attempts to subsume the technological possibilities of the cell phone camera into the practices of traditional media creation.

As a corollary to the ubiquity of the cell phone, the granularity of documented experience is also a key technological reality that human actors attempt to make sense of. Granularity, as a term, is used here to denote not only the fidelity of low-resolution images, but the potential of ubiquitously distributed cameras to capture moments in detail previously unachieved. As more cameras exist in more places, the broad scope of events and interactions may be captured in granular detail, leading to a higher-resolution total reality distilled into aggregate images. With the presence of camera phones acting as a mediator in small-scale interactions, they are able to record and reveal the details of these interactions in ways that have real effects on the performance of power. Recounting the differential access to power between police and protester, Caleb Crain writes in the *New Yorker* *"But things are different nowadays. Smart phones have cameras, and almost everyone has a smart phone. A court is therefore less likely to be ignorant of what actually occurred between the policeman and me. The policeman and I may have videotaped it. Bystanders might have, too."*[16] As Crain's statement reveals, the presence of the cell phone is important not just because it is everywhere, but by being everywhere, it can record in detail. It is through the use of these details within the institutional relations that legitimize their verisimilitude and reality that these images have the potential to reconfigure relations of power.

If there is anything that can be considered truly, materially different and consequential about cell phone cameras, it is this ubiquity achieved through mass-ownership as well as the granularity achieved through the widespread use of the cameras. Ubiquity and granularity of representation, though, are not strictly technological realities embedded in the design of the camera; they emerge as social realities through the ways that groups have come to use the

devices as well as the way that institutional actors have defined ubiquity and granularity as new media-based phenomena that need to be accounted for in various forms of strategic operations.[17] It is important to note here that ubiquity and granularity emerge as objects of consideration not because of strictly socially-based phenomena nor because of a technologically-determined practice, but through the tension that emerges when a specific technological object is inserted into established practices, thus forcing actors to revise those practices in ways that account for the object. The terms granularity and ubiquity emerge as a label for those revisions and resultant tensions in action. Still, the camera phone's ubiquity and granularity should be considered phenomena within a milieu of image-production practices that connect to a broader, collective form of expression, where, "the abiding interest in camera phone images relies on the fact that the device is ubiquitous, and thus always 'on the spot'...It is in this fashion that objects or products that are a priori individual documents enter into the consciousness of the collective."[18]

Strategic practices of image capture: Image politics and sousveillance

While the increased presence of cell phone cameras is an interesting phenomenon in itself, the intentional use of these cameras emerges as part of a strategy of representation that allows forms of popular dissent to effectuate these practices of image production. While popular press articles and analyses treat the increased ubiquity of cell phone cameras as a natural evolution of technological practice, the use of cell phones as devices capable of documenting previously obscured social phenomena like police brutality, material inequality, and urban poverty and crime in granular detail and aggregate scope fits within a specific tradition of creating a spectacle around issues of political inequality and social injustice.

At this point, it is important to note that images and practices of image creation are inextricable from one another in the ontological possibilities they help create. For instance, the very notion that an image captures a form of mediated reality that can then be transmitted and distributed represents a particular productive rationale undergirding practices of strategic image creation and deployments. The image exists as simultaneously productive of and representative of certain forms of practice, thus giving visible form to the practices that undergird its creation. For instance, Debord posited the ontological possibilities of the spectacle as a form of image creation and thus a means for drawing attention to the material inequalities of modern life.[19] It was his hope that in their creation, certain kinds of spectacles could give an ontological means for rendering visible the hidden ideological relations of contemporary life under consumer capitalism and, as such, grant viewers the perceptual tools for seeing these relations in the muddy reality beyond the spectacle. Debord's belief in the ontological power of the spectacle represents a strategic use of the aesthetic and practical considerations undergirding image creation.

To construe image capture as a strategic practice means identifying social reality as at least partly constituted through a series of discourses that can be affected by the deployment of images. This assumes that mediated images have an effect on the rationality that undergirds the structural relations of social reality. As an example, DeLuca identifies mediated image creation as a key practice among environmental activists, one that outpaced membership recruitment in importance due precisely to the way that these images impact diffuse popular "consciousness."[20] As DeLuca has stated about social movements:

> "The point is not that groups do not exist, just that they are not the social movements themselves. Instead, groups, as well as individuals or institutions, through their rhetorical tactics and strategies create social movements, changes in public conscious with regards to a key issue or issues, measurable through changes in the meanings of a culture's key

terms in public discourse...In other words, social movements are materially manifest not in groups, but in public discourse."[21]

In order to create these images, groups develop a series of aesthetics and tactics that actively draw attention to and make sensible antagonisms at the core of corporate practice, namely those practices that place profit-motive in direct relation to human life. The bodies of activists, then, become symbolic of the value of a human body and life when placed into positions of direct conflict with the machinations of corporate interest and industrial production, such as images of bodies standing between trees and large construction machinery in order to deter the development of vulnerable lands. By identifying a political consequence of images in themselves, DeLuca maintains the discursive power of images to aestheticize and distill broader relations of power into single moments, but elides the power of imaging practices that draw attention to the image-capturing device itself.

While the power of making visible the relations of power that undergird contemporary power relations has been rigorously theorized and analyzed elsewhere, few have interrogated the potentialities located in the device as it embodies practices of witnessing and documentation. In order to utilize the ubiquity and mobility of consumer cameras, surveillance scholars and activists in recent years have turned their attention to a form of consumer camera-based practice known as "sousveillance," which operates as the conceptual antithesis to surveillance practices. Sousveillance, in its etymology, reverses the relationships implicit in the act of surveillance by replacing the French preposition "sur," meaning above, with the preposition "sous," meaning below. As Bakir has noted, this reversal is not overtly political in deployment, instead simply revealing a shift in location and perspective of the camera.[22] However, just as Foucault noted about the act of surveillance, or watching from above, worked as an analagous practice in the

individualizing gaze of the institutions of power, sousveillance reverses the terms of the gaze, lending the power of the gaze to those that had been the objects of a watchful eye from above.[23]

In actual practice, sousveillance experiments and events often involve the individual conspicuously wearing a camera in a way that draws attention to the image capturing device and then walking through a public space where recording is not prohibited, in full view of police and security officers, thus making apparent the individual's ability to turn the tools of visual documentation upon the agents who have previously held that power.[24] In practice, sousveillance documents the workings of state power, thus making the specifics of that power more visible. It also serves as an ancillary practice in the deployment of camera phones during the Arab Spring and Occupy protests of 2011, particularly as police conflicted with protesters in highly visible ways. While, in the anecdote about UC-Davis that begins this chapter, the use of cameras is less intentional than in formal sousveillance projects, the principle undergirding their deployment is similar, namely that portable and ubiquitous camera phones allow for the recording of police power in ways that contextualize and even call into question the legitimate deployment of that power. The point, according to sousveillance activists is to not rigorously document the activities of police and security officers, but to instead draw public attention to the prevalence and potential power of ubiquitous cameras.[25]

As an ancillary understanding of the power of ubiquitous cameras in action, the New York Police Department allegedly blocked the presence of journalists' cameras by closing the airspace above the park as well as keeping journalists away from the protesters using crowd control tactics during the initial clearing of Zuccotti Park in November, 2011.[26] Though the *Columbia Journalism Review* would later report that the NYPD did not have the formal power to

close the airspace above Zuccotti Park, nor the constitutional power to block the freedom of the press, the acquiescence of traditional journalists in the face of police power reveals the possibilities of image capture represented by ubiquitous image-capturing devices dispersed among a group whose access to traditional forms of visibility-creation and image capture have been abridged.[27] Elsewhere, legislatures and police precincts have attempted to abridge the ability of citizens to record police, leading to a programmatic understanding of image capture as powerful practice, but one that can be accounted for and recategorized under the rule of law, thus revealing its discursive overlap with other systems of public power production and meaning making.[28]

Image Production

In thinking about the production of visibility, the camera phone's specific image manipulation and production capabilities offer a way of understanding how the device elides and obscures highly technical processes into an interface that reduces the technical mediation between the moment of capture and the moment of distribution. As with practices of image capture, these shifting practices of image production open up new possibilities, as practitioners take into account the shifting material realities of image production. Software, color and light chip technology, and processing power all create specific material capabilities that affect the production of images. Like lens focal length and traditional photography, practitioners consider devices' capabilities and restraints in order to produce images that adhere to the values and aesthetics of photographic communication. In this case, the word "aesthetics" refers to the professional values and forms of judgment that govern an image's style and allow a practitioner

to evaluate the quality of an image as well as apprehend the methods necessary for producing a quality image.

Notions of professional aesthetics offers practitioners a conceptual language and value system to mediate the relationship between a cell phone camera's technical capabilities and its professional practice. Technical limits are embedded in the device through its production process, but practitioners incorporate these technical limits into their professional practice in a way that both preserves the legitimacy of the individual photographer and shows how the device can be used to produced professionally valuable images. Such moves and rationalizations then legitimize cell phone camera images as an epistemologically valid representation of reality.[29]

Technical specifics and resultant aesthetics

The specific technical dimensions of the cell phone camera vary radically from traditional cameras, leading to a device that has far more limited image capturing capabilities than traditional cameras. Since lenses are condensed into a far smaller space, the physics of a cell phone camera's lens keep it from achieving wide-ranging zoom and panorama while also limiting the device's ability to achieve a granular depth of field in the image itself.[30] The materiality and make-up of the lens itself has offered researchers, designers, and manufacturers opportunities to improve the quality of cell phone cameras, but due to the physics of the compressed lens, and to a lesser extent, the reduced light-sensing capabilities of the lens' companion light-sensing chip, there will always be limits to the types of images a cell phone camera can capture.[31] Problems with overexposure, auto-focus distortion, and shadow, for example, offer particular technological problems that designers and manufacturers respond to in

order to improve the cameras.[32] Still, the manufacturing process of cell phones offers a key set of

material parameters acting on the production of cell phones, as issues of production scale,

material cost, and market estimations all act as considerations that go into the production of cell

phone cameras, in many cases preventing rapid technological advancements that outpace desired

affordability.[33] For the production of digital images from cameras, this means that a variety of

material limits, imposed by the physics of the device itself as well as production demands to

keep consumer costs of the camera low, work to create a device capable of producing a specific

kind of image with a limited range of quality.

Still, the limited capabilities of the cell phone camera grant a certain range of aesthetics

and forms to the produced image. Professional and amateur photographers alike use cell phone

cameras' limited technical capabilities to produce photos that are then digitally augmented via

filtering software like Hipstamatic and Instagram that take light and color data recorded by the

camera's light chip, converted into binary data, and then augmented as the data is turned into a

digital image.[34] Using the same concepts and color and lighting correction functions found in

most commercial photo editing software, image-filtering software for smart phones—or "apps"

as they are known colloquially—use coding algorithms to standardize the image-editing effects

and apply filters between the snapping of an image and its initial display.[35] Aside from complex

data processing that converts captured light into binary data and then into a filtered image, these

apps obscure these processes beneath an interface that, in its deployment, allows the individual to

produce images with a color and shading palette without having to understand how the device

produces these images. The technical process are hidden beneath the filters that provide various

levels of color saturation, shadow, and light balance, among other aesthetic components, thus

permitting the individual to focus further on the act of distilling reality into a captured image. The individual user does not need to understand the terms "color saturation" or "light balance" or the consequences of manipulating these aspects, as these apps reveal manipulations of the image in real time and through the application of templates, thus the individual user to decides what manipulations to use based upon their personal taste and notion of what "looks good."[36]

For the purpose of this dissertation, the obscuring of these technical processes into the simple-seeming buttons of a cell phone camera has the added effect of allowing discourses about practicality and aesthetics to emerge and circulate around the cell phone camera. Professionals argue whether or not the images produced by a cell phone camera are as "authentic" as image captured by more technically sophisticated digital cameras.[37] Many photojournalists who use image-filtering smart-phone apps argue that the device captures moments that are seemingly unmediated becauese the presence of an unobtrusive cell phone camera keeps subjects from altering their behavior. *New York Times* photojournalist Damon Winter won awards in 2011 for photos he snapped of U.S. soldiers on patrol in Afghanistan using a smart phone with the Hipstamatic app, and he defends the use of the cell phone camera and these apps in the following quote, revealing a certain philosophy about image creation that preserves the perceptual abilities of the individual holding the device, pointing it, and then capturing the image:

> I think any discussion on the validity of these images comes down to two basic fundamentals: aesthetics and content. At the heart of all of these photos is a moment, or a detail, or an expression that tells the story of these soldiers' day-to-day lives while on a combat mission. Nothing can change that. No content has been added, taken away, obscured, or altered. These are remarkably straightforward and simple images...Some consider the use of the phone camera as a gimmick for aestheticizing...news photos. I think that those are fair arguments to make, but those arguments have nothing to do with the content of the photos...We are not walking photocopiers. We are storytellers. We observe, we choose moments, we frame little slices of our world with our viewfinders, we even decide how much or how little light will illuminate our subjects, and yes we

choose what equipment to use and through all of these decisions, we shape the way a story is told.[38]

In such a statement, the device itself becomes almost transparent or, at the very least, an extension of the trained individual's professional intentionality. Elsewhere, Winter describes the specific effect that the camera phone has had on his professional practice: "It is also the beauty of using a new tool that allows you to see and approach your subjects differently. I am terrible sometimes about paying attention to the little details in storytelling, and using this phone brought me in to those little details that I know I would have missed otherwise."[39] Such a statement is simultaneously individuating and generalizing in its purpose, revealing the effect that the device has on the image-capturing practice through an individual's self-aware reflection upon his own form of professional practice.

Professional practices converging at the site of the device

Photojournalism, as a professional practice, has a particular set of commonly accepted aesthetic standards that not only give shape to the images that can be considered "journalistic," but also gives rise to the ethics and methods that individuals may use when practicing photojournalism.[40] The legitimating practices of photojournalism are carried through institutionalized aesthetics of what makes for a good photo. They grant a sense of revealing authenticity through a professional practice whose rules for image production preserve the image's relationship to the material reality that precedes it. It is this preservation and privileging of the photojournalistic image's relationship to reality that, as Bogre has argued, grants certain forms of documentary photography a political effectivity rooted in claims that these types of images reveal a previously unseen reality.[41]

It is here, in the particular notion of previously unseen reality, that the cell phone camera gains its aesthetic legitimacy as a professionalized device. For instance, National Public Radio reporter David Gilkey used a camera embedded in a smart phone to capture images while traveling the entire length of the Trans-Siberian railroad. As an aggregate collection of images, f a particular stylistic unity to emerge amid the project, one that reveals expressive faces in detail, with glimpses of landscapes or background buildings fleeting into the picture and running out of the frame.[42] Upon close examination, several visual details extend from the technical limitations of the camera, with blurred backgrounds and minor details extending from the camera's inability to reveal a fully composed depth of field, yet nonetheless adding a sense of kinetic motion to the images. This inability to reveal a contrasted and dynamic foreground and background also leads to images framed closely around the faces of human subjects, thus revealing personal emotions. The lack of zoom or wide angles on the cameras further leads to medium shots and close shots, thus producing photos that, in aggregate, reveal a collection of details that coalesce into a seeming whole. While it is important to track the development of a particular aesthetic attached to the use of the cell phone camera, it is also important to note that this aesthetic assimilation of the cell phone camera into the reality-mediating practices of professional photojournalism marks an important discursive shift, one that not only legitimates the cell phone camera as an image capturing device, but also effectively grants the power of truth to cell phone images themselves.[43]

In granting legitimacy to the device and the images it produces, the practices of image creation then become separated from the trained individual, as images produced by amateurs "who were there" gain the same news value achieved by professionals.[44] For the case studies in

the following chapters, the perceived legitimacy of cell phone produced images is a fundamental rhetorical and practical foundation that grafts a certain form of visibility and politics upon the reality these images reveal. Yet, in understanding the effectivity of the cell phone camera, the technological simplicity of integrating cell phone images and videos into journalistic texts integrates these "citizen-produced" images as part of the institutional practices of knowledge production preserved by traditional media outlets.[45] The news image, as it is made sensible through the practices of news production, gives meaning to the act of perceiving cell phone images, a rationality at work that condenses "the availability of the cameras, combined with the ability to transmit pictures and text instantaneously," beneath the statement that these technologies are "enabling the world to view news with nearly the immediacy of a victim or eyewitness."[46] This rationality obscures the technological specifics of image production, thus preserving the news image as the published artifact of experienced reality, regardless of the individual who held the device that captured this reality.

Image Distribution

As the UC-Davis story that starts this chapter reveals, the power of the cell phone camera lies not just in the its ability to easily produce an image, but to also grant the power of image distribution to the individual user. While the granularity and ubiquity of the cell phone camera capture specific, unseen details of reality, and the technical aesthetics of the cell phone camera allow its images to assimilate into existing media practices, the distribution infrastructures that flow through the individual cell phone allow its images to gain a particular effectivity among dispersed, formal and informal audiences.

