Affective Action in Organizations:
Social Media, Personalized Communication and Advocacy in the European Union

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Abstract

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Civil society organizations such as citizen groups and NGOs are the cornerstone of democratic pluralism but face a significant engagement problem: people are more interested in unconventional forms of participation than in participating in formal groups. The literature on digital media and collective action argues that social media should partially solve the problem by allowing the public to participate in organizations in a more personalized way. However, we still know little about which groups are more likely to use social media for public engagement, and which types of frames are more likely to engage the current individualized public. I aim to fill this gap in the literature by presenting and testing a theory of Affective Action in Organizations. I portray social media engagement with civil society groups as a function of their public dependence, the types of messages they promote, and the emotions these messages evoke. I build on existing political psychology models to argue that two emotions related to people's dispositional system (enthusiasm and anger) and one emotion related to the surveillance system (anxiety) explain in part why people decide to engage with civil society groups online. I empirically test the argument by studying how Twitter users interact with hundreds of civil society organizations advocating in the European Union.

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the rest of us.

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DEDICATION

To Alba, my soulmate and life partner, for her unconditional support. T'estimo.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

February 5th, 2012 was an important day for the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (Platform for People Affected by Mortgages, also known as PAH). A few months after the financial crisis hit Spain, the organization was created in Barcelona with the intention of providing human, economic, and political support for citizens affected by eviction processes. As unemployment grew from 10% to 20% between 2007 and 2010, more than 230,000 families lost their homes, and suicide rates reached their highest point in Spanish democratic history.[1] The need for social and supporting organizations such as PAH was clearly palpable.

Nevertheless, despite some initial support and sporadic media coverage, the PAH was struggling to become the influential social organization it wanted to be. By early 2012 it had yet to achieve sufficient public support for one of its main organization projects, a citizens initiative to amend existing housing and lending regulations. Some of the goals of this legislative proposal were to increase social housing, stop eviction processes, include a "dation in payment" clause in all mortgages,[2] and encourage owners of vacant apartments to put them on the market. Two years after drafting the proposal they were still short of the 500,000 signatures required to introduce it to the Spanish Parliament.

But something changed on February 5th, 2012. PAH's leader, Ada Colau, and the vice president of the *Associación Española de la Banca* (Spanish Banking Association, also known as AEB), Javier Rodriguez Pellitero, were among those invited to speak to the Economic Committee of the Spanish Parliament. The Committee was debating potential banking reforms, and it wanted to hear from stakeholders. AEB's vice-president spoke first defending

[1] FSME (2013)

[2] Dation in payment clause: in case of an eviction, the bank takes the home but the debt gets paid-off.

the banks' interests, denying any responsibility for the crisis, and opposing any banking reform. Rodriguez Pellitero argued that there was "nothing wrong with the Spanish mortgage system... what is causing the loss of homes is not the existing lending legislation but the unfortunate economic crisis and the current unemployment levels, which is what needs to be solved."

The PAH, of course, could not have disagreed more. After years of helping out thousands of evicted families, the organization had seen the pain and suffering caused not only by an economic crisis of immense proportions but also by lending regulations that left people on the street without releasing them from their debts. A noticeably angry Ada Colau responded that "to put forward such an argument when there are people who are taking their lives as a consequence of this criminal law, I assure you... I assure you that I didn't throw a shoe at this man because I thought it was important to stay here and tell you what I'm saying now, but this man is a criminal and you should treat him as such."

Cameras present in the room captured the moment, and edited versions of Ada Colau's speech immediately went viral on social media, particularly on Twitter. Thousands of users shared the video with their friends and many of them started following the PAH online. Social media made it possible for the organization to grow its support base and network, and influence public opinion. By the end of the month, the PAH had collected more than 1.5 million signatures in favor of their legislative proposal to reform the banking system. The PAH, suddenly, had become one of the major social and political organizations in Spain.

1.1 An Open Question

What happened on February 5th, 2012 highlights an important open question in political science and communication research: under what conditions can social media facilitate public engagement with formal civil society organizations?

Civil society groups play a crucial role in promoting democratic pluralism (Dahl, 1961; Skocpol, 2003; Schlozman et al., 2012), but in recent decades membership groups such the

PAH, unions, and certain NGOs, have been facing a severe engagement problem, putting their existence at risk (Beyers et al., 2016). Fewer than 10% of young Europeans, for example, participate in any type of sociopolitical group.[3]

Scholars such as Castells (2015) and Bennett and Segerberg (2013) point out, however, that this does not mean that people do not want to participate in politics anymore. Instead, they want to do it in a more personalized way, which has lead to a rise in unconventional forms of participation (Stolle and Micheletti, 2013).

Digital media can (at least partially) solve this engagement problem in two ways. First digital media allows organizations to adopt decentralized and flexible ("less formal") structures that appeal more to individualized publics (Karpf, 2012; Bimber et al., 2012; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013). *Moveon.org* is often seen as the epitome of this new type of hybrid organization. Like the PAH, however, many membership groups do not fit this new type of malleable organization (Beyers et al., 2016). PAH's organizational structure is very similar to how chapter organizations used to be 50 years ago, with a main leadership body coordinating the chapters and mapping out the organization's strategy, and with decision making occurring at the chapter and central level through regular face-to-face meetings.

In this context, digital media can foster civic engagement by allowing citizens to connect and interact with formal organizations in a more personalized manner (Bimber et al., 2012; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013). Instead of becoming official paying members of a group and attending meetings and events, people can simply follow an organization such as PAH on social media, pay attention and endorse (e.g., share and like) content, and even occasionally support the organization on the ground.

Some journalists and academics have their doubts about the extent to which this type of "weak" engagement (often referred as "clicktivism") helps membership organizations at all (Dean, 2005; Morozov, 2009). Practitioners on the other hand argue that social media allows them to carry out and increase the impact of their communication and mobilizing activities

[3]See Flash Eurobaromter 375 and 408 on "European Youth", 2013 and 2014.

(Obar et al., 2011). The viral diffusion of Ada Colau's speech and the subsequent boost in the number of followers allowed the PAH to grow its attentive public, increasing its ability to mobilize people, influence opinion, set media and political agendas, and ultimately have a chance at influencing policy.

However, several questions remain unanswered. How generalizable is the PAH story? To what extent can formal civil society organizations offset the decline in political participation by engaging with social media? To what extent are they dependent on social media? How do these organizations use social media, and more importantly, when is it most effective?

1.2 Why should we care?

The events of February 5th, 2012 are illustrative of how important civil society organizations are for democratic pluralism. If we stop for a second and take advantage of a counterfactual to imagine that an organization such as the PAH had not existed in Spain, or that it had existed but had only achieved small levels of engagement and support, what would have happened? Given PSOE's and PP's (the two major Spanish political parties) reticence for reform[4] and the ability of a powerful interest group such as the AEB to influence policy, evictions would have probably continued at a similar rate. Policy ideas such as incorporating a "dation in payment" clause[5] in all mortgages would have been off the table, and thousands more Spanish citizens would be living on the streets.

First, these events highlighted the political consequences of what is commonly known in social science research as the *collective action problem* (Olson, 1965): individuals and institutions with concentrated interests and resources, such as the financial and banking

[4]The *Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol* (PSOE) and *Partido Popular* (PP) are the two major political parties in Spain since the democratic transition in the 1970s. In 2012 they controlled about 85% of the Parliament seats. At that time none of the two parties wanted to consider any of the major legislative reforms defended by the PAH. See for example the following news article in Publico:
Benitez, Brais. "PP y PSOE se han quedado sin excusa." *Público* 7 Sept. 2011. Accessible in http://www.publico.es/espana/pp-y-psoe-han-quedado.html

[5]See Footnote 2.

sector—PAH's 'opposing' side—are always likely to organize. The AEB is a resourceful group that has been coordinating and defending the banks' interests for decades. They have a substantial number of full-time employees and extensive lobbying experience and connections. On the other hand, organizations supporting more diffuse interests, such as the PAH, face harder collective action problems (Olson, 1965) that often prevent them from flourishing and/or influencing politics.

A second point is that sometimes political parties and elites do not directly represent citizen's voice on issues with high public support. Despite the support that PAH's policy ideas received (particularly after the February 2012 events), both major political parties in Spain (PP and PSOE) did not want take into consideration any of PAH's claims. In situations like these, when a majority of political forces fail to take into consideration a claim with overwhelming public support, civil society organizations are crucial to keep democratic pluralism in place.

Far from being a mere anecdote, this dramatic case is a clear example of a larger political pattern. Although membership groups are the cornerstone of democratic pluralism (Dahl 1961), social scientists have known for a long time that groups defending the narrower interests of resourceful institutions and companies are more likely to emerge than groups defending citizens' voice (Olson, 1965). The engagement problem that membership organizations face has the potential to keep exacerbating these existing "representation biases" (Skocpol, 2003; Schlozman et al., 2012; Gilens, 2012; Rasmussen and Carroll, 2014).

Social media has the potential to help organizations solve this issue. Networked technologies reduce information costs for organizations and participation costs for supporters (Lupia and Sin, 2003; Bimber et al., 2012; Mack et al., 2003), and more importantly, they create opportunities for people to support and engage with civil society organizations in a more personalized manner. But what type of frames and strategies help organizations the most in solving collective action problems via social media? Despite some great exceptions (Coppock et al., 2016), the number of studies analyzing the engagement that different types of organizational frames achieve online, particularly on social media, is still scarce.

1.3 The Contribution

The contribution of this project is three-fold. First, I aim to fill the existing theoretical gap by advancing and testing a model of 'Affective Action in Organizations' that explains which civil society groups are more likely to use social media for public engagement, and what types of frames are more likely to succeed at doing so. My focus is on the engaging role of emotion-evoking frames. As I will discuss in the next chapter, emotions have always played a role in solving collective action problems for social movements and civil society groups. However, I argue that in the current era of individualized politics (Giddens, 1991; Inglehart, 1997; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013), in which people are reticent to participate in formal political groups, emotion-evoking frames gain a new relevance. They are not only more likely to attract people's attention and interest, but they also allow people to engage with formal civil society groups in a more personalized manner.

A second contribution of this project is to provide rich empirical data on social media usage by civil society organization, and more importantly, to explore detailed data on the engagement different types of organizational messages and frames achieve. Some works already exist that look at the type of messages advocacy organizations and civil society groups promote on social media (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012; Obar et al., 2011; Guo and Saxton, 2014; van der Graaf et al., 2016), but no study yet explores the engagement levels these messages achieve. Learning about the conditions under which organizations succeed at engaging online publics is crucial from a democratic pluralism perspective.

Finally, I aim to contribute to our understanding of advocacy dynamics in the European Union. The powers of the European Union and the number of advocacy organizations in Brussels has been growing in recent decades (Majone, 2002; Klüver, 2013). A rich literature exists that explores the conditions under which advocacy organizations influence European policy (Mahoney, 2004; Dur, 2008; Klüver, 2013) and whether a representation bias exists (Rasmussen and Carroll, 2014). Studies highlight that European advocacy organizations use not only inside strategies but also public outside strategies to achieve their goals (Dur and

Mateo, 2016). However, although recent studies point out that most of the organizations use social media technologies to carry out their outside tactics (van der Graaf et al., 2016), we still know little about whether and which types of social media campaigns succeed at engaging the public. The theoretical model and the empirical data presented here will contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics and success of this increasingly relevant outside strategy.

1.4 The Mobilizing Role of Emotions

Political psychology studies exploring the role of emotions in shaping political behavior are on the rise (Marcus et al., 2000; Goodwin et al., 2001; Neuman, 2007; Valentino et al., 2011; Papacharissi, 2015). In the past, social scientists saw emotions as affective reactions getting in the way of rational thinking (James, 1894), relegating the study of affective effects to a secondary level (Neuman, 2007; Papacharissi, 2015). However, more recent work indicates that when exposed to new information, people feel first and think second (Zajonc, 1980; Marcus et al., 2000). People are more likely to pay attention to, process, and think about emotion-evoking than non-emotional information. In the current context of information overload (Bawden and Robinson, 2009)), emotions help us be alert, and they encourage us to take action on issues we deem important, as well as on new issues that may suddenly be of our interest (Marcus et al., 2000; Neuman, 2007).

This literature that has emerged in recent years shows how emotional reactions to received information encourage people to participate in a wide range of political activities. Marcus et al. (2000) find that certain emotions encourage people to seek further information related to political campaigns. Valentino et al. (2011) show that emotions encourage people to turn out to vote. Furthermore, Goodwin and Jasper (2006) argue that emotions mobilize people to protest, and Victoroff (2005) finds that emotions even motivate people to join radical violent groups. However, despite their clear mobilizing effects, very little attention has been devoted to studying which, how, and under what circumstances emotions can facilitate online

and social media engagement.

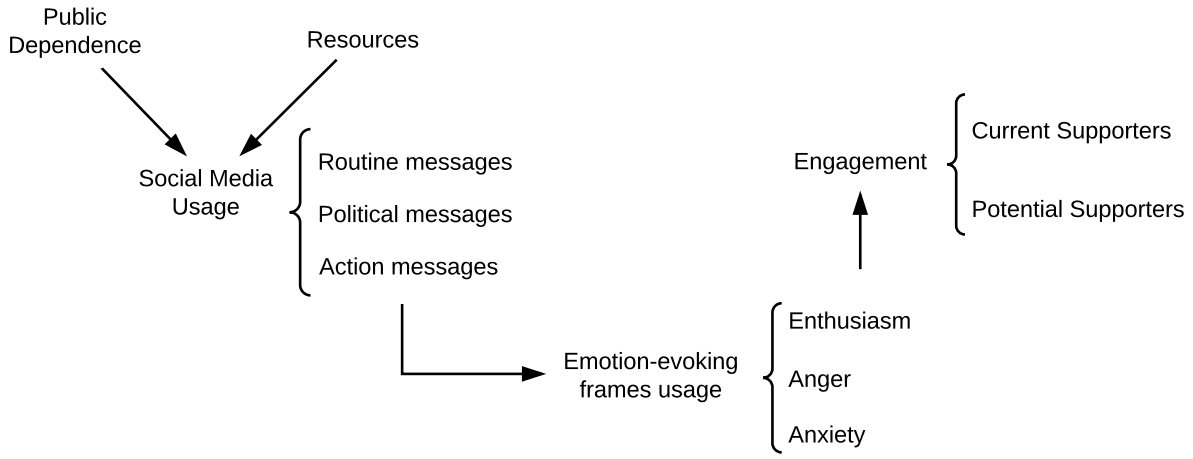
An exception is the work of Papacharissi (2015). In a study of online engagement with protest movements, she highlights that emotional discourses can be very powerful at recruiting and engaging online publics with contentious events and movements, a claim that is also supported by existing marketing research showing that emotional social media content fosters online information diffusion (see Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2013) as an example). However, research on how emotions facilitate engagement with civil society organizations is crucial for the reasons mentioned above, but currently nonexistent. Moreover, work on the role of emotions in fostering political engagement on social media is still of a descriptive nature (Papacharissi, 2015). A clear theory predicting which emotions engage which publics and under what circumstances does not yet exist. The aim of this research is to put forward and to test a theoretical model explaining how emotions shape online engagement dynamics with formal civil society organizations.

1.5 A Theory of Affective Action in Organizations

The end goal of the theory is to explain the variation in the amount of engagement formal civil society organizations achieve on social media in regard to how many users follow them and engage with their messages online at any given point in time. This engagement is an objective in the current digital environment that most organizations see as crucial in order to influence public opinion, increase their mobilizing capabilities, and have a chance at influencing policy in the long run (Obar et al., 2011).

I portray social media engagement with formal civil society groups as a function of four main factors. First, group resources and whether organizations rely on public support to achieve their goals are predictors of how often organizations use social media. Then, the type of messages organizations promote is a predictor of whether organizations employ emotion-evoking frames. Finally, the emotions messages trigger have an influence on the levels of engagement organizational messages achieve.

Figure 1.1: A diagram of the theory



A first set of conditions to take into account when theorizing about social media engagement with civil society organizations is that not all of them have the same amount of resources or are equally interested in engaging the public (Lang, 2013). Past studies show that resourceful groups are able to run more prolific public campaigns (van der Graaf et al., 2016; Dur and Mateo, 2016), leading us to expect that these groups with more *resources* will also be more active social media users.

Moreover, some organizations are more interested in engaging the public than others, since some groups simply want to promote social change by providing services (Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004). Government agencies often fund organizations to provide social services they do not want to or cannot directly provide. These service-oriented organizations often do not rely on public engagement to carry out their mission. All (or most of) their income comes from commercial services offered to public agencies instead of individual donations (Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004), and since they do not aim to influence policy, they do not need to build public support around any policy idea. I theorize that the level of *public dependence* also determines the extent to which organizations use social media. I expect the effect to be particularly substantive among resource-scarce groups. Given the tight budget,

these organizations need to establish more clear priorities. I theorize that resource-scarce groups with low public dependence will rarely turn to social media for public engagement.

Then, a second main factor to account for is that civil society groups do not only use social media for public engagement. Research shows that they also use it to improve transparency and good governance—simply reporting about the day-to-day of the organization (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012; Obar et al., 2011; Guo and Saxton, 2014)—and to get feedback from their current supporters (Obar et al., 2011; Karpf, 2012). I assume that organizations are somewhat aware of the mobilizing power of emotion-evoking frames, and as such, use emotional appeals in messages aiming to engage online audiences. Building on the existing literature (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012; Obar et al., 2011; Guo and Saxton, 2014; Karpf, 2012), I distinguish between three different types of messages, those that aim (a) to provide information about the day-to-day of the organization (*routine messages*), (b) to promote the claims and policy ideas of the organization among current and potential supporters (*political messages*), and (c) to call current and potential supporters into action (*action messages*). I theorize that messages aiming to engage the public (political and action messages) are more likely to contain emotion-evoking frames than messages intending to report about the day-to-day of the organization (routine messages).

Finally, I theorize about which emotions are likely to engage the currently individualized public. Two different types of online publics are of particular interest in this regard. First, organizations interested in promoting social media campaigns need to find ways to engage their own followers (which I will often refer as their *current supporters*). Current supporters represent the organization's base, and engaging them is a necessary condition to spread their message to those who are less familiar with the group's claims (Bimber et al., 2012). Then, organizations also need to find ways to engage new audiences (which I will often refer to as their *potential supporters*). Civil society organizations interested in public campaigning need not only to receive the support of their base, but they also need to achieve general public support for their policy ideas in order to have a better chance at influencing policy (Baumgartner et al., 2008).

I portray the ability of organizations to engage current and potential supporters as a function of emotion-evoking frames, where organizational messages that evoke a set of emotions to users are more likely to be shared by current and potential supporters, and to turn potential supporters into new organizational followers. But which emotions are the most relevant? I build on Marcus et al. (2000)'s *affective intelligence* model to argue that three main emotions play a key mobilizing role: anger, enthusiasm, and anxiety.

These emotions are particularly mobilizing because of their connection to two crucial cognitive processes. People's emotions are not driven by a single—but rather a dual—emotional system (Marcus et al., 2000). First, emotions are driven by a *dispositional system*. Anger and enthusiasm are directly linked to this system, as they are in charge of governing our feelings and behavior on issues we care about. For this reason, information evoking anger and enthusiasm can do a really good job at attracting the attention of users who care about a particular issues and at motivating them to act.

Second, emotions are also driven by a *surveillance system* that is in charge of scanning our environment for new potential threats. Anxiety is a key emotion related to this other cognitive system, and it often contributes to making people more aware and interested in issues they previously did not pay attention to. Potential supporters can be exposed to messages from an organization they do not follow if they are following current organization supporters who decide to share the organization's message. Although initially these potential supporters may not care much about the issue the organization is working on, messages evoking anxiety should warn them about a potential threat. In turn, this threat could lead them to pay more attention to the issue and to be more likely to engage with the organization.

The diagram in Figure 1.1 provides a brief overview of the theory. To sum up, resources and public dependence have an effect on how often civil society groups use social media messages. Organizations (resource-scarce groups especially) that rely on the public to survive and influence policy will use social media more often. At the same time, the type of message an organization promotes affects whether emotion-evoking frames are used: organizations are more likely to use emotion-evoking frames in political and action messages. Then, messages

triggering anger, anxiety, and enthusiasm are likely to achieve higher engagement levels: to be shared more often, to recruit a larger number of followers, and to engage more influential users.

1.6 How will I test the theory?

When we study how a single organization such as the PAH is able to increase online engagement in different points in time, we get a precise picture of how things happen but we run the risk of taking away conclusions from a case that does not represent how organizations and citizens behave on average. To avoid this pitfall, I study how social media users engage not only with one but hundreds of civil society organizations aiming to influence European Union politics.

The European Union regulates today on a large number of policy areas, and it is one of the main political actors in Europe (Majone, 2002). The population of interest groups present in Brussels has significantly increased in the last decades (Klüver, 2013). Academics find the "representation bias" in Brussels (unequal proportion of business organizations compared to membership groups) to be of a significant magnitude (Rasmussen and Carroll, 2014). All these characteristics make the European Union a particular case of interest. The extent to which digital media and online engagement can help redress this representation bias is still unclear but of vital importance to asses democratic politics in Europe (van der Graaf et al., 2016).

Putting together a list of the population of interest groups active in Brussels is particularly challenging, but luckily, other people have already done so. The most recent and complete attempt is the Comparative Interest Group (CIG) survey (Beyers et al., 2016), in which researchers from the INTEREURO team surveyed advocacy organizations present in the major existing lists of lobbying groups (e.g., Transparency Register, OECKL, and the Leiden database). I treat the civil society organizations in this list as the population of active membership groups in Brussels and for a one year period I trace their Twitter communica-

tions. The CIG survey contains very rich information about each of the organizations under study, including the size of their annual budget and the number of full-time employees (*resources*), their main sources of income (government *versus* individual and private sources), which can be used to measure *public dependence*, as well as other organization-level features that can be used to control for alternative explanations when putting the theory to test.

I complement the organization-level data in the CIG survey with four new types of data. First, I collect all the messages these organizations send on Twitter. This allows me to test how often organizations use social media. Then, I collect a set of engagement measures related to each of the messages, such as the number of retweets and the number of recruited-lost followers after sending a given message. These allow me to build the key outcome engagement variables of the study. Third, I collect daily data about which users follow the organization, which allows me to distinguishing between the proportion of shares by followers (current supporters) *versus* non-followers (potential supporters). Finally, I ask thousands of people on the crowdsourcing site Mechanical Turk to manually label each of the messages for their intention and the emotions they evoke. This allows me to test hypotheses about the type of messages organizations send and the emotions these messages evoke, as well as to observe which emotion-evoking frames achieve higher engagement levels.

1.7 What you will find next

In the the following **Chapter 2**, *The Engagement Problem and The Digital Solution*, I will explain in more detail the motivations of the project. First, I will introduce and provide empirical evidence of the collective action and the free rider problem civil society organizations face. Then, I will discuss the solutions to the collective action problem that scholars propose, but I will provide empirical evidence showing that these traditional solutions have not been working well in recent decades. Next, I will propose that this is mainly because of a change in the value system that makes people more interested in personalized forms of participation and less likely to participate in formal political organizations. Finally, I will argue

that digital technologies, and social media in particular, can help civil society organizations solve engagement problems in a meaningful way. I will conclude the chapter by laying out the unanswered question that the rest of the project will address.

