Zizi Papacharissi, **Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics**, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015, 176 pp., $26.95 (paperback).

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The Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, and the Spanish Indignados movements have garnered a great deal of attention among those seeking to understand the role of social media in protest activities. Whereas some have argued that social media enhance freedoms and can lead to transformative changes (e.g., Castells, 2012; Earl & Kimport, 2011; Shirky, 2008), others have noted the limitations of commercial platforms and the potential for slacktivism rather than activism within those platforms (Dean, 2005; Fuchs, 2014 Gladwell, 2010; Hoofd 2012; Morozov, 2009; Poell & Van Dijck, 2016). Zizi Papacharissi's recent work **Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics** contributes to this discussion, but takes it into an exciting new domain. Rather than debating for or against the role of social media as a space for political *effect*, she is interested in how people use these online spaces for political *affect*. In other words, she wants to understand how social media provide new ways for people to express themselves and participate in what she terms the "soft structures of feeling" (p. 116) that help people feel that their views matter and are worthy of expression in this particular moment. First, she argues, we *feel* like we are a part of the developing story, and then, as we contribute our own emotive declarations online through our words, photos, and videos on Twitter, Facebook, or in other social media venues, we *become* a part of the story.

Papacharissi wants to be clear, however, that it is our narratives rather than our technologies that constitute the connective tissue of unfolding social movements. She argues that our emotional contributions in response to conversations about protests are political statements, and in this argument she brings current debates about social media's ability to facilitate emotional feelings of belonging into the realm of debates about political engagement. This is an important intervention at a time when scholars such as Warner (2002) and Mouffe (2005, 2013) have been challenging the deeply rooted assumptions of deliberation and reason that inform the idealized Habermasian public sphere, particularly as those assumptions informed a great deal of early research on politics and the Internet.

In many ways, Papacharissi's work shares common ground with Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) argument that social media have brought about what they term *connective action*, referring to the ways that networked communication enables individuals to personalize expressions of a movement's goals outside of the bounds of traditional social movement organizations. But while Bennett and Segerberg wish to contribute a fresh means of understanding this new Internet-assisted phenomenon of political organization, Papacharissi is particularly interested in bringing theories of affect into the conversations

about political organizing. Participation in online conversations, Papacharissi argues, enables people to "feel their way into politics" (p. 25).

The book begins with an excellent review of affect theory that traces the beginning of the rational/emotional dichotomy to the late 17th century. It was the Enlightenment critique of the Church's role in securing affect and its concurrent monopoly on knowledge that animated the demand for reason as a basis for democratic society. Highlighting the affective turn in recent studies of media, politics, and everyday life, she points out that communication scholars, following Habermas' (1991) critique of popular media as designed to appeal to the emotions, have tended to be particularly concerned with how we might develop the means for resisting the ideological exploitation and knowledge management that are a part of an affectively driven media. She is interested in Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) approach, articulated also in the Gregg and Seigworth (2009) reader, that explores affect as forces other than conscious "knowing" that, through their liminality, can drive humans toward new thoughts or actions. As she argues, "Per affect theory, empowerment lies in liminality, in pre-emergence and emergence, or at the point at which new formations of the political are in the process of being imagined but not yet articulated" (p. 19). People are empowered, in Papacharissi's view, when they feel that their views "count." Such a feeling does seem to be an important precursor to further engagement in political activities, and Papacharissi's work provides the theoretical foundation for further exploration. Perhaps following the discursive tendencies in much of affect theory, her idea of empowerment focuses almost exclusively on the ways in which individuals might find personal fulfillment in and through expression. Scholarship on social movements considers the ways individuals are also at times moved from shared feelings into the kinds of transformative actions that tend to take place much more slowly, more ponderously, and much less thrillingly (Clark, 2016; Jasper & Poulsen, 1995; Tufecki & Wilson, 2012; Verhulst & Walgrave, 2009). This added dimension to the importance of affect in movement building can help us develop a more nuanced understanding of the potentials and limits of online affective expression as scholars build upon the base that this volume has established.

The book includes three case studies that employ discourse analyses of Twitter hashtags in its exploration of "affective publics," which Papacharissi defines as "networked public formations that are mobilized and connected or disconnected through expressions of sentiment" (p. 125). The first case study is an exploration of the ways that tweets with the #egypt hashtag were emotionally charged as they blended both fact and opinion. She describes the resulting Twitter flow as an instance of what she terms "affective news," in that it displayed the characteristics of newsworthiness even as it also captured the emotion of indignation that those tweeting felt toward an unresponsive regime.

For her second case study, she considers the hashtag #ows and discussions surrounding Occupy Wall Street. In this analysis, she finds that tweets were not only emotionally charged but were also declarative rather than deliberative in nature, as people with differing views about the movement sought to discredit or even silence those with whom they disagreed. She argues that even as #ows supporters were arguably successful in challenging the dominant narrative that had generally left unexamined the relationship between Wall Street and mounting inequities in the United States and elsewhere, the discourse surrounding Occupy Wall Street events was largely disruptive due to the cacophony of differing opinions expressed.

The book's third case study considers the ways that the political occurs in everyday expressive statements on Twitter. This case study and its analysis seems to draw most directly on her earlier work in *A Networked Self* (2011) and *A Private Sphere* (2010), as she is interested in how individuals perform the self and specifically in when "the act of making a private thought public bears the potential of a political act" (p. 111). Trending conversations on Twitter, she notes, allow individuals to contribute personal thoughts to a public conversation. This argument is compelling, and future research should consider trending hashtags through the lens of women of color feminist theory to further flesh out points of connection between impassioned individual expressions regarding experiences of oppression, and collective political consciousness and action (see e.g., Moraga & Anzaldua, 2015; Perez, 2007).

With nods to the ways that previous media platforms such as radio have served to spark and galvanize affective publics into being, Papacharissi ends the volume by encouraging scholars to consider the specific affordances of new media in order to uncover the "affective attunement and engagement these invite" (p. 134). This counsel dovetails well with research currently exploring the relationship between technological affordances and emergent patterns of emotive communication.

This book has set the stage for viewing affect as relevant and important in the development of political theory, specifically in the ways that we might better understand the role of social media in relation to politics. Since its publication, scholars have come to see more clearly the limits of diversity on Twitter and have become more aware of the ways that Twitter and other social media platforms tend to privilege certain people and points of view over others. Moreover, scholarship is continuing to refine understandings of the relationships between publics, counterpublics, protests, and movements, particularly in light of contentious public realms in which emotional expressions of "us versus them" tend to dominate the discourse. This book offers a promising framework for how scholars might explore the ways that such contemporary emotive expressions online might play out or become exacerbated in the anonymity afforded by Twitter and other social media sites, and invites scholars to further explore what such expressions might mean for democracy's prospects now and in the future.

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