When thinking about the types of connection and forms of distribution Internet-connected smart phones afford, it is important to also the consider the Internet at large. While categorizing all theories of the Internet lies beyond the scope of this study, the Internet can be productively considered as a realm of shifting communications practices within a variety of milieus, from interpersonal interaction to mass media distribution to the quantification of social interaction. For the sake of this project, though, the most telling discourses and theories posit the Internet as an extension of a society's public sphere, where new forms of interaction and communication engendered by the materiality and practicalities of Internet-based communication give rise to new matters of concern.[47]

In several areas of popular commentary, the Internet exists not as an essentialized realm of idealized discourse, but as a technological phenomenon that has affected modern institutions in real and discernible ways, such as the ways people organize, the ways individuals articulate their demands and identities to institutions, and the ways institutions individuate people and make sense of their collective "will."[48] Others have noted that as a formal aspect of interaction in the public sphere, the Internet further gives form to the democratic power of dispersed individuals, though it also grants the tools for institutions to surveil and attempt to control individual interactions across the medium.[49] The point of these discourses is to not programmatically characterize Internet interaction as essentially democratic or repressive, but instead to give form to how it has "more effect than ever on the exercise of power in our physical world."[50] For the sake of this chapter then, the cell phone camera and the user's ability to record reality posits the Internet as a simultaneously conceptualized tool of freedom, vector of micro-

power, and important object within the broader exercise of international diplomacy and statecraft.[51]

In conceiving the Internet as a realm of shifting political praxis in the construction of a public sphere, we can begin to account for the particular capabilities the camera phone may have upon the broader construction of that sphere and the types of communication objects that circulate in that sphere. In this respect, the shifting of digital activity onto mobile devices means that Internet-connected smart phones like the Droid, iPhone, and Blackberry become important, individualized nodes through which the forces of a civil public sphere flow.[52] According to the most current numbers from the PEW foundation's Internet and American Life project, nearly 20 percent of American cell phone users do most of their Internet browsing on mobile devices.[53] Individual users also reveal an awareness of these devices' effects on interpersonal interaction as well as the individual's relationship to a broader network.[54] However, a material and cultural history of increased access, affordability, and expanded wireless infrastructure belie the increase of cell phones acting as key sites of individualized interaction with a broader network. For instance, in 1995, cost and limits on infrastructure prohibited extensive interaction on the Internet as connection speeds and computer processing power limited most activity to limited text-based interactions, while companies like America Online and Compuserve billed connection time by the hour.[55] Now, as the material infrastructure has made using the Internet cheaper, there is also a correlated simplification of design and creation of web content, as content management systems and user interfaces mask the complex tasks of server connection and html coding that allows information to travel across the Internet, most notably resulting in the seemingly seamless integration of sophisticated objects like images and video into the presentation of web pages.[56]

Images and videos can be transmitted as objects from a hosting service to a web page through embed codes that preserve the integrity of the object but allow it to appear in multiple other web pages or masked behind a textual link and spread via e-mail. Wireless networks then integrate this activity and ease of use into the usability of the cell phone.

This material expansion of the Internet to the cell phone and the resultant communicative capabilities undergirds considerations and conceptualizations of how journalistic practice occurs across the device. Though trade journals reveal a professional anxiety about shifts in platform, they also reveal an awareness of connectivity and audience reception of media texts.[57] Tracing, quantifying, and typifying user behavior across mobile internet devices becomes part of not only delivering content and expanding business models, but also providing a means for quality engagement that preserves journalism's normative function within the political public sphere, whether that means informing voters or giving voters a way to be represented.[58] Mobile devices, then, fit within a decades long shift in media practices that attempt to account for the emergence of new technologies, with a particular attention to these technologies' instrumentality, as trade publications and think-tank reports offer working journalists and audiences texts that inform them about new technologies with an eye to how these technologies augment and fit within existing professional praxis.[59]

As a device through which shifting media praxis flows, the cell phone also offers individuals a way to create their own images and communication objects and, in turn, distribute these objects and images across networks. By digitizing the image, the cell phone camera converts light and color into a digital object that can be easily moved from a phone onto a computer, where individuals can in turn use image editing software to augment the image in

various ways.[60] Recent versions of smart phones incorporate these computer-based functionalities into the device, building their interfaces around the same uses found in personal computers.[61] The digitized image, formatted for the cell phone screen, stands as evidence of the shifting practices located in the cell phone device itself, leading Schaffner to assert that the impact of these shifting practices "goes beyond the telephone apparatus itself, implicating a new relationship between communication, space-time, and a profound change in the interfaces developed for the digital image."[62]

One such implicated practice germane to the interests of this dissertation is the social practice of sharing images. Some scholars have noted that the physical photograph, printed upon glossy photo paper and kept in albums and shoe boxes served as a hallmark of the "Kodak generation," and that the lack of tactile object that comes with digital photography has fundamentally changed the way people share and distribute photos with one another.[63] In order to accommodate this shift and to connect the emotional register of photo sharing with the capabilities of the digital technology, software companies like Microsoft produced materials that combine the vernacular of digital photography and sharing platforms with emotion-laden language that attempts to reveal a common production of social memory at the core of photo-sharing that transcends its technological manifestation.[64]

As digital photo and video sharing platforms like Flickr and Youtube allow people to spread their images among internet-connected devices, it is important to note that contemporary versions of smart phones localize these distribution practices behind the simple buttons of touch-screen apps. This simplification of the interface continues a practice of hiding the complex algorithms that convert light to binary code and then convert that code into an image capable of

being projected onto a screen.[65] By masking the complexity of these operations, the cell phone camera equipped with sharing apps makes the process of image distribution natural and almost invisible in its simplicity. Katz refers to this technological masking when stating: "it is unlikely that many boundaries will remain unpierced. In part this is because of the irresistible sweetness of using the technology, and the fact that people have become inured to such practices."[66] This seeming naturalness dissipates once the devices are turned off or the network is disrupted, like when Mubarak shut down the Internet and cell phone network during the height of the protests in Cairo.[67]

Conclusion

This chapter deconstructs the practices that constitute the cell phone camera in order to demonstrate how the device typifies the shifting forces that constitute the production of images. As a device, the cell phone camera masks sophisticated technological operations with a user-interface that naturalizes the production and distribution of images within a device whose primary proliferation has occurred through consumer markets. By deconstructing the practices that constitute and make sense of the camera phone, this chapter has shown that the device itself is not essentialized to a single practice, but instead is constituted through the simultaneous existence of these practices within the device. As such, the device allows individuals and groups to engage within a shifting politics of visibility by localizing the production of images to a device tethered to the human body that also connects with digital networks of image and video distribution through a mobile internet connection as well as specific video and image sharing

platforms. Furthermore, media production standards make these images legible and thus effective within a broad network communication practices.

By masking complex image production and distribution practices, the cell phone camera has allowed new forms of visibility to emerge. The device masks these practices, as "camera phone videos also enable us to see that which was often intended to remain veiled or hidden."[68] By lowering the bar of technical competence and providing a means for producing images within existing forms and aesthetics of media praxis, the device allows groups to directly interact with the politics of visibility, thus using the device to engage in forms of social documentation and self-representation to create media texts that expand the intelligibility of a group's mission or identity beyond the boundaries of the group or the capabilities of a specific device.[69] Simply put, by eliding the technical boundaries to image production and distribution, individuals and groups utilizing cell phone cameras articulate their politics with an affective, visual vocabulary and sensibility. The valences of power move both ways through the cell phone, as the technology also allows surveillance practices like geo-location and IP tracking to further monitor individualized bodies.[70] Still, the power that moves through the cell phone can be instrumentally conceptualized and strategically deployed, accounted for and resisted as it is made manifest through the particular capabilities on display in the device itself.

It should also be noted that the cell phone camera is a single device among many different kinds of devices whose practical operations have a certain affectivity within a broadly conceived politics of visible. Still, this study can illustrate, in synecdoche, how visibility is not a natural process, involving various technical, aesthetic, cultural, social, and political elements. Such an assertion attempts to retain the specific capabilities of a device without reducing it to an

instrumentalist perspective that makes the assertion that devices exist as a corollary to human agency. Instead, this chapter shows that the cell phone camera exists within a perspectival regime that makes possible the intelligibility of what Latour has called "matter of concern."[71] As such, the shifting capabilities of image-producing technology interact with existing ontologies and practices of sense-making in a way that both makes those practices of sense-making more apparent and opens them up for certain ontological shifts as to what constitutes a an event, object, or issue deserving of public attention and concern.

Notes for Chapter 2

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CHAPTER 3

DIGITAL SELF-REPRESENTATION: OCCUPY WALL STREET AND THE

PRODUCTION OF VISIBILITY

We all know the classic scene from cartoons. The cat reaches a precipice but it goes on walking, ignoring the fact that there is nothing beneath this ground. Only when it looks down and notices it, it falls down. This is what we are doing here. We are telling the guys there on Wall Street, "Hey, look down!"

-Slavoj Zizek, October 9, 2011, Zuccotti Park[1]

This dissertation will now move from looking at devices as a site where the practices of visibility production flow in order to consider the ways that the production of visibility affects the political praxis surrounding an event, issue, or group. The previous chapter established the cell phone as an exemplary device embedded in practices that make ontological reality sensible and intelligible. This chapter will build on the preceding chapter's argument by analyzing the Occupy Wall Street movement as an example of these practices and technologies in use, making the movement, its politics, and objects of critique more broadly intelligible. This chapter shows how acts of self-representation render visible not just the politics of a movement like Occupy Wall Street, but also make sensible the relations of power such projects are immersed within.

As Loehwing, Cram, and Lucaites have argued, the activity of Occupy Wall Street, with people collected in physical spaces, embodied visual habits of representation with the intent to affect political ontology.[2] The movement is a collision of digital media practice, collectivist politics, and aesthetics of self-representation, and as such, it opens up the practices of political

citizenship around the crux of spectatorship, where the act of becoming visible legitimates the ideas and arguments attached to that visibility.[3] Before delving into an analysis of the movement, this chapter begins with the assertion that the Occupy movement's forms of self-representation were, by design, neither a singular nor monolithic form of representation. By engaging in specific practices of representation, various aspects of the movement were given sensible form. These moments of representation revealed contradictions, objects of critique and lines of power within and external to the movement while creating a tenuous rhetoric of solidarity that preserved the movement's cohesion in the face of political challenge and marginalization.

Building upon the notion that the specific power of the movement was exercised via the practices of visibility, this chapter investigates how modes of self-representation contributed to a rhetorical and aesthetic sensibility that made the broader critiques at the core of the Occupy protests intelligible to those inside and outside the movement. This chapter will begin by contextualizing scholarly analysis of and theorizing about the movement and practices of representation. The chapter will then move into an analysis that will use exemplary digital videos, texts, and contextualizing documents to explicate, analyze, and critique the three following aspects of the movement's representation: a) the appending of meaning and critique onto the material praxis of the movement; b) the practices that made visible the lines of conflict between the Occupy movement and the exercise of police power; and c) the deliberative process of developing a movement identity and resolving conflicts around that identity. Each of these key aspects offer a moment from within the movement where various modes of representation work to create discernible objects of knowledge that distilled the movement's politics into discrete

moments of activity. Within the proposed analytical schema, acts of documentation offer a key analytical touchstone, which will be dealt with early on.

Reviewing the literature surrounding Occupy Wall Street

For the purposes of this project, the Occupy Wall Street movement offers a key site of inquiry into the production of visibility precisely because many interest groups collectively worked to create a singular representation that also maintained the granularity of its constituent interests.[4] In order to maintain this granular unity of diverse interests, the movement had to create both a singular spectacle for attention to coalesce around as well as a rhetoric of solidarity as what Gerbaudo has called an "emotional condensation" emerged. A rhetoric of solidarity, then, allowed spectators who viewed the movement through digital platforms to express support, understand the movement's objects of critique, and coordinate their own activities without having to physically interact with the organizational locus in Zuccotti Park.[5]

Still, the Occupy movement has proven to be a difficult site for scholarly inquiry due to its dispersed and diverse geographies, activities, and actors. Castells offers an account that attempts to capture the movement in its totality and contextualize it amid similar movements in the Middle East, United Kingdom, and Spain in 2011 while also articulating concepts and hypotheses as others follow and study these movements in more empirical detail.[6] Although notable for its timeliness and its attempt to theoretically account for the movement, Castell's book is limited by its reliance upon his early work that theorizes communication power as an act of transmission between individuals and groups. Castells maintains a political schema that holds a unified rational subject as the primary locus of power. This assumption leads his book to

assume that global protests became a form of "communication contagion" starting with an individual idea carried across an ecology of digital networks to other discrete individuals.[7] His overt empiricism pushes him to adopt an explanatory framework that simultaneously privileges the use of technology in the movement and essentializes it to a broader expression of latent social democratic ideals preserved in the workings of institutions. Fuchs offers a critique of Castells, deeply informed by the work of critical geographer David Harvey, and proposes as an alternative to the encroaching neoliberalism of Castells' interpretation an argument that the Occupy Wall Street movement and its ancillary protests stand as a sign of the "crisis in capitalism" waiting to be expressed.[8]

Both Fuchs' and Castells' interpretations rely upon an assumption that the preconditions of these protests are essentially material: Castells assumes that democratic values are embedded in the workings of social technologies while Fuchs assumes the material conditions of capitalism are pushing people to protest. By sticking to these antecedent assumptions, both interpretations fail to capture the complex interplay between the productive capabilities of the technologies involved, protestors' political strategies, and the way in which these converged practices make the politics that extend from the Occupy movement visible and intelligible.

Instead, Kellner's use of the word "spectacle" in relation to the movement offers a way to begin understanding the interplay between digital media and the embedded politics of the Occupy movement.[9] Indebted to Debord, Kellner's notion of media spectacle denotes a capitalist imperative working through a hegemonic order of media institutions, devices, and practices that produce the narratives and logics by which individuals come to understand the reality surrounding "events."[10] Kellner attempts to avoid reductive interpretations that ascribe an

underlying logic to the expression and intelligibility of spectacles, instead arguing that mediated events are specific and contingent in their production and that their political, cultural, and material effects can be read in the specific ways media spectacles are expressed over time. For Kellner, narrative becomes the form making events intelligible. Movements like Occupy Wall Street veer into the order of spectacle as "they have an aesthetic dimension and are often dramatic" in that they "dramatize key issues in a given society....[and] take a narrative form, becoming stories around which society is constructed at a given moment and which can be contested and used for various social and political ends."[11] Kellner does not ascribe a deterministic role to media, narrative, and aesthetics, but he is also reticent to make claims about the relationship between mediated images and the material and political consequences these images may have, instead opting to argue that spectacles take a form that reflects the dynamics of underlying social and cultural conditions.

The trick, then, is to attribute a political power to mediated images that does not subsume images, or practices of image-production, to either materialist or structural determinisms. Couldry offers one way to argue for a more active relationship between mediated representations and politics, in that "Scale still matters in politics: and media institutions, digital or otherwise, remain crucial in the production of scale and so key shapers still of the possibilities of political agency."[12] For the study of a movement like Occupy, Couldry offers a way to begin arguing that media, conceptualized as digital tools and strategies of representation, offer sites for affecting the rationalities that underlie the conditions that dissident political strategies organize against. Such an understanding leads others, like Deluca, Lawson and Sun, to assert that, "with a smartphone in her pocket, an Occupied activist camping in Zucotti Park or Chicago or Oakland can become a

panmedia outlet, a decentered knot of video, photographs, and blogging that documents and

creates and circulates the Occupied events."[13] Here, the disparate nature of media uses, both in

the production of media images and texts and their distribution are localized to the individual's

connection to media devices and networks, thus offering an entry point for understanding the

complex dynamics between political praxis and digital media devices as they are simultaneously

present at the site of the individual.

In order to fully capture the way that political praxis, technologies of perception, and

communication practices form an assemblage that gives a form through which certain modes of

intelligibility to emerge around particular event or previously unseen phenomena, conceptions

that push beyond the site of the individual and towards the collective are needed. Latour offers

useful conceptual tools for further explicating the relationship between digital media and

political praxis as evidenced in the Occupy movement, specifically at the level of practice. His

work offers a way to avoid slipping into determinisms reliant upon *a-priori* media or material

conditions, instead allowing the following analysis to posit a complex and constitutive

relationship between practices of media representation and political protest as the key

problematic underlying the movement and the various events and forms of meaning that grew

from the activity in Zuccotti Park.[14] Latour dispenses with the terms "objects of knowledge" and

"matters of fact," instead opting for "matters of concern" because the term captures the focus of

collective attention around events and phenomena whose existence is perceptible but not

statically defined by methods of knowledge production or technologies that enable their

perception.[15] Though Latour's work focuses mainly on science studies and the way that scientific

practices give rise to certain forms of knowledge, it permits the following analysis to argue that,

in the case of Occupy Wall Street, digital technologies, media practices, and political objectives all converged around the movement to produce an understanding of the movement that was neither determined by the strictures of media practice nor the specific political and material conditions of the movement. Instead, these elements formed an assemblage where each element worked simultaneously to create a sense of intelligibility around the movement that operated at the level of a granularly understood collective that did not subsume singular meanings or events into a monolithic logic.

In order to make Latour's work pragmatic for this project, I have opted to focus this following analysis upon the circulation of meanings, formal style, and communication strategies that make certain aspects of the Occupy movement broadly perceptible. The analysis presupposes that the movement, and mediated representations of the movement, contains a multitude of possible meanings tied to the specific conditions of production, but that particular themes that transcended the particular strategies, geographies, and events of the movement emerged and became at least partially emblematic of the politics and forces at play. Such claims have distinct practical and methodological implications. Portable cameras usually attached to cell phones provided the means for documenting Occupy Wall Street's collective activity. In their aggregation, these digitally-produced videos created the broad aesthetic by which the movement was made sensible to a broader public. Furthermore, digital documentation allowed for the spectatorship of the spectacle to expand beyond the immediate geographic contexts of each site of protest. These sense-making processes connected viewers not simply to phenomena, but instead to an amalgamation of varying practices and forces of power, as the following analysis will investigate. While digital texts form the key documentary touchstones for the chapter,

documents and reports where actors from and around the movement grant meaning to these thematics offer a key means for exploring the context surrounding digital texts.

Creating an Intelligible Object of Critique

This analysis begins by interrogating the ways that the collective activity of the Occupy movement made class relations and the politics of inequality visible as an object of critique. The following section argues that the mass of individuals, in identifying themselves as parts of the Occupy Wall Street movement, provided a material antecedent for the articulation of a critique that deployed a specific rhetoric of consensus and deliberation. This rhetoric in turn gave sensible form to the unequal class relations of contemporary capitalism while also modeling a form of discourse that offered an alternative mode of relation. Acts of articulation, deliberation, and documentation enabled specific forms of agency to manifest during the protest in a way that created an intelligible object of critique that could be broadly circulated.