In **Chapter 3**, *Affective Action in Organizations*, I will expand the theory summarized in this introduction. First, I will go over the existing research on the mobilizing role of emotions, and I will explain in detail the *affective intelligence* model (Marcus et al., 2000) that I use to theorize about which emotions are likely to engage social media users with civil society organizations. Finally, I will discuss in more detail how the three main predictive factors in the model (public dependence, message type, and emotion-evoking frames) affect how often organizations use social media for social engagement and the level of engagement (e.g., retweets and favorites) their messages and frames achieve.

The following chapters will be dedicated to the empirical analysis. In **Chapter 4**, *Data and Methods*, I will present the data I use for testing the model, as well as some preliminary results. First I will present the sample of formal civil society organizations I study, and then I will focus on illustrating how the three outcomes of interest (social media usage, emotion-evoking frames usage, and social media engagement) vary substantively, not only due to obvious differences one would expect to be relevant (e.g. organizations that are more active are also more likely to recruit new followers), but potentially due to message-level differences, such as the presence and usage of emotion-evoking frames.

In **Chapter 5**, *The Affective Action in Organizations Theory to Test*, I will use the collected data to test the validity of the model. Overall, I find substantive support for each of the three main claims of the theory, as well as for the theoretical model as a whole. I will conduct a large-N analysis based on statistical models that estimate the quantities of interest while controlling for other potential predictors. Moreover, to provide a more clear illustration of the findings, I will conclude the chapter by exploring the communications of one organization, *European Digital Rights*, in more detail.

Finally, I will conclude in **Chapter 6**, *So what did we learn?*, by summarizing the theory and the findings of the project and also by discussing their limitations and implications.

Chapter 2

THE ENGAGEMENT PROBLEM AND THE DIGITAL SOLUTION

Civil society organizations are the cornerstone of democratic pluralism (de Tocqueville, 1899; Dahl, 1961). Citizens only get to vote for those who represent them once every few years, but what happens if representatives do not do what they promised? Or citizens' views do not achieve enough votes to be formally represented? Or representatives take positions contrary to the views of those who elected them? Under these scenarios citizens have the right (and some would even say the duty) to organize and advocate for the political ideas they believe in; the represented can demand that their representatives do what they promised, and the unrepresented can express their voices and potentially influence public opinion and policy. In other words, under these circumstances, civil society organizations act as the putty that holds democracy together.

However, how do civil society groups emerge? What challenges do they face? Do they have a similar voice and influence than other types of advocacy organizations? Are they equally likely to emerge and engage the public today as they were a few decades ago? If not, why? Can social media technologies make it easier for them to engage the public today in a meaningful way?

The goal of this chapter is to lay out the motivations of the research project, and it is structured to make four main points. The first one is that collective action and free rider problems make it harder for civil society organizations than for other types of advocacy groups to form and to succeed at engaging the public (Olson, 1965; Berry, 1997). This generates representation biases that favor the voices of business groups to the detriment of civil society organizations, putting democratic pluralism at risk (Schlozman et al., 2012;

Gilens, 2012; Rasmussen and Carroll, 2014). In Section 2.1 I introduce the collective action and free rider problems, and I report some evidence of the representation biases they generate from the first studies conducted in the United States. Then, since the focus of this study will be organizations advocating in the European Union, in Section 2.2 I also provide evidence of the same biases in Europe.

The second point I aim to make is that, due to a decline in formal civic engagement in recent decades (Putnam, 2000; Skocpol, 2003; Mair and van Biezen, 2001; Scruggs and Lange, 2003; van Schuur and Voerman, 2010), existing representation biases are likely to widen. In Section 2.3 I explain some of the strategies in which civil society organizations have traditionally solved the collective action problem. However, as I then show in Sections 2.4 and 2.5, these strategies have not prevented formal engagement with civil society groups from declining both in the United States and in Europe in recent decades. In Section 2.6 and 2.7 I argue that this recent formal engagement decline is mainly a result of people having a new individualized value system that does not align with traditional forms of participation.

The third main point I want to make is that social media technologies have the potential to solve the engagement problem civil society organizations face. In Section 2.8 I lay out the reasons for being optimistic: digital media reduce information and participation costs and, more importantly, they allow citizens to participate in a way that fits their current participation preferences. Then in Section 2.9 I disagree with the existing critiques portraying social media engagement as a meaningless form of participation. I build on recent research showing the opposite findings, as well as on the testimony of practitioners from civil society organizations.

Finally, as the last main point, in Section 2.10 I argue that we still know little about what kinds of communication help civil society organizations the most to connect with and engage people in social media. I conclude by presenting the question that serves as the main driver of the project: under what conditions should we expect civil society organizations to succeed at engaging social media publics?

2.1 The Free Rider Problem and the Representation Bias

Collective organizations can be powerful instruments of interest representation and policy influence. Groups with a centralized decision-making body, an infrastructure to recruit resources, technical expertise, lobbying experience and connections have proved to be successful at achieving policy goals (Berry, 1997; Moe, 1980). In a study of the policy influence of advocacy groups in the United States, Gilens and Page (2014) studied how the preferences of different groups of citizens and actors aligned with a set of 1,779 policy initiatives. After controlling for the policy influence of public opinion and political parties, they found that interest organizations had a strong impact on the direction of policy changes related to those initiatives.

However, not all "latent groups" are equally likely to organize and, conditional on only some being formed, certain organizations are more likely to recruit resources than others. In *The Logic of Collective Action*, Olson (1965) puts forward a main reason why: rational individuals, businesses and/or institutions pursuing a public good face a "free-rider" problem that groups pursuing private goods do not face. Since a person, company, or institution can benefit from a common good independently of whether it contributes to its achievement, the rational thing to do is to save time and resources instead of contributing to the collective action.

This free rider problem contributes to the generation of two types of representation bias. The most immediate one is that groups pursuing private benefits, such as business groups and professional associations, are more likely to form than groups pursuing public goods, such as civil society organizations. In a study of advocacy organization present in Washington D.C., Schlozman et al. (2012) found a clear over-representation of organizations advocating for concentrated benefits. Companies, institutions, and associations of companies and institutions represented most of the organized interests. Only about 12% of the groups were membership associations, and there were very few organizations advocating for public interests (4.6%) and identity issues (3.8%).

Verba et al. (1995) also found that differences in the ability of organizations to recruit resources generated a second type of representation bias: some are in a better position to influence policy than others. Advocacy groups use a wide variety of tactics to try to achieve their goals (Schlozman and Tierney, 1986; Dur and Mateo, 2016). Sometimes they use inside strategies that aim to influence policymakers directly (by providing expert knowledge and funding), and sometimes they employ outside tactics that try to pressure them indirectly (by shaping and mobilizing public opinion). Both types of strategy are costly, which means that groups with more resources are in a much better position to make their voice heard.

In the same study of advocacy organizations in the United States, Schlozman et al. (2012) not only found that groups present in Washington D.C. were dominantly organizations pursuing concentrated interests, but that for their period of analysis (2000-2001), these organizations spent on average about $625,000 on lobbying, whereas public interest organizations only spent $334,000. The study made it clear that not all "latent interests" are equally likely to be heard during the policymaking process, particularly the voice of those defending the broader public interest.

2.2 Representation Biases in the European Union

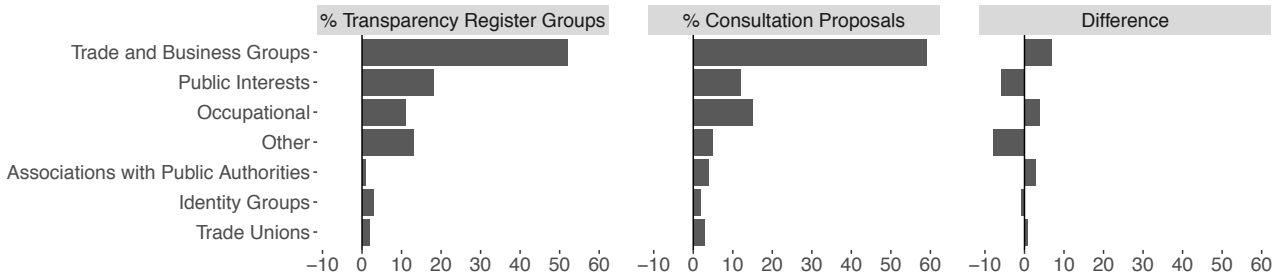
In this project I focus on studying digital engagement with civil society organizations advocating in the European Union. The political powers of the European Union and the number of advocacy groups in Brussels have grown significantly in recent decades (Majone, 2002; Klüver, 2013), making it a perfect and relevant case of study. In the previous section I provided evidence indicating that significant representation biases exist in the United States, but do these same biases exists in the European Union?

Studies estimate that more than 2,000 advocacy organizations aim to influence European institutions on a regular basis (Beyers et al., 2016). As mentioned earlier, research on lobbying success shows these advocacy groups often get what they want. Klüver (2013) studied the extent to which suggestions made by interest groups on 56 policy consultations

aligned with the policy proposals later drafted by the Commission.[1] She found that the language of the final policy proposal drafted by the European Commission was often similar to what coalitions of advocacy organizations proposed. But which types of organizations have a stronger presence and are more active in Brussels?

Emulating Schlozman et al. (2012)'s work, Rasmussen and Carroll (2014) explored the extent to which similar representation biases existed in the European Unions. First, they looked at which types of interest groups had a stronger presence in Brussels, and then they studied which ones were more active in lobbying for European legislation. Figure 2.1 provides a visualization of their findings.

Figure 2.1: The "Representation Bias" in the European Union*



* *Data source: Rasmussen and Carroll (2013)*

In the left plot in Figure 2.1 you can see the first type of representation bias mentioned earlier, as most of the groups in Brussels are organizations defending concentrated interests. More than 70% of the groups in the Transparency Register[2] are trade and business associations (about 55%) and occupational groups (about 15%). On the other hand, groups pursuing diffuse interests represent a minority of the organizations; civil society organizations defending public interests represent less than 20% of the population of advocacy groups, and

[1] The European Commission is the only organ with the power to initiate and propose legislation in the European Union. When drafting new legislation the Commission often opens a consultation period when interest groups can comment on initial drafts.

[2]he Transparency Register is a list of interest organizations that report participating in lobbying European Union institutions: http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/homePage.do.

membership organizations advocating for identity rights only about 3%.

Then, in the middle and right plot in Figure 2.1 we observe that groups with concentrated interests are not only more likely to be in Brussels, but they are also more likely to participate in a larger number of lobbying activities. The middle plot shows the proportion of all the European Commission's consultations in which each type of organization participated between December 2001 and April 2010.[3] The right plot indicates the difference between these proportions and the proportion of all organizations in the Transparency Register that each group type represents. In this right plot we can clearly observe that organizations pursuing concentrated benefits and with more resources (such as trade and business groups and occupational organizations) are relatively more active than organizations with less resources, such as groups advocating for public interests and identity rights. Trade and business associations represent 51% of the groups in the Transparency Register and 60% of the policy suggestions proposed during consultations, whereas public interests organizations represent 18% of the registered groups but only 12% of the policy proposals.

In sum, these studies provide evidence that representation biases currently exist in both the United States (Schlozman et al., 2012) and the European Union (Rasmussen and Carroll, 2014), as well as showing that collective action and free-rider problems (Olson, 1965) are in part to blame for it. However, the evidence also shows some variation that the collective action problem fails to account for: the free-rider problem predicts that no organization advocating for public goods should emerge nor be successful at engaging citizens and influencing policy, but the empirical evidence demonstrates that some do. We still observe, for example, that 12% of the policy proposals made to the European Commission come from public interests organizations. Why is this the case? What do we know about what membership organizations can do to succeed at engaging citizens? And if we already have a good idea of what they can do, why should we re-evaluate these theoretical principles?

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[3] See footnote 1

2.3 The Traditional Solutions to the Free-Rider Problem

Academics point out a set of *material*, *social*, *institutional*, and *emotional* solutions to the collective action problem organizations defending diffused interests face.

In *The Logic of Collective Action*, Olson (1965) argues that organizations advocating for diffuse interests can recruit and engage members by offering positive selective incentives. NGOs and labor unions, for example, can offer tax deductions in exchange for contributions and exclusive legal or medical services in exchange for membership. By contributing to the organization, then, people get a set of material benefits they would not get to enjoy otherwise.

Not all is about material incentives however. Olson (1965) also points out that *social* negative selective incentives can be used to increase support for a collective action. Individuals already supporting an action or organization can pressure others to do so by excluding them from other social activities and/or calling them out. This type of incentive is more likely to have an effect in small and homogeneous groups, and when the visibility of a collective action is higher (Oliver, 1980). For example, unionized workers can pressure others to participate in a strike by excluding and calling them out in public, and Hollywood stars are more likely to support the *Time's Up* initiative when the association organizes an action during a highly visible event such as the Golden Globes ceremony.

Social selective incentives do not need to be negative (Oliver, 1980). Civil society organizations, for instance, can increase support by compensating members with social reputation, using tools such as naming programs and initiatives after members, mentioning active members in newsletters and reports, or rewarding those who participated or contributed the most. Fleishman (1980) also argues that in situations in which group belongingness and social identity is high, and in which group members perceive that the goal is important but will not be achieved unless the whole community contributes, collective actions are more likely to emerge (Gamson, 1975; Oberschall, 1980).

Skocpol (e.g., Skocpol and Fiorina (2004)) argues that civic engagement with voluntary organizations is in great part a function of the *institutional context* in which organizations

emerge and operate. In *The Civic Culture*, Almond and Verba (1963) observed that the number of voluntary groups and the levels of civic engagement in the United States was significantly higher (in the 20th century) than in other countries, but they did not provide any clear explanation as to why. Skocpol pointed out three relevant institutional factors that could explain such variation: a weaker state, more religious freedom, and a republican form of government. A weaker state made citizen associations necessary (as alternative service providers) and possible (very little to no regulation on who and how to form organizations). Religious freedom meant that associations not possible elsewhere could be formed in the United States and that a larger number of religious groups engaged in fierce recruiting campaigns. Finally, the Republican form of government that emerged in clear opposition to the old European regimes meant that political elites encouraged a bottom up society where a plurality of "factions" acted as the base of the Federal government (Madison, 1787; de Tocqueville, 1899).[4]

However, why is it that within the same institutional context some civic organizations fail while others succeed? In *Governing the Commons*, Ostrom (1990) posed another institutional response to this question: the characteristics of the institutions that govern collective organizations also matter. Some institutional designs help organizations do better at engaging members. Ostrom was mostly concerned about organizations in charge of preventing individuals from exhausting public resources, and she highlighted the importance of developing organizational rules to define boundaries, monitor compliance, impose sanctions, solve conflicts, and allow members to have an equal voice. A similar argument can be made for any type of civil society group. In *The MoveOn Effect*, for example, Karpf (2012) shows that civil society organizations that by design allow members to play a stronger role in the decision-making process do a better job at engaging the current individualized public.

Finally, a set of scholars also pose an *emotional* solution to the free-rider problem, as

[4]This pluralist view of the early American state however disregards the numerous inequalities present at that and later times. Please see for example Smith's *Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America* Smith (1993) for a more accurate and critical representation of the American polity across time.

they argue that some emotions drive people to start supporting a collective action while other emotions contribute to keeping them engaged. Jasper (1998), for example, argues that individuals feeling angry and outraged about an issue are more likely to join movements and organizations working on solving that problem. Then he argues that, by participating in the collective action, people develop a new set of emotions, such as love, solidarity and trust, which increase their likelihood to keep contributing to the group. The argument aligns with other findings in political participation research. Marcus et al. (2000) and Valentino et al. (2011) find that people feeling anxious and enthusiastic about a given issue and/or political candidate are more likely to seek further information and be politically active.

For a long time, these different material, social, institutional, and emotional motivations have proved to be useful solutions to the collective action problem and have encouraged citizens to engage with formal civil society organizations. The analyses of scholars such as Almond and Verba (1963), Skocpol (Skocpol and Fiorina, 2004), and Putnam (2000) show how the number of voluntary organizations and the number of people engaging with them was very high in numerous Western democracies for most of the 20th century. However, in the last few decades, rates of civic engagement have been in decline (Putnam, 2000; Pharr and Putnam, 2000). In the next three sections I first describe this pattern both in the United States and in Europe, and then I discuss the main reasons put forward by academics as to why.

2.4 The Formal Engagement Decline

In 2000, Putnam (2000)'s book *Bowling Alone* brought into light a concerning issue that immediately got the attention of academics, journalists, politicians, and the general public: the American civil society was in decline. The issue was particularly worrisome because a strong civil society is a crucial component for stable and pluralistic democratic polities to grow (de Tocqueville, 1899; Dahl, 1961; Almond and Verba, 1963).

Putnam showed a clear decline in both civic and political engagement. Since the 1960s,

(a) Membership decline in civic organizations

Figure 8: Average Membership Rate in Thirty-two National Chapter-Based Associations, 1900–1997

(b) Decline in formal politics participation

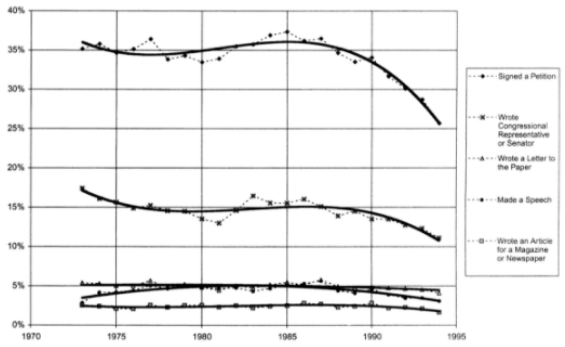


Figure 6: Trends in Civic Engagement III: Public Expression

fewer Americans have become paying or active members of any type of local, regional and national civic organization. As you can see in Figure 2.2a (directly extracted from Putnam's book) the number of members of thirty-two prominent associations in the United States substantially declined between 1960 and 2000. The same story applies to participation in formal or traditional political activities. Figure 2.2b (also from Putnam's book) shows how American citizens have been gradually signing fewer political petitions (top line) and contacting political representatives less often (second line from the top), among other examples.

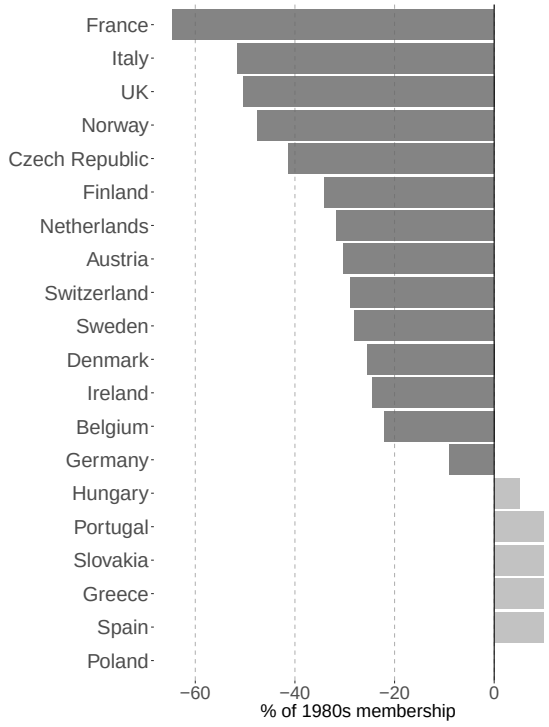
2.5 The Engagement Decline in the European Union

Right after Putnam's book was released, the issue of a declining civil society got the attention of academics from all around the world, who immediately started conducting analogous studies. In studies involving European countries, authors often found that party membership and engagement with civic organizations were also in decline. In a study of party membership between 1980 and the 2000s, for example, Mair and van Biezen (2001) found more than a 50% membership decline in France, Italy, and Great Britain, and between a 30% and 50% decline in countries such as Norway, Finland, and the Netherlands (see Figure 2.3a). The only European countries that showed an increase in party membership were the ones that

had recently transitioned to democracy (such as Greece, Portugal, and Spain) and in which political parties were still being constituted and party membership could do nothing else but to increase.[5]

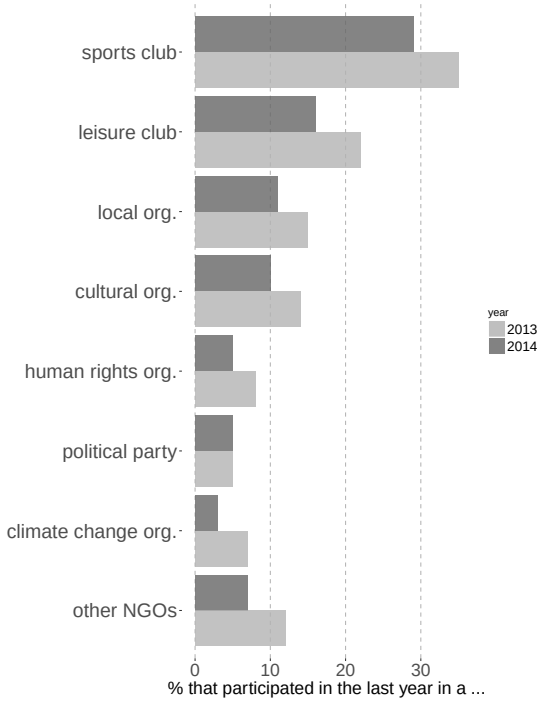
Figure 2.3: The Engagement Decline in European Countries

(a) Party Membership Decline,1980-2000 [a]



[a]Data source: Mair and Van Biezen 2001

(b) Civic and Political Engagemenet Decline [a]



[a]Data source: Flash Eurobaromter 375 and 408 on "European Youth", 2013 and 2014.

Civil society groups have gone through a similar trend. Scruggs and Lange (2003) show for example that labor union membership has been decreasing since the 1970s, with a 17.7 percentage points decline in Austria, 15.6 in the United Kingdom, 13 in the Netherlands, and 12.4 in France.

[5]Party membership growth for Slovakia, Greece, Spain, and Poland is higher than 10 percentage points. I cut their bars to 10 however so that variation for the declining countries, the data of interest in this study, is easier to appreciate.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, authors such as Hall (1999) and Hooghe and Stolle (2003) argued that formal civic and political engagement had not declined everywhere nor at the same rate in all Western democracies. Hall (1999), for example, argued that by the end of the 20th century no such decline existed in the United Kingdom. However, more recent data indicates a more definitive and pessimistic picture.

If we take a look at how often younger Europeans participate in any form of civic organization today, we observe generally low engagement levels across the board (see Figure 2.3b). The differences between the two years plotted in the Figure are not the main focus (they are likely to not be statistically significant). What is important to note is what it seems to be current societal pattern. Although a significant number of younger citizens still participate in some sort of sports (30%) or leisure organization (15-20%), only a small fraction participate in any other local or cultural group (about 10%), or in a non-profit or political organization (<10%). This puts membership groups from countries all around Europe in risk. For example, a recent study on Belgium civil society organizations indicates that one in five groups "face important threats to their survival."[6]

2.6 The Main Reason Why: A New Value System

Social scientists point to a wide range of reasons for why citizens today are less likely to engage with formal civil society groups. These explanations can be mainly grouped into three overarching arguments: the rise of individualized forms of entertainment, an increasing suburbanization and time pressure, and a generational replacement that aligns with a change in the value system. Empirical evidence suggest that the latter argument is probably the main driver of this engagement decline.

The first of the arguments goes as follows. New forms of entertainment such as television and video-games emerged in the 1960s that created incentives for people to stay home and

[6] https://www.cigsurvey.eu/2016/07/05/civil-society-and-interest-groups-face-important-threats-to-their-survival-results-of-our-survey-in-de-standaard/.

reduce their socialization time (Putnam, 2000; Hooghe, 2002), thus lowering their interest not only in participating in leisure associations but also in engaging with political actions and groups. In the end, as authors such as Galston (2004) demonstrate, civic and political engagement go often hand in hand.