Furthermore, acts of digital documentation made the sustained articulation of critique and embodiment of these rhetorics possible across communication networks. As Foucault has argued in *Discipline and Punish,* acts of documentation lead to the creation of a record that represents reality as it happened. Documentation, then, occupies a privileged space in the construction of knowledge and the production power because it forms the basis for an archival ordering and representation of reality that can be effectuated upon the practices and disciplines that produce objects of knowledge.[16] Each document, then, enters into an archive where it exists within a broader field of discourse implicated in the production of subjugated knowledges.[17] Documentation plays a key motif in the following analysis, as it provides a way of understanding

the logic undergirding the deployment of certain practices and the ways agency manifests

through the composition and circulation of key texts, videos, images, and documents.

In the following analysis, acts of documentation create a record that allows individuals

and groups to represent themselves and articulate their politics from within a broader field of

meaning. For understanding the power of representation located within the Occupy movement,

digital documentation, in the form of practices like video recording and streaming, photo capture

and production, and argument and deliberation performed over digital Web-based platforms,

offers a way to understand how shifts in the practice of documentation offer a means for

challenging the production of publicly held knowledge. These acts of digital documentation

require networks of circulation and devices capable of accessing those networks, but also a

practical and strategic awareness of these networks that permits individual use of them, often to

challenge the hegemonic record in real ways, as in the case of the Occupy protester who was

found not guilty after a jury viewed a video that contradicted police testimony of his arrest.[18]

After considering the relationship between documentation and representation, this chapter turns

to the way these documents created the backdrop from which an object of critique emerged as

well as models for the modes of deliberation protesters engaged in. Each act exists as an aspect

of meaning making that takes the energy and activity of the movement as a referent that can be

be understood through different schemas of intelligibility.

Documentation and representation

Beyond the spectacle of the event, the materiality and daily presence of protesters

gathered in Zuccotti Park offered a phenomenon for meaning and visibility making practices to

coalesce around. Individuals documenting this event through cell phone cameras and cataloging

its affective tenor through blog posts and social media messages created a wealth of documents

from which forms of narrative and meaning could be apprehended. The aggregate collection of

documents from the movement allowed sympathizers to argue that the physical phenomena of

the movement existed as evidence of democratic ideals in action, as if these values can in fact

become empirically observed once they emerge in the form of collective action and movement

sympathizers to state: "This is a healthy *sign* for our nation because it dramatizes that the people

aren't powerless in the face of extreme inequality" [emphasis added].[19]

Documenting the activity in Zuccotti Park and the associated movements forms an

important part of constructing the movement and its relevance. The movement gave a discernible

form to the idea of democratic politics in action through an event that disrupted the flows of

daily life in and around the physical space of the New York financial district, thus drawing

attention to these ideas and arguments by first creating a physical spectacle whose disruption

garnered public attention. The digital record of this event, the collection of shared videos and

photos, digital testimonials from the protest camps, the mass of tweets and text messages

exchanged between members of the movement, and the videos that capture moments of the

protest and the collective deliberations involved all serve to substantiate the statement "We are

assembling in public, we are coming together as bodies in alliance, in the street and in the square.

We are standing here together making democracy, enacting the phrase 'We the people.'"[20] Such

statements, when undergirded by the power of collected bodies whose activity has been

documented and shared across media platforms, further affixing the ideals of democratic

deliberation to the movement by giving literal, referential weight to the notions of "We" and "the people."

In order for these documents to make sense, they need a schema of intelligibility that contextualizes individual documents amid broader relations of meaning and power. Though class politics served as a key logic of intelligibility underlying the rhetorics of Occupy Wall Street project, the expression "class politics" often referred to a direct conflict between the movement and the operations of the major banking institutions that precipitated the economic collapse of recent years. By positing banks and the financial system as an antithesis of the collectivist politics at the core of the movement, the Occupiers identified a key referent to define the movement and its associated protest activity. In *Declaration of the Occupation of New York City*, members of the movement articulate the following rationality beneath their actions:

> A democratic government derives its just power from the people, but corporations do not seek consent to extract wealth from the people and the Earth; and that no true democracy is attainable when the process is determined by economic power. We come to you at a time when corporations, which place profit over people, self-interest over justice, and oppression over equality, run our governments.[21]

The document goes on to list grievances against corporations and banks, including, "They have influenced the courts to achieve the same rights as people, with none of the culpability or responsibility," and "They determine economic policy, despite the catastrophic failures their policies have produced and continue to produce."[22] Though class relations form the logic underscoring the Occupation's critical project, by articulating the specific ways in which corporations and banks influence the American political process, the movement adopts a rhetoric of pragmatism that offers its own operations as an alternative to "how things are done," while also noting that "these grievances are not all inclusive."[23] By avoiding forms of direct Marxian

abstraction and instead using language that mimics political pragmatism, the document reveals a rationality informed by political productivity, where the nature of interaction itself offers a means for developing specific concepts aimed at overturning the object of critique.

A key point on the existence of *Declaration of the Occupation of New York City* needs to be made here: as a document drafted after the initial occupation of Wall Street and attached to the highly visible activity of the occupation, the *Declaration* appends ideas and concepts onto the movement after it had become too visible to be ignored. This is not a document that gave rise to ideas that in turn became the occupation. Instead, the document grew out of the collective energy and a form of consensus-based deliberation already at play within the movement. Here, the ideas of the document help to create a schema of intelligibility that grafting a sense of political purpose and effectivity from within a movement that had already gained a level of energy and visibility.

Articulation of critique

After looking at how acts of digital documentation create a record from which meanings and arguments emerge, the analysis turns to consider how articulations of meaning connect specific critiques to the collected activity of the protests. Articulations of critiques rely upon positing the collective activity of the protests as a material antecedent that opens a space for critique in the broader public discourse. Such moves do not limit the types of critiques and arguments that emanate from the protests, but do begin the process of configuring the discursive and political possibilities the protests open up.

On October 9, 2011, as the Occupy Wall Street movement hit a fever pitch and absorbed both mainstream media attention and the attention of critical scholars working in the academy,

videos of social theorist Slavoj Zizek standing on a rock and delivering a speech to Zuccotti

Park's temporary inhabitants began to circulate. In it, Zizek, growing sweaty, gesticulates wildly

before the crowd but also lectures it on the importance of the movement and critique in general

while also cautioning the growing movement against "falling in love with yourselves."[24] He

urged members of the movement and spectators alike to conceive of new possibilities for social

and political engagement beyond the possibilities that seem materially overdetermined by the

workings of capitalism. A key motif in Zizek's speech was the production of a mode of dissent, a

language and series of concepts that helped to make the conditions of contemporary capitalism

visible so that a critique could be launched: "This is how we live. We have all the freedoms we

want. But what we are missing is red ink: the language to articulate our non-freedom. The way

we are taught to speak about freedom—war on terror and so on—falsifies freedom. And this is

what you are doing here. You are giving all of us red ink."[25]

Zizek captures in this moment the importance of giving intelligibility to ideas, and in

doing so, frames an ontological imperative at the core of the movement. But this video's

existence also depends upon the material conditions of its capture as well as a rich history of

critique synthesized by Zizek's words. Various cell-phone cameras in the crowd captured

moments of Zizek's speech, spreading it across informal social networks and formal internet-

publishing platforms. In the weeks following the speech, transcripts of it began to appear in

mainstream press outlets like *The Guardian* and *The New York Observer*.[26]

Zizek's speech offers an important moment for understanding the Occupy Wall Street

movement because it not only reveals an instance where someone applied meaning to the

aggregated activity of the movement, but videos of the speech became key digital documents that

acted as a definitional waypoint for those outside of the movement, seeking a way to understand its importance.[27] The kinetic fury outside the frame echoes the chaotic nature of the movement while the seeming impromptu nature of the talk echoes an anarchist ethos espoused by individuals who publicly identify with the movement. Amid this swirl of activity, Zizek's sweaty, charismatic, dressed-down presence becomes simultaneous sign and referent digitally reproduced across media networks, combining contemporary critical theory's project with the expansive, symbolic materiality of the Occupy movement. The digital nature of the video also allowed it to spread beyond the bounds of Zuccotti park as Zizek's use of the second and first-person plural implicated the audience beyond the park's immediate physical space. The video of Zizek apprehends the symbolic importance of the movement by rooting his speech in the very material act of collectively occupying and living in a public park with the purpose of drawing public attention to the act's significance.

The Zizek video, and less-famous speeches from other social theorists like David Harvey, also draw attention to the way the occupation of Zuccotti Park operates as a material antecedent to their critique.[28] As many of the movement's founders have noted, before ideas, concepts, arguments, ontologies, and forms of critique could characterize the movement's ethos, it needed a daily presence that disrupted the perceived order of capital's hidden flows in a tangible and thus observable way while also not precluding other, allied forms of meaning to emerge.[29] The continued presence of bodies in Zuccotti park and other encampments in other cities created a material antecedent of protest activity that could stand as a referent opposed to specific expressions of capitalist political power. A spectacle anchored to specific sites, the movement emerges as a social phenomenon whose existence belies the presence of less visible, and more

nefarious, social forces.[30] Though the collective activity emerges as an event and social force

through its sustained presence, a strategic understanding of protest politics and the rhetorics of

political demonstration undergird the forms of communication activity that cohere into a

collective activity as dispersed yet unified groups articulate "a demand to have a voice."[31]

Before moving on, it is important to note that, as a media spectacle, the Occupy Wall

Street movement performs an important ontological task by giving a tangible perceptibility to the

abstractions at the heart of contemporary class relations and forms of political representation and

deliberation.[32] The charge that Occupy Wall Street protesters across the country could not

achieve specific goals because they could not articulate these goals operated as a key mainstream

media critique of the movement during its height. However, such critiques come from a specific

contextual configuration within the modern media system, and as such, fail to capture the

productive work that exists outside the system of modern media-based referents and systems of

knowledge. Instead, it is perhaps best to take McKenzie Wark's words into consideration:

> The abstraction that is Wall Street also stands for something else, for an inhuman kind of power, which one can imagine running beneath one's feet throughout the financial district...How can you occupy an abstraction? Perhaps only with another abstraction. Occupy Wall Street took over a more or less public park nestled in the downtown landscape of tower blocks...It has at its core a suggestion: what if people came together and found a way to structure a conversation which might come up with a better way to run the world?[33]

Wark finds in the Occupy movement an important, material, and active referent that helps make

visible the imperceptible flows of modern capitalist power. By conflating symbolic power of the

movement's material reality with a sustained critique of capitalist class relations, Wark, like other

scholars writing about the movement in mainstream venues, grafts upon the movement an

interpretive schema that not only casts a certain interpretation upon the movement, but also

inflects future events and texts that emerge from the movement with a rhetorical tenor that clearly depict the movement as part of a particular critical project.[34] While such interpretive moves may be politically effective, this ensuing analysis will show that the movement itself is far less fixed in its meaning and visibility, and is instead constantly reproduced through various acts representing divergent politics.

Modeling deliberation

What separated Occupy Wall Street from other forms of political spectacle, and makes it particular germane to this dissertation, was a conscious focus on the discourses of public deliberation. Members of the movement drew on previous social movements in order to create a mode of interaction that promoted a type of consensus-building decision-making that also served as an alternative to majoritarian democratic politics.[35] This focus on deliberation and consensus created a style of discourse that characterized the activities and representations that emanated from the Zuccotti Park encampment and other camps built in solidarity. Consensus, as a form of collective decision-making, embraces the granular divisions, conflicts, and differences that must be overcome in order for a group to make decisions that serves its diverse interests, in this case putting into praxis alternative, pluralist democratic values, principles, and practices articulated by thinkers as disparate as Dewey, Mouffe, Rawls, and Hardt and Negri.[36] Though these thinkers are not often overtly referenced in relation to the movement, they place the praxis of the Occupy movement within a broader context, rooted in a history of democratic critique where modes of consensus and deliberation offer a means for articulating a form of democratic subjectivity that shifts the power of representation to the dispersed will of collective individuals.

Inherent in the demand for a critical voice is the further concern that the collective voice not speak in a way that quashes minority interests or exerts a totalizing force upon the membership of the movement, forcing them to adhere to a certain set of goals. In this regard, the notion of a "general assembly" formed the core of the movement and, as such, provides a form of communication and deliberation that collected the movement members through shared interests without inflecting authoritarian meaning upon their activity.[37] Videos of the general assembly in action show members of the movement deliberating over ideas, with more charismatic individuals asserting authority only to keep discursive order of the meeting.[38] As media texts, these videos of general assemblies in action serve two primary purposes. First, they document the deliberation and decision-making at the core of the movement, showing how certain decisions were made with the interests of individual members in mind. As such, they preserve not just the reasoning behind decisions, but also the objections and obstacles that block a decision. Secondly, videos of the general assembly in action operate as mimetic counterpoint to contemporary representative politics. As individuals get recognized, express their opinions on both collective decisions and modes of critique, the assembly begins to grow seemingly interminable as relevant talking points begin to give way to unwieldy and divergent topics of concern.[39] However, as people speak at length about a broad range of concerns to the collected bodies of other protesters, the assembly itself takes on a form that models the ideals of democratic assembly and deliberation.

Many of these general assembly videos are documented on cell phone cameras capable of capturing only minutes at a time, and as such, the ostensible public record of a general assembly meeting often reveals the ideas that gather a broad response from the collective or distill the gist

of the general conversation into a single speaker's words.[40] From this de facto editing process, an intelligible understanding of the protest's import and the various ideas, opinions, sets of personal values, and historically-informed philosophies begins to emerge and reveals itself. These videos then appear on blogs and allied publications like *Truth Dig* and *Democracy Now*, where informed commentators place them into context and curate them as exemplary texts for their audiences.[41] Over time, the moniker "Occupy Wall Street" and the collective activity in Zuccotti Park begin to embody the divergent opinions of various charismatic speakers whose words happened to have been captured and disseminated under the Occupy name.[42] From a communication perspective the style of interaction becomes much more important than the content of interaction, as it is the style of interaction that preserves the open intent of the movement's consensus-style deliberation. Furthermore, it is this style of open deliberation that makes the movement recognizable as similar groups appear in Oakland, Chicago, Atlanta, London, and elsewhere, also falling beneath the moniker of "Occupy."[43] As such, it is this style of interaction and deliberation that creates a coherent mass of people that, in turn, allows outsiders like Zizek and Wark, as well as others from the academy, the progressive press, and public institutions to contextualize the movement and explain its import to those beyond the physical boundaries of the protests.

Making the Exercise of State Power Visible

Beyond creating an event that served as the material antecedent to an expression of collectivist politics and a critique of class relations and the modern banking system, digital documents from the Occupy movement also throw into sharp relief the exercise of dissent and

the state's tactics in countering that dissent. It is difficult to talk about the Occupy movement without talking about the direct conflict between Occupiers and police, often documented through cell phone cameras and shared across social media networks. Beyond the movement's intent to articulate a concentrated critique against the expressions of modern class relations, by making visible the tactics of state control through direct opposition, the movement gave further credence to its critique by explicitly showing how the state works to silence a dissenting movement whose voice has grown too loud.

These videos, as they became part of the mainstream media's coverage of the protests, formed a key part of the popular depiction of these protests and dominated the mainstream narratives. Journalistic news values centered on conflict and reporting practices geared towards dramatizing conflict existed before the protests, but inform their rendering in popular media. As such, they offer a style of narrative storytelling that makes the terms of conflict between protesters and the police intelligible.

Spectacles of violence

The most visible conflict between the protesters and police occurred during mass arrests on the Brooklyn Bridge as thousands of protesters marched toward a police barricade in the middle of the bridge on October 1, 2011. Reporters from the *New York Times* captured the apparent chaos of mass arrests, as police officers and spokespersons alleged that they had warned protesters that marching in the bridge's traffic lanes would lead to arrests, while various protesters alleged that the police had knowingly let them walk into the bridge's traffic lanes and into a barricade so that police could conduct mass arrests. New York police made 700 arrests for

disorderly conduct.[44] In the days immediately following the protests, lawsuits claiming First and Fourth Amendment rights violations would be filed, thus bringing the conflict between protesters and the police into the realm of public adjudication.[45]

The incident, as a mass, strategic exercise of police power, reveals the lines of conflict between police and protesters in granular detail, and videos collected from the crowd during the arrests reveal a detailed picture of police power in action as well as the chaotic environment such power is exercised in. Most apparent in these videos is the stark visual difference between police and protesters. The officers wear homogenous uniforms and move their bodies in a strategic choreography meant to directly conflict with the oncoming, chaotic yet nonviolent mob of protesters.[46] Shot at a wide angle from the pedestrian walkway above the Brooklyn Bridge's main traffic lanes, various videos provide a broad enough visual perspective to reveal the logistical power of the police force at work as officers move their bodies in unison to block off the entrance of the bridge, trap protesters, and begin lifting sitting, immobilized individuals from the crowd and in order to restrain them with zip ties and arrest them.[47] The videos show a police force moving with a bureaucratic precision that is simultaneously unresponsive to the protesters' invectives to show mercy to people who appear to be children and to chants of "Shame! Shame! Shame!"[48]

As a documentary text, the videos reveal details from various angles within the protest and in aggregate show the New York Police Department's ability to exert an ordering force upon the collective bodies of the protesters.[49] The videos also show what that power looks like at the level of the personal, as officers have to grab individual bodies and drag them across asphalt in order to make an arrest.[50] As documents located within the broader cultural practices of visibility,

these videos reveal New York police officers as an extension of state power and reveal the personal details of that power in action, especially once it is deployed against a group of seemingly nonviolent protesters. By documenting the workings of this power and tapping into a symbolic register where New York police officers stand as a symbol of the sate's power, these videos encourage people outside the movement to question the legitimate deployment of the state's police power and argue that "such acts of police aggression are fast becoming the shame of our nation."[51]

Videos documenting the Brooklyn Bridge protests reveal the operation of police power en masse and at a macro-scale as well. It is at this scale that they reveal the lines of conflict between police and protesters, especially as the operation of police power moves to exert an influence and quell the symbolic act of protesting. Obviously, there is a canny awareness of media attention at play as "the more protesters who get arrested, the more press coverage the movement gets. That press coverage, in turn, brings out more protesters, some of whom may be willing to spend a few hours in a police van during the next OWS event."[52] Such large-scale events, once documented and distributed, allow outside commentators and spokespeople from within the movement to further describe the meaning of the revealed relations as part of a narrative of populist dissent that reveals a system of capitalist class relations that corrupt and use the capabilities of democratic institutions to contain the power and expression of popular will.[53] Videos that capture the conflict between police and protesters then valorize the populist aesthetic of the movement as opposed to the demonstrated, restrictive power of state institutions simply through the act of capturing that power in action. Once that power is documented in its deployment, that power can be debated as legitimate in the macro-scale.[54]

Revealing the details of micro-power

Though videos of large scale events reveal the lines of conflict between police and protesters, other videos that document conflicts between individual officers and protesters further reveal the exercise of micro-power in these moments of conflict. These images also reveal the personalized police tactics in action, drawing attention to an imbalance between officers that wield the state's power and citizens whose bodies receive the full brunt of force. Photographs of bandaged heads and bloodied faces stand as evidence of a police apparatus capable of inflicting bodily harm on the individuals engaged in dissent.[55] Such photos of the violence gain an affective currency, particularly when police violence is exercised against a person whose own physical presence seems disproportionate to the kind of violence deployed.

Take for instance the photo of 84-year-old Seattle activist Dorli Rainey. In it, her face drips with pepper spray, as fellow protesters carry her.[56] Rainey, smaller than the surrounding figures in the photos, stares directly into the camera as the white pepper spray glaze on her face forms a direct counterpoint to the drab colors of the photo. She stares into the camera, addressing the viewer in a way that not only arrests attention, but also humanizes the consequences of police violence. The power of this image lies not only in its aesthetic composition, but also in its digital form. Captured by Josh Trujillo, a *Seattle Post Intelligencer* photographer outside an Occupy Seattle encampment, the image quickly spread, appearing in various Twitter feeds associated with Occupy Wall Street as well as blogs hosted by organizations like CBS News and *The Atlantic*. Digital coding and sharing infrastructure allowed this photo to spread quickly, while Trujilo's own Twitter account allowed him to give further context to the photo, revealing that pepper spray covered his camera lens after the police action.[57] Such messages contextualize the

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circumstances surrounding the photo's capture, but also reveal it as a hybrid text, caught between the structure of an official media institution (the *Post Intelligencer* and the Associated Press) and a more informal media structure where the photo emerged as an exemplary text that aesthetically revealed the relationship between the movement and the use of police power. The photo also exists as a part of a broader, aggregated mass of videos and photos that document this specific type of police action.[58] Furthermore, the photo, and the other texts surrounding it, stands as counter-evidence to the rationality undergirding the deployment of pepper spray, as Seattle police spokesperson Jeff Kapel articulates in an article for CBS News: "Pepper spray...is not age specific. No more dangerous to someone who is 10 or someone who is 80...These protesters are well organized, they're using homemade remedies to counter pepper spray."[59] Though such rationalities attempt to discredit the mediated representations presented in these photos, they also discursively reveal the power of image capturing practices to undermine the legitimacy of police power as it is deployed against Occupy protesters.

Videos and photos surrounding the police activities reveal with varying scope and scale the capabilities of the police force while also humanizing protestors. Individual photos and videos establish setting and context for protest activities, document individual arrests and injuries, reveal lines of police officers in riot helmets, show officers carrying gates used to corral protesters, depict the scale of protests as crowds gather in public spaces like New York's Union Square, or present thematic details like protesters adorning a statue of Mahatma Gandhi with balloons.[60] Collected together, these photos and videos reveal the digital yet sensible form of the event. Given the digital nature of these documents and the ease with which they integrate into web pages via html coding, they can be collected in one place. Fro here, a single blogger,

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activist, or journalist may curate the various texts in a way that contextualizes the conflict between police and protesters with an intelligibility that changes as new events happen and new documents of those events emerge.[61]

The power relations these documents display in aggregate can also be found in single emblematic photos that distill into a single image the state's ability to deploy physical force, such as the Associated Press photo of a New York police officer swooping low to swing his baton at a black-clad protester girding himself for the impending blow.[62] Such thematic photos distill the action and conflict between police and protesters into a single shot that gains it resonance from the surrounding context of other, less aesthetically composed images that document the range of activity surrounding the protests and police action. These thematic photos in turn reveal the meaningful dynamics at play through a practice of image capture that is centered upon the simultaneously deployment of image capturing devices and knowledges of image composition. Though powerful and emotionally affecting photos of the protests emerge and circulate, their power is not limited to the border of the text itself; it is contingent upon the existence of devices and practices that from which these images emerge in the first place.

Occupy Identity: Managing Internal Dynamics

This chapter now moves from an analysis of representational dynamics external to the Occupy Movement to a consideration of the ways that forms of representation and visibility helped provide cohesion to the movement by offering a means for articulating solutions to moments of disjuncture within the movement. Such an analysis presumes that moments of

disjuncture challenging the cohesion of the movement emerged internally, but through deliberation, preserved the cohesion of the movement's broader critical project.

After protestors in Zuccotti park dispersed and police dismantled similar encampments in other cities in late 2011, the slogan "We are the 99%" persisted, often finding its way into news reports on diverse topics ranging from unemployment numbers to presidential politics to arts and music. As Gerbaudo argued, the slogan's populist sentiment varied from the minoritarian politics of the anti-globalization protests of the 1990's and allowed for a rhetoric of dispersed, collective, and granular unity to emerge around the movement.[63] To this date, the Tumblr page "We are the 99%" stands as an artifact of the type of rhetoric and embodied politics that Gerbaudo describes. The site contains more that 3,500 user-submitted digital photos of individuals holding pieces of paper describing their specific life conditions and variations of the slogan "I am the 99%."[64] People who upload photos to the site tend to describe the politics underlying their financial circumstances, ranging from problems with student debt, lack of health insurance, or difficulties raising a family on a minimum wage job. As a collection of photos, the website derives its documentary power from the way it individualizes the slogan "We are the 99%" to specific bodies capable of enunciating their specific life experiences within the broader politics of the movement. As such, the site stands as a collection of texts that offers a granular and collectivizing politics capable of critiquing the specific effects of economic inequality.

Yet, as Gupta notes, the slogan and the politics it embodies reveal the limits of the movement's ideals when faced with the problems of democratic deliberation and strategic dissent. "The 99 percent is a great slogan, but even in a best-case scenario, there will be winners and losers whenever a decision is made. Progress requires democratic mechanisms of legitimacy

and accountability and an awareness of who represents the movement and how to represent it. But that can be easier said than done," he argued.[65] As noted above, shared values and modes of deliberation served as a unifying element across the group, but the collective nature of the movement and the unifying rhetoric of "the 99%" also provided opportunities for fissures and disjunctures within the movement to emerge. The following sections will look at two of these moments of disjuncture: the use of violence by the "Black Bloc" and a critique of the Occupy movement articulated by Native American activists. In each moment, the terms of the movement opened up as individuals used the rhetorics, technologies, and modes of intelligibility from within the Occupy movement to resolve these forms of disjuncture.

Black Bloc and the use of violence

As Occupy Wall Street protests grew through the fall of 2011 and into the spring of 2012, organizers and spokespeople from the movement began to publicly criticize individuals within the movement identified as the Black Bloc. Chris Hedges, a journalist sympathetic to the Occupy movement called Black Bloc a "cancer within Occupy" due to its use of violent tactics. He argued that violence was detrimental to the health of the Occupy movement because Black Bloc tactics, "permit an inchoate rage to be unleashed on any target."[66] For Hedges, Black Bloc represented an ideological problem that could sink the movement, because, in practice, it reduced the form of critique to a logic of violence emblematic of a rigid moral structure that could not accommodate any position other than a strict anti-capitalist critique.[67] Coming at a time when the movement had gone beyond the initial novelty of occupying Zuccotti park, Hedges' critique of Black Bloc represents a key problem facing any movement, namely how to manage the "bedrock

issues of authority, accountability, representation, and legitimacy," from within a movement that, on its surface at least, strived to preserve a diversity of tactics that extended from a power structure rooted in collectivity instead of hierarchy.[68]

Black Bloc presented a key site of disjuncture amid the rationalities and values underlying the movement for a variety of reasons, but mostly because it was described, both by individuals within the movement and critics outside the movement as an expression of dysfunction and violence what they simplistically took to be indicative of modern anarchist movements, most notably the World Trade Organization protests of 1999.[69] The term Black Bloc, as it discursively operates within the Occupy movement, takes on a fixed character that foregrounds the use of violence in a way that separates the term from its context as a historically specific political strategy tied to the effectivity of an anonymous political subjectivity.[70] One photo often referenced by conservative commenters from *Breitbart.com*, a woman dressed in a black hoodie with a black bandana brandishes a make-shift cardboard sign emblazoned with the slogan "ALL MY HEROES KILL COPS" standing as an image distilling the ideology underlying Black Bloc activities.[71] Supporters of the Occupy movement described images of Black Bloc protesters vandalizing public property, antagonizing police officers, and frightening onlookers as activity divorced from the values articulated elsewhere in the movement. In response to the acts of "feral activism" and "spontaneous insurrection" that typified Black Bloc activities, Derrick Jensen argued, "I don't have a problem with escalating tactics to some sort of militant resistance if it is appropriate morally, strategically and tactically. This is true if one is going to pick up a sign, a rock or a gun. But you need to have thought it through."[72] These statements represent a means for making sense of Black Bloc activities while articulating their

specific use of violence as divorced from the movement's underlying rationality. Such statements attempt to preserve the values at the core of the movement by isolating problematic elements from the broader activity of the movement.

The symbolic nature of Black Bloc violence, as an expression of anarchist principles, makes it ripe for the type of criticism that first imparts meaning over the action. However, Black Bloc, as a tactic of protest, is rooted in the Autonomia movements as collective individuals girded themselves in black in order to maintain their anonymity in order to specifically avoid the state's power of surveillance.[73] Black Bloc, as a tactic of anonymously deployed violence, ties to broader debates and reflections on the role of violence within social movements. Most germane here is the work of Marxist activist and theorist Sorel, who argued that in order for the proletariat to achieve its ends in early 20th century Europe, large-scale anonymous acts of violence that stood as expressions of the popular "will to act" were needed.[74] As a tactic, it provides an aesthetic unity through all-black garb and protected faces that also protect individual identity beneath a protective and defiant sense of unity meant to symbolize the group's collective agency to resist the control of the state.[75] When considered in relation to the Occupy movement, the use of Black Bloc tactics fold within the pragmatic goals of the movement: "In certain places and times the Black Bloc effectively empowered people to take action in collective solidarity against the violence of state and capitalism...we should continue working pragmatically to fulfill our individual needs and desires...Masking up in Black Bloc has its time and place, as do other tactics which conflict with it."[76] Such statements attach Black Bloc, as the tactics appeared in connection to the Occupy movement to a broader philosophy of anonymity within anarchist politics. Anonymity, as a means of obscuring identity, serves both a pragmatic function

(obscuring identity from the mechanisms of state surveillance) and a philosophical function

(obscuring the notion of identity in order to build a politics based on collective action).[77] As

such, by talking about Black Bloc and its place within Occupy, supporters and critics attempt to

deliberate whether or not such tactics have a place within the movement.

By articulating the goals of anarchist politics to the collectivist project at the core of

Occupy, supporters of the use of Black Bloc tactics within the Occupy movement argue that

these tactics do not denote a separate group within the Occupy movement, but instead a series of

tactics aimed at pursuing similar goals.[78] Black Bloc tactics, and the conflict over them, stand as

evidence of the deeper problems of self-governance within the movement:

> These are not hypothetical questions. Every major movement of mass non-violent civil
> disobedience has had to grapple with them in one form or another. How inclusive should
> you be with those who have different ideas about what tactics are appropriate? What do
> you do about those who go beyond what most people consider acceptable limits? What
> do you do when the government and its media allies hold up their actions as justification
> —even retroactive justification—for violent and repressive acts?[79]

As an example of the mode of democratic engagement valorized by the Occupy

movement, unresolved conflicts over Black Bloc tactics present a moment where the principles

of deliberation are made visible, with members of the movement articulating their opinions

across digital platforms to other members of the movement in a way that makes visible to

outsiders and insiders alike the practices of deliberation active at the heart of the movement. As

journalist Arun Gupta's reporting captures, "In a movement like Occupy, which is more like a

cosmic haze of subatomic particles than a luminous celestial body, democracy is fuzzy.

Democracy is not 'everyone does what everyone wants to," says [professor of political theory

Peter] Bratsis...Some want to work within the system. Others want to fight the state."[80] Gupta's

reporting shows supporters of Occupy's deliberative process arguing that tactics of dissent, either

rooted in philosophies on non-violence or pragmatisms that justify the use of violence, are the

visible expressions of underlying philosophies. As such, "these actions all impinge on other

people's rights or visions of the movement. Consensus – the lifeblood of the General Assembly

which is the beating heart of the Occupy movement – is about getting everyone to agree."[81] It is

in agreement, or at least the public, deliberative processes that lead to agreement, that the

connective solidarity of the movement, its potential, and its effects, were expressed.

Native voices critical of the 99%

While concerns about Black Bloc circulate around tactics of dissent, other groups'

critiques identified a complicated racial politics that affected the identity of the movement and

challenged the legitimacy of its critical project. As Native American blogger Adrienne K. has

noted, the term "Occupy" is itself problematic given America's colonial history. The term as it

was used by the movement elided a complicated history of colonial politics.[82] As she argues, the

rhetoric and politics surrounding the Occupy movement often ignores an uncomfortable history

of racial struggle and oppression linked to the development of the American economic system.

Some texts, such as the photo of a Lenape woman super-imposed with the phrase "Occupied

since 1625," utilize the rhetoric and signifiers of the Occupy movement to draw attention to

historical acts of oppression.[83] As a text, photos like the one of the Lenape woman draw attention

to acts of marginalization that occur within the movement, namely, the notion that protests

against economic forces, conditions of inequality, and the inadequacy of political representation

elide broader issues of race and colonial history that are just as implicit in the production of

unequal conditions. As activist John Paul Montano wrote in an open letter to Occupy protesters:

> I hope you would make mention of the fact that the very land upon which you are protesting does not belong to you – that you are guests upon that stolen indigenous land. I had hoped mention would be made of the indigenous nation whose land that is. I had hoped that you would address the centuries-long history that we indigenous peoples of this continent have endured being subject to the countless '-isms' of do-gooders claiming to be building a "more just society," a "better world," a "land of freedom" on top of our indigenous societies, on our indigenous lands, while destroying and/or ignoring our ways of life. I had hoped that you would acknowledge that, since you are settlers on indigenous land, you need and want our indigenous consent to your building anything on our land – never mind an entire society.[84]

Others, like Robert Desjarlait, claimed a first-hand understanding of the kinds of inequality that served as the object of Occupy Wall Street's critique: "As far as financial inequity is concerned, we, the red and the brown peoples of the Americas, have suffered financial inequity ever since the oppressors first invaded our shores. Financial inequity – perhaps better termed as socio-economic inequity – began with the subjugation of our lands through treaties."[85]

Such statements historicize financial inequality as an object of critique while also sharply criticizing the Occupy movement for appearing blind to these histories. Such arguments, though, do not undermine the foundation of the movement. Instead, they open it up, and its modes of discourse, to accommodate further forms of critique from voices and identities that complicate the notion of "the 99%" as a monolithic collective with unified interests. These positions also allow individuals to launch critiques against the populist nature of the movement, drawing stark attention to the electorate's complicity in all forms of oppressive machinations, as Jessica Yee wrote:

> This is part of a much larger issue, and in fact there is so much nationalistic, patriotic language of imperialism wrapped up in these types of campaigns that it's no wonder people can't see the erasure of existence of the First Peoples of THIS territory that happens when we get all high and mighty with the pro-America agendas, and forget our OWN complicity and accountability to the way things are today – not just the corporations and the state.[86]

Critiques aimed at the individuals within the movement open up the potential for revising the

movement's strategies and rhetorics by first identifying and critiquing the ways in which the

movement fails to account for the concerns of a key group that has historically been on the

receiving end of the forces of oppression and inequity. These statements open up the Occupy

movement to discursively accommodate a historically rooted project of critique that implicates

not just relations of economic inequality, but also overt forms of exploitation rooted in the

European settlement of the New World. Such a critique encompasses the entirety of the Occupy

project by pointing out the protests and the relations they impugn happen within a system where

systemic exploitation and extraction were the basis upon which a broader economy was built.

Since many of the arguments launched by native voices appeared across blogs and digital

publishing platforms, digital conventions like deep linking and quoting allowed for an argument

to develop across various blogs and various writers. These writers did not construct arguments

and critiques of the Occupy movement in a vacuum, but instead built upon each other's

collective statements about the movement. Over the course of September and October 2011,

these collective statements built a form of visibility and intelligibility across Native American

concerns that culminated in the acknowledgement of indigenous interests within the Occupy

movement, such as the following statement from Occupy Denver:

> If this movement is serious about confronting the foundational assumptions of the current
> U.S. system, then it must begin by addressing the original crimes of the U.S. colonizing
> system against indigenous nations. Without addressing justice for indigenous peoples,
> there can never be a genuine movement for justice and equality in the United States.
> Toward that end, we challenge Occupy Denver to take the lead, and to be the first
> "Occupy" city to integrate into its philosophy, a set of values that respects the rights of
> indigenous peoples, and that recognizes the importance of employing indigenous visions
> and models in restoring environmental, social, cultural, economic and political health to
> our homeland.[87]

Such statements serve as evidence of a deliberative process and form of assembly that can take in new matters of concern. Here we see a key thematic of identity formation resolved through a form of digital critique that reveals a process of collective deliberation. When other strands of the movement, such as those in Occupy Boston, ratified "Memoranda of Solidarity with Indigenous People," they revealed the movement's capacity to bring new identities and concerns into the broader movement without pushing for an assimilation that neutered a critical group's original concerns.[88] Such events and acts of solidarity reveal a key thematic at the core of the movement, namely, that through sustained critique across digital platforms, members of the movement were able to take up these critiques as objects of concern from in a way that built upon the granularity of identities and concerns encapsulated by the movement.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis centered on key aspects from the Occupy movement in order to explicate how the assemblage of political praxis, communications practice, and digital technologies formed a grid of intelligibility around specific aspects of the movement as a broader event. This chapter does not presume to capture the totality of the Occupy movement nor its media presence, but instead attempted to show that such attempts fail to capture the broad, multifaceted, and conflictual nature of the movement. By focusing on particular aspects of practice that emerged from the movement, this chapter has shown how modes of visibility made intelligible particular events, objects of critique, and modes of deliberation within the movement. To say that the physical crush of people in Zuccotti Park presaged critical awareness of the movement, or that social media tools enabled a swell of material support, reduces the complex

interplay between practices that granted the movement its critical and rhetorical power, and thus the intelligibility that made the issues at the core of movement broadly visible to outside onlookers.