However, other scholars such as Norris (1996) warn us against buying into the argument too fast. Not all television content is mere entertainment nor does it necessarily encourage social isolation. Television news, documentaries, talk shows, etc. provide the information citizens need to be critical and active. She shows that although the number of hours one spends watching television is negatively associated with multiple forms of formal political participation, watching the news and "public affairs" shows are strongly related with higher engagement levels. Hooghe (2003) also finds television consumption to be a residual explanation for why European citizens today participate less often with any kind of civic or political group.

Increasing sub-urbanization and time pressure is another major argument that scholars have put forward to explain the recent engagement decline. Compared to decades ago, a larger proportion of the population works, has a longer workday, and a longer commute. Research shows that time is a valuable resource often related to formal political participation (Verba et al., 1995), and some link this growing time scarcity to the recent engagement decline (Tiehen, 2000; Putnam, 2000). Studies conducted in European countries, however, do not seem to support the claim. Hooghe (2003), for example, does not find mobility nor time constraints to be statistically related to lower formal engagement.

Finally, another set of scholars argue that the reason why fewer people participate in formal organizations is because newer generations follow a new value system that does not align with traditional forms of participation and engagement. Authors such as Giddens (1991) and Inglehart (1997) point out that, in post-traditional societies, citizens are more concerned about their self-identity. Given less clear traditional values and social hierarchies, individuals are mainly worried about their immediate environment. People have fewer group ties and so they feel neither the need nor the pressure to formally engage in formal

associations and their activities.

This last argument has the strongest empirical evidence on its side. Hooghe (2003), for instance, finds that when controlling for the discussed alternative explanations, the decline in religious affiliation in Europe (often seen as the most clear symptom of this value system replacement) is directly related to lower engagement levels.

2.7 An Era of Personalized Politics

Lower formal engagement does not mean that citizens do not want to participate in politics anymore. On the contrary, research shows that people remain very active (Lichterman and Seidman, 1996; Stolle and Micheletti, 2013). However, citizens today want to participate in politics in a more personalized way, as they seek to escape from traditional and rigid organizational structures that leave them with very little room to express their views in their own voice (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013). Unconventional forms of political participation (such as demonstrations and boycotts) have always existed (Barnes and Kaase, 1979), but they are now on the rise. Citizens today engage in a wide action repertoire to challenge elite and institution-driven policies, such as austerity measures, free-trade agreements, and house eviction policies in Europe (Stolle and Micheletti, 2013; Romanos, 2014). Beck and Jennings (1979) refers to this "unconventionalism" as a a rise of "active subpoliticians" (citizens) filling in for actual politicians and institutions that are not capable of addressing contemporary challenges (Stolle and Micheletti, 2013). Micheletti and McFarland (2011) describe a "creative public" looking for alternative ways of raising awareness about problems that parties and institutions do not want to address, and Li and Marsh (2008) talk about "everyday-makers," who are citizens acting locally with no or weak ties to formal institutions.

The problem is that participating only in unconventional and sporadic forms of participation poses a crucial challenge to democratic pluralism. As I illustrated in the beginning of this chapter, formal organizations are a powerful instrument to influence policy and fight for one's ideas and interests (Berry, 1997; Moe, 1980). By giving up on them, citizens risk

having a weaker voice in the decision-making process. Unconventional forms of participation have proved to be a great instrument for the emergence of bottom-up movements such as the *Indignados* in Spain and Black Lives Matter in the United States. However, it is the creation of more stable and formal organizations representing such interests that allowed these sporadic movements to set political agendas in a more persistent way and to have a real shot at influencing policy. A wide range of claims formed the agenda of the *Indignados* movement in May 2015 (Casas et al., 2016). Nevertheless, only one of the claims is still part of the agenda today—the fight for a fair housing policy that the PAH keeps alive. Almost no one talks anymore about reforming the financial and tax system, or about getting rid of the monarchy to transition to a fully Republican form of government.

Hence, given the importance of formal organizations for interest representation and democratic pluralism, how can civil society organizations engage the public in an era of personalized politics? Can social media technologies help them do so in a meaningful way?

2.8 Reasons to Buy into the Digital Solution

Two main reasons exist to be optimistic about the potential of social media technologies to solve engagement problems and help civil society organization have a stronger political voice: they reduce information and participation costs, and more importantly, they allow citizens to participate in politics in a more personalized manner.

Information and participation costs play a crucial role in traditional collective action theory (Olson, 1965). First, in order for people to decide whether to engage in a collective action, they need to have information about the issue at hand, the groups working on it, and the specific actions and campaigns organizations are working on. Producing and accessing such information, however, comes at a cost. From the organization point of view, resources need to be devoted to producing and distributing outreach material. From the citizen point of view, time and resources need to be invested to access and process it. Also from the citizen's perspective, there are costs attached to participating in any collective action, such

as attending a meeting and volunteering in a fundraising event. Lower information and participation costs should be associated with higher engagement levels (Olson, 1965).

As some academics point out, Internet technologies in general, and social media in particular, have significantly reduced information and participation costs (Lupia and Sin, 2003; Bimber et al., 2012). Today an organization can easily post a message on social media to provide general information about an issue, to inform about a campaign, or to ask people to participate in an action (Guo and Saxton, 2014) . Accessing such messages has a very small cost for citizens, who can immediately view them on their mobile devices. Some forms of participation, such as spreading the organization's word by sharing their claim or by messaging in support of the group, also comes at a small fraction of traditional participation costs (Barbera et al., 2015).

Digital media not only has the potential to increase civic engagement by lowering information and participation costs, but also by allowing citizens to engage with civic society organizations in a more unconventional and personalized way.

Social media has transformed the collective action paradigm by relegating the free rider problem to a marginal role. As previously discussed, in traditional collective action theory citizens face the decision to either assume the costs of participating in a collective action, or to free-ride and take advantage of the achieved common good without bearing any of the costs. However, as authors such as Bimber and colleagues (Bimber et al., 2012) and Bennett and Segerberg (2013) argue, in the current social media environment this logic does not always apply. Sometimes citizens participate in collective actions without even noticing it; they are eager to express their own opinion to their online social networks and by doing so, they make their private preferences public, and they encourage others to do the same. Eventually this can turn into a large number of people supporting the same policy ideas and pressuring policy makers to implement them. This type of "connective" dynamic is in part the cause for some mass protests that have taken place in the past decade or so, like the Arab Spring, the *Indignados* movement, and Occupy Wall Street as a few examples (Howard and Hussain, 2013; Castells, 2015).

Despite facilitating this type of "connective action" *without* organizations, social media also allows citizens to participate in organizations in a more unconventional way. Social media helps to connect citizens' will for a more personalized participation with the need of civil society groups for stronger public engagement and support. People can develop weak ties with multiple organizations, tune in and out as desired, and share and help organizations spread the messages that speak to them. But to what extent can these weak forms of social media engagement help a civil society organization achieve its goals?

2.9 Can Online Engagement Really Help Civic Society Organizations?

A set of authors are very critical of the ability of digital media to generate meaningful forms of political engagement. These scholars do not necessarily argue that civil society organizations are not able to use digital media to engage the public, but that this type of engagement (often known as "slacktivism" or "clicktivism") does not really help organizations to achieve any type of social change.

Jodi Dean perfectly lays out the argument in her "Communicative Capitalism" piece. Dean (2005) argues that networked communication technologies have fostered the creation of a *fantasy of participation*, where people think they are contributing to social change by engaging in "weak" forms of online engagement, when in fact they are contributing to the avoidance of change. Their weak efforts actually prevent them from doing something more meaningful such as donating to a political cause or protesting on the street.

In his piece in *Foreign Policy* ("Brave New World Of Slacktivims"), Morozov (2009) builds on Dean (2005)'s premise to undermine the political effects of slacktivism, saying that "slacktivism is the ideal type of activism for a lazy generation."[7] However, in the exact same piece he lays out what has become one of the key counter-arguments to his "clicktivism" critique: "Given the media's fixation on all things digital — from blogging to

[7]Another known journalists that aligns with this argument is Malcom Gladwell. See for example his "Small Change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted" piece in *The New Yorker*: October 4, 2010 Issue.

social networking to Twitter — every click of your mouse is almost guaranteed to receive immediate media attention, as long as it's geared towards the noble causes." Literature on opinion formation and policy processes tells us that public and media attention precede policy change (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Page and Shapiro, 1992; Kingdon, 1984; Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). Hence, although Morozov (2009) discards contributing to public and media attention as a meaningful form of participation, we should be inclined to think the opposite.

In the last few years this pessimistic "slacktivism" argument has been gradually loosing support (Vie, 2018). The success of digitally-enabled mass protest such as the ones that I already mentioned (the Arab Spring, the *Indignados* movement, and Occupy Wall Street), and hundreds of others such as the Gezi Park protest, Taiwan Umbrella movement, etc. have made it clear that successful collective actions with meaninguful political impact can emerge from "weak" forms of digital engagement. In a relatively recent study, Barbera et al. (2015) go as far as showing that in the growth of this type of mass protest, simple retweets by peripheral users (users that do not have many followers and are not well connected to people messaging about the action) play a crucial role, as they allow the word to spread from a well-connected and influential node to another. Examples such as PAH's story in the opening chapter also illustrate of how weak forms social media engagement can help an organization gain momentum, reach new audiences, set media and political agendas, and achieve some key organization goals such as reaching the required number of signatures to introduce a legislative proposal to the Spanish Parliament.

In this line, practitioners working for civil society groups assert that social media technologies indeed help them to engage the public and achieve their goals. In a 2012 study, Obar et al. (2011) interviewed 169 representatives from 53 advocacy organization in the United States about their social media usage. At the time, about 80% of small organizations (1-5 employees) and 100% of medium (5-20 people) and large organizations (employing more than 20 people) were already present on Twitter and Facebook. About 70% of them reported using the two platforms to communicate every day. When asked about what social media technologies were useful for, they highlighted three main characteristics. First, most of them

pointed out that social media helped them in their outreach efforts by raising awareness, gaining exposure, and reaching new audiences. They also asserted that networked technologies allowed them to more easily organize and implement collective actions, since they were able to react faster to sudden and immediate events and to send call-for-action messages to their immediate and also broader audiences (e.g., followers-of-followers), without the need of media coverage. Finally, these practitioners highlighted that social media was an incredible tool for getting immediate feedback on organization frames, campaigns, and actions, thus creating new opportunities to connect with members and supporters and to tailor their actions so they more easily speak to their audience.

In interviews with civil society organizations that I conducted in Brussels in July 2017, these three advantages, as well as others, were mentioned. A communication officer of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) highlighted two other ways in which social media helps them achieve their goals. First, it facilitates reaching out to mainstream media. He described how in recent years the number of journalists attending the organization's press conferences was much smaller than it used to be. Mainstream media coverage, though, is still a great tool to reach large audiences and set political agendas; so if journalists do not come to you, you have to go to them. A lot of journalists and media companies follow the organization on social media, and they often get in touch as a result of a new social media campaign they saw online.

The ETUC representative also mentioned that social media helps them build stronger partnerships and networks with other organizations. Building lobbying coalitions is one of the most likely ways to influence policy (Klüver, 2013), and ETUC has always partnered with others in order to advance common policy ideas. The officer mentioned "The Europe we want" campaign—a coalition with hundreds of organizations such as Green10 (confederation of the top environmental NGOs) and ActionAid—as an example. In the past, coalition campaigns would be truly salient only during the day of the presentation, and members and supporters of one organization would barely engage with the others. Social media helps make these coalitions more salient. The organizations involved can send frequent messages

together, and it is much easier for followers of each organization to check out the work of the other groups and to start engaging with them as well.

However, in order for civil society organizations to take full advantage of what social media has to offer, they need to find ways to engage the public. They need to have as many followers as possible, and their messages need to be shared not only by their immediate supporters but also by those who follow their supporters. We still know little about whether and how civil society organizations can get social media users to engage with them and their messages online.

2.10 The Open Question

In the last two decades there has been a substantive amount of work on the extent to which digital technologies have shaped collective action generally and advocacy organizations in particular. This work has mainly focused on three distinctive areas. A large body of literature studies changes in collective action *without* organizations: are protest and social movements more likely to emerge in the current digital environment than, let's say, fifty years ago? And if so, why? (Howard and Hussain, 2013; Castells, 2015) A second body of literature studies collective action *within* organizations but with a particular focus on organizational changes (Karpf, 2012; Chadwick, 2011; Bimber et al., 2012; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013): have new types of advocacy organizations emerged as a result of the new media environment? If so, what do they look like? And some other work studies digital media adoption by advocacy organizations: do interest groups use digital media platforms to communicate their message and engage others? If so, which ones and how? (Obar et al., 2011; van der Graaf et al., 2016; Vromen, 2017).

Thanks to all this research we have learned a great deal about how digital media has changed collective action and advocacy dynamics in the 21st century. Digital media reduce information and participation costs, solve coordination problems, connect purposes with new forms of engagements, make mass protest more likely to take place, make two-step

information flows relevant again, empower both influential and peripheral nodes, allow for new types of horizontal advocacy organizations to emerge, etc. However, some important questions still remain unanswered.

The main open question driving this study is: under what conditions can formal civil society organizations engage the public in social media? New types of advocacy organizations like *MoveOn* have emerged (Karpf, 2012; Bimber et al., 2012), but most membership groups still have a traditional organizational form (Beyers et al., 2016). Most of these traditional-looking groups make use of social media technologies (Obar et al., 2011), but the reasons why some organizations and messages do a better job at engaging the public than others is still unclear. Better answers to this question are crucial if we are to understand the extent to which networked technologies can help civic society organizations engage the public, strengthen their political voice, and make sure that current representation biases do not widen.

Chapter 3

AFFECTIVE ACTION IN ORGANIZATIONS

In the previous chapter we saw that traditional solutions to the collective action problem have not prevented formal engagement with civil society organizations from declining in recent decades. I argued that this is mainly because we live in an era of individualized politics where people prefer to participate in a more personalized way instead of doing so through formal political groups. I also contended that new digital technologies such as social media facilitate connecting civil society groups's need for public support with people's preference for personalized participation forms, and I argued that they can do so in a meaningful way that helps organizations achieve their intermediate and longer term goals. However, there is significant variation across and within organizations on the levels of social media engagement they achieve. What explains this variation? In other words, which organizations use social media more often, which type of messages achieve higher engagement levels, and what type of frames help organizations the most in spreading their word and recruiting followers online? Little attention has been devoted to answering these questions, and no clear theoretical model yet exists.

In this chapter I turn my attention to the mobilizing and engaging role of emotions to advance a model of Affective Action in Organizations that aims to answer these questions. As discussed in the previous chapter, emotions have always played a role in solving collective action problems. However, in the current era of personalized politics they gain a fresh new relevance. Recent work on online engagement with social movements shows that emotions particularly motivate people to participate in online political discussions (Papacharissi, 2015; Casas and Webb Williams, 2018). I anticipate affective reactions to be important drivers of engagement with civil society organizations in social media as well. Before I describe

the theoretical model in detail, in Section 3.1 I first highlight why emotions matter, and in Section 3.1.3, I explain why they matter for political participation and engagement. I pay special attention to a well-established model in political psychology literature, the Affective Intelligence model (Marcus et al., 2000), which provides us with very specific insights about what emotions can play a particular engaging role.

Then I dedicate the rest of the chapter to present the model of Affective Action in Organizations (Section 3.2). I argue that four main factors should be taken into consideration when studying social media engagement with formal civil society groups. The first set of factors are resources and the extent to which organizations depend on public support to carry out their mission. In Section 3.2.1 I explain that not all civil society organizations aim to bring about social change by influencing policy; rather, some specialize in providing services and receive most of their funding from commercial and government sources. Since they do not depend on public support to carry out their mission or to survive, I do not expect this type of group to be very active on social media.

A second factor is the type of message civil society groups promote on social media at any given time. In Section 3.2.2 I discuss how organizations use social media technologies for a variety of purposes, not only for public engagement. I expect messages not aimed at engaging social media users to not do as well as the ones that intend to do so. Finally, not all messages that aim to engage people evoke emotions or trigger the same affective reactions. In Section 3.2.3 I argue that messages containing emotion-evoking frames are more likely to achieve higher levels of engagement than those that do not, and I build on the affective intelligence model to theorize about what type of emotions are more likely to mobilize the public. Two dispositional system emotions, anger and enthusiasm, and one surveillance system emotion, anxiety, are particularly likely to foster participation. Civil society organizations are interested in engaging current and also new potential social media supporters in order to increase their chances of setting public, media, and political agendas, and to influence policy. I argue that messages evoking these three emotions will do a better job of engaging current and also new potential supporters.

3.1 Why emotions matter

There are two main reasons for why emotions are the main focus of this project. The first reason is that emotion-evoking information is more likely to attract people's attention and to make people think about and act on issues. The second reason is that emotion-evoking frames are more likely to connect with the current individualized public, since they look and feel more personal than any other type of organizational frames.

3.1.1 Affective information captures our attention and makes us more likely to think about and act on issues

We live in an era of "information overload" (Bawden and Robinson, 2009) where people are exposed to more information than ever before in human history. Moreover, research shows that, on average, people pay very little attention to politics (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002) and also that people lack clear policy positions on most political issues (ConversePhilip, 2006). When and how do people decide to pay attention to and think about politics then? And what makes them more likely to take action?

In *Affective Intelligence*, Marcus et al. (2000) advanced a novel, somewhat controversial, but particularly powerful and useful explanation: emotions interact with cognition to often be the origin of rational thinking and behavior. Traditionally, Western thought has viewed emotions and rationality as contradictory (Izard, 1971); emotions get in the way of rational thinking. In order to make decisions that are in our best interest, we need to leave emotions aside.

Recent research, however, contradicts this notion and argues that when exposed to new information, people feel first and think second (Zajonc, 1980). In the absence of affective reactions, people rely on their habits and do not pay much attention to or think much about politics. However, emotion-evoking information draws our attention to political issues we

believe are important, as well as to issues we did not deem relevant in the past. Our emotion system, or systems as I will discuss next, alert us about the existence of new information on any given issue, and it gets us thinking about how the new information affects us and whether we should do something about it. But how does this process work? What emotions draw our attention and make us more likely to engage with a political issue, action, or event?

3.1.2 A Dual Dispositional and Surveillance Affective System

Past studies used to portray and map emotional reactions onto a single affective positive-negative dimension.[1] However, later studies by scholars such as Abelson et al. (1982) noticed that a set of theoretically independent emotions could be distinguished within that continuum (e.g., hope, pride, simpathy, disgust, anger, and fear). Then, other researchers such as Watson and Tellegen (1985) realized that these discrete emotions could in fact be mapped back onto two dimensions: one involving different levels of enthusiasm and another one involving different levels of anxiety. Recent work by Marcus and colleagues (Marcus et al., 2000) connects this literature with cognitive research to argue that these dual affective systems are connected to two cognitive processes in our brain—the *dispositional* and the *surveillance* systems.

The dispositional system is in charge of governing our habits. It governs how we feel, think, and behave on issues that we deem important. Two key emotions are part of this system: anger and enthusiasm. *Anger* "emerges in situations when people are threatened or find obstacles blocking their path to reward" (Brader and Marcus, 2013, 179), and individuals experience *enthusiasm* "when the system receives positive feedback about a pursuit, namely when rewards appear within reach, are getting closer, or have been attained"(Brader and Marcus, 2013, 175). When people feel angry and enthusiastic about an issue they care about, they are more likely to think and do something about it.

Nevertheless, information on a given issue that evokes emotions related to the disposi-

[1]See Chapter 2 in Marcus et al. (2000) for an overview.

tional system can have little effect on people who do not particularly care about the topic. For example, if equal access to housing is not a priority for a group of people, a message communicating that a political actor is blocking a policy change related to the issue (campaign with high anger-evoking potential) or a message communicating that a policy change can be achieved (high enthusiasm-evoking potential) will not have much of an effect on them. Being concerned about equal access to housing is not part of their core beliefs or habits.

The surveillance system is in charge of scanning the environment for potential threats. Anxiety (or fear)[2] is in charge of this emotional dimension, and it often triggers a reflective process capable of mobilizing those who care about an issue as well as those who did not previously care much about the topic. It particularly increases the likelihood that people will reconsider their beliefs, seek further information, and mobilize on new issues. Building on the previous example, even though a group of people did not see equal access to housing as a priority, a campaign designed to evoke anxiety is likely to get their attention, and to get them thinking and acting on the issue.

3.1.3 The Dispositional and Surveillance System in Action

There is substantive evidence showing the effect of dispositional and surveillance emotions on political engagement. Initial studies particularly focused on the role of enthusiasm and anxiety in shaping electoral behavior. In *Affective Intelligence*, Marcus et al. (2000) used survey data from the the American National Election Study (ANES) to study attitudes and behavior during presidential campaigns in the United States from 1980 to 1996. Three main findings stood out. First, after controlling for numerous characteristics that are known to predict political behavior, the authors found that people feeling enthusiastic and anxious about the candidates were more likely to pay attention to the campaign in that they cared more about who won, and they read newspapers and magazines more often. Second, they

[2]Although fear and anxiety can be theoretically distinguished, empirical evidence show that they are highly correlated and difficult to distinguish in practice (Marcus et al., 2017). For this reason in this project I use Valentino et al. (2011) approach and treat fear and anxiety interchangeably.

found that people feeling these emotions were also more likely to engage in political actions during the campaign: they tried to convince others how to vote, attended rallies, and worked on the campaign at higher rates than those feeling less enthusiastic and anxious. Finally, they found that people feeling anxious were more likely to learn about new campaign dimensions, uncovering the potential of fear for drawing attention to and action on new issues.

Later work by Brader (2005) on the effects of political advertising during campaigns also showed how enthusiasm increased people's likelihood to act on their preexisting beliefs, while anxiety made them more likely to reconsider their habits and to adopt new interests and behavior. In an experimental setting, he found that people exposed to a political video-ad generating enthusiasm about a set of issues were more likely to vote for their party's candidate and less likely to sponsor the candidate from the other party. However, people exposed to a video-ad evoking anxiety on the same issues were more likely to reconsider their beliefs and to sponsor the candidate of the other party.

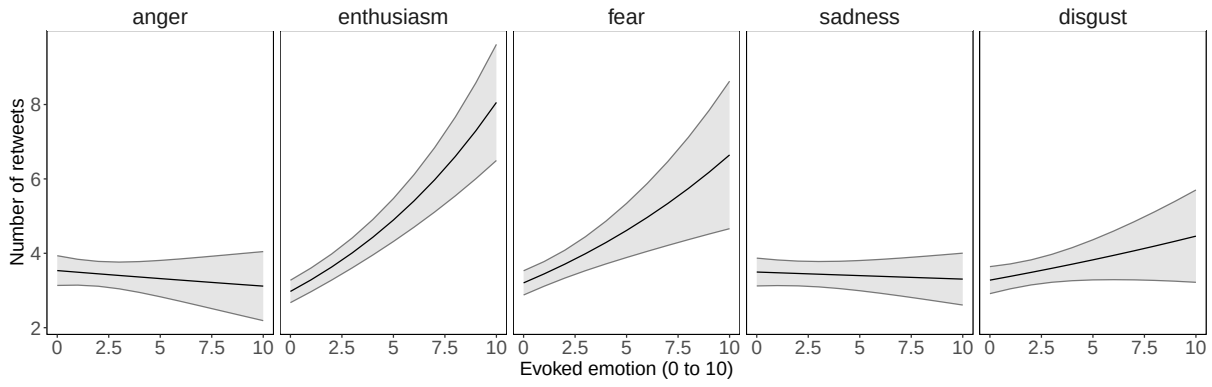
Finally, a subsequent study by Valentino et al. (2011) revealed the engaging power of anger, the other dispositional emotion of interest besides enthusiasm. In a study of the effect of resources and emotions on political engagement, they used both experiment and survey data and found that people feeling angry during campaigns were more likely to participate in them. They found an effect not only for "cheap" (e.g., trying to convince others what to vote) but also for "costly" forms of participation, such as attending a rally and donating money.