For the politics of visibility, and the broader concerns of this dissertation, these practices play a key role in understanding the modes of self-representation that undergird the exercise of politics within roader meaning-making systems. Neither determined by the possibilities inherent in technologies nor collective human activity, these strategies of self-representation combine material and political concerns into a project contingent upon the social realities circulating around a particular historical moment. The Occupy movement represents a single moment where the practical considerations of digital documentation converge with the strategic considerations of a political project, giving rise to a means of self-representation whose intelligibility is reliant upon a broad context, but whose presence amid the discourse also works to render visible long dormant political forces that inscribe political subjectivity. These practices of self-representation not only make Occupiers' political project visible, they also render visible the relations of power that such representations are immersed within.

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CHAPTER 4

DISCIPLINES OF TRUTH: THE 'ARAB SPRING,' AMERICAN JOURNALISTIC

PRACTICE, AND THE PRODUCTION OF MEANING

What's so rewarding about the reporting in Egypt...if you just tell people's stories, then they become the vehicles for these sentiments, these emotions. It becomes much more real in a certain way. Also much more honest.[1]

-Former New York Times Beirut bureau chief Anthony Shadid

The previous chapters have examined the politics of visibility as an assemblage of practices by accounting for digital technology and aspects of self-representation. This chapter furthers the explication of the assemblage by looking at American journalism as a field of public knowledge production, using the Arab Spring as a particular event around which practices of knowledge production circulated. This chapter analyzes four aspects of the Arab Spring coverage as emblematic of journalistic practices in order to illustrate how, as a discipline, journalism produces specific discourses that in turn produce meaning around and the visibility of these events.

A critical understanding of the phrase "Arab Spring" is necessary before moving on, as the term embodies a form of cultural flattening that reduces the specific politics, histories, and geographies of North African and Middle Eastern countries into a single term that, at the time, conflated the various political identities and strategies of the region as an expression of an idealized democratic subjectivity.[2] As Applebaum argued in early 2011, the various protests

across the Middle East and North Africa, while fascinating in their simultaneity, did not represent a monolithic movement toward liberation among Arab populations, but instead revealed a complex variety of political and cultural conditions undergoing shifts that were unique to each country.[3] Therefore, the term "Arab Spring" is rhetorically misleading in that it links each uprising to an essentialized Arab identity transitioning into a traditional liberal democratic subject through the coordinating and communicative power of social media. While studying the specific complexities of these movements lies beyond the scope of this dissertation, the term "Arab Spring" is useful for critiquing the particular forms of knowledge production that American journalism engages in. Despite being reductive in a geo-political context, the term is also productive by enabling journalists to craft coherent narratives around a complex bed of activity in a part of the world of which few Americans have direct knowledge.[4] For the study of media and communication, the Arab Spring becomes an ideal site for investigating how American journalism, as a discipline, engages in what Louw has analyzed as the public production of truth through the use of concepts and labels that cause phenomena and events to cohere around a singular meaning and thus become visible and able to be apprehended.[5]

In keeping with this dissertations's assertion that the production of visibility occurs across a politically charged assemblage of practice, this chapter will trouble the notion that an inherent tendency toward democracy at the heart of social media led to the Arab Spring. This chapter will examine claims to truth at the heart of American journalistic practice, positing the Arab Spring as an event that journalism's institutional meaning-making practices circulated around. By looking at how these practices helped make the Arab Spring visible, this chapter hopes to reveal them as

temporally and technologically contingent, but also linked to the values of liberal democracy that undergird journalism's role in American public life.

In order to do so, this chapter's analysis consists of four parts centered around American coverage of the Arab Spring protests. The first part lays out the conceptual basis for understanding American journalism as a realm of cultural and political knowledge production. This chapter then presents Wael Ghonim as an example of these practices in action and a media figure who conflated liberal democratic values with protests in Egypt and elsewhere. In order to analyze the conflation of technology with the expression of democracy, the chapter will then investigate discourses surrounding American journalism's relationship to social media and digital devices, asserting that the journalistic use of these devices preserves an epistemological authority that can be discerned at the site of the individual reporter. This chapter then looks at the individual reporter as a site of individualized knowledge production. Finally, this chapter considers how news commentary and analysis built upon the epistemological authority of prior reporting to construct the Arab Spring as a particular object of public interest intelligible within the broader regime of liberal democratic institutions.

Journalism and the Production of Publicly-held Knowledge

In order to understand how the Arab Spring became an object of public concern, one must first conceptualize American journalism as a discipline engaged in the production of public truth. As noted earlier, journalism operates as a broad field of institutionally and professionally established practices that legitimize certain phenomena as important and, thus, visible. A key way that journalism establishes the fidelity of a representation is through the creation, curation,

and ordering of facts. Facts aggregate and circulate around phenomena in such a way as to create predominant narratives and meaning around events. Here, in the production of facts and the subsequent production of meaning, we find the real effectivity of visibility as discussed in the preceding chapters, for if an event, group, or technology can change the ways of perceiving, presenting, and ordering facts, there is then the possibility to change the orders of meaning, and subsequently the values attached to that meaning.

Such a claim corresponds to those of Latour, who has laid out a broader project for destabilizing the production of facts, and in doing so, allows for the creation of new matters of concern that can have an effectivity in their relation to existing practices or seemingly settled modes of meaning.[6] In terms of political pragmatism, Latour finds problematic the modes of representation in public discourse such as journalism, precisely because notions of fidelity to fixed reality solidify borders around what can and cannot be considered a new object of public concern. He states:

> But it might also be the case that half of such a crisis is due to what has been sold to the general public under the name of a faithful, transparent and accurate representation. We are asking from representation something it cannot possibly give, namely representation without any *re-presentation*, without any provisional assertions, without any imperfect proof, without any opaque layers of translations, transmissions, betrayals, without any complicated machinery of assembly, delegation, proof, argumentation, negotiation and conclusion.[7]

While Latour's own work builds from the study of science and scientific practice, he links these knowledge-production practices to the broader realm of political discourse, assembly and decision making, seeking ways to bring non-human phenomena into political praxis in a way that acknowledges the impact that non-human phenomena have on human political praxis. His ideas have important consequences for the study of communication and modes of public deliberation,

particularly the production of a journalism that strives to present the objective truth-in-formation of matters of fact—the indisputable who, what, where, why, and how of an event.

In thinking about the production of visibility, Latour offers a conceptual language for thinking about the multiple meanings of the term "assembly," namely positing it as an ordering of phenomena and things that demand to be taken into account. For the purposes of this chapter, and in the example of the Arab Spring, assembly becomes an apt mode of thinking about the phenomena under review in at least two ways. Just as the collection of individuals gathered in Tahrir Square throughout early 2011 assembled in such a way to be considered a new form of political phenomenon within the Egyptian context, an assemblage of digital devices and social media technologies broadcast these protests to a geographically dispersed audience, assembled in solidarity with the events playing out on their screens. Alongside all these meanings, assembly also connotes the realm where the co-constitutive production of meaning takes place, much as how an assembly hall serves as the idealized setting for deliberative, democratic decision making.[8] By expanding the term "assembly" to connote the collection of groups, individuals, events, and things granted relevance within broader discourse, Latour opens the possibility for conceiving of journalism as a discipline that denotes the ontological boundaries around a given matter of concern.

Journalism and journalistic practice give sensible form to matters of concern through the professionalized daily practices involved in "making the news."[9] These practices coalesce into a form of public knowledge production, albeit one directly implicated in the relations of power that create the discursive context journalism operates within. Thus, these practices produce not only the circumstances through which information can be understood as true, but also the conditions

that determine "who has the ability to tell the truth, about what, to whom, and with what relation to power."[10] As a realm of privileged truth-production, its practices circulate to create the Arab Spring as an object of knowledge, contained in its activity and inert in the basics of its meaning once the term has been established. Given Latour's schema, journalism, as a discipline forms the basis for "taking into account" various phenomena and bringing them into the discourses of public life by curating the terms, images, opinions, and sources by which these phenomena are deemed worthy of concern.[11]

It should be noted that, as a particular field of practice, journalism is neither monolithic nor overdetermining in its claims to truth, but instead historically contingent and specific to the broader sets of values at play. As such, it operates as a discourse that creates heterogeneous objects whose primary epistemological value derives from their selection as timely and relevant events, though the depictions of global events and identities are often fraught with particular expressions of power.[12] These events, in their representation, reveal certain cultural, political, and historical values at work. As McChesney and Nichols have argued, the realities of journalistic practice are contingent upon a range of political, economic, historical, and social factors. As a discipline, journalism tends to adhere to traditional liberal democratic values elevating the power of singular ideas and forms of speech as an essential part of a democratic society.[13] Despite debates about the influence of economic structures and perceived corruptions in the practice of journalism, a normative standard that outlines the role journalism should play in a liberal democratic society still operates at the heart of the discipline, providing a set of values that guide the practice in action. As such, these values not only undergird media reform movements, but

also affect the modes of production that journalistic knowledge emerges within and provide the discursive structure that objects of journalistic knowledge emerge within.[14]

The Arab Spring, as an object of journalistic knowledge, offers a key event through which to understand how journalism's meaning making practices elevate certain elements within an event and apply meanings and value to them. In Egpyt, Libya, Tunisia, Syria, and elsewhere, Arab protesters were often depicted as a new liberal democratic subject coming into being, harnessing the tools of communication to engage in a process of self-representation and assembly previously forbidden by their governments. The following analysis will show that there are real epistemological consequences to the way that journalists constitute their objects of inquiry.

Articulating a Democratic Subjectivity: The Case of Wael Ghonim

After Hosni Mubarak resigned his power in Egypt amidst protests in early 2011, certain narratives began to emerge surrounding his ouster as American media outlets sought to explain the link between protests in the country, social media, and international pressure urging the dictator to resign. Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter were often cited as a key factor, as young Egyptians used these tools to coordinate protest activities, evade police, and publicize their dissent as well as police abuses to audiences beyond the immediate bounds of Tahrir square.[15]

In American media texts about the protests, Wael Ghonim, a young Google executive based in Dubai who traveled into Egypt in early 2011 to take part in the protests, emerged as a key figure. He was often sought out to articulate the meaning of these protests to Western

audiences.[16] Capturing the conventional wisdom surrounding Egyptian protests in a CNN interview, Ghonim said, "If you want to free a society, just give them Internet access. The young crowds are all going to go out and see the unbiased media...This is the Internet revolution. I'll call it Revolution 2.0."[17] In the months following the protests, Ghonim published a book about the protests and gave lectures explaining the link between social media tools and the new forms of protests and politics emerging in the Middle East and North Africa.

To understand how democratic values were conflated with the events surrounding the Arab Spring, this analysis will look at Ghonim as a key media figure who gave voice and intelligibility to these values. In news reports, books, blog posts, and public lectures throughout 2011, he explained how the events in Egypt represented a democratic potential at the core of the country's citizens. In the broader regime of meaning-making surrounding the Arab Spring, Ghonim's statements offer a particular understanding of the events in Egypt amenable to Western democratic values. As a media figure and a source for explaining the importance of the events to a Western audience, he offers a way of understanding how an event fits within a broader regime of liberal democratic values.

Wael Ghonim's status as a media figure typifies the discursive practices surrounding the Arab Spring at work. An Egyptian activist and Google executive, Ghonim was often cited as the "spark" of the protests in Egypt after Egyptian police arrested and detained him for two weeks for creating a Facebook page that commemorated the death of anti-Mubarak blogger Khaled Said and that encouraged other Egyptian citizens to gather in Tahrir square and protest decades of repressive rule.[18] Ghonim's own social media use, as well as his status as an executive at Google, made him an ideal point for discourses celebrating digital media's inherent democratizing power

on display in and around Tahrir Square. In media appearances after the resignation of Mubarak,

Ghonim further subsumed liberal democratic values to the technologies utilized in the Egyptian

protests, as the following quote from a TED talk about the protests illustrates:

> This is Revolution 2.0. No one was a hero because everyone was a hero...If you think of the concept of Wikipedia where everyone is collaborating content, and at the end of the day you've built the largest encyclopedia in the world. From just an idea that sounded crazy, you have the largest encyclopedia in the world. And in the Egyptian revolution, Revolution 2.0, everyone contributed something. Small or big, they contributed something to bring us one of the most inspiring stories in the history of mankind.[19]

By rhetorically linking the crowd-sourced construction of Wikipedia to the diffuse and dispersed

activity of Egypt's revolution, Ghonim connects the operations and logics of crowd-sourced

digital social networks and the diffuse political power of a mass protest. Such an articulation

typifies an understanding of the Arab Spring protests that circulated in American Media

throughout 2011. The enhanced connectivity of social media tools enabled repressed and

frustrated citizens from across the Middle East and North Africa to express their political

discontent at a previously inconceivable scale.

Yet such understandings of the Egyptian protests and other activities that fall under the

"Arab Spring" moniker also advance a narrative of these events as seemingly natural extensions

of the inherent capabilities of social media tools and mobile devices. This is why Ghonim was a

compelling figure for American media in the midst and immediate aftermath of the protests. As a

Google executive and politically active Egyptian citizen, he could uniquely articulate the

meaning of the protests in a way that linked the power of social media to broader democratic

ideals in a rhetoric and aesthetic that belied the same values that undergird American journalistic

discourses. Such discourses locate the central meaning of the protests around a singular object at

the expense of exploring and articulating other possible understandings, namely the cultural and

historical factors that enabled an inequality and repression that gave protesters an abstracted condition to protest against.[20] In the year following Mubarak's ouster, Ghonim portrayed himself as a source of the disparate activity, lauding the power behind his own Facebook page to incite real political action, revealing an understanding of political power that locates political effectivity at the site of an individual articulating ideas to a disaggregated mass. In the following statement, he reveals this rationality at work: "I kind of feel responsible for whatever I say on the page. I always ask myself, before every post, is that in the best interest of this country or not? I do not want to abuse a tool like this, because at the end of the day, it could lead to people dying, or it could lead to...bringing the country in the wrong direction."[21]

The proliferation of Wael Ghonim as a source for understanding the importance of the Arab Spring belies the journalistic practices of sourcing and personalization, where the words, images, and ideas of individual person are used to explain the importance of an event or issue. In the case of the Arab Spring, Ghonim articulates the democratic values of the events and in doing so reveals his discursive function as someone capable of defining the meaning of these events. For the purpose of this chapter, understanding Ghonim as an individual media figure embedded within the broader context of the Arab Spring allows us to see how the practices of journalistic meaning production circulate around particular aspects of an event. By articulating certain democratic values, Ghonim's statements offer a schema for ordering the facts surrounding the Arab Spring, thus making it sensible beyond the immediate geographic bounds of the protest by conflating the protests with a democratic subjectivity evident in the use of social media and digital technologies. As the next section will show, the creation of meaning around the Arab Spring relies first upon the collection of information, and it is in the act of collecting information

and deeming it credible that journalistic practice gathers the ontological raw material from which meaning can emerge.

Social Media and Journalism's Epistemological Authority

A focus on social media sites like Twitter and Facebook fueled early media analysis and cable news broadcasts about popular protests in Arab countries in early 2011, and the rationality underlying ovations about social media's power in the popular press was, and remains, more indicative of the shifting realities of journalism's means of knowledge production than it does any actual popular, unified zeitgeist across the Middle East and North Africa. Reporting about journalists' use of social media served to legitimate the epistemological authority of these technologies within journalism's broader regime of meaning production.

In understanding the impact these technologies have on the production of visibility, this section will interrogate how they fold into not just journalistic practice, but also become discursive objects unto themselves. They offer not just a means for distributing and capturing information, but also a schema of intelligibility for imparting meaning upon the events surrounding the Arab Spring.

Social media and the collection of news

First and foremost, social media and digital technologies offer a means for gathering material that then integrates with journalistic texts. As Heflin has argued, a journalistic focus on social media sites, and Twitter in particular, extends from professional traditions that define the credibility of sourcing.[22] As a journalistic tool, "Twitter enables a kind of individualized and

professionalized empiricism, which journalists comfortably accommodate within traditional routines."[23] Still, its empirical roots are troublesome as "individuals offering their own accounts or opinions of events on Twitter do not...cooperate in a public, open process of verification."[24] Heflin has called the journalistic use of Twitter and other social media sites "an inductive, data-driven mode of content creation" that fits within broader professional practices that value eyewitness accounts and first-hand knowledge of events.[25]

These requirements were particularly relevant in the case of the Arab Spring. As a news event, it encapsulated broad and dispersed activity in various countries, many of which were difficult for American journalists to report from directly, either due to strict controls on the press or violent conditions.[26] In the absence of a skilled reporter trained in the news collection process, information gathered from social media sites begins to fill a void. In an environment reliant upon information posted on social media networks, the professional onus then moves from the journalist observing a story to judging the credibility of information gathered from sources on Twitter, to curating and disseminating that information to an American audience plugged into the same tools.[27]

As a result, the information about protests posted across social media networks, published as digitally portable videos, images, and code files, becomes part of the news production process in a way that conflates the impact these technologies have had on news production with a broader expression of liberal democratic value. As these technologies are assimilated within the journalistic apparatus, their value to the profession is debated in a way that reifies the journalism's normative role as the distributor or publicly-held knowledge.[28] In analyzing the importance of social media in Egypt's protests and the ouster of Mubarak, reports conflate the

expression of public will with the technologies through statements like, "The success of the

revolt should be credited to Egyptian people, but the impact of social media is undeniable."[29]

Apart from glib pronouncements about the democratic potential of social media, there

also exist sober analyses that argue social media technologies are "intertwined with the

development of formal organizations, informal networks, and external linkages, provoking a

growing sense of modernity and community, and globalizing support for the revolt."[30] Here, one

finds the means for understanding the way social media and digital technologies became facets

of a broader event and narrative whose meaning was constructed as an expression of certain

democratic ideals in action. Nowhere is the link between technologies of representation and the

democratic values undergirding the protests more typified than in *Time* magazine's declaration of

the "protestor" as its person of the year in 2011, as discussed at the very beginning of this

dissertation: "Once upon a time, when major news events were chronicled strictly by

professionals and printed on paper or transmitted through the air by the few for the masses,

protesters were prime makers of history."[31] Technology used to express and represent dissent

becomes "the natural continuation of politics by other means."[32] The following statement reveals

a critical linkage between journalism's normative, liberal democratic ideals and the use of digital

technologies in these specific countries:

> In police states with high Internet penetration — Ben Ali's Tunisia, Mubarak's Egypt,
> Bashar Assad's Syria — a critical mass of cell-phone video recorders plus YouTube plus
> Facebook plus Twitter really did become an indigenous free press. Throughout the
> Middle East and North Africa, new media and blogger are now quasi-synonyms for
> protest and protester.[33]

Such claims make social media activity synonymous with a truth-revealing function that drives

journalistic practice.

Situated at the nexus between the social media actors protesting their governments via Twitter and traditional news audiences sit social media reporters like National Public Radio's Andy Carvin, whose words about the Arab Spring indicate a functioning professional relationship between social media activity and the media institutions that capture activity and create narratives out of it:

> Actually, I see myself as a storyteller, but one who doesn't work in traditional story form structures. For people who've followed me on Twitter, they've gotten to know many of the people I tweet about as characters in a broader Arab Spring narrative. You see their ups and downs, the hopes fulfilled and their dreams dashed. But because it's happening over Twitter, you're not experiencing these stories in the past tense. You're experiencing them in the present—as present as you can get. And my characters are real people, whether they use their real names or are forced to use pseudonyms for their own safety.[34]

Carvin's statement reveals a productive rationality at work, one driving the creation of news narratives through the aggregation and curation of information, quotes, images, gathered from individuals on Twitter. In this regard, the epistemological power of these technologies in the news production process arises from the ways they encourage journalists to perceive the words, actions, images, and representations of people they would be unable to access otherwise.

Information gleaned from social media still derives its professional usefulness from within journalism's discipline of verification.[35] Verification, as a professional practice, maintains journalism's authority over the truth, but social media and digital technologies offer obstacles to traditional modes of verification that were rarely standardized in the first place.[36] As a practice, verification produces accuracy as well as an epistemological authority contingent upon that accuracy. Since methods of verification have been destabilized by social media and digital technologies, a productive tension exists between the potential for a granular perception of closed-off events and the need to situate these modes of perception into a knowledge-regime

built upon accuracy.[37] Social media in general, and the Arab Spring in particular, offer a site around which concerns about verification circulate. Concerns about social media and ovations towards its democratic efficacy in the revelation of information, then, exist as part of a regime of knowledge production that preserves the privileged role of journalists in evaluating and disseminating that information.

Such an understanding of these technologies is necessarily dependent upon the infrastructures they are immersed within. As protests continued through 2011 and transitioned into protracted struggles for political power, governments began to crack down on various protesters through their own technological tools. Reporting on technologies began to focus less on the social values inherent in these technologies and more on their strategic deployment. In a *Wired* magazine article describing the technological tools deployed by the protesters, particular attention is paid to software programs that allowed individuals to broadcast images of police brutality and suppression as well as messages of protest and solidarity. "The Arab uprisings showed that the use of video as a monitoring tool has shifted decisively," but the use of new recording and broadcasting technologies to document the protests also implies a contested use of these technologies.[38] As citizens use cameras, police take those cameras. As they use cell phones, police take those cell phones. As police take cell phones, protesters use streaming software that broadcasts images as they are recorded.[39] As citizens find more ways to use the Internet to broadcast their position and plight, the government turns the Internet off.[40] This reveals an information gathering structure informed by restrictive governmental policies that constrict the flow of information through few pathways. Though networks inside a country might be complex and layered, network connections outside a country like Egypt route through a single,

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government-controlled portal, and once these information portals close, sources of raw material depicting the protests in action dries up.[41] As technology use became strategic for protesters, it also became strategic for journalists attempting to cover the protests, as journalists and dissenters alike communicated under false avatars, used encrypting software to hide their location and connection from authorities, and searched for video streaming services that could penetrate governmental firewalls.[42] Due to the strategic deployment of technology to escape governmental surveillance and security apparatuses, the journalism surrounding the protests amplified an inherent conflict here, as the use of digital technologies indicates a popular will that utilized any method to exploit fissures in state hegemony in order to express a democratic ideal at their core.

This observation brings this chapter back to the technological obsession characterizing the early coverage of the protests. Given an American media system currently searching for ways to integrate Facebook, Twitter, streaming video, and other forms of "user-generated content" into journalistic practice, the Egyptian and Libyan use of these technologies in particular provides a critical interface for making discursive sense of the Arab Spring. Images of protesters carrying signs celebrating Facebook alongside Arabic protest slogans became the archetypical image of the protest.[43] By giving a technological form to the protests that could be captured by American media, mobile recording technologies, alongside the distribution networks Facebook and Twitter, helped valorize the movement within American journalistic practice more through a practical integration of these technologies into the American media production than through any values inherent in the technology.[44]

A focus on digital and social media tools ultimately links these modes of communication with the aegis of journalistic production. Commenters argued that amid the Arab Spring, social

media tools enabled an "active participation in journalism," and "commentary not possible in even the most alternative of venues."[45] As part of an ersatz journalistic apparatus, these tools allowed for a "new Habermasian public sphere" to emerge amid restrictive regimes, thus creating a new category of citizenship inimically linked to digital expression.[46] Under these terms, this digital Arab citizenry, by its creative invocation of social media tools, was able to tap into centuries of democratic ideals and stand for an expression of these ideals in action. Such analytic moves, though, conflate the practicalities of reporting and information gathering with the articulation of broader values, and in doing so, cast a certain meaning upon the events influenced by liberal democratic values.

Critiquing social media as part of the bigger story

Inscribing discourses of essentialized democracy upon the digital technologies of communication engenders its own set of problems. For one, the discourse ascribes democratic agency to the material configurations of technology, severing any links between technologies and the realms of human agency and praxis. Given that American transnational companies produce these technologies and profit from their use and deployment, discourses that ascribe agency to the technology also elide uncomfortable questions about globalization, the neoliberal expansion of capital, and possible technological colonialism. Furthermore, discourses about the technology fail to capture changes in the protests as a social phenomenon as its participants begin to take more traditional forms of action against the government. Communications technology can only capture certain forms of dissent, but as Professor Mohammed el-Nawawy was quoted as saying in the *New York Times*, when people began "taking their frustration to the streets," the discourse

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about technology's role shifted because "blogs are not important now. Things have moved beyond that point."[47]

Other media critics would later criticize the focus on Facebook and Twitter as the technologies of democracy, and these critiques mark an important moment revealing how the protests shifted as an object of discursive concern.[48] Content mentioning the protests and published across Twitter and Facebook could be easily analyzed, quantified, and published in American media outlets, but the empirical link between this content and the subsequent political shifts is complicated by historical and cultural factors and thus difficult to prove.[49] Given an American media system where severe cutbacks to international reporting, as well restrictive media policies in countries like Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, have lessened the number of reporters capable of filing objective yet politically and culturally contextualized information about the region, the images from the protesters and Twitter and Facebook content form a pre-discursive reality around which meaning and truth are produced.[50] At times, techno-deterministic discourses around these technologies can lead journalists and commentators to make assertions about the democratic potentialities of these technologies when they are in actuality tools that, in their contemporary configuration, make these acts of protest visible and accessible to the journalists and their broader audiences.

In the press, discourses about the latent democracy of Internet technologies reached their limit not once protestors in Middle Eastern and North African countries began to engage in more traditional forms of dissent, but once American journalists, editors, columnists, and commentators began to articulate the meaning of the protests beyond the democratic potentials of Internet technology. As *New York Times* columnist Frank Rich pointed out in his critique of press

coverage of the Arab Spring, "That we often don't know as much about the people in these

countries as we do about their Tweets is a testament…to our own desire to escape a war zone that

has for so long sapped American energy, resources and patience. We see the Middle East on

television only when it flares up and then generally in medium or long shot."[51] His remarks

identified a cognitive limit in understanding events in the Middle East that located the limit in the

journalistic practices used to portray the region. Rich noted that journalistic practices had

replicated a geographic and cultural distance that limited what could be made intelligible about

Middle Eastern societies, and addressed the historical consequences of these practices more

directly in the closing of his column:

> As we took in last week's fiery video from Cairo — mesmerizing and yet populated by
> mostly anonymous extras we don't understand and don't know — it was hard not to flash
> back to those glory days of "Shock and Awe." Those bombardments too were spectacular
> to watch from a safe distance — no Iraqi faces, voices or bodies cluttered up the shots.
> We lulled ourselves into believing that democracy and other good things were soon to
> come. *It took months, even years, for us to learn the hard way that in truth we really had
> no idea what was going on* (emphasis added).[52]

Rich's words distilled a reflexive sentiment aimed at the journalistic profession that was also

expressed elsewhere by reporters and columnists like the *New Yorker's* Malcolm Gladwell,

Slate's Shmuel Rosner, *Salon's* Glenn Greenwald, and NBC's Richard Engel, Rachel Maddow,

and Lawrence O'Donnell.[53] In their own comments about reporting from the protests, these

journalists each proposed a method for reformulating and redeploying the tools of journalism

around the Arab Spring in a way that preserved the discipline of journalism as a producer of true

information. These critics, as part of the profession and disciplined in its norms and expectations,

admonished reporters, editors, and audiences to look beyond social media and digital

technologies and to instead focus on the social phenomena that these technologies made

intelligible in the first place. These critiques can exist alongside social media reporting precisely

because they graft normative values onto specific practices in a way that individuates the

perceptive power of the individual reporter, editor, or photographer.

The Meaning Making Power of the Individual Reporter

Amid the aggregation of digital information as well as the historical congruence of shifting

events sits the individual reporter, journalism as a regime of knowledge production necessarily

relies upon the perceptive and analytic power of individual reporters as the embodiment of the

discipline's meaning making practices. In the case of the Arab Spring, individual reporters with

experience in the region and an understanding of the history and politics surrounding the protests

act as the synthesizers of disparate events, texts, documents, blending various phenomena into a

coherent narrative that shifts as new information emerges. As the next section will argue, social

media and digital technologies enter into these individualized practices of meaning making

where experienced reporters and editors collect information and imbue it with its overall

significance to a shifting story. In doing so, these stories and the reporters that produce them cast

these events within a certain ideological regime—in this case, conflating the Arab Spring with

the expression of liberal democratic values.

As protests in the Middle East carried through the rest of the spring and into the summer,

Richard Engel, as NBC News chief foreign correspondent, appeared frequently on both NBC's

network news programming and MSNBC's daily cable news shows. As an extension of NBC's

traditional news gathering apparatus, Engel's function was "to explain how important this all is

to Americans" via first hand reports that attested to the "dignity" and "pride" of the protesters. [54]

Engel, like other reporters, commenters, and news anchors focusing on Egypt and Libya, existed as point of articulation between the protests and the traditional media apparatus, allowing the entirety of the protests to enter into the regime of truth that journalistic reporting and commentary helps produce. Likewise, MSNBC anchor Rachel Maddow discursively located the protests place within the ideologically regime of classical liberalism when she identified a Tunisian man's act of self-immolation as the inciting incident for the Middle Eastern protests. Her statements characterize the act as a symbol of "the anger and resentment over corruption and unemployment and unfairness and repression boiled over into demonstrations in Tunisia— demonstrations that would not stop no matter what the government said or what the police did, and the regime was ousted." Such statements reveal the power of a single individual, locating in that individual's act an expression of discontent consistent with an understanding of liberal democratic subjectivity.

The expression of liberal democratic subjectivity was also evident as Richard Engel espoused the values of democracy and the inevitability of democratic revolutions as he said, without irony, over grainy images of Libyan rebels capturing killing Muammar Qaddafi, that an epiphany of democratic inevitably came to Qaddafi as "he was pulled from a drainage pipe by rebels who smacked him around, pulled his hair, and ultimately put a bullet in his forehead."[55] Here, the inevitability of a democratic revolution is rhetorically grafted upon the Libyan rebels as the grisly violence of these images. Engel's words reflect a logic that justifies this very violence through what Foucault has identified as the rationality of a democratic *raison d'etat* at work, embodied in the will of the people to depose and kill a sovereign whose tactics of rule had

rendered his claims to power illegitimate.[56] As a credible interpreter and analyst of this video, Engel holds it up as evidence that a democratic will that expresses itself in the overthrow of dictators, whether through violence or acts of protest. In Engel's statements, videos like these document the existence of a democratic force that resists dictatorial power and works through individual subjects.

The authority undergirding Engel's statements and analyses is born out of a professional credibility built through professional practice. Engel can make certain assertions about the meaning of certain documents and events precisely because he has been trained in professional methods and values like verification and objectivity. As NBC's chief foreign correspondent (a title that denotes experience and mastery of the form), he can parlay meaning over particular events that is informed by a knowledge of the broader context the story occurs within. For instance, in the year following the initial uprising, as dissent in Syria became entrenched and pushed closer to civil war, Engel filed a report entitled "The Arab Spring is dead—and Syria is writing its obituary."[57] Engel's report exists as a counterpoint to the optimism that characterized early stories about uprisings as he attempts to explain entrenched tensions and politics in the region in terms of conflict between Sunni and Shiitie Muslims and contextualized by the United States continued military presence and policies of intervention in the region.[58] Such a report is characterized by necessary context and an understanding of recent history. In Engel's case, this is a form of objective reporting rooted both in first-hand experience from years spent reporting in these countries as well as professional expectation that the reporter presenting the story will possess a knowledge that is cognizant of the relative contexts. As Schudson has argued, such professional norms give a tangible form to the production of a type of knowledge that aspires to

be objective by giving journalists a way to understand the methods for producing objective information that relies not only on observation, but an informed analysis of relevant context.[59] These standards of professional practice are produced through individuals trained in journalism's methods and that serve to protect the empirical and epistemological purity of journalistic information, thus creating the standards by which valid and true knowledge is produced.[60]

The privileging of professional journalistic practice as an epistemologically valid form of knowledge creation characterizes a broad series of Arab Spring reports filed by major media organizations. CNN's Peabody Awards citation typifies a privileging of professional praxis, as the award's board commends a network "prepared when revolution began to leap like wildfire across the region," and individual reporters "present for almost every major event, providing visual information made more meaningful with informed commentary and analysis" in a way that "exemplified the professionalism of the entire CNN organization."[61] Compared to dispersed and seemingly anonymous reports from Twitter and Facebook, trained American journalists reliably produced news that conformed to the professional norms that preserved the discipline's status as a the source of publicly-held truth. Professional practice was embodied in the individual reporter, trained in theses methods and employed as part of a news organization whose institutional structure is configured to reproduce representations of events and reality at a certain epistemological standard.

Still, a rationality of representation lies at the heart of journalistic practice, and the inherent conflict of a highly public and visible protest lends itself to a reasonably uncomplicated representation. As the following critique from the Center for Strategic and International Studies reveals, understanding less dynamic and visible events can became complicated:

Looking forward, the coming phases of Egyptian politics lend themselves remarkably poorly to television. Complicated story lines, made even more incomprehensible by a raft of new political actors with unclear levels of support, will make it hard to report on what is happening. Meetings behind closed doors do not generate powerful images.[62]

Such critiques impugn journalism's aesthetics of representation, but also provide a basis for privileging the individual journalist's ability to understand and convey less the visible political, social, and historical context.

Perhaps nowhere was this personalized expression of professional practice embodied more clearly in the reporting from the Arab Spring than in the figure of Anthony Shadid. As the *New York Times*' Beirut bureau chief, Shadid was often presented as having special, culturally specific knowledge of the Egyptian protests due to his Lebanese heritage. Reflecting upon the meaning of an Arab Spring in the context of a colonial history that extended from the Ottoman Empire through European administrators, he attempts to place the protests as a logical evolution of Arab history:

> The dysfunction of all [Arab history], and of course the conflict with Israel, have fundamentally impacted these notions of identity. I think that's where we're at right now. That's what's so compelling about this Arab Spring—people at some level, consciously or unconsciously, are trying to heal the wounds of a century of, not just dysfunction, but of having governments fail to meet their ambitions.[63]

Shadid's own position as a bureau chief for a major American media outlet also allows him to explain not only why the Arab Spring was an important event, but also why trained journalists should pay attention to the event:

> If I take a step back and look at what was going on there, the events that are taking place are so overwhelming and they feel so historic and so important that you feel a real challenge to get it right. You feel a real challenge to do justice, I think, to what's happening around you...I hate to say this, and I hope it's not the case, but I'm sure ambition was as well, that you want to be there. You want to see what's happening. You want to do your job as a journalist, and I think in the end we all got taken by surprise by how quickly things unfolded and where we ended up.[64]

Taken together, these two quotes reveal a rationality underlying the practice of journalism that privileges the specific capabilities of the individual reporter to witness an event and synthesize its importance amid other historical and cultural knowledge. As the Shadid quote in the inscription of this chapter shows, this practice occurs beneath a humane and humanistic ethic that ascribes a particular power to the act of witnessing and reporting. It is a practice that hinges upon the individual to get the story "right" by not only observing the events, but to understanding those events, an in turn, synthesizing and reporting those events to an audience via narratives that show all of these elements at work. Here, between unmediated reality and an audience sits journalists, whose particular communicative power comes from their individualized knowledge in practice, as it has been constructed within journalistic practice, to understand what is happening in an event and in turn place it amid a broader context.