3.1.4 How Dispositional and Surveillance Emotions Mobilize Individualized Publics in Social Media

Recent qualitative and quantitative studies show the potential of dispositional and surveillance emotions to engage social media users with political causes. In *Affective Publics*, Papacharissi (2015) conducts a qualitative analysis of Twitter messages related to mass protests such as the Arab Spring and the Spanish *Indignados*. She does not focus on the mobilizing role of specific emotions. Rather, she aims to develop a better understanding

of what motivates people to engage with protest movements on social media more broadly. She argues that people today belong to fewer communities, but a need for belongingness still exists. Social media allow people to feel and show affection to others and to political causes, thus helping them fill this belongingness gap. Using qualitative analysis she shows that affective and emotional messages often dominate "connective" actions that take place on social media.

Figure 3.1: Images evoking dispositional and surveillance system emotions contributed to increased attention to a Black Lives Matter protest on social media.



In some of my previous work on social media engagement with protest movements, I found emotion-evoking information to have an important mobilizing effect Casas and Webb Williams (2018). In particular, I found images evoking a dispositional system emotion (enthusiasm) and a surveillance system emotion (fear-anxiety) to increase the attention to a Black Lives Matter protest (#ShutdownA14, which took place on April 2015) on Twitter. Figure 3.1 shows some results from the study. After controlling for numerous covariates, messages with images labeled as evoking the maximum enthusiasm score were predicted to be shared more than twice as much as messages with images evoking no enthusiasm (nine *versus* three retweets on average). The effect was also very large for images evoking anxiety-fear (although of a slightly smaller magnitude than enthusiasm). In this case, images evoking anger did not seem to have much of an effect on protest mobilization online.

Overall, Papacharissi (2015)'s work and these results from my own research (Casas and Webb Williams, 2018) illustrate the potential that emotion-evoking information has for engaging the currently individualized public with political causes via social media. But are all civil society organizations equally likely to use social media for public engagement? Do they also use social media for other purposes? What type of messages from formal civil society groups are more likely to evoke emotions? And do these emotion-evoking messages from formal groups actually achieve higher engagement levels? In the next section I lay out a model of affective action in organizations that aims to answer these questions.

3.2 A Model of Affective Action in Organizations

I present here a three-step model portraying social media engagement with civil society organizations as a function of their resources and public dependence (how much they rely on support from individuals to carry out their mission), the types of messages they promote, and the emotions these messages evoke.

3.2.1 Model Part I: Resources and Public Dependence

A first relevant consideration to take into account is that not all civil society groups have the same amount of resources. Research indicates that those organizations with more resources are able to engage with a larger number of activities and campaigns Dur and Mateo (2016). Hence, I expect civil society organizations with a larger budget and a larger number of full-time employees to be able to dedicate more people to develop and implement their communication strategy, and therefore to be more active on social media.

Moreover, another relevant consideration is that not all civil society groups aim to bring social change by influencing policy; some want to promote change by simply providing services (Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004; Lang, 2013). Labor unions and citizen groups aiming to influence policy often depend on the support of individuals to signal to policymakers that substantive support for their policy ideas exists, thus increasing their bargaining and polit-

ical power. The *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH) is a good example. This Spanish organization fighting to stop eviction processes and promote more equal access to housing has strongly relied on the support of individuals to stop numerous evictions and to push their ideas into party platforms and policy proposals.

However, service-oriented organizations are not particularly interested in promoting policy change. They receive most of their funding from commercial services they offer to other groups and to public agencies, so they do not rely on the support of the public to carry out their mission. For this reason I argue that they have little reason to participate in public campaigning or to promote engagement via social media, especially in situations when they have to establish clear priorities. I expect service-oriented organizations with scarce resources to not use social media very often.

Since the 1990s, the European Union has promoted the creation of service organizations as a way to externalize the provision of social goods at the national and European level (Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004). The rapid growth of the welfare state in European countries since the 1950s, plus the growth of the powers and programs of the European Union since its creation, required the fast development of an extended service network. Developing bureaucracies of any magnitude is costly and time consuming, so both member states and the European Union started looking at civil society organization as alternative service providers. Eikenberry and Kluver (2004), for example, highlight that today commercial services represent a large proportion of civil society groups' income.

As an example, a 2014 report by the European Commission on "*EU financing for NGOs in the area of home affairs, security, and migration*" clearly presents the reasoning for using civil society groups as service providers.

> ***Contributing to project management:*** *The specific expertise that NGOs can contribute to managing, monitoring and evaluating projects financed by the EU. The contribution of NGOs is particularly important in tackling social exclusion and discrimination, protecting the natural environment, and the provision of humanitarian and development aid. The expertise and dedication of NGO staff and their willingness to work under difficult operational conditions mean that NGOs are vital partners for the Commission both within the EU and beyond.*

3.2.2 Model Part II: Message Type

Civil society organizations use public campaigns generally, and social media in particular, for multiple purposes besides engaging the public with the goals and mission of the organization (Dur and Mateo, 2016). For example, sometimes they use it for transparency and to report about meetings and the daily life of the organization. Since the objective of these other types of messages are not to spread the organization claims or to reach and engage new potential supporters, I do not expect them to have emotion-evoking frames very often or to achieve high engagement levels.

Lovejoy and Saxton (2012), for example, argue that most advocacy organizations use their public communications with a three-fold objective in mind: providing information, building community, and mobilizing for action. In a later work, Guo and Saxton (2014) study the social media communications of 188 American non-profit organizations and find that they indeed use their networked communications for these three different purposes. They analyze a random sample of tweets sent by these groups to find that about 70% of the messages intended to provide information, about 20% intended to build a stronger community, and about 10% called people into action.

In another study of the social media communications of advocacy groups, Obar et al. (2011) also found that civil society groups used their networked technologies for similar purposes, although they found the mobilizing purpose to be more prevalent than in Guo and Saxton (2014)'s study. In interviews with managers and communication officers of 53 advocacy groups, they learned that these organizations used social media for transparency

and good governance (similar to Lovejoy and Saxton (2012)'s information goal), for civic engagement (Lovejoy and Saxton (2012)'s community purpose), and for collective action (call people into action). Managers and communication offices put special emphasis on the two latter objectives.

I build on Lovejoy and Saxton (2012), Obar et al. (2011), and Guo and Saxton (2014) classifications (and on some preliminary analysis of the data I collected for this project) to distinguish between three types of purposes for which organizations use social media: (1) inform about the organization's routine (*Routine Messages*), (2) inform and promote the organization's political views (*Political Messages*), and (3) call people into action (*Action Messages*). The first type of message (routine messages) is intended to improve transparency and does not aim to be broadly distributed. Because of its reporting and one-way nature, I do not expect this type of message to use emotion-evoking frames often or to achieve high levels of engagement.

The other two types of messages (political and action messages) intend to engage the public in a more clear way. They are crucial for the organization to spread their policy views and goals, frame political debates, set agendas, and eventually influence policy. I assume that organizations are somehow aware of the engaging role of emotion-evoking information,[3] and I expect these types of messages to be the ones that use emotional appeals the most, as well as to be the ones that achieve the highest engagement levels. But which type of emotional appeals are more likely to the public?

3.2.3 Model Part III: Affective Engagement

In this third part of the model, I build on the affective intelligence theory (Marcus et al., 2000), and the dispositional and surveillance system distinction introduced earlier in the chapter. I argue that, conditional on some organizations being more likely than others to

[3] In interviews with the communication officers of some civil society organizations conducted in Brussels in June 2017, several interviewees knowledge that they tried to use emotion-evoking frames in out-reach messages.

use social media for public engagement and on some types of messages being more likely than others to include emotional appeals, messages evoking enthusiasm, anger (dispositional system emotions), and anxiety (surveillance system emotion) are likely to achieve higher engagement levels.

Emotions are useful to appeal to different constituencies. Organizations need to succeed at engaging two types of audiences in order to use social media for public engagement and to promote their political views and actions. They first need to succeed at engaging their *Current Supporters* (current followers). They are the ones exposed to the organization's messages in the first place, and they act as goal keepers; they need to be engaged in order for the civil society group to reach larger audiences. Then, civil society groups are interested in engaging *Potential Supporters*, users who do not follow (at least yet) the organization but whose support is necessary in order to spread the organization's views and claims broadly.

However, emotions that appeal to current supporters may not appeal to potential supporters. As discussed earlier, dispositional emotions such as enthusiasm and anger have a particular effect on the behavior of those who care about an issue, but they may influence very little those who do not deem the topic relevant. For this reason I also predict messages evoking anxiety, they key emotion related to the surveillance system, to also do particularly well at engaging current and potential supporters.

Chapter 4

DATA AND METHODS

On May 25th, 2018, the *General Data Protection Regulation* (GDPR, Regulation (EU) 2016/679) came into effect. This new directive protects European citizens' right to privacy by establishing new rules on how companies can store, transfer, and process private data from customers. The EU legislation represents a big win for civil society organizations, such as *European Digital Rights* and *Access Now*, which fight for the protection of individual rights to privacy.

Since the initiative was launched in 2011, big corporations and foreign governments have strongly opposed it.[1] From an extensive political science literature, we know that a policy change is unlikely when business and powerful public actors are opposed to a legislative reform (Baumgartner et al., 2008; Schlozman et al., 2012; Gilens, 2012). Nevertheless, the European DGPR directive is a good example of how sometimes membership organizations can succeed at imposing their views over the interests of more powerful business and public actors.

The legislative success of civil society groups typically goes hand in hand with a change in public opinion (Baumgartner et al., 2008, 2009). In order to succeed, these groups need to find a way to engage and shape the public's perceptions on issues. In the last decade, scholars have debated about the extent to which new digital technologies such as social media can help civil society groups solve the harder collective action challenges they face (Bimber et al., 2012; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013; van der Graaf et al., 2016) in order to increase their policy influence and strengthen democratic pluralism. However, we still do not know

[1] EDRi, "US lobbying against draft Data Protection Regulation," (22 December 2011), accessed on April 29th 2018: https://edri.org/us-dpr/

much about which type of civil society organizations turn to social media to engage citizens and shape public opinion or about which type of frames and strategies help them engage online audiences the most. Are all civil society groups equally likely to be active on social media? If not, what explains the variation in social media usage? Do all of them succeed at engaging social media followers? If not, why?

4.1 The Theoretical Claims to Test

I advance a theory of Affective Action in Organizations that aims to answer these currently unresolved questions. I focus on the mobilizing role of emotions to portray social media engagement with formal civil society organizations as a function of these organizations' public dependence and resources, the types of messages they promote, and the use of emotion-evoking frames in their communications.

The theory makes three main claims. First, organization resources and public dependence predict social media usage. Organizations with more resources can more easily maintain an online brand and strategy, and I expect them to be more active on social media than resource-scarce groups. However, I also expect differences among resource-scarce organizations, as those that depend on the support of individuals (economically and politically) to carry out their mission have a stronger incentive to prioritize their social media communications. Compared to more service-oriented groups with a similar budget, I expect them to use social media more often.

Second, I argue that messages aiming to engage and mobilize users (what I call Political and Action messages) are more likely to contain emotion-evoking frames. I assume that organizations are somewhat aware of the mobilizing role of emotions and that they are more likely to use emotion-evoking frames in messages aiming to engage the public rather than simply communicate to the public about the day-to-day of the organizations (what I call Routine messages).

The final prediction of the model is that those messages evoking enthusiasm, anger, and

anxiety—emotions known for their mobilizing potential (Marcus et al., 2000; Brader, 2005; Valentino et al., 2011))—are more likely to achieve higher engagement levels. This higher engagement means these messages will be shared more often by current and potential supporters and will help organizations recruit new supporters.

4.2 Testing the Validity of the Claims: Three Data Challenges

In setting out to test these theoretical claims, I face three main challenges: to define a group of civil society organizations to study; to collect data about their social media activity and engagement rates; and finally, to define a method capable of evaluating the extent to which messages from these organization evoke enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety to viewers.

The focus of the empirical analysis is on how civil society organizations advocating in the European Union engage online users on the social media platform Twitter. As the opening motivating examples illustrate, the European Union has become a powerful legislative body capable of influencing a wide range of national policies and practices (Majone, 2002). As a result, the number of interest organizations in the European capital has grown substantially in recent decades (Klüver, 2013), making the European Union a relevant context in which to study how formal civil society groups can use social media to engage citizens and to potentially offset existing representation biases.

I draw on two main data sources to address the data challenges I face. The first is data from the Comparative Interest Group (CIG) Survey (Beyers et al., 2016), a survey conducted in 2015 with 2,038 advocacy organizations that actively lobby European Union institutions. The second is data from the social media platform Twitter.

In Section 4.3 I use both data sources to select a group of 142 organizations to study. These are groups that completed the CIG survey, represent the interests of individuals (as opposed to business or public agencies' interests), have a Twitter account, tweet in English, and have publicly accessible Twitter data. In Section 4.4 I use measures from this survey to build a Public Dependence variable and Resource variable to capture the key explanatory

Table 4.1: Overview of the Main Variables of the Study

Variable	**Description**	**Source**	**Type**
Claim 1: Organization Resources and Public Dependence predict Social Media Usage (Units = Organizations)			
(x) Public Dependence	% annual budget from individuals	CIG	Continuous {0,1}
(x) Resources (Budget)	size of the annual budget	CIG	Categorical
(x) Resources (FTE)	number of full time employees	CIG	Discrete
(y) Social Media Usage (1)	avg. daily original tweets	Twitter	Continuous
(y) Social Media Usage (2)	avg. daily tweets	Twitter	Continuous
Claim 2: Message Type predicts the presence of Emotion-Evoking Frames (Units = Messages)			
(x) Routine Message	message about day-to-day routine	Twitter-MT	Dichotomous
(x) Political Message	message promoting views of organization	Twitter-MT	Dichotomous
(x) Action Message	message calling people to action	Twitter-MT	Dichotomous
(y) Enthusiasm	how much enthusiasm message evokes	Twitter-MT	Continuous {0,5}
(y) Anger	how much anger message evokes	Twitter-MT	Continuous {0,5}
(y) Anxiety	how much anxiety message evokes	Twitter-MT	Continuous {0,5}
Claim 3: Emotion-Evoking frames predict Social Media Engagement (Units = Messages)			
(x) Enthusiasm	how much enthusiasm message evokes	Twitter-MT	Continuous {0,5}
(x) Anger	how much anger message evokes	Twitter-MT	Continuous {0,5}
(x) Anxiety	how much anxiety message evokes	Twitter-MT	Continuous {0,5}
(y) Follower Gain-Loss	% followers gained lost after a message	Twitter	Continuous
(y) Retweets (RTs)	number of times a message is retweeted	Twitter	Discrete
(y) RTs (Current Supporters)	number of retweets by followers	Twitter	Discrete
(y) RTs (Potential Supporters)	number of retweets by non-followers	Twitter	Discrete
(y) Retweeters Avg. Followers	avg. followers of message retweeters	Twitter	Continuous

dimensions of the first theoretical claim.

Then, in Section 4.5 I move to discuss how I use Twitter data to build measures capturing other crucial variables of the Affective Action in Organizations model. I use the messages these groups sent from March 8, 2017 through February 16, 2018 (40,124 original tweets and 24,266 retweets), information about who follows them at each point in time, information

about how much users engaged with each of their messages, and data about the number of followers of users sharing their messages. I use these data to build a set of variables capturing Social Media Usage (average daily original tweets and average daily tweets), the outcome of interest of the first claim, and Social Media Engagement (number of retweets, retweets by current supporters, retweets by potential supporters, followers gain-loss, and retweeters' average number of followers), the outcome of interest of the third claim.

Finally, in Section 4.6 I use crowdsourcing services (Mechanical Turk) to build variables capturing, for a random sample of 7,000 tweets, the types of messages (Routine, Political, and Action) these organizations promote—the outcome of interest of the second claim—as well as how much Enthusiasm, Anger, and Anxiety their tweets generate, which I argue are key predictors of social media engagement.

Overall, these different variables facilitate a detailed exploration of how formal civil society groups advocating in Brussels communicate and engage the public on Twitter. With these data, I seek to address several questions. Are those organizations with more resources and higher public dependence more active on the social media platform? Do they send original messages or retweets? What explains differences in tweet-to-retweet ratios? Are resources related to engagement? And if resources are not the full picture, what else can explain why some organizations and messages do a better job at engaging the public? Are the types of messages, and the emotions they evoke, partially the cause?

Table 4.1 provides an overview of the measures I construct and explore in this chapter. The *variable* column provides the name of the variable as well as information about whether it is a predictor (x) or an outcome of interest (y). The *description* field provides a brief definition of the variable. The *source* column indicates whether I use data from the CIG survey, Twitter, or Twitter plus Mechanical Turk labels to build that measure. Finally, the last column describes the variable type.

4.3 The CIG Survey: Defining the Population of Interest

A first step to build a research design that can facilitate testing the main claims of the Affective Action model, is to define a list of all (or at least most or the most relevant) civil society organizations advocating in Brussels. A recent dataset collected by the InterEuro research team makes this task relatively easy. These academics have drawn from different existing sources of active advocacy organizations, such as the Transparency Register, the OECKL dataset,[2] and the Leiden database[3] to compile a comprehensive list of 2,038 organizations that "show at least a minimal degree of interests in EU policymaking processes" and that represent "a certain constituency, which could be a human constituency (implying a membership-structure) or a nonhuman constituency (e.g., environment, animals)."[4]

After compiling this comprehensive list, the researchers conducted a survey with these organizations between March and July 2015. Organizations were asked about a wide range of background, membership, and organizational characteristics as well as questions regarding their strategies, tactics and lobbying success. In later sections I explain how I use this data to build measures capturing the key characteristics of the theoretical model. Here, however, I focus on describing how I use this data to define the organizations I study.

The response rate for the survey was around 36%, which means that 738 of 2,038 organizations actually completed the survey. I treat these 738 organizations as the population of active interest groups in Brussels. Second, given that the interest of this project is on civil society groups that represent citizens, I use information in the CIG survey to exclude those groups that represent some corporation or firm and some local or regional government, which reduces the number of organizations to 396.[5] Finally, 228 of these groups have a Twitter account, and 142 of them tweet in English and have publicly accessible Twitter data through

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[2] A commercial directory of EU level institutions and organizations

[3] Another list of advocacy organizations compiled by the InterEuro group.

[4] See a description of the data sampling process in the following link (last time accessed in March 16, 2018)

[5] I removed those observations that answered values higher than 1 in questions `q04_02` and `q04_02`

Table 4.2: A summary of the selection of the civil society organizations under study

	N
Organizations that received the CIG survey	2,038
... and completed the survey	738
... and only represent citizens	396
... and have a Twitter account	228
... and message in English and their Twitter data is publicly accessible	142

Twitter's REST API. I focus my analysis on these 142 organizations.

Table 4.2 shows a summary of the criteria employed in the selection of the sample. A potential concern is that these 142 organizations are not representative of the overall population of civil society organizations advocating in Brussels, as four of these selection criteria are driven by data constraints instead of theoretically-motivated decisions. However, I do not have strong reasons to believe that these constraints are systematically biasing the sample under study.

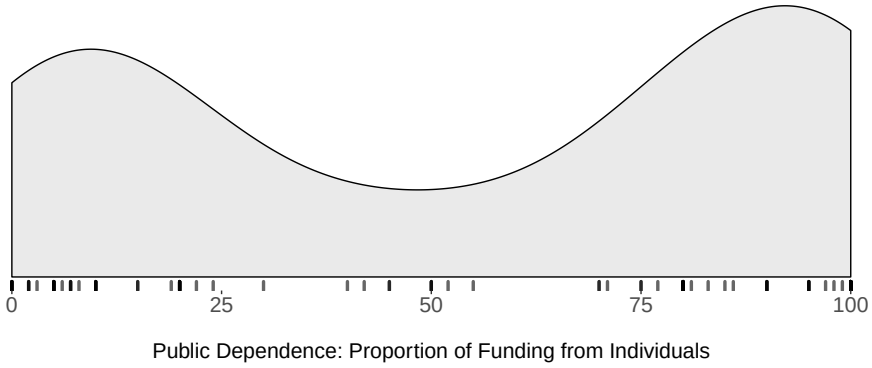
First, organizations that did not complete the survey are likely to be *insider* groups representing business organizations, which are not the focus of the analysis. Second, organizations with no Twitter account are on the left side of the Social Media Usage distribution I aim to capture in the first claim of the theory. By cutting them out, I may be overestimating how active these organizations generally are on social media (estimating a higher intercept, if one thinks in statistical terms), but that does not mean I cannot adequately estimate the effect the covariates of interest (Public Dependence and Resources) have on the outcome (Social Media Usage). Then, I believe the main difference between organizations messaging in English *versus* other languages is that the former focus on influencing European politics while the latter are more focused on influencing national politics. Only focusing on English-tweeting organizations is not an important drawback because the main focus of the empirical

analysis is to have a better understanding of the advocacy system in the European Union. Finally, I believe that the most professional organizations are the ones that are more likely to not share their data on Twitter. I am not particularly concerned about missing some of them because this type of organization is still represented in the 142-group sample, as some groups have a large budget and numerous employees.

4.4 The CIG Survey: Building Public Dependence and Resource Measures

Social media can help civil society organizations address the engagement problem they face, thus potentially strengthening their voice in the policy making process and improving democratic pluralism by off-setting existing representation biases. However, are all organizations equally active on social media? If not, what explains these differences in social media usage? The first claim of the theory of Affective Action in Organizations is that group resources and public dependence predict social media usage. How can one measure these two predictive dimensions? Data from the CIG survey are particularly useful.

Figure 4.1: An estimate of the proportion of funding that comes from individuals (n = 101).



First, one can measure public dependence by assessing how much organizations depend on resources coming from individuals. Two pieces of information are of particular interest:

membership subscriptions and donations from individuals.[6] Ideally, to have a sense of the proportion of the annual budget that comes from individual contributions, one would sum up these two quantities. However, both survey answers have numerous missing values, as organizations are often reticent to share financial information, and combining them would mean reducing the sample of interest for which we can use this merged variable to only 88 organizations.

Instead, I measure public dependence by taking the maximum value of these two quantities, which facilitates building a public dependence variable for 101 of the 142 organizations. How is this variable distributed? What proportion of the 142 organizations under study actually depend on the support of individuals to achieve their goals?