As uprisings grew in Syria, reporters from CBS crossed into the country, and in the process created a news story of their trip, revealing the difficulties of crossing into the country.[65] The story of anchor Scott Pelley clandestinely chasing a story under the cover of night across the Syrian border won a Peabody Award for the way it revealed the difficulties involved in gathering news from a country where several journalists were captured and killed throughout 2011. Such stories reveal the importance of witnessing and news gathering to the overall news process, but this does not mean that a reporter's eyes or a news organization's recording equipment are the privileged implements in this process. "Nothing happens in the region anymore without some form of bearing witness to it," Shadid has said and, in doing so, reveals a journalistic apparatus capable of bringing digital technologies into its reporting process. As capable of making judgments about the credibility of images and information gathered from social media networks,

the individualized journalist places these images and information into a historical and cultural

context primarily informed by professional experience. After Shadid died from an asthma attack

while crossing into Syria, his own career was memorialized as an epitome of witnessing in the

region as former editors lauded his "gifted eye for detail and contextual writing" practiced amid

personal peril in Middle Eastern war zones.[66]

With a government openly antagonistic to foreign journalists, the example of Syria

provides an interesting context for understanding the way that journalistic practice and the

production of meaning intersect at the level of the individual professional. The physical difficulty

crossing into the country and the war's dangers offer material obstacles, while a seeming lack of

American military or policy interest provides a cognitive one. Still, amid the conflict comes the

following passage, from a longer story lionizing the work of the few freelance photographers

snapping images of the conflict:

> For Syria's war is characterized most strongly by absence and collective abandonment.
> Other than the protagonists and victims the arena is almost empty. There is no foreign
> military intervention. There are no NGOs or aid workers distributing food and blankets.
> The media is similarly self-exiled: very few broadcasters or newspapers commit
> journalists regularly, if at all. A handful of freelance photographers work inside the
> country, but none of the big names.[67]

Amid these difficulties, photographers assume the role of professional chroniclers, recording in

image the material realities of these conflicts despite obstacles that would prevent this collection

of images. Collected photos from the Syrian conflict, as well as from other venues in the

collective Arab Spring work to reveal the broader story in detailed, human-centered moments.[68]

In thinking about the collected and collective information of the Arab Spring, the single

photographer snapping historically important images stands as a key symbol of the practice of

journalism as it is exercised by the individual trained in its methods. They represent a larger

institution whose emblem may be emblazoned on a camera, microphone, or jacket.

It is here, in the epistemological site of the individual reporter, photographer, or commentator,

that the practice of journalism asserts an authority over the construction of meaning that easily

assimilates technological shifts into existing professional practices. From this epistemological

purview, individual journalists situate shifting events and realities within the broader systems of

meaning. From here, analysts and commenters can explain how these ontologically settled events

have certain consequences within broader liberal democratic institutions.

Making Events Intelligible

In order to understand journalism's meaning making role within the broader context of

institutional power, this chapter will now turn its analysis to the ways that journalism makes

certain objects of knowledge, like the Arab Spring, intelligible to broader institutional regimes of

power. The capacity to grant significance to an event from within the practices of power

undergirds journalism's role within a liberal democracy, and it is from within this capacity that

we can begin to understand how objects of journalistic knowledge may gain a form of effectivity

across society at large.

In the months following the ouster of Mubarak in Egypt, on CNN, Fareed Zakaria

responded to a speech in which President Obama outlined a democratic imperative for

supporting protests in the Middle East, as well as specific policy positions justified by this

imperative. Zakaria celebrated the president's attention to policy and said that:

> The most difficult aspect of this Arab revolution is not in understanding it right now—its
> causes are clear. The problem is it remains very much unfinished business…the United

States should focus much of its attention on Egypt—the Arab world's largest state, the heart of Arab culture and a fount of ideas for the region. If Egypt succeeds, it will change the Arab world. If it fails—if this revolution fails—it will send a terrible message throughout the region.[69]

Such a statement is not so relevant in its content, but in its existence, as it reveals a link between American journalism as a discursive mode and its relationship to the broader structures of power in American society as embodied in the production and exercise of policy. Zakaria's quote reveals an ability to define post-Mubarak Egypt as a particular object of consideration, one that can be linked to American policy interests in the region and liberal democratic values writ large. The inscription of meaning and values onto global events is a key discursive function of American journalism, and one that is only possible once discipline's epistemological authority has been assumed.

Taking Libya and Egypt as examples, much of the journalistic analysis and commentary surrounding these two countries takes on a pragmatic tone that assumes both American interests in the region and the ability to act upon them. In many instances, the journalism surrounding American intervention in Libya and Egypt construed the countries as particular sets of problems with practical, policy-oriented solutions. In analyzing the Obama administration's response to Libya and Egypt in *The New Yorker*, Ryan Lizza casts the American response to Egypt and Libya in contrast to the Iraq war when he wrote that "pursuing our interests and spreading our ideals thus requires stealth and modesty as well as military strength."[70] As shorthand for failed foreign policy and international intervention conducted on the impetus of democratic ideals, Iraq also created a new policy problem in justifying how "humanitarian intervention…should not be abandoned because of the failures in Baghdad. Nor should American diplomacy turn away from emphasizing the virtues of bringing the world democracy."[71]

Interventions in Libya and Egypt are portrayed as "realist," whereas the Iraq policies are portrayed as "idealist," thus offering a solution to the problem by granting policy interventions' autonomy from the ideology that undergird their development and deployment.[72] A quote by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton crystallized the new rationality of realism: "The people who start revolutions may or may not be the people who actually end up governing countries."[73] These quotes and commentary reveal shifting policy approaches that privilege pragmatism over ideology, but also reveal the ways that journalistic commentary construct foreign politics as objects worthy of domestic concern. By comparing Egypt and Libya to previous projects in Iraq, the discourse reveals a diplomatic apparatus capable of dealing with shifting cultural and politic realities while also forwarding liberal democratic values with a tacit legitimacy unquestioned by that very same apparatus.

By constructing the values by which events, policies, and individuals in Libya and Egypt could be made intelligible, the American journalistic apparatus further preserves the broader cultural logics and systems of sense-making that journalism is discursively embedded within. As such, these logics are discursively revealed through the forms of reporting and commentary that offer analysis of particular events and overtly graft liberal democratic values onto these events. Writing in the *Nation,* Rashid Khalidi reveals a particular policy-oriented rationality centered upon the appropriate deployment of American foreign policy apparatus in regards to Egypt and Syria:

> Much has been said in recent weeks about the potential of applying the "Turkish model" to the Arab world. In fact, Turkey and the Arab states came to their understanding of modernity—and with it of constitutions, democracy, and human, civil and political rights —through a shared late Ottoman past… The Arab states have a long way to go to undo the terrible legacy of repression and stagnation and move toward democracy, the rule of law, social justice and dignity, which have been the universal demands of their peoples

during this Arab spring. The term "dignity" involves a dual demand: first, for the dignity of the individual in the face of rulers who treat their subjects as without rights and beneath contempt. But there is also a demand for the collective dignity of proud states like Egypt, and of the Arabs as a people… it is vital that a new Arab world, born of a struggle for freedom, social justice and dignity, be treated with the respect it deserves, and that for the first time in decades it is beginning to earn.[74]

This passage reveals an overt liberal democratic rationality, linking Arab states and identities with a pre-democratic subjectivity that is incapable of understanding the values that undergird modern democracy without first shrugging off this pre-democratic subjectivity through the very act of protest. As a key piece of analysis of the conditions in a post-Arab-Spring world, this passage also reveals American journalism's tendency to link liberal democratic values and language, like "dignity of the individual," to geopolitical events in order to create a grid of intelligibility that discursively preserves liberal democratic values by holding up certain events as evidence of these values in action.

As a key part of American journalism's tendency to tacitly give intelligible form to the way in which world events are understood, some popular commentators called on the American journalism apparatus to produce information that is more "true" than previous journalism about the region so that the institutions and public discourses that rely on this information may operate with a closer understanding of the reality at play. Changes in government in Egypt and Libya after protests and American intervention "show how superficial, and how false, were most Western media images of this region," and furthermore, how dangerous those false assumptions had proven to be in Iraq and Afghanistan.[75] As objects of public concern, Libya and Egypt merited a different form of knowledge-creation and journalistic consideration that was more granular and specific in its understanding of the region. In explaining the protests, Lisa Anderson of *Foreign Affairs* wrote, "the important story about the 2011 Arab revolts in Tunisia, Egypt, and

Libya is not how the globalization of the norms of civic engagement shaped the protesters' aspirations. Nor is it about how activists used technology to share ideas and tactics. Instead, the critical issue is how and why these ambitions and techniques resonated in their various local contexts."[76] Such statements reject obvious narratives about digital technology's inevitable democratic potential or the global expansion of a neoliberal object while also preserving the notion of an idealized individual capable of putting into practice the values necessary for developing a system of democratic-self governance informed by particular historical and cultural contexts.

As a sense making apparatus, American journalistic practices also reveal the public ideologies and policy-making rationalities that presage events, dictating the terms by which they might be understood. *New York Time* columnist Roger Cohen, reflecting on the Libya intervention and the international policies it engendered made the observation that "the Obama administration has a doctrine. It's called the doctrine of silence. A radical shift from President Bush's war on terror, it has never been set out to the American people. There has seldom been so big a change in approach to U.S. strategic policy with so little explanation."[77] Cohen noted that the deployment of covert American military power Pakistan, Iran, and Yemen extended from the logic of sparsely deploying strategic military resources in Libya. As a columnist, his statements still belie an acquiescence to power, despite any unease, revealing a calculated rationalization that continues to portray Libya as fundamentally different than other interventionist projects: "This is a development about which no American can feel entirely comfortable. So why do I approve of all this? Because the alternative—the immense cost in blood and treasure and reputation of the Bush administration's war on terror—was so appalling."[78] In a moment that

revealed the productive relationship between journalistic discourse and the values and rationalities that undergird American political praxis, Cohen revealed a key operative assumption when he concluded, "Political choices often have to be made between two unappealing options."[79]

Still, Cohen's remarks do not exist in a vacuum, instead indicating a broader form of deliberation about events and their meaning that happens across columns and in various publications. *Salon* media critic Glenn Greenwald responded to Cohen's arguments toward acquiescence with a critique of the relationship between journalism and the deployment of American military power: "American journalists are the leading proponents not of transparency but of secrecy, not of accountability but of covert decision-making in the dark, not of the rule of law but the rule of political leaders."[80] Greenwald's critique of Cohen reveals a key assumption operating at the heart of the journalistic apparatus. As it provides the rational and objective information that is ostensibly at the center of civil society, the practice of journalism is subject to the dynamic shifts of American power relations. Furthermore, as policy-makers encounter new problems and develop practical and "realist" solutions to these problems, responses to the solutions can be chronicled and critiqued via journalism, precisely because journalistic practices are established as an apparatus that reproduces the conditions that make these problems intelligible.

More generally speaking, Cohen's comments and Greenwald's reaction to those comments are indicative of a discursive regime that admits a range of phenomena and events into the realm of public concern. As the changing nature of discourses surrounding the Arab Spring have shown, by entering into the journalistic apparatus, ideas and information are subjected to

the greater workings of "civil society," or the technologies of public reasoning that constitutes self-governance in late neoliberal societies.[81] Debates about journalism's relationship to American power and institutions belie a journalistic apparatus that continually incorporates new phenomena, events, and information into a complex regime of overlapping truths that change when new information is uncovered or events occur. However, it ultimately preserves the status of American journalism as a discipline and institution where these stories and the values they express form the epistemological foundation for understanding and debating the consequences of these values in action.

The Arab Spring, then, discursively operates as an event around which these discussions play and the values undergirding the practice of journalism are expressed. To bring the conversation back to social media, a narrative focus on the use of social media amid these protests and uprisings reifies the value of an individual's expressive power within a liberal democratic system. As the broader understanding of the Arab Spring became more complex, the "the battle for the Arab blogosphere...turned from being a competition over accessing the Internet and circumventing government controls to a cyberwar for the predominant narrative through Facebook, Twitter, and traditional media." [82] As Shadid argued, acts of communication "had the promise of creating something different in the Arab world, of societies that were democratic, of notions of freedom, of social justice, of liberation, you know, rendered sometimes in the smallest of ways."[83] As such, certain sentiments go a long way in preserving the notion that "democracy isn't unchanging but is influenced by its press, its time, and what its citizens think of themselves.," by first and foremost reasserting the role of journalism as an institution whose

specific practices are deeply connected to the exercise of democracy, regardless of the geographic context.[84]

Conclusion

In considering the production of visibility as an assemblage that situates phenomena, events, ideas, groups, and individuals within systems of meaning, 2011's Arab Spring has served as a case study for understanding how American journalism operates as a particular discipline by which phenomena, events, ideas, groups, and individuals are granted broader, publicly-apprehended meaning and prefigurative visibility. As Alterman has argued, "Part of the problem of comprehending what has happened in the Middle East is that so much of it is so new...In the new field of Arab media studies, there simply had been no Arab revolutions to consider."[85] Still, the practices of journalism grafted a narrative form onto the protests, unified them beneath a singular moniker, and then set about identifying key aspects of the movement as an expression of liberal democratic ideals within a regime of broader meaning. Within these schemas, Wael Ghonim's notion that, "In Egypt, the winning is not what is going to happen in the political scene, the winning is the accepted dignity of each single Egyptian," is an expression of the epistemological boundary of this event.[86] The singular, expressive power of the individual is understood as the beginning and the end of liberal democratic power. As this chapter has shown, journalism's specific practices positioned the Arab Spring as an event that liberal democratic values grant discursive form to. A concern about journalism's knowledge production capacity underscores even President Barack Obama's expressed concerns over "how the media shapes debates."[87]

It should be noted that as a particular realm of truth production, journalistic practice should not be considered a sealed and monolithic system, but one with established and institutionalized modes of meaning production that shift under given circumstances. As a discipline that attempts to embody the values of truth and accuracy through its professional practice, these practices respond to technological, political, and cultural shifts in a way that both preserves journalism's authority over the truth and the power relations that extend from that truth. As the next, concluding chapter will explore, the possibilities of fissure and difference brought on by technological, aesthetic, and epistemological shift grant new forms of political possibility within the production of visibility.

Notes for Chapter 4

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

So far, this dissertation has argued that the politics of visibility acts as an assemblage of digital technologies, practices of self-representation, and media practices that create objects of public knowledge. To that end, the preceding chapters have dealt with key moments in the assemblage in order to understand how events, movements, issues, groups, and individuals are made broadly intelligible. However, political failure, or at least, understandings of what constitutes a political failure have gone under-theorized in the preceding chapter. In order to detail the strictures of knowledge production that make politics conceivable in the first place, the following chapter will briefly deal with the notion of political failure with specific reference to the Occupy and Arab Spring movements.

This concluding chapter offers a summary of the study so far before offering a concluding analysis that accounts for political failure by focusing on popular commentaries about the Occupy and Arab Spring that appeared in mainstream media outlets movements in order to uncover the deeper rationalities and practices that gave form to what can be understood as a political failure. The notion of political failure offers this study a means for concluding by way of addressing both popular concerns and criticisms of Occupy and Arab Spring movements, but it also configures this dissertations critique of meaning-making processes and analysis that occur within the broadly conceived "politics of visibility" laid out in this dissertation. By critiquing the terms by which political failure is defined and understood, this chapter hopes to

recover the specific possibilities and tensions that emerge from the media and technological

practices that make modern events, issues, and phenomena visible and intelligible.

Impetus and summary of this study

This study sought to interrogate the politics of visibility as an assemblage of relations

amid digital technologies, practices of self-representation, and practices of meaning making

rooted in media. Its impetus came from the seeming shifts in technologically-mediated politics

and subjectivity that accompanied dominant narratives that accompanied the Occupy Wall Street

and Arab Spring movements of 2011. After reviewing existing literature surrounding digital

technologies, media practices, and social protest movements, it became clear that a new

understanding of visibility as rooted in the relations of practice was needed in order to maintain

both the agencies of humans and technologies amid a field of media-centric knowledge

production. A materialist perspective that posited visibility as political charged instance of

knowledge production allowed this study to put forth analyses that recovered digital

technologies, practices of self-representation, and practices of media representation.

The first chapter posited recovered technological agency from existing communications

literature and located it within media praxis before recovering the concept of visibility as

extending from specific practices of representation. Such a move recovers the ontological

consequences of visibility production by laying bear the seemingly natural processes of

perception and representation in not just enlightenment rationalities, but in critical theories that

found political possibility in the production of visible phenomena, but continued to maintain a

split between an objective reality and the means of perceiving that reality. Foucault, Latour, and

Guattari offered a philosophical out that moved the locus of inquiry from reality itself to the practices that make that reality intelligible. It is here, at the focus on intelligibility, that the following chapters drew their explanatory power as the strategies and practices of representation detailed in each chapter affected the ways that certain phenomena, events, and issues were made intelligible and deemed consequential.

The second chapter analyzed the cell phone camera as key device that actively produced visibility. As a device, the cell phone camera opens up new strategies of representation dependent upon ubiquity and granularity as attendant phenomena. The device also masks complex technical processes in a way that echoes a genealogy of consumer photography. The key difference between the cell phone camera and prior consumer grade cameras, though, is the masking of image production and distribution that comes from the way the device merges photography and information distribution. Complex practices of light and color capture, as well as image digitization and distribution are localized to interface that has the potential to distribute images and video at the immediate moment of capture. The capabilities of the cell phone camera as a device become material considerations that cause strategies of representation, and their attendant relations of power, to shift in ways that attempt to accommodate the camera phone's functionality.