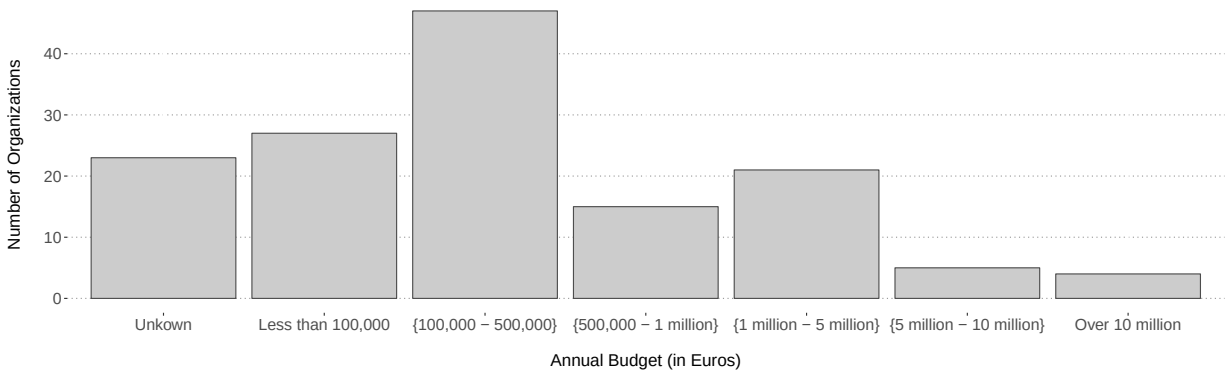
Figure 4.1 shows a distribution of this public dependence variable. The distribution is of a bimodal nature, indicating that about half of the civil society groups under study do not depend much on funding from individuals to carry out their mission (40% have a public dependence value smaller than 40%) while the other half completely depends on it (40% have a value higher than 80%), with few organizations in the middle (20% of the groups have a medium public dependence value between 40 and 80%). This significant variation should facilitate testing hypotheses about the extent to which public dependence is actually related to social media usage.

The next question is how can we measure the resources organizations have? The literature studying interest organizations often uses two different measures: the size of the annual budget and the number of full time employees organizations have (Eising, 2007; Klüver, 2012). Not surprisingly, the CIG survey contains information about these two resource dimensions. How are they distributed? Does the 142-group sample include resource-scarce as well as wealthier organizations?

Figure 4.2 illustrates that half of the 142 groups have a small or medium size budget (52% of the groups have an annual budget smaller than 100,000 euros or between 100,000

[6] These are questions/answers `q09_01` and `q09_02` of the CIG survey

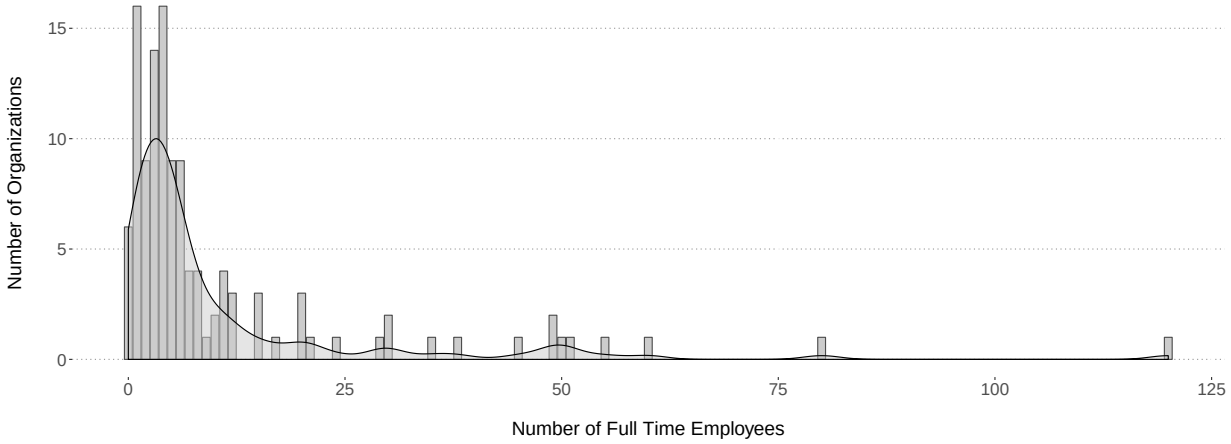
Figure 4.2: Annual Budget of the 142 Organizations under Analysis



and 500,000 euros) while the other half have a much larger amount of resources (48% of them have an annual budget of half a million or more). The figure also shows a general distribution of this six-class categorical variable, which indicates whether organizations have a budget of: (1) less than 100,000€, (2) between 100,000 and 500,000, (3) between 500,000 and 1 million, (4) between 1 million and 5 million, (5) between 5 million and 10 million, and (6) more than 10 million euros. Note in the far left bar that 23 organizations did not provide information about the size of their budget. Overall, as occurred with the public dependence variable, there is also a significant variation in the amount of resources these groups have, which can also facilitate testing whether resources have an effect on social media usage and engagement.

Does our conception of how resourceful these 142 groups are change when we explore the number of employees they have instead of their annual budget? Not really. Figure 4.3 indicates that some of the groups are of a small or medium size (71% of them have less than 20 full-time employees) but that a substantive number of groups are much larger. Notice for example a group of six organizations that have between 40 and 60 employees, and some organizations have even more. The organization with the highest number of employees has about 640, which had to be excluded from Figure 4.3 in order to appreciate the variation on

Figure 4.3: Number of Full Time Employees of the Organizations under Analysis



the left side of the distribution.[7]

Now that we have a sense of the resources these 142 groups have, as well as how much they depend on the support of individuals to achieve their goals, three questions remain. Which ones are more active on social media? Is social media usage related to their resources and public dependence? Which ones are more successful at engaging social media users, and why?

4.5 Twitter Data: Social Media Usage and Engagement

4.5.1 Messages

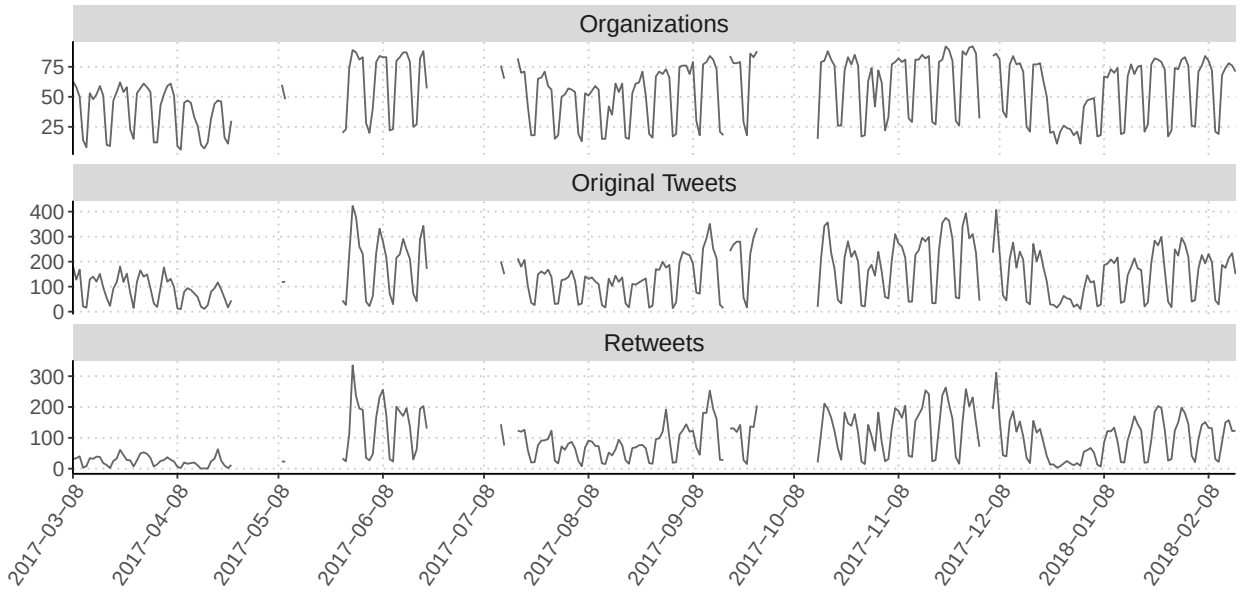
These 142 organizations sent 64,389 messages (40,123 original tweets and 24,266 retweets) between March 8, 2017 and February 16, 2018. Figure 4.4 provides an initial picture of how active these groups are on social media.[8] Three points are worth highlighting. The first one

[7]Figure 4.3 does not include values for 21 of the 142 organizations because they did not answer this specific question of the CIG survey

[8]There were two issues related to the data collection process that are important to notice. The first one is that for technical reasons unrelated to the explanatory and outcome variables of the study, the data collection process had to be interrupted on three occasions. See three periods of missing values in the time series in Figure 4.4. Another issue is that during the period before the first interruption (from February to

is that not all organizations tweet every day. On average,only 75 organizations (about 50% of the 142) send at least one tweet on any given weekday (the lower points in the time series represent weekend activity). However, a second element worth noting is that for the ones that do tweet, they tend to send more than one original tweet or retweet; in aggregate, we see these organizations sending on average about 200 original tweets and 150 retweets per day on weekdays. This initially indicates that some organizations are more active than others, illustrating the type of variance the first theoretical claim aims to capture. Finally, one last point worth mentioning is that, in aggregate, organizations send more original tweets than retweets.

Figure 4.4: Messages collected from March 8, 2017 through February 16, 2018



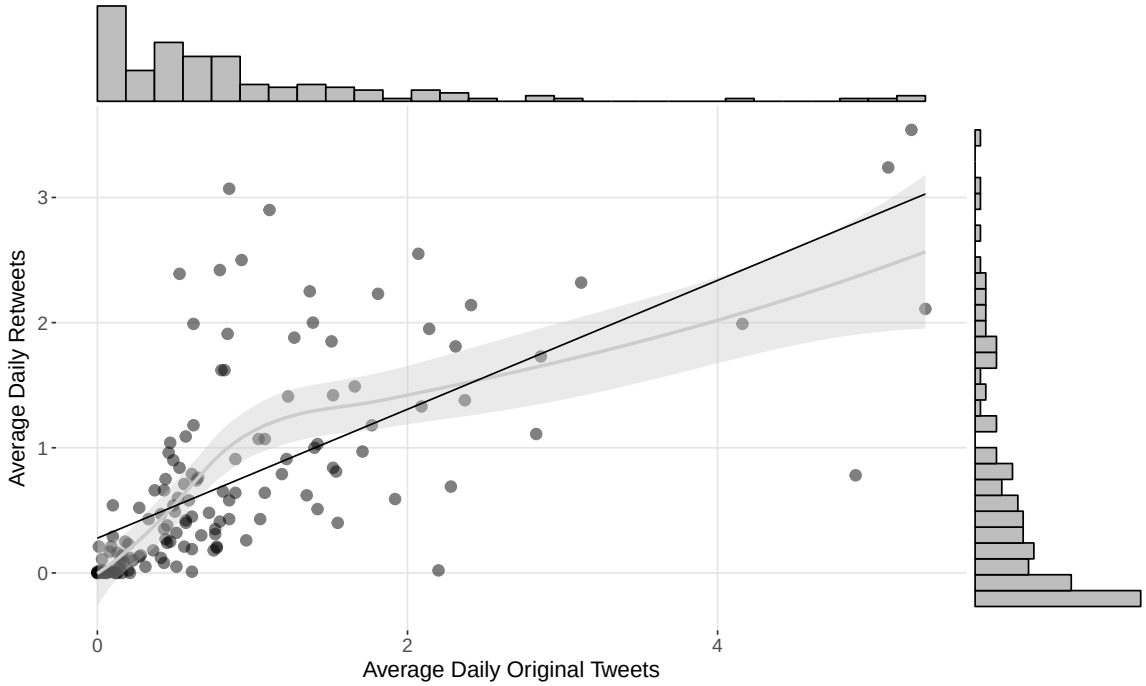
This last point about Figure 4.4 raises a question: how should one measure social media usage? Should we measure it by looking at how often an organization tweets in general, or

May-June 2017) I did not have yet the complete list of 142 Twitter handles. In a first search, I only found 136 of the 142 accounts. In a second more intense search however I found 6 extra accounts and added them into the data collection pipeline. This explains the slightly higher number of messaging organizations and tweets after May-June 2017.

how often it sends original messages or retweets? Does choosing one or the other affect our understanding about which groups are more likely to be active on social media?

Figure 4.5 addresses these questions by exploring the relationship between daily original tweets (x-axis) and daily retweets (y-axis) in more detail (each dot represents one of the 142 organizations). Three points are worth highlighting. First, we again observe significant variation in terms of social media usage. At the bottom left corner we observe a group of organizations that do not tweet very often, less than one tweet and retweet per day (such as JM International, HearNet Connection and Shipbreaking Platform). However, we also observe a significant number of organizations to be much more active (such as European Trade Union Confederation and the Federation of German Consumer Organizations).

Figure 4.5: Average number of daily Original tweets and Retweets by Organization



Second, we see a very high correlation between the number of daily tweets and the number of daily retweets. This would initially suggest that choosing one or the other to measure

social media usage should not have much of an impact on our understanding of how often these organizations communicate. However, the third point worth highlighting is that a closer look at Figure 4.5 reveals that more active organizations also have a slightly higher tweet-to-retweet ratio, as displayed by the logarithmic form of the gray ribbon describing the tweet-retweet local correlations in Figure 4.5 (compared to the straight black line describing the general linear relationship). This raises an important question: does a relationship exist between what I argue are two main social media predictors (Public Dependence and Resources) and this tweet-to-retweet ratio? Can measuring social media usage by looking at tweets or retweets influence the results?

Figure 4.6: Predicted Tweet-to-Retweet Ratio (y) as a function of Public Dependence (x_1) and Resources (x_2): $log(y) = \alpha + x_1 \cdot x_2 + x_3 + \epsilon$

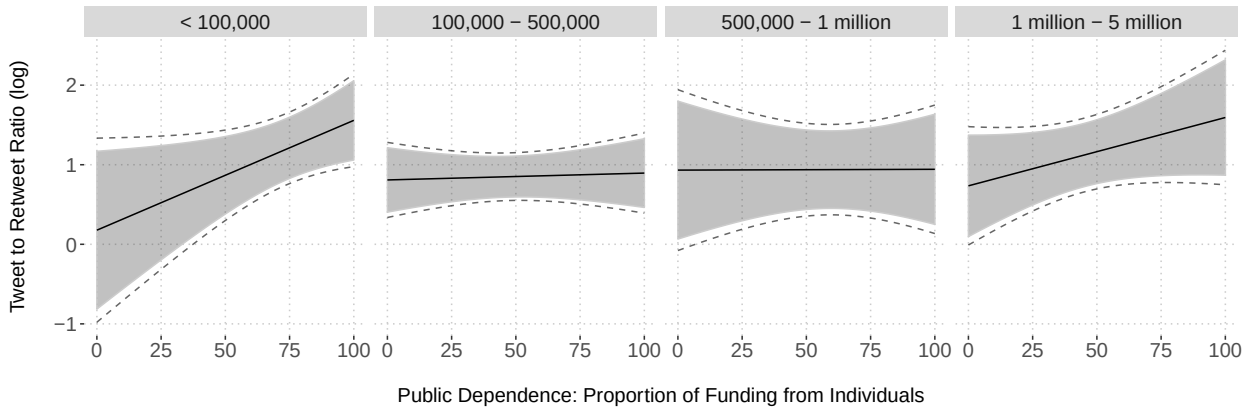


Figure 4.6 shows the output of a linear model predicting logged tweet-to-retweet ratios as a function of Public Dependence and Resources (annual budget). The straight lines show the predicted values for organizations in the four main budget categories and with a public dependence ranging from 0 to 100% (gray and dashed polygons represent 68 and 95% confidence intervals respectively).[9]

We see the average ratio to be very similar across budget categories, and public depen-

[9]The coefficients table for this model is available in Appendix A.

dence does not have a particular effect for resourceful organizations (groups with an annual budget over 100,000 euros). Nevertheless, we do see this tweet-to-retweet ratio to substantially increase as organizations with a smaller budget (< 100,000 euros) become more heavily dependent on the support of individuals. These results do not say anything about how active these organizations are on social media, but they do indicate that resource-scarce organizations that rely on the support of the public, as opposed to service-oriented groups with a similar budget, tend to make an extra effort to produce original social media content (although the findings are not statistically significant according to conventional levels). This suggests that I should be particularly cautious when deciding how to measure social media usage. Focusing on daily original tweets *versus* all tweets can (at least slightly) impact my results. I am particularly interested in original messages, since they more clearly show that organizations have an interest in producing content and being active on social media. However, the robustness of findings based on daily original tweets should be evaluated by also looking at all daily tweets.

4.5.2 Followers

How many followers do these organizations have? Did their number of followers change over time? If so, did their number of followers increase or decrease? And did the number of followers change at similar rates for all organizations?

Figure 4.7 provides a first overview of the followers the 142 organizations had on March 8, 2017. We observe that most of them only had between a few hundred and a few thousand followers. The organization that had the lowest number of followers was the European Senior Organization (ESO), with only 37 followers. However, we also see some groups have a much larger online support base. The organization with the largest number of followers, on the far right of Figure 4.7, was Scout, with 61,312 followers.

What explains this difference in the number of followers? I argue that affective communications help organizations attract the attention of new publics and increase their support

Figure 4.7: Number of Twitter followers of each organization when the study started

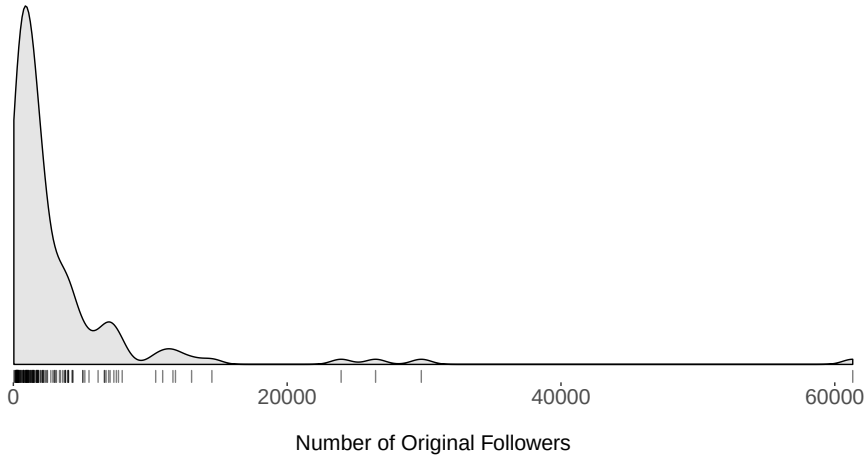
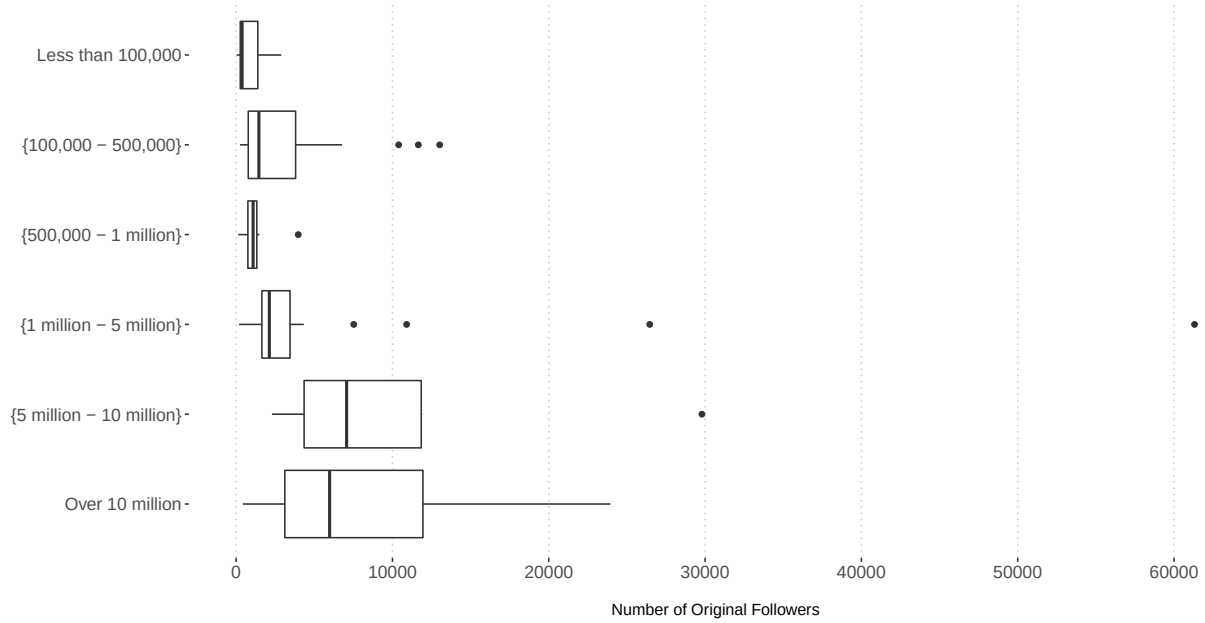


Figure 4.8: Number of Twitter followers by Budget Size



base, but the most obvious and straight-forward answer is resources (van der Graaf et al., 2016). Figure 4.8 corroborates that there is a high correlation between the number of follow-

ers and the resources organizations have. The average number of followers for groups with an annual budget between 5 and 10 million, and over 10 million (9,082 and 11,068 respectively), is substantially and significantly higher than the average number of followers of groups with a smaller budget. However, the average for groups in the first three budget categories (annual budget $<$ 1 million euros) is very similar and statistically indistinguishable. Overall, Figure 4.8 illustrates that, as expected, resources are strongly related to the number of followers, but that they are not the only reason why some groups have more followers than others; leaving room for other explanatory factors such as the use of emotion-evoking frames.

Did the number of followers of these organizations change at similar rates during the period of study? Differential rates across and within organizations would strengthen the idea that message-level factors, and not only organization-level characteristics, affect the ability of these organizations to increase their online support base.

Figure 4.9: Evolution of the number of followers of 10 organizations

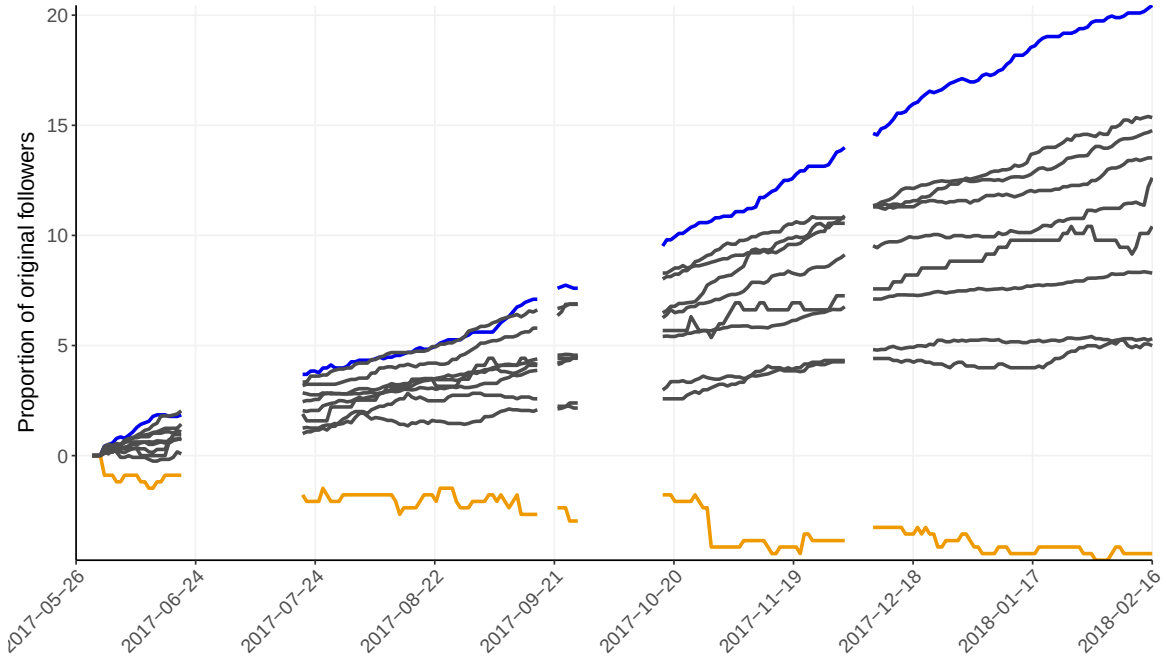


Figure 4.9 shows the evolution of the number of followers of 10 of the 142 organizations, chosen at random.[10] Two main points stand out. Significant variation exists across the organizations, and significant variation exists within the organizations.

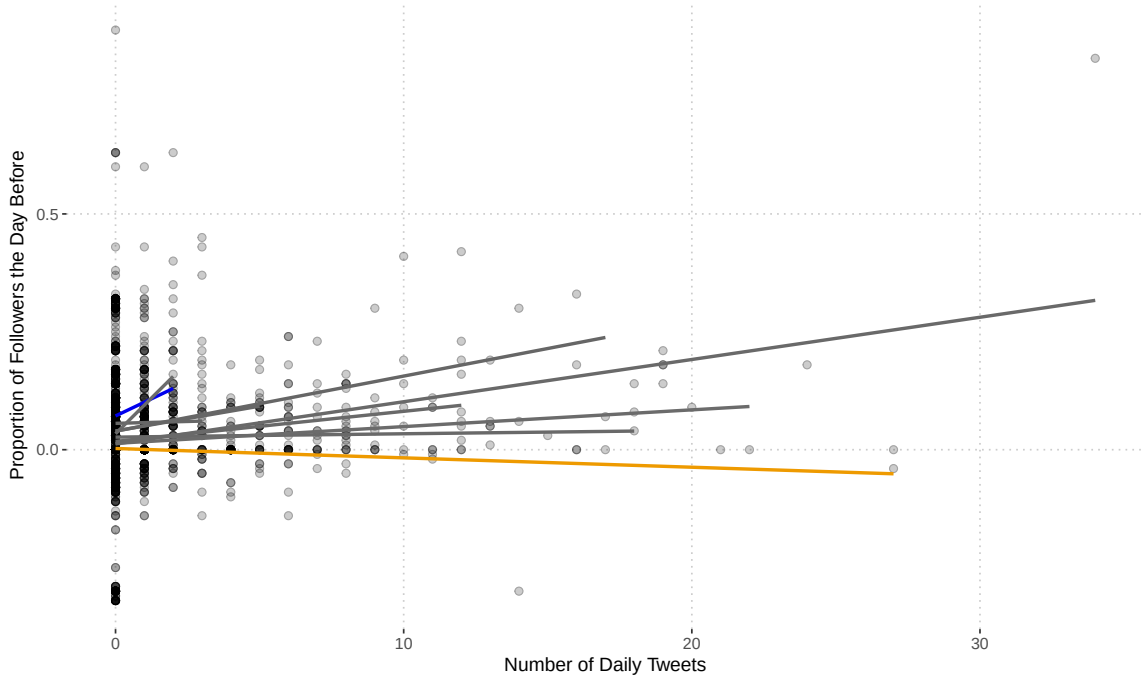
First, the figure shows how some organizations are able to gradually engage a larger number of followers while others are not. The orange line represents the number of followers of Europe Hopes, which went from having 337 in early 2017 to 326 in early 2018, for a 5% decline. On the other extreme, the blue line represents the evolution of the number of followers of ChemSec, an organization working on "freeing the world from hazardous chemicals," which increased its number of followers by more than 20% in a bit less than a year (from 1,408 to 1,691).

Second, Figure 4.9 also shows engagement variation within organizations. These civil society groups do not increase/decrease their levels of Twitter engagement in a completely linear fashion. The time series in the figure are full of small up and down spikes. Moreover, if we take a close look at the progression of ChemSec (blue line), we see that they increase their number of followers at a higher pace after October 2017.

It is possible that these follower recruitment patterns are highly correlated to how active organizations are on Twitter, as more users might start following an organization at moments when the group is more active. Figure 4.10 indicates that this is sometimes the case, but also that there is more to the story. The figure illustrates the correlation between how many messages the ten organizations in Figure 4.9 sent on any given day and the followers they gained or lost the day after as a proportion of the followers they had in the previous day. We see that some civil society groups do indeed gain more followers in those days they are more active, but some others organizations do not, suggesting that other contextual or message-level features may be related to their ability to recruit new followers.

[10]The Figure only contains information for 10 random organizations in order to avoid overcrowding the plot and to facilitate interpretation

Figure 4.10: Correlation Between Daily Original Tweets and Follower Gain/Loss

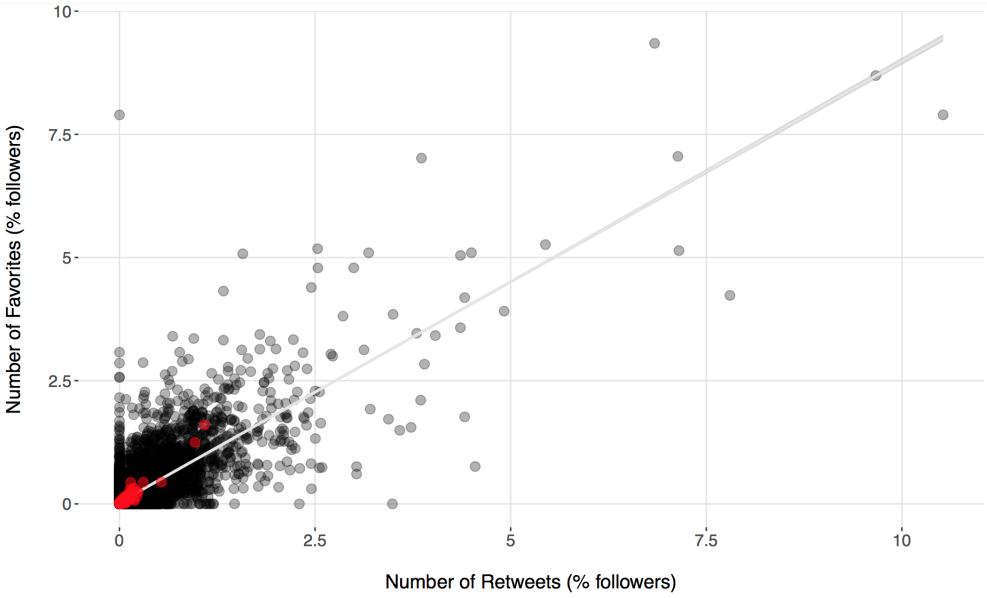


4.5.3 Message-Level Engagement

Apart from exploring followership growth, the number of times a message is shared or marked as favorite also provides a sense of how many users engage with a given organization and its messages.

Figure 4.11 shows the number of retweets and favorites of all messages sent by the 142 organizations under study. We can see a very high correlation between these two message engagement measures ($r = 0.73$). Each dot represents a message sent by one of the 142 organizations during the period of study. The x-axis indicates the number of times the messages have been retweeted (as a proportion of the organization's followers), while the y-axis represents the number of times they have been marked as favorite (also as a proportion of followers). This high correlation indicates that these two measures are capturing the same engagement dimension, and that by only looking at one of them (preferably retweets, as they

Figure 4.11: Correlation between number of retweets and the number of favorites



represent a more meaningful form of engagement) one would reach similar conclusions.

Two other points from Figure 4.11 stand out. We observe again significant variation both across and within organizations, which strengthens the idea that message-level factors (such as the presence of emotion-evoking frames) may affect how much users engage with organizations. First, we see significant variation in the number of retweets different messages achieve. Although most messages are only shared by a number of users representing a small proportion of followers (less than 1%), some are shared by a much larger crowd.

Another major point from Figure 4.11 is that sometimes messages from the same organization are shared a lot and sometimes they are not. To illustrate this variation, each red dot in Figure 4.11 indicates the engagement that messages from one of the groups under study, Save the Children, achieved. The message that achieved the lowest engagement rate (only one retweet) was a Routine-type message informing followers about an interview that the organization's CEO, Helle Thorning, did on television in order to present the group's annual report (see Figure 4.12). The message that achieved the highest engagement levels,

Figure 4.12: Low Engagement Example

Figure 4.13: High Engagement Example

which was shared by 340 users and marked as favorite by 504, was a very emotion-evoking message protesting against the violence and political situation in Afghanistan, where four organization workers were killed in the country in January 2018 (see 4.13). These examples totally align with the Affective Action in Organizations' model in that routine messages are less likely to contain emotion-evoking frames and to engage users, but political and action messages that evoke emotions, such as anger and anxiety, are more likely to receive attention and get people involved. The variables I build in this chapter will facilitate a more general validation of the theory.

4.5.4 Retweeter Followers

Some messages can boost message-sharing and contribute to the recruitment of more followers simply because influential users (people with a lot of followers) decide to retweet it. If that is the case, message engagement can be the result of simply engaging influential users instead of evoking particular emotions from the public. Accounting for the number of followers users sharing a given organization message should rule out this alternative explanation. On the other hand, engaging influential users is also an outcome of interest. Given that these users can propagate the organization's message to a larger number of users, it would be interesting to know if emotion-evoking message facilitate activating these more influential users.

4.6 Message Type and the Emotions Messages Evoke

A final challenge in testing out the theoretical claims laid out in the introduction of this chapter is to measure the emotions social media messages from these civil society groups generate (how much Enthusiasm, Anger, and/or Anxiety), as well as to identify their intention or message type (whether it is a Routine, Political, and/or Action message). Table 4.3 provides some illustrative examples of messages that generate each of the emotions of interest, and Table 4.4 has some examples of each of the message types under study.

In systematically labeling a big corpus of messages for their intentions, and in particular, for the emotions they generate for users, I face three additional challenges. The first one is that emotions are subjective; different people can feel different emotions when exposed to the same message. Moreover, these emotional reactions can be correlated with the sociodemographic features of the viewer, such as age, race, gender, or income. I explain in subsection 4.6.1 in greater detail how I address this concern by using the crowdsourcing platform Mechanical Turk to recruit a large pool of people with varied backgrounds to participate in the emotion-labeling process, and by having three different people label each of the messages for

Table 4.3: Messages with High Emotional Scores

Enthusiasm	
European Digital Rights	Great news from India: Right to #Privacy a Fundamental Right, Says Supreme Court in Unanimous Verdict: https://t.co/us3j4IW8kL
Compassion (CIWF)	Good news! Further evidence to show that the healthiest diets, are also best for the environment. #WednesdayWisdom: https://t.co/J98gI8nop4
Anger	
Save the Children	PRESS RELEASE: Children in Yemen bear the brunt of an endless war: https://t.co/M5A5rW3l7j #Yemen #Savethechildren
European Jewish Congress	MEP Becker - #Iran signs rockets and Missiles with written goal to extinguish Israel https://t.co/Wc9MtCEKKg
Anxiety	
Eurosif	Moody's makes it clear that there is a potential #ClimateRisk bubble in which an extreme weather event causes damage so catastrophic that taxpayers, insurers, lenders, states and municipalities suffer losses of hundreds of billions of dollars #SRI #ESG: https://t.co/55wSilC1op
EURAD	Britain already has Europe's highest proportion of #heroin #addicts, and last year #drug deaths hit a record high: how the New York Times sees the UK. https://t.co/OGg15duide.

Table 4.4: Examples of Routine, Political, and Action Messages

Routine Messages	
Red Cross EU	In #Agen, the French #RedCross has celebrated the 3rd Festival of Youth & Citizen Engagement, with 135 volunteers: https://twitter.com/CEMAagri/status/869810494764404736/photo/1
World Uyghur Congress	Vincent Metten of International Campaign for Tibet speaks during #Uyghur Friendship Group launch re: China's approach to Uyghurs & Tibetans: https://t.co/LuI5iCZQ4k
Political Messages	
European Digital Rights	Together with over 50 civil society organisations we ask the #EU to stop the #censorshipmachine & #fixcopyright now https://t.co/VWNOlO3rwc
International Commission of Jurists	Only negotiations under international supervision and not violence like now will help solve the Venezuelan crisis https://t.co/Z4wnCCDEit
Action Messages	
Compassion (CIWF)	Help spread the word about the campaign to #StopLiveTransport! Add the logo to your profile picture: https://t.co/H2TLQhhbxQ
World Organization of the Scout Movement	Join #Scouts worldwide today as we mark International #PeaceDay, and find out how you can take action: https://t.co/QDB4rBKhtc

the emotions they evoke.

I am arguing that three emotions (enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety), representing three emotional dimensions encompassing a wider range of fine-grained emotions, are particularly mobilizing. Thus, a second challenge is to actually confirm that these three emotional dimensions do a good job at capturing the more nuanced emotional reactions one would expect. I explain in subsection 4.6.2 how I address this concern.

Given that Mechanical Turk workers did not receive any previous training on how to rate messages for the emotions they generate or for their intention (message type), a third challenge is to ensure the quality of the responses given by them. In subsection 4.6.1 I describe three actions I take to ensure the quality of their message labels.

I conclude in subsection 4.6.4 by providing an overview of the resulting emotion scores for a random sample of about 7,000 messages sent by the organizations under study and how they correlate with the type of message (routine, political and action messages) indicated by the Mechanical Turk annotators.

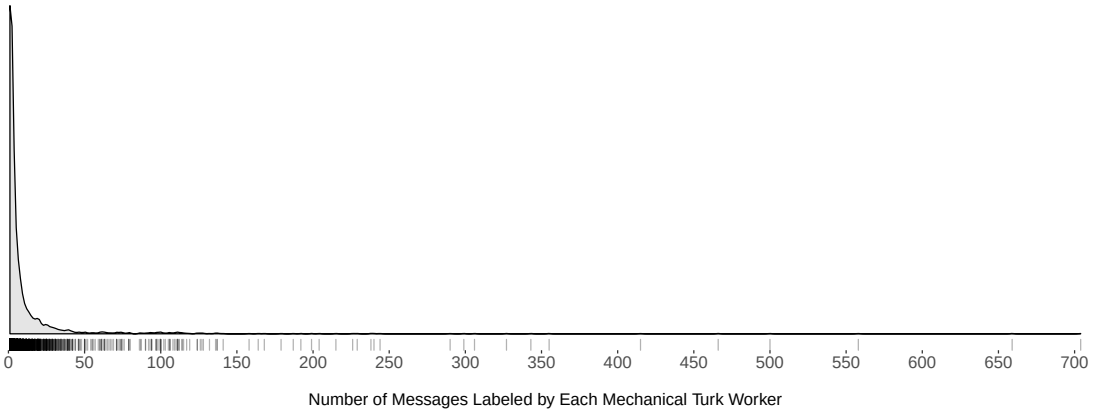
4.6.1 Measuring Emotional Responses: Crowdsourced Labeling

Emotions are subjective, so different people can feel different emotions when exposed to the same content. To precisely measure the effect of emotion-evoking frames, one would ideally have information about the sociodemographic characteristics that correlate with all types of emotional responses and the sociodemographic features of all users exposed to each message. In the absence of this extremely detailed data, the second best approach is to get a sense of the average emotional reactions any given message generates.

I turn to the crowdsourcing platform Mechanical Turk to create measures of the average enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety that messages in a random sample of about 7,000 tweets evoke.[11] A total of 2,215 workers participated in the labeling process. In order to encourage

[11] I sampled an equal proportion of messages from all 142 organizations to make sure all groups were represented in the sample.

Figure 4.14: Distribution of the Number of Messages Each Annotator Coded

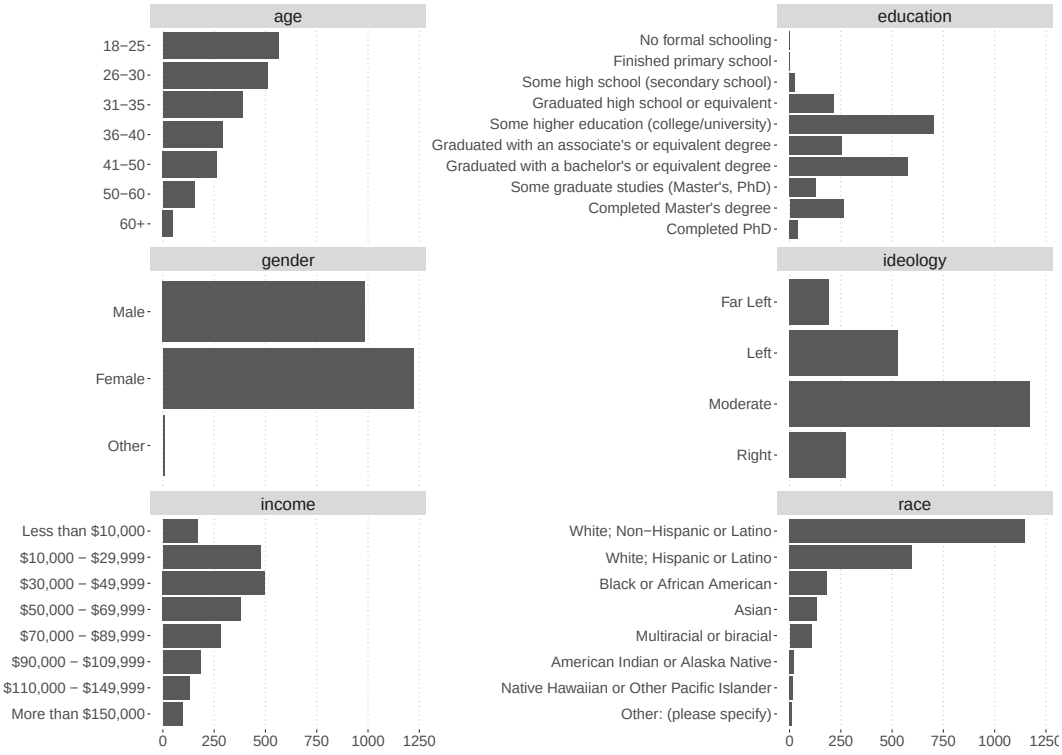


diversity, each worker was allowed label a maximum of 1,000 messages. However, as Figure 4.14 indicates, although a few workers labeled a large number of messages (the one that labeled the most completed 704, in the far right of the distribution), most of them only labeled between a few and 50 messages. To confirm that a diverse pool of annotators participated in the labeling process, before performing any annotation, workers were asked to complete a short sociodemographic survey in Qualtrics (a copy of the survey is available in Appendix B). Figure 4.15 presents a sociodemographic description of the pool of people who participated in the labeling process. The figure shows that people with varied backgrounds, in terms of age, education, gender, ideology, income, and race, contributed to labeling the messages.

4.6.2 Confirming the Prominence of the Enthusiasm, Anger, and Anxiety Dimensions

Political psychologists (Marcus et al., 2000; Brader, 2005; Valentino et al., 2011) argue that enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety are three overarching emotional dimensions that capture a higher dimensional emotional space (more fine-grained emotions such as proud, happy, bitter, hateful, and worried). To make sure this assumption holds, instead of labeling messages for the presence of these three emotional dimensions, Marcus et al. (2017) suggest to have annotators evaluate whether each piece of information evokes a larger list of fine-grained

Figure 4.15: Socio-Demographic Features of the Annotators

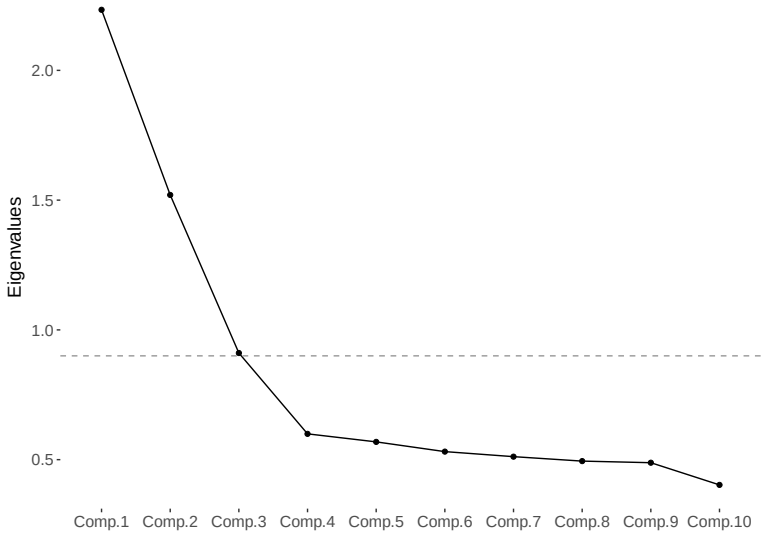


emotions.

Hence, Mechanical Turk workers rated their emotional reactions according to 10 fine-grained emotions (on a 0 to 5 scale). Proud, happy, and enthusiastic should load onto the enthusiasm dimension. Resentful, bitter, angry, and hateful should cluster around the anger dimension. Afraid, scared, and worried should compose the anxiety dimension. To make sure the order in which these 10 emotions were presented did not prompt workers to give them a similar rating, the order in which they appeared was randomized.

Explanatory factor analysis in Figure 4.16 confirms that responses on these 10 evoked emotions load onto three main dimensions. A three-dimension scenario has an Eigenvalue higher than .9 (conventional practices recommend choosing a dimensional space with an Eigenvalue close to or higher than 1), and the value significantly drops and flattens out

Figure 4.16: Exploratory Factor Analysis of the 10 labeled emotions.



when considering a higher dimensional space. The confirmatory factor analysis in Table 4.5 confirms that these 10 high-level emotion dimensions load onto the expected enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety factors.

Table 4.5: Resulting loads from Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Enthusiasm			Anger				Anxiety		
Proud	Happy	Enthusiastic	Resentful	Bitter	Angry	Hateful	Afraid	Scared	Worried
0.81	0.89	0.83	0.85	0.86	0.86	0.80	0.91	0.90	0.83

4.6.3 Ensuring the Quality of the Crowdsourced Labels

Clear instructions were provided to Mechanical Turk workers on how to label messages for the emotions they evoke and the message type. However, since they did not receive a face-to-face training, some of the workers may not perform as well as others. Three different actions were taken to ensure the quality of the Mechanical Turk labels.

First, only Mechanical Turk workers with a performance rate over 90% were allowed to participate in the labeling process.[12] Second, workers were asked to fill out a short preliminary sociodemographic survey in Qualtrics before rating their first message. This did not only facilitate checking the diversity of the pool, but it also acted as a first check to detect people who were in a particular rush and did not read the instructions carefully. At the end of the Qualtrics survey, workers received a 10-digit random code they had to provide every time they finished labeling a given message. Message ratings submitted without this unique identifier (or a fake identifier with a different digit length) were rejected, and other workers were asked to do them.

As a final action to ensure quality, the provided responses were manually checked, and those from workers who performed poorly were excluded and reassigned to others. Two criteria were used to judge poor performance: constant across-the-board non-zero emotion responses and non-sense responses to a question asking them to describe the most salient elements in the message image (if any image was present). The first of these criteria refers to users constantly indicating in their responses that a message generated to them one of the maximum scores (4 or 5 on a 0-5 scale) for all 10 emotions, which should be incredibly rare if not impossible. The second criteria refers to people describing that one of the most salient elements in the message image is, for example, a beach, when the message does not have an image or the image is about something completely different, such as a street demonstration. These responses were discarded and done by other workers, and annotators who systematically failed to fulfill these criteria were banned from participating in labeling the remaining

[12] Meaning that only workers that had at least 90% of their worked accepted by any other requester in the past were considered.

messages.

4.6.4 Exploring the Resulting Labels

In sum, Mechanical Turk workers indicated, for a random sample of 7,000 tweets, how much of 10 emotions each message (text plus attached image, if the message had an image) evoked for them, and whether they considered the message as being a routine, political, or action message. Each of the 7,000 messages were labeled by three different annotators following the form in Appendix B.