The third chapter dealt with Occupy Wall Street as an instance of digitally-informed practices of self-representation in action. Three key aspects of this movement were analyzed: the articulation of critique upon a visible phenomenon, the revelation of lines of conflict between citizens and police, and the contestation of the movement's organization. These aspects were analyzed in order to explain the ways that practices of self-representation operate in various

milieus within a singular movement, yet still allow for a coherent political project to emerge as intelligible to both those inside the movement and those outside of it.

With digital technologies and practices of self-representation considered, the fourth chapter consider the media-centered practices that produced an American-centric understanding of the Arab Spring. As a political phenomenon, the Arab Spring movement was primarily explicated through liberal democratic values that privileged social media and digital technologies and social media as extensions of a liberal democratic subjectivity. This chapter then looked at the professional practices that encased social media within journalism's claims to epistemological authority, arguing that these practices created the broader grid of intelligibility through which the events and politics surrounding the Arab Spring could be understood as an expression of liberal democratic subjectivity in action. This chapter's argument posited journalism as a mode of public knowledge production capable of enfolding digital technologies and practices of self-representation within its meaning-making schema.

As a result, this study can conclude that the politics of visibility exist as an assemblage amid the complex interplay of practices. While journalistic texts, images, videos, and documents reveal certain aspects of a phenomenon, there are possibilities for finding fissures in the production of this visibility. This study has shown that digital technologies, practices of self-representation, and media practices are not singular and stable, and that shifts in one aspect of the assemblage open up the possibilities for meaning making in a way that allows for the revelation and apprehension what Latour calls "new matters of concern."[1]

Occupy Wall Street and "failed" political projects

The following analysis will show how notions of political failure are inimically tied to modes of dominant knowledge production and political practice that preclude alternative politics and modes of subjectivity from emerging. With regards to the Occupy Wall Street movement, the terms of political failure are rooted in what Joseph Stiglitz has identified as a movement ethos "instinctively opposed to organization."[2] Such a claim, taken seriously, reveals an understanding of political power as not just rooted within the symbolic power of collected individuals gathered in a physical space, articulating messages and modes of deliberation across social media networks and broadcast networks, but as also capable of interfacing with existing political structures and institutions as they currently stand. David Dietz further characterizes the specific failures of the movement: "The failure of the Occupy leadership, was just that: a failure to assume leadership. The group's noble and rather democratic goals of allowing the occupy movement to be a big tent for all gripes and grievances quickly diluted its founding anti-corporatocracy message."[3] While some conceive of the structure of a political movement as an organizational shortcoming, the *New York Times* Andrew Sorkin captures the terms of failure in specific policy initiatives that were never proposed or came to fruition:

> But consider this: Has the debate over breaking up the banks that were too big to fail, save for a change of heart by the former chairman of Citigroup, Sanford I. Weill, really changed or picked up steam as a result of Occupy Wall Street? No. Have any new regulations for banks or businesses been enacted as a result of Occupy Wall Street? No. Has there been any new meaningful push to put Wall Street executives behind bars as a result of Occupy Wall Street? No.[4]

Such claims reveal a conceptualization of politics rooted in policy arguments and pragmatist political conceptualization that distill dissent and protest activity into the contemporary techniques of government modern institutions deploy.

While critics may be able to point to the Occupy movement as a failure, such a critique is rooted in the expectation that such a movement would provide a base of power in practice that could be apprehended and harnessed by contemporary politics. For instance, when commenters note that Gallup public opinion polls reveal little connection between the Occupy movement and support for specific policy programs, they are relying upon the public opinion as a key tool of government that is used to discern and quantify popular will in a way that makes it perceptible and efficacious within politics as currently practiced.[5] In the terms of this dissertation's argument, what is revealed here is an inability for existing systems of politics, and meaning-making within those systems, to fully apprehend an alternative, deliberative politics. This is a failure rooted in the systems of meaning-making, the methods by which we are able to take into account certain events and translate their objects of critique into existing political discussions.

Nowhere was this more apparent than during 2012's American presidential election, nearly a year after the Occupy movement. Amid the speeches and pageantry of one of the media spectacle that is an American presidential, the overt presence of the Occupy movement (or the Arab Spring, for that matter), was noticeable in its absence. However, the politics of inequality embodied by the movement were distilled into a clandestine video of candidate Mitt Romney arguing that "47 percent of Americans will vote for Obama regardless," and was echoed in the populist rhetoric of President Obama's convention speech.[6] Such moments may be interpreted as the politics of class and inequality forging their way into political discourse, but such interpretations still privilege politics in their contemporary institutional practice and do not take seriously discursive and practical attempts to reconfigure politics and attendant assumptions about the dispersed power of citizens.

Instead, it is perhaps best to think about the Occupy movement, and critics that call its political project a "failure," as part of a continued project contesting the role of individual subjectivity amid the multiple forces that comprise modern neoliberal states. Hardt and Negri, writing in *Adbusters*, the same magazine that published the invective to "Occupy Wall Street," eighteen months before, argue for a creation of individual modes of subjectivity and collective projects not captured by the contemporary modes of political discourse. Pushing for a mode of interaction that escapes the individualizing logic of contemporary practices of debt collection, media consumption, and political representation, they argue that any project that truly seeks to change contemporary conditions must first actively disengage from the systems of meaning-making that attach individual identity to systems of control. In pushing for a different conceptualization of mediated-subjectivity, they argue "before you can communicate in networks, you must become a singularity...Singularities are defined as being multiple internally and finding themselves externally in relation to others. The communication and expressions of singularities in networks, then, is not individual, but choral, and it is alway operative, linked to a doing, making ourselves while being together."[7] Such statements describe a subjectivity that not only strives for a "free mobility" among media and technological networks, but are also capable of giving rise to an alternative mode of politics that are not reliant upon previous forms of political subjectivity and meaning-making that enable contemporary forms of dominance.[8]

Hardt and Negri, then, compose a set of terms by which the Occupy movement can be evaluated outside the realm of traditional politics. As a mode of subjectivity and activity, the movement used existing communications networks and technologies to enable forms of communication and deliberation that allowed for a rhetoric of digital solidarity to engage those

not geographical rooted in the park in a way that tied individuals together in a collectivist politics that posited the "99%" as a conceptualization of political power that provided an alternative to an individualist, neoliberal subjectivity. As a model for putting an alternative mode of subjectivity into practice, one needs to only look at how the organization and energy of the original movement have been put into projects like debt forgiveness, home foreclosure prevention, and Hurricane Sandy recovery that utilize individuals whose original connection stemmed from a solidarity with the ethos embodied in Zuccotti Park.[9]

Herein lies the potential for thinking about visibility and intelligibility as part of a technologically-mediated and politically-charged form of praxis. Projects that apprehend the political potential of events and modes of visibility give rise to the potential and alternative forms of subjectivity and activity. Under this schema then, political subjectivity is not singularly settled, but is instead always contested and open to alternative expressions, primarily through the practices that make individuals, events, issues, and problematics broadly intelligible. It is here, in the act of contestation, that we can understand visibility as an aspect of power in the Foucauldian sense. To quote Foucualt, "power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society."[10] As an aspect of contested and strategic power relations, that the visibility of a movement like Occupy Wall Street can be understood, not as a strictly defined political failure, but as an expansion of possibility that finds its manifestation in forms of action that exist outside contemporary political arenas.

The Arab Spring and the failure to understand

Compared to the Occupy movement, the Arab Spring represents a different understanding of failure, one that is centered in journalistic practice and its shortcomings in providing a granular understanding of the Middle Eastern and North African politics presaging the "Arab Spring." In the year following the "Arab Spring" protests, entrenched political problems in Egypt, sustained chaos in Libya, and protracted violence and human rights abuses in Syria undercut any narrative celebrating an intrinsic liberal democratic spirit offering a clean solution to the political problems that led to protests in the region. While there is a legitimate critique of American journalism's ability to apprehend the complex politics of a non-Western context here, extrapolating these failings to the broader system of political rationality that American journalism is embedded within more cogently fits within the concerns of this dissertation. The following section will assert that an understanding of the Arab Spring as a failure extends from the regime of political knowledge journalistic practices are immersed within, revealing an ontological shortcoming that, again, cannot account for possibility.

To that end, it is important to look at how the failure of the "Arab Spring" was extrapolated to specific failures of military action and an inability to perceive the potential political problems in Libya and Egypt. Prior to retiring from her post as secretary of state, Hillary Clinton appeared on CBS' *60 Minutes* alongside President Barack Obama in an interview that acted as a capstone to her career as America's chief diplomat. The interview ranged over various topics, but also touched upon security failures at a consulate in Benghazi, Libya. When asked about the conflict between the early hopes undergirding American intervention in Libya and the chaos that had ensued after Qaddafi's death, Clinton responded, "It is not always easy to perceive

what must be done in order to get to that [peaceful] outcome."[11] This statement, and the fact that

the Scott Pelley, the interviewer, allowed it to pass unaddressed, reveals the role that perception

plays in popular understandings of how the American political and diplomatic apparatus

operates. Perception, in this context, acts as a linkage between understanding the circumstances

within a country like Libya and the proper policy, military, or diplomatic response to those

circumstances. Here, perception is not rooted in an individual capacity to distill objective reality

and prognosticate proper responses, but as an institutional capacity carried through the

intelligence and analysis practices centered at the American State Department and rooted as an

extension of American global perceptual power. The above quote from Clinton, then, does not

identify perception as a failure related to the exercise of power, but as a tactical failing of the

diplomatic apparatus.

The failure of perception, then, can also be seen in American journalism's failure to

apprehend to relevant political context on Egypt. In the case of Egypt, Mubarak became a key

object of knowledge, and a failure to understand the way his methods of government influenced

Egyptian politics even after his ouster was often identified as a gap in journalists' understanding

of Egypt:

> Decades of dictatorship, state-sanctioned brutality, and economic desperation have left a
> majority of young Egyptians feeling like they have no stake in Egyptian society. They
> bear deep resentment toward the political class and state authority. Government here is
> generally seen as inherently corrupt, and the police are almost universally despised. The
> massive underclass has very little realistic chance of social mobility, and the shrinking
> middle class is fighting for a piece of an ever-smaller pie.[12]

Understanding Egypt under Mubarak, certain commentators, like William Gibson, account for

the potential failings of subsequent political projects as groups attempted to fill the void of power

his ouster left behind, often leaving American commentators to note "so much for democracy" in

Egypt as citizens protested oppressive tactics deployed by Mohammed Morsi as he took the

country's reins.[13] Still, certain Western commentators could find democratic values amid the

varied activity in the country, defining the protests and Western denunciations as part of a

broader project of democratic deliberation in Egypt, a continuation of contested self-governing

projects that began after Mubarak left.[14]

Still, in failing to capture the complexity of Middle Eastern and North African politics

following the "Arab Spring," journalistic commenters dig into Egypt's recent history to find a

theme, story, or previously unacknowledged policy solution that distills a complex understanding

of the region into a single nugget. As William Dobson observes, serving as an examples:

> Mubarak was the primary author of the stunted and underdeveloped politics that
> Egyptians inherited two years ago, when they overthrew Mubarak's regime. In his three
> decades in power, political institutions shrank more than they grew. He (and Anwar Sadat
> before him) refused to let genuine political parties spring up. Civil society and
> independent NGOs were caged birds whose wings were easily clipped.[15]

While Dobson's attempts to explain the complexity of post-Mubarak politics in Egypt, he easily

identifies the tone of leadership under Mubarak as the key obstacle that would keep future

political projects mired in the past. In a prior analysis from Dobson, Mubarak exerted control

over Egypt's epistemological possibilities, positing a frightening and chaotic future that only his

presence as a ruler could forestall: "He based his legitimacy on an alternative history, on events

that hadn't happened but that he insisted could. Mubarak's chief political argument was a scary

unknown that he skillfully conjured for audiences with the conviction of certainty."[16] Again,

though, this analysis commits the fallacy of locating within the tacit Egyptian people a singular

will to power that Mubarak had to manipulate in order to preserve his own station. While such

analyses offer a counterpoint to the heady optimism of the early days in Tahrir Square, they do

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not offer a realm of meaning making beyond the terms of a liberal democratic subjectivity that essentializes the power of the individual.

To encapsulate issues, movements, or events within the terms of failure or success reveals an ontological predisposition that can only operate in an evaluative mode. The terms failure and success come with a tacit "to whom" that would benefit from the potential success or failure. These terms, then, reveal events in North Africa and the Middle East as existing within a political schema keenly geared to evaluate their effects on political and diplomatic strategy, but, for this dissertation, we are left wondering what does this mean for journalism as a discipline attuned to helping us perceive these events.

There is a powerful critique to be made here about American journalism's inability to provide a complex understanding of power and politics precisely because, as a realm of public knowledge production, it is a discipline tied to the production of power in a context partially determined by American political interests. Reporting and analyses of Egypt reveal this understanding of power, and as Henry Giroux has argued in the alternative publication *Alternet*, "Decontextualized ideas and issues, coupled with the overflow of information produced by new electronic media, make it more difficult to create narratives that offer historical understanding..the cascade of information reinforce new modes of depoliticization and authoritarianism."[17] For Giroux, media products and journalistic practices reproduce unequal relations of power, and thus, as a field of knowledge production, do not provide the ontological material necessary to begin challenging these relations. Terms like "democracy, freedom, justice, and the social state" lose their value as they become idealized concepts separated from the concepts that bring them into being.[18] Giroux's argument pushes beyond the liberal critique of

the 1947 Hutchins report that criticized journalism as a field of decontextualized facts by attaching journalism to a broader regime of power that subverts democratic subjectivity by failing to provide a conceptual and practical language that is "vigilant about where democratic identities are not only produced, but where forms of social agency are denied" from emerging.[19] Quite simply, journalistic practices not only fail to preserve the liberal democratic values that govern their normative function, they fail to provide the recognizing and contending with emergent alternative politics and modes of possibility.

When taken in comparison to the politics of possibility discussed in regards to the Occupy movement above, the strictures of journalistic meaning-making offer an important site of contestation as critical projects approach the limits of journalistic knowledge. The very act of identifying the discipline's ontological shortcomings throws its visibility and intelligibility practices into sharp relief, again showing the importance of conceiving the politics of visibility as an assemblage that takes into account practices of self-representation and technological possibility alongside the strictures of institutionalized media practices. Such an approach casts statements such as "information is an existential threat to these regimes" with a pallor that underscores just how contested the production of information, intelligibility, and visibility really can be.[20]

Implications and directions for future research

One key implication that derived from this study is an understanding of visible, intelligible moments presented in journalistic discourse as existing as the result of complex relationships of representation that implicate digital technologies alongside the practices of

contemporary media production. One optimistic interpretation leads the researcher to search for possible moments of fissure within the assemblage of visibility, as laid out in the first chapter of this dissertation. A pessimistic interpretation, though, may lead the researcher to see contemporary media practice as an overdetermined process, where meanings are already fixed and the shifts wrought by digital technologies are quickly apprehended within the existing practices of media production.

As the substantive chapters of this project have tried to show, such pessimism would be misplaced. Aside from explicating a politics of visibility, this project has tried to give a critical purchase for future scholars attempting to apprehend the ways that digital technologies and projects of dissent challenge modes of public meaning making. Such projects are an extension of critique, but should follow from Foucault's notion that "criticism consists in uncovering that thought and trying to change it: showing that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted."[21] While this project has concerned itself with digital technologies and forms of representation, it has tried to destabilize the forms of received knowledge that attempt to make the structure of politics appear a foregone conclusion.

Future projects, then, should attempt to further look at how the specific capabilities and practices of digital technologies produce forms of knowledge and representation. For instance, info-graphics and forms of data visualization offer a method and field of practice for turning "big data" into stylized graphic representations that aestheticize data with the hope that popular audiences might be able to draw compelling conclusions. Such projects have their own,

historically specific contexts of development, but clearly tie into a neoliberal tendency to quantify phenomena in a way that allows for productive apprehension.

There is also potential to launch further critiques that interrogate the use of digital technologies as a means for controlling press coverage and media representations of certain events and issues. James O'Keefe's and Andrew Breitbart's manipulation of found video aesthetics offers the most immediate examples of political texts that utilize the capabilities of digital representation to intentionally create texts that reveal the operations of government agents in a way that reflects the ideologically-informed understanding of political reality, offering two potential case studies in the manipulation of visibility.[22]

Perhaps the greatest potential for future research stemming from this project comes from an understanding of technologies as existing within a field of meaning-making practices. Given an understanding of visibility as the result of technologically-mediated practices, it is possible to historically recover the effects that imaging technologies, camera fidelity and mobility, film processing, and professional training have had on the ontological realities that undergird the understanding and practice of politics. Furthermore, this perspective also allows future work to look at how seemingly new technologies of representation and communication permitted groups to conceptualize and deploy their politics in seemingly new ways while also looking at how journalism, as a professional practice linked to the production of information about events, incorporated these technologies into its professional praxis in a way that preserved the discipline's institutional, epistemological authority.

In sum, this study demonstrates the value of conceiving of visibility, technology, and media practice as a site of contestation, as an extension of broadly conceived politics. To study

this requires treating technologies as co-constitutive agents in the production of meaning, but not in a way that reduces human agency to the workings of technical circuitry. As shown throughout this study, seemingly stable democratic subjectivities serve to mask the processes of meaning-making that make the structure and style of political praxis seem natural and fixed. Taking seriously the ontological consequences of media representation and technologies of visibility allows us to understand how shifts in the production of visibility open up the possibility for our systems of politics, representation, and deliberation to take previously invisible issues, groups, and phenomena into account.

Notes for Chapter 5

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[11] Hillary Clinton, Interview with Scott Pelley, *60 Minutes*, CBS, January 27, 2013.

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