The information was then used to build two types of variables: message type (*Routine*, *Political* and *Action* variables indicating whether a given message has these intentions) and evoked emotions (how much *Enthuisasm*, *Anger*, and *Anxiety* messages generate). In regard to the message type variable, each message was considered to be about each intention if at least two of the three annotators who labeled it indicated so. Table 4.4 provides some examples of messages coded by more than two people as having a routine, political, and action intention. In total, we observe 2,859 routine messages, 1,781 political ones, and 364 that called people into action.

$$y_e = avg(avg(x_{i,j})_z) \tag{4.1}$$

e = main low level emotion (enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety)

i = message

j = high level emotion (pround, happy, resentful, bitter, ...)

z = high level emotions j that map to lower level emotion e

Then, in order to assign a single *Enthusiasm*, *Anger* and *Anxiety* score to each message, the 0-5 responses that the three workers gave for each of the 10 fine-grained emotions (proud, happy, enthusiastic, resentful, etc.) were averaged. The resulting averages from the high-

level dimensions that map onto the each of three low-level factors were then also averaged. Equation 4.1 formally illustrates how these three emotional variables were created.

Figure 4.17 shows the correlation between these three emotional dimensions. Each dot represents a message, and each of the three axes represent the emotion score for that emotion. We observe that most of the messages from the 142 civil society groups under study do not generate strong emotional reactions from people; they are close to the (0,0,0) vertex. In the figure we can also see that the most frequently evoked emotion is enthusiasm (with a larger number of dots closer to 5) and that the scores for this emotion are negatively and strongly correlated with anxiety and anger; as we get closer to 5 on the enthusiasm dimension, the lower the anger and anxiety scores we observe. There is a slight positive correlation, however, between anxiety and anger. Table 4.3 provides some examples of messages rated as strongly evoking each of these three emotions.

Figure 4.17: Resulting Emotion Scores for the Full Random Sample of 7,000 Messages

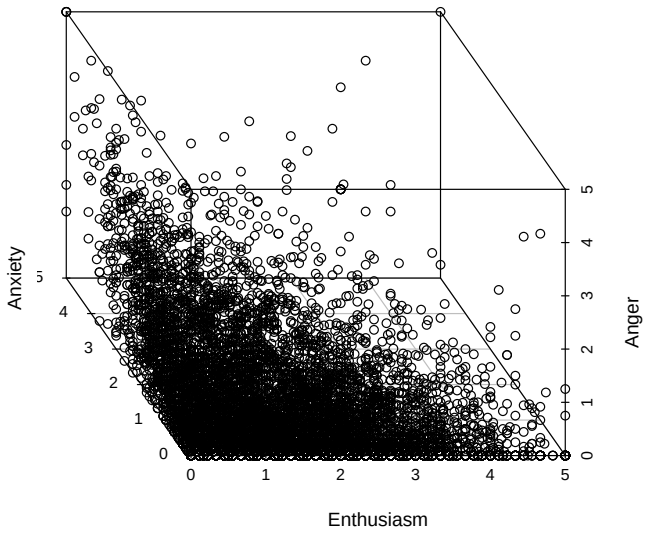
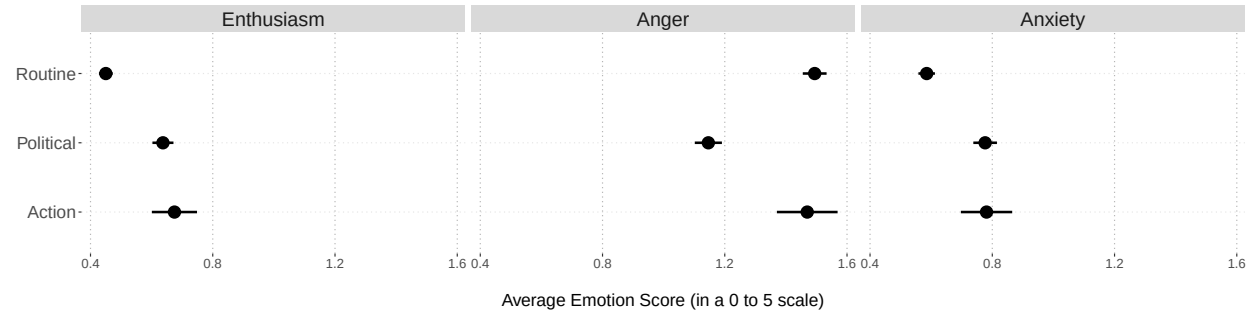


Figure 4.18 provides a first look at the relationship between message type and the average emotion reactions the random sample of 7,000 messages generate. The dots in the figure represent the average emotion score for messages classified into that message category, and

the lines represent 95% confidence intervals around the averages.

Figure 4.18: A First Look at the Correlation Between Message Type and Evoked Emotions



Two main takeaways and one minor caveat stand out. First, as we already appreciated in Figure 4.17, the average emotion scores are not very high. On a 0 to 5 scale, all the averages in Figure 4.18 range from 0.4 to 1.6, indicating that organizations do use emotion-evoking frames, but that they do not use them very often. A second main point worth highlighting is that, as expected, political and action messages are in most cases associated with higher emotion scores. The only caveat is that this does not seem to be initially the case for anger, since we see that not only action messages but also routine messages have very high anger scores—higher than the average anger score associated with political messages.

4.7 What we have seen and what will see next

The theory of Affective Action in Organizations makes three main claims about which formal civil society organizations are more likely to use social media for civic engagement and which types of communications are more likely to succeed at doing so: 1) the resources organizations have and their level of public dependence predict social media usage, 2) message type (routine, political, and/or action messages) predict the usage of emotion-evoking frames, and 3) messages evoking enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety are more likely to engage the current individualized public on social media.

In this chapter we have explored a set of measures that can be used to capture the key variables of the model. In regard to the first claim, the proportion of the annual budget that comes from individuals captures the *Public Dependence* variable; budget size and number of full-time employees capture the *Resource* dimension. Additionally, the average daily tweets, and in particular the average daily original tweets, are a strong measure of *Social Media Usage*. Regarding the second theoretical claim, Mechanical Turk annotators have identified the *Message Type* (whether the tweet is a routine, political, and/or action message) and the presence of evoked *Emotions* (how much enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety tweets evoke) for a random sample of 7,000 messages. Finally, in regard to the last theoretical claim, the mentioned *Emotions* variables can be used as key predictors, and *Social Media Engagement* can be measured by looking at *Follower Gain-Loss*, *Number of Retweets* (which can be split into retweets by current supporters/followers, and potential supporters/non-followers), and the *Average Followers of Message Retweeters*.

We have explored the distribution and some initial relationships between these variables. The initial exploration revealed that the outcomes of interest—*Social Media Usage*, evoked *Emotions*, and *Social Media Engagement*—vary significantly across and within organizations, and that theorized predictors indeed have the potential to explain a good part of the variation. In the next chapter we will explore if these initial findings hold when applying more complex statistical tests and when controlling for other alternative explanations.

Chapter 5

THE AFFECTIVE ACTION IN ORGANIZATIONS THEORY TO TEST

Civil society organizations are the cornerstone of democratic pluralism: they voice citizens' views and concerns, particularly at times when political parties and institutions do not (Dahl, 1961). However, civil society groups defending diffuse interests have always faced harder collective action problems than groups defending more narrow interests, such as business organizations (Olson, 1965). This unequal collective action problem often generates representation biases, as organizations defending narrower interests are more likely to emerge, recruit resources, and influence policy (Schlozman et al., 2012; Rasmussen and Carroll, 2014). Moreover, current political behavioral trends have the potential to widen these representation biases already in place. People today are more interested in personalized forms of participation than being part of formal groups (Stolle and Micheletti, 2013; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013), a trend that has the potential to aggravate the decline in civic engagement that started decades ago (Putnam, 2000) and to put democratic pluralism at risk.

Scholars have theorized about the extent to which digital communication technologies can help civil society organizations solve the engagement problem they face (Karpf, 2012; Bimber et al., 2012; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013). First, digital technologies reduce communication and participation costs for social groups, making it simpler for civil society organizations to recruit new supporters, and for new supporters to help organizations reach their short- and long-term goals (Bimber et al., 2012). Second, digital media allows for the emergence of new types of malleable and horizontal organizations that better connect with people's participation preferences (Karpf, 2012; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013).

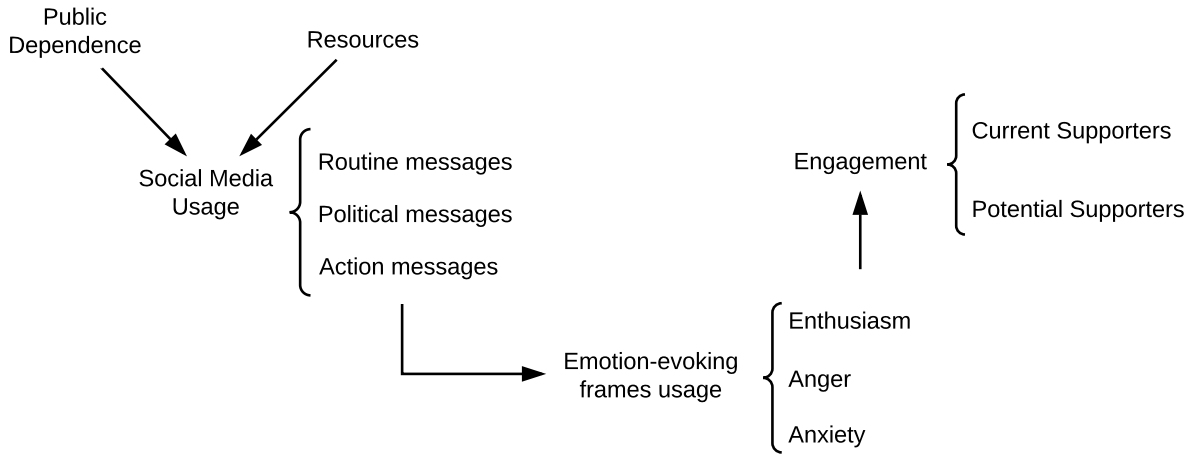
However, more formal civil society organizations are still the norm (Beyers et al., 2016), and they can be stronger and more consistent instruments of interest representation (Wilson, 1981). What remains an open question is: to what extent can social media help these more formal groups engage the public online, and thus strengthen their voice?

I argue that formal civil society groups can do a better job at engaging the current individualized public by employing a more personalized communication strategy. In particular, I argue that the use of emotion-evoking frames can help an organization attract the attention of social media users and motivate these users to engage with the organization. Emotions trigger a reflexive process that can lead to action. Enthusiasm and anger (emotions related to our dispositional system) motivate people to act on issues they care about, whereas anxiety (an emotion related to the surveillance system) motivates action on new threats and issues of new interest (Marcus et al., 2000; Brader, 2005; Valentino et al., 2011). Moreover, emotions can do very well at engaging the current individualized public because they promote organizational views and goals in a more personalized form (Papacharissi, 2015).

However, are all formal civil society organizations equally active on social media? For what purposes do they use their social media communications? Are they more likely to employ emotion-evoking frames in certain types of messages? And do emotion-evoking frames actually help them engage the current individualized public online? I advance a theory of Affective Action in Organizations that aims to answer these questions.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the three main claims of the theory. First, the resources and public dependence of an organization predicts how active the organization is on social media. Groups with more resources can afford having a strong social media presence. However, organizations with fewer resources need to establish much clearer priorities; resource-scarce groups that depend on the economic and political support of individuals will be more likely to be active on social media than resource-scarce organizations that promote social change by simply providing services. Second, organizations not only use social media for public engagement, they also use it for transparency and to report about the routine of the organization (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012; Obar et al., 2011). I expect formal civil society groups,

Figure 5.1: A Diagram of the Affective Action in Organizations Theory



in particular, to use emotion-evoking frames in messages aimed at engaging the public (political and action messages). Finally, for the reasons mentioned in the previous paragraph, messages evoking enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety are particularly more likely to engage the public for both current and potential organization supporters.

In this chapter I test the validity of these three main theoretical claims by studying the Twitter communications of 142 formal civil society organizations advocating in the European Union. The European Union has become a strong political decision-making body, and the population of interest groups in Brussels has grown significantly in recent decades (Majone, 2002; Klüver, 2013). Research shows that clear representation biases exist in the advocacy system of the European Union (Rasmussen and Carroll, 2014), making it a very relevant case to study. Thus, I seek to answer the following question: how can formal civil society organizations in Brussels use social media communications to engage the public and potentially offset these biases and strengthen democratic pluralism?

In Section 5.1 I test the validity of the first theoretical claim. I explore the extent to which *Public Dependence* (the proportion of each organization's funding that comes from individuals) and *Resources* (the annual budget size and number of full-time employees) are good

predictors of *Social Media Usage* (average daily tweets and average daily original tweets). As expected, I find a strong correlation between resources and social media usage. Then, I find no general relationship between public dependence and how active groups are on social media, but I do find public dependence to be a relevant usage predictor for resource-scarce groups.

In Section 5.2 I explore the validity of the second claim and find, as expected, that *Political* and *Action* messages are more likely than *Routine* messages to contain frames evoking *Anger* and *Anxiety*. However, I do not confirm this to be the case for frames evoking *Enthusiasm*, as routine messages are more likely to evoke this emotion than political and action tweets. I discuss in this section some potential reasons for this unexpected finding.

Finally, in Section 5.3 I test whether messages that evoke *Enthusiasm*, *Anger* and *Anxiety* are indeed more likely to engage social media publics. After controlling for a battery of alternative explanations, I find that messages evoking these three emotions achieve higher levels of *Social Media Engagement* according to a wide range of measures. The positive effects of anxiety and anger are of substantive magnitude, and statistically significant, when using *Retweets*, *Retweets by Current Supporters* (followers), *Retweets by Potential Supporters* (non-followers), and *Average Retweeter Followers* as measures of engagement. These two emotions are also positively associated with followership increase, although the effects are much smaller and not statistically significant. As for the effect of enthusiasm-evoking messages, they are positively associated with higher numbers of retweets, but the effects are also smaller and not significant. However, enthusiasm is strongly and significantly related to an increase in followership and to the engagement of influential users.

To illustrate the findings from this large-N analysis more clearly, in Section 5.3.4 I explore in more detail the social media communications and achieved engagement of a particular civil society organization—European Digital Rights (EDRi)—advocating in Brussels. EDRi defends individual liberties and privacy in the current digital World and has recently been very active on legislation related to net neutrality and online data protection.

Overall, the evidence presented in this chapter shows substantive support for the three

main claims of the Affective Action in Organizations theory, and for the more general claim that formal civil society groups can appeal to and engage the current individualized public by exploring more personalized forms of communication. At the same time, this chapter also illustrates a few shortcomings of the theory and lays out potential improvements for future research to address.

5.1 Social Media Usage as a Function of Public Dependence and Resources

Why are some civil society organizations more active on social media than others? I argue that *Social Media Usage* is mainly a function of two organization characteristics: *Resources* and *Public Dependence*.

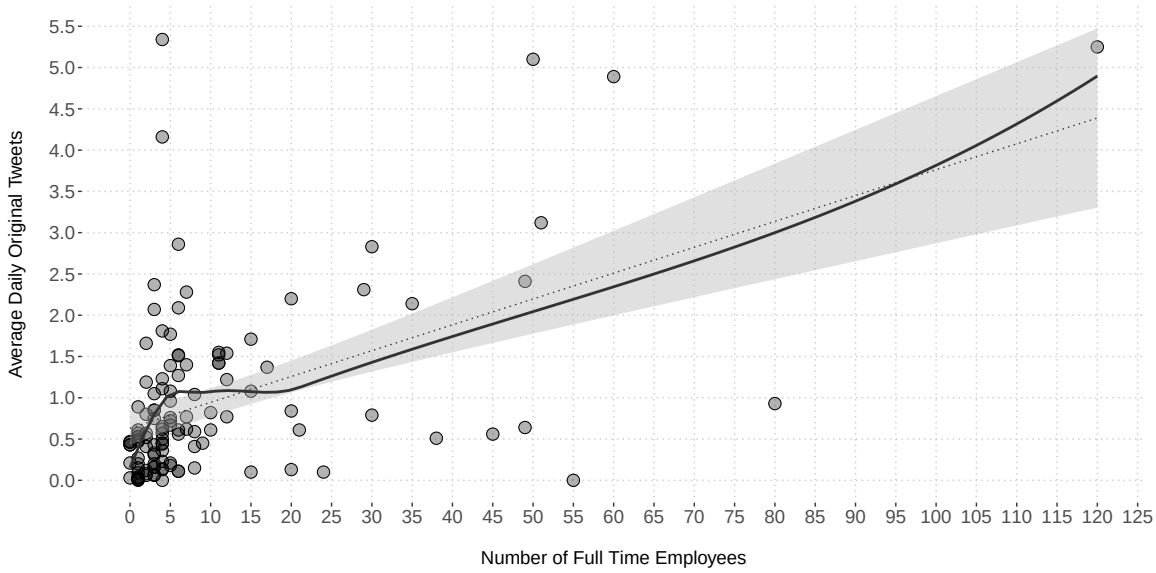
Most organizations are interested in a strong online presence. Groups aiming to shape policy are interested in engaging users in order to shape public opinion and pressure policy-makers, and those interested in promoting social change by providing services are interested in publicizing the services they offer. Resources allow organizations to be able to dedicate a person or a team to developing a strong online presence, and so we should expect resourceful organizations to be more active online than resource-scarce groups.

However, should we expect all resource-scarce organizations to have a weak online presence? Not necessarily. Civil society groups with fewer resources have no other option but to prioritize. I argue that groups that are more dependent on the support of individuals to carry out their mission will be more likely to prioritize their social media communication and to be more active online users. These groups need a strong outreach system because they need public opinion support in order to achieve their goals.

Figure 5.2 shows a positive correlation between resources (x-axis is the number of full-time employees) and social media usage (y-axis is the average daily original tweets).[1] On

[1]I exclude an organization outlier that reported in the CIG survey as having 640 full time employees but that did not tweet very often (about 1.5 original messages). I do so because it is a very rare observation; it has five more times the number of employees than the second largest organization has, but it end ups having a large effect on the results. This is an organization working on supporting the rights of a particular racial minority in Europe. A potential explanation for their low online presence (in relation to their number of employees) is that they know that their principal audience is not very active on social

Figure 5.2: Correlation between Resources (Full Time Employees) and Social Media Usage (N = 101)



average, organizations with fewer than five employees send less than one original message per day, whereas organizations with more employees send at least one.

The European Passengers' Federation and Dystonia Europe are two example organizations that have fewer than five employees[2] and that do not tweet very often. The first group works on promoting sustainable mobility and improving standards on public transport, whereas the second one works on promoting policies and research helping out those suffering from dystonia. Since they have limited staff and no communication team, neither of them has the ability to design thoughtful social media campaigns. Most of their messages are retweets of other organizations working on similar issues; when they do create original messages, they are routine type messages reporting, for example, about a convention or

media. I also exclude 21 organizations for which I do not have information about the number of full time employees they have.

[2]According to EPF's website, they only have 2 people team, and according to Dystonia Europe's website, they only have 1 full time employee.

conference they assisted.

Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) are the other side of the story. The former works on protecting animal lives and welfare, whereas the latter is a confederation of unions fighting for better working and living conditions. According to the information on their websites,[3] CIWF has a seven-person team, and the ETUC has about 60 employees. They both have people exclusively dedicated to designing and implementing their respective organizations' communication campaigns, such as CIWF's #StopLiveTransport and ETUC's #OurPayRise, and they are both extremely active on social media, sending about five original messages per day.

These two organizations are illustrative of another major point reflected in Figure 5.2, which is that the effect of resources on social media usage is of a logarithmic nature (see darker line representing local correlations). Having an extra staff member has a very substantive impact on social media usage when the team is particularly small, but the effect is of a much smaller magnitude when the team is already of large magnitude. As noted above, CIWF reports to have seven employees, and ETUC has about 60 full-time employees, but they are both similarly active on social media. This indicates that on average, as soon as organizations start having a larger team and are able to dedicate a person to managing their social media communications (when they have about five staff members, according to Figure 5.2), they are already able to maintain a social media presence similar to much larger groups.

Resources, therefore, matter, but we still see substantial social media usage variation in Figure 5.2 that remains unexplained. I argue that public dependence has the potential to do so, particularly for explaining the variation among resource-scarce organizations that are constrained and forced to prioritize their actions.

Figure 5.3 shows no direct correlation between this other explanatory variable of interest, Public Dependence (proportion of the annual budget that comes from individuals), and Social Media Usage (average daily original tweets).

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[3] https://www.etuc.org/staff-list and https://www.ciwf.com/our-story/our-team/, accessed on May 1, 2018.

Figure 5.3: Correlation between Public Dependence and Social Media Usage

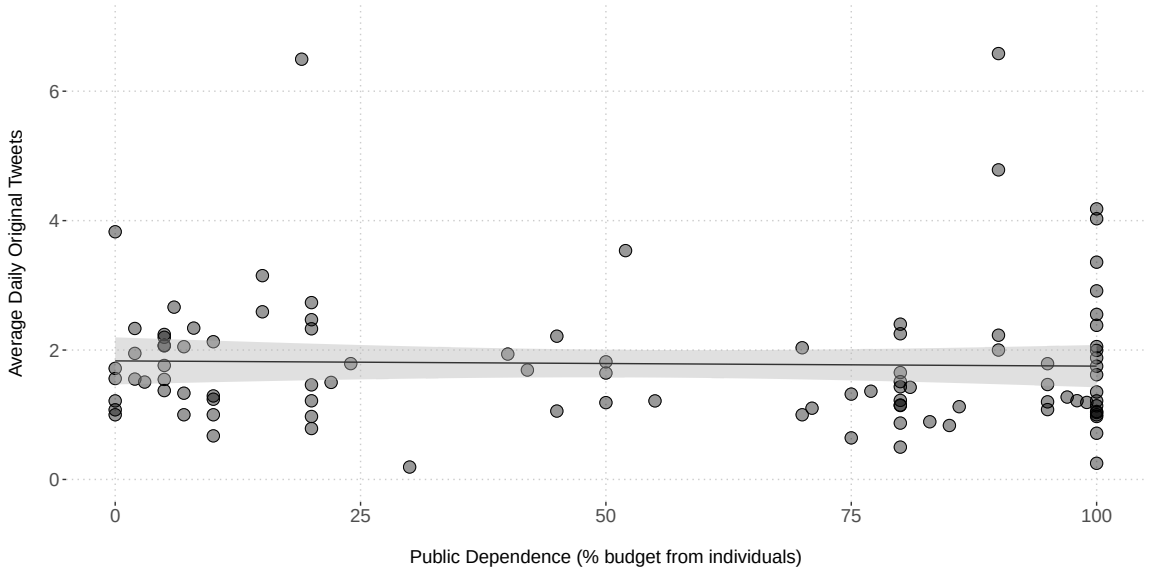
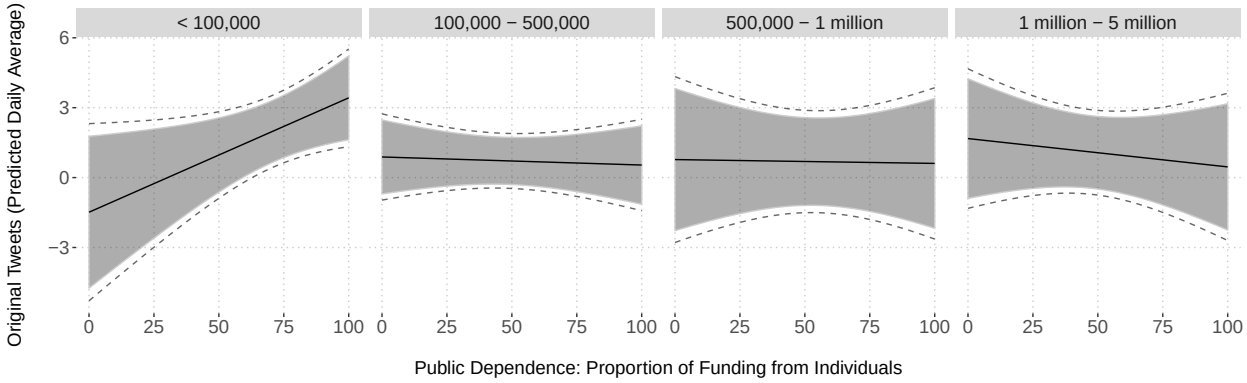


Figure 5.4: Predicted Daily Original Tweets (y) as a function of an interaction between Resources (x_1) and Public Dependence (x_2): $y = \alpha + x_1 \cdot x_2 + \epsilon$

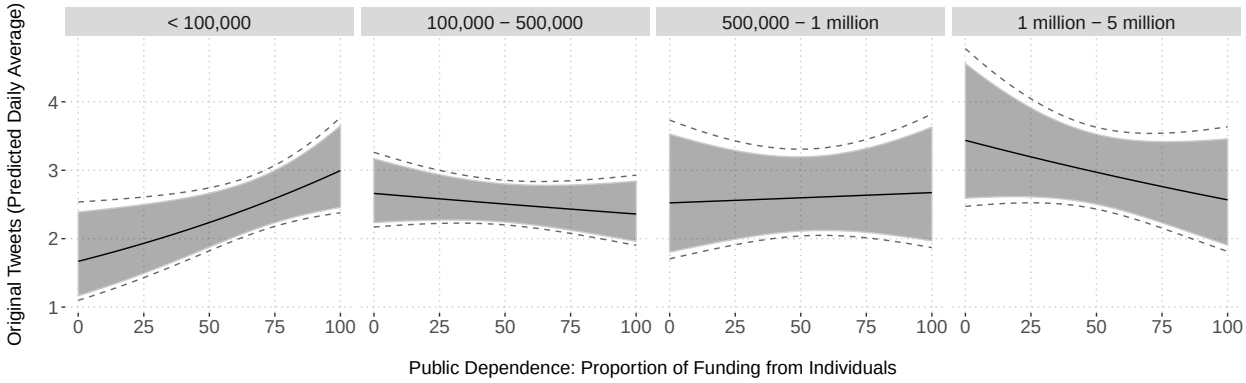


However, as expected, Figure 5.4 shows that the degree of public dependence does matter in understanding social media usage among resource-scarce groups.

To simplify the analysis, instead of measuring resources by looking at the number of full-time employees, in Figure 5.4, I group organizations according to the size of their annual

budget. The figure shows predicted social media usage as a function of an interaction between resources and public dependence. As we saw in Figure 5.2, organizations with more resources ($> 100,000$€, four right panels) on average send more original messages than resource-scarce groups, and their degree of public dependence has no effect on how active they are.[4] However, in the left panel we observe that for resource-scarce organizations (which represent about 23% of the civil society groups under study), their degree of public dependence has a big influence on their social media usage. Those that do not depend on public support are predicted to not use social media at all, whereas those that receive most of their funding from individual member fees and contributions are predicted to be as active as very resourceful organizations.

Figure 5.5: Predicted Daily Original Tweets ($log(y)$) as a function of an interatction between Resources (x_1) and Public Dependence (x_2), after applying a log-transformation to the outcome: $log(y + 1) = \alpha + x_1 \cdot x_2 + \epsilon$



The results in Figure 5.4 hold in Figure 5.5 when applying a log transformation to the outcome variable in order to account for the range of unfeasible predictions shown in Figure 5.4 (predicted original tweets below 0). Coefficient tables for the models used to create the predicted values in Figure 5.4 and Figure 5.5 are available in Appendix C.

[4] I leave out the largest budget category, "over 10 million," in Figure 5.4 and 5.5, because it represents a minority of the organizations under study and the resulting confidence intervals are very large. Adding these this extra facets makes it very difficult to appreciate the differences of interest while not changing the substantive findings.

The Young Entrepreneurs for Europe (YESforEurope) and the European Industrial Pharmacists Group (EIPG) are two groups that illustrate the findings in Figures 5.4 and 5.5. The former is a service-oriented organization that helps out young European entrepreneurs, while the latter is an association fighting for the rights of those working in the pharmaceutical sector. According to information publicly available in the Transparency Register,[5] they both have a budget below €100,000 and fewer than five full-time employees. However, the former receives most of its funding from European grants and has a primary goal of promoting social change through service provision to young entrepreneurs, whereas the latter receives most of its funding from members and has a main goal of promoting better working conditions in the pharmaceutical sector by shaping public opinion and influencing policy. The former is not very active on social media, sending less than one original message per day, while the latter is much more active, sending tens of daily messages.

To summarize, in this section I explored some key predictors of social media usage, and I found that organization resources have a direct impact on social media usage (the more resources, the more active organizations are on social media, Figure 5.2) but public dependence does not (Figure 5.3), indicating that even service-oriented organizations have an interest in maintaining a strong online brand. However, when considering an interaction between resources and public dependence, I found that among resource-scarce groups, those with higher public dependence are much more active social media users than those that do not rely on funding from individuals.

Next I turn my attention to the engaging role of emotions, the main focus of this project. First, I will explore which types of messages are more likely to employ emotion-evoking frames, and then, I will test whether messages evoking three emotions that are known for their mobilizing effect (enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety) are indeed related to higher engagement levels.

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[5] See http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/displaylobbyist.do?id=654225521365-19 for information about YESforEurope and http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/displaylobbyist.do?id=979567925318-36 for information about the EIPG, both accessed on May 1, 2018

5.2 Evoked Emotions as a Function of Message Type

Civil society organizations do not only use their social media communications for public engagement. Research shows that they use network technologies for three main purposes (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012; Obar et al., 2011; Guo and Saxton, 2014): to report about their day-to-day activities (what I refer to as Routine messages), to promote their views (Political messages), and to call people into action (Action messages). The main goal of routine type messages is not to engage users or to spread the organization's views, but rather to keep current supporters informed about what the organization is doing. On the other hand, the main objective of political and action messages is indeed to engage the largest audience possible, as they are designed to spread and diffuse the organization's views and campaigns.

I argue that organizations are somewhat aware of the mobilizing role of emotions. Research shows they often experiment with different types of frames to see which ones do a better job at engaging users and spreading their message around social media platforms (Karpf, 2018). Hence, I expect messages aiming to engage users (political and action messages) to be more likely to contain emotion-evoking frames.

In order to test the argument, a large and diverse pool of human annotators (from the crowd-sourcing platform Mechanical Turk) identified, for a random sample of 7,000 messages, whether they were routine, political, and/or action messages. Three different annotators coded each message. For the purpose of the analysis, I consider a given message to have that particular routine, political and/or action intention if at least two of the coders indicated so. Then, annotators also indicated how much enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety each message evoked from them (on a 0-5 scale). For a given emotion and message, I average the responses from the three annotators to obtain the average enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety each message generates.

Table 5.1 provides two examples of each message type of interest. Annotators have indicated the two routine messages generate some enthusiasm but no anger or anxiety, whereas

they have indicated the other four messages as evoking not only enthusiasm but also the other two emotions—in particular the message from European Digital Rights about internet censorship, the tweet from the International Commission of Jusrists about the open conflict in Venezuela, and the message from CIWF related to their #StopLiveTransport! campaign.

However, the tweets in Table 5.1 are not a random representation of the messages the organizations under study sent, which raises the question: do we still see non-routine messages (so political and action messages) to be more likely to evoke the three emotions of interest (anger, anxiety, and enthusiasm) when looking at a much larger sample of messages and when when taking other organizational features into account?

To address this generalizability concern, I model how much enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety a random sample of 7,000 messages[6] evoked as a linear function of their intention (routine, action, and/or political messages). To control for organizational differences, I only allow the model to make inferences from within-organization comparisons (organization fixed effects).

Figure 5.6: The effect of message type (*routine*, *political*, and *action* messages) on the emotions j messages i evoke: $y_{ij} = \alpha_j + routine_i + political_i + action_i + organization_i + \epsilon_{ij}$

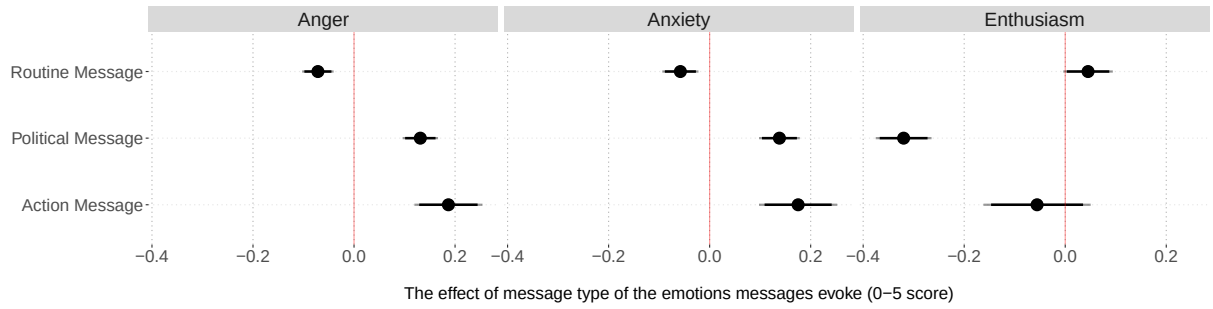


Figure 5.6 shows that, after controlling for other factors, political and action messages are much more likely to evoke anger and anxiety than routine messages. However, routine messages are more often related to enthusiasm than messages aiming to directly engage

[6] A random sample of all original messages the 142 organizations under study sent during the period of analysis.

Table 5.1: Examples of Routine, Political, and Action Messages

Routine Messages	
Red Cross EU	In #Agen, the French #RedCross has celebrated the 3rd Festival of Youth & Citizen Engagement, with 135 volunteers: https://twitter.com/i/web/status/872010288538800128
World Uyghur Congress	Vincent Metten of International Campaign for Tibet speaks during #Uyghur Friendship Group launch re: China's approach to Uyghurs & Tibetans: https://t.co/LuI5iCZQ4k
Political Messages	
European Digital Rights	Together with over 50 civil society organisations we ask the #EU to stop the #censorshipmachine & #fixcopyright now https://t.co/VWNOlO3rwc
International Commission of Jurists	Only negotiations under international supervision and not violence like now will help solve the Venezuelan crisis https://t.co/Z4wnCCDEit
Action Messages	
Compassion (CIWF)	Help spread the word about the campaign to #StopLiveTransport! Add the logo to your profile picture: https://t.co/H2TLQhhbxQ
World Organization of the Scout Movement	Join #Scouts worldwide today as we mark International #PeaceDay, and find out how you can take action: https://t.co/QDB4rBKhtc

the public. Figure 5.6 shows predicted emotion-evoking differences between the "average" message in the dataset and tweets classified as routine, political, and action messages. The results account for organization-level differences, ruling out the possibility that emotion-evoking differences are simply the result of the groups varying on other dimensions. You can see in Appendix D the full coefficients table of the model.

On average, compared to a random message, routine messages were rated by annotators as evoking .05 less anger and anxiety. Overall, the 7,000 messages were rated as generating an average anger of .62 and an average anxiety of .40, which means that routine messages were rated as generating 8% and 10% less anger and anxiety respectively.

On the other hand, as expected, political and action messages are associated with higher levels of anger and anxiety. In both cases the effects are of a larger magnitude for action tweets. Political messages evoke about .15, and action messages about .2, more anger and anxiety than the average message. If we take into consideration again the average anger and anxiety messages generated (.62 and .49 respectively), the .15 and .2 effects translate into political messages evoking 24% more anger and 30% more anxiety, and the action messages generating 32% more anger and 40% more anxiety, than the average tweet.

Finally, the results in the right panel of Figure 5.6 do not align with the hypothesized effects. In this case we observe that routine messages are the most likely to evoke enthusiasm (although the results are not statistically significant at the conventional .05 level) and that political and action messages are less likely to trigger this emotion (the negative effect is statistically significant and of a particularly large magnitude for political messages).

What explains this unexpected result? What dynamics not captured by the theoretical model presented here should future work take into account?

Table 5.2 shows three example tweets that were coded as communicating about the routine of the organization and rated as evoking enthusiasm. The first one, from the *Jesuit Refugee Service*, congratulates an organization member for winning the European Citizen's Prize, an award given by the European Parliament "to projects and initiatives that facilitate

cross-border cooperation or promote mutual understanding within the EU."[7] The second one, from *Compassion in World Farming*, announces that two members will spend their birthday climbing a mountain to raise funds for the organization. The final message, from *Red Cross E.U.*, communicates that some volunteers are helping out people in an area recently affected by an earthquake.

Table 5.2: Routine Messages with High Enthusiasm Scores

Jesuit Refugee Service	Congrats to Fr. Tvrtko Barun SJ of JRS SouthEast Europe winner of the European Citizen's Prize!!
Compassion (CIWF)	This month Ester & Lia will be marking Lia's birthday by climbing Snowdon. All to raise funds for farm animals! https://t.co/gPtofv4WNE
Red Cross E.U.	During the night, 30 Italian #RedCross volunteers went by boat to the island of #Ischia, to support people affected by the earthquake there. https://t.co/fT1aKSIFFw

In these examples we see that although the main intention of these messages is to report about what the organization and organization members are doing–and not to communicate particularly about the political views of the group or to call people into action—they are still trying to foster engagement, especially among group supporters. They are praising members for their contribution to the organization in a very enthusiastic way, probably with the expectation in mind that this will encourage supporters to keep contributing to the group, as well as to show members that the organization stays active. If that is the case, it would not be unreasonable to expect organizations to use enthusiasm-evoking frames in this context. Enthusiasm is one of the key emotions associated with the dispositional system,

[7]For further detail on the award, visit the following link: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ireland/en/about-us/european-citizen%E2%80%99s-prize (accessed on April 19, 2018)

the emotional system that governs our habits on issues that we care about. Since group members are likely to be very interested and concerned about the issues the organization works on, it is probably the correct strategic move to employ enthusiastic frames in messages aiming to foster engagement among supporters and to compensate members for their help. In sum, in light of this final unexpected finding, future theoretical models should consider the possibility that messages reporting about the organization routine can also be related to enthusiasm, since they may also have the intention to keep current organization supporters engaged.

To summarize, in this section I studied whether some types of messages are more likely to contain emotion-evoking frames. I theorized that routine messages aiming to report about daily organization activities would be less likely to evoke enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety, than messages aiming to engage the public. I confirmed that engaging political and action messages are more likely to evoke anger and anxiety, but contrary to what I expected, I found routine messages to be associated with higher enthusiasm scores. Finally, I discussed some ways in which future work can incorporate this unexpected dynamic.

In the next section I turn my attention to social media engagement, and I test whether messages evoking enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety are indeed associated with higher engagement levels.

5.3 Social Media Engagement as a Function of Emotion-Evoking Frames

Finally, do emotion-evoking frames encourage social media engagement with formal civil society organizations? I theorize that messages evoking certain emotions are more likely to engage online publics. First, certain emotions trigger a reflexive cognitive process that makes people more likely to pay attention to, reflect on, and act on new received information (Marcus et al., 2000; Brader, 2005; Valentino et al., 2011); and second, affective content from formal civil society groups is more likely to connect with the current individualized public (Papacharissi, 2015; Casas and Webb Williams, 2018), which tends to seek personalized forms

of participation away from formal political structures they associate with political failures of the past (Li and Marsh, 2008; Micheletti and McFarland, 2011; Stolle and Micheletti, 2013; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013).

In particular, I built on the Affective Intelligence model (Marcus et al., 2000) to argue that frames evoking three emotions—enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety—should play a particularly mobilizing and engaging role. Enthusiasm and anger are related to our dispositional system, an emotional-cognitive system in charge of governing our habits, and are likely to mobilize us because they cue us into a desired goal that is within reach (enthusiasm) or that an impediment exists that makes it impossible for us to get we desire (anger). These emotions then encourage us to act in order to reach such an objective. Anxiety on the other hand is related to our surveillance system, an emotional-cognitive system that traces our environment for potential threats. Messages evoking anxiety encourage us to act in order to avoid the unwanted consequences of this new threat.

5.3.1 Measuring Relevant Engagement Dimensions

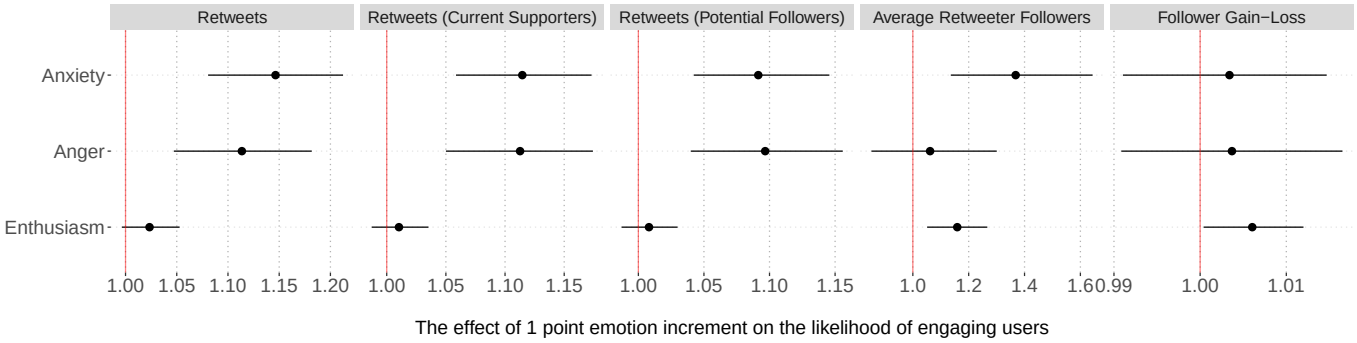
I use five variables to capture and study social media engagement. The first one is the *Number of Retweets*, which is the number of times a message from a given civil society group is shared. This is an important engagement dimension because message-sharing allows an organization to diffuse their word to a potentially infinite audience. Then I distinguish between the *Number of Retweets by Current Supporters* (organization followers) and *Number of Retweets by Potential Supporters* (non-followers). These capture how successful organizations are at engaging two different but equally crucial audiences. In order to succeed at shaping public opinion, civil society groups first need to keep their current supporters engaged, as they are the ones who care the most about the issue at hand, who constantly receive the organization messages, and who "curate" what non-followers see. But then, organizations also care about potential supporters who are not following them online because in order to shape public opinion, they need to build a strong support coalition around their ideas.

The forth measure is *Follower Gain/Loss*, the number of users the organization gained or lost five days after sending a given message. Recruiting new followers is of particular value because it allows the organizations to constantly communicate their views to a larger audience. Finally, I also study the *Retweeters' Average Followers*, the average number of followers users sharing a given organization's message have. This final variable is important because it provides an idea of how influential the engaged users are—the more followers a retweeter has, the more people the organization's word can reach.

5.3.2 Nothing else matters?

In testing out the effect that emotion-evoking frames have on social media engagement, I face one last challenge. I need to account for other alternative explanations that can also have an effect on the engagement. I use a two-fold strategy to address this challenge. First, to rule out the possibility that organization-level features covary with the predictors and the outcome of interest (so with evoked emotions and engagement), I run statistical models with organization-level fixed effects, allowing the models to only make inferences from within organization comparisons. Second, I control for a battery of other covariates in order to rule out the possibility that engagement is simply a function of organization resources (number of full-time employees), the number of users following a group at a given point in time, the type of message the organization promotes (routine, political, and action messages), and the time of the day the message is sent. Moreover, in models predicting the number of retweets and the number of followers gained/lost, I rule out the possibility that overall engagement is simply a function of engaging very influential users by controlling for the average number of followers the retweeters of a given message have.

Figure 5.7: Predicted Engagement Effects as a Result of an Increase in Evoked Emotions



5.3.3 Results

Figure 5.7 shows that, overall, emotion-evoking frames are indeed strongly associated with higher social media engagement. The figure shows the results of five statistical models predicting different engagement dimensions of interest. The dots represent the average predicted engagement effect (and 95% confidence intervals) of a message evoking one extra point of anxiety, anger, and enthusiasm (on a 0-5 scale). A complete coefficient table for the five models is available in Appendix F.

After controlling for the effect of other alternative explanations, we observe higher enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety scores to always be associated with higher engagement levels (although the effects are not always significant at conventional levels, p-value $< .05$).

In models predicting the number of retweets, we see anxiety and anger having the largest effect: a one point increase translates into a 5% to 20% increase in the number of retweets. However, a similar increase in evoked enthusiasm is associated with a much lower effect, a 2.5% increase in the number of retweets, and this effect is not statistically significant. The patterns are very similar for current and potential supporters.

In models predicting the ability of a given message to recruit influential users (retweeters' average followers as displayed in the second panel from the right in Figure 5.7), we observe anxiety again playing a strong mobilizing role. A one point increase in evoked anxiety is

related to a 60% increase in the average number of followers users retweeting the message have, meaning that anxiety-evoking messages have the ability to reach a much larger audience than any other type of tweets. Enthusiasm also plays an important role in engaging influential users, as a one point increase in enthusiasm is related to an 18% increase in the average number of followers retweeters have. Despite being of a positive sign (+5%), the average effect of anger, however, is not statistically significant.

Finally, in the last model in Figure 5.7 (right panel), we also observe that all emotion-evoking frames are predictive of an average increase in the number of followers. The effect for enthusiasm is statistically significant. A one-point enthusiasm increase is on average associated with a .6% increase in the number of followers.

Overall, these findings provide very strong evidence supporting the Affective Action in Organization theory and the argument that more formal organizations can do a better job at engaging online users by framing their communications in a more expressive and personal manner.

The advantage of Figure 5.7 is to clearly present the engaging effects of emotion-evoking frames after controlling for a battery of other alternative explanations. However, a potential drawback is to not have clear examples of how these effects come to take place. In the next subsection I overcome this shortcoming by illustrating the role that emotion-evoking frames played in the communications of one of the organizations under study–European Digital Rights.

5.3.4 An illustration of the findings: European Digital Rights

European Digital Rights (EDRi) is a confederation of civil society groups (an "umbrella" organization) that was founded in 2002 with the goal of defending people's rights and freedoms in the current digital environment.[8] Since its creation, the organization has been a

[8]See EDRi's website for some more basic information about the group: https://edri.org/about/. Accessed on May 3, 2018.

very active advocate, pressuring European policymakers on legislation related to copyrights, net neutrality, and data protection, such as the recently enacted General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679), among others.

EDRi uses all kind of strategies to purse its goals. Sometimes the organization uses more traditional *insider* strategies (Dur and Mateo, 2016) and meets with members of the European Parliament to discuss legislation face to face,[9] and sometimes it supports on-the-ground actions around Europe, such as demonstrations against internet surveillance and censorship, and violations of net neutrality.

As part of these *outsider* strategies, as well as a way to engage a broad audience with the organization's claims, EDRi has always been a very active social media user. The organization knows that it often holds policy ideas that differ from the views of very powerful actors, such as business groups, public agencies, and regional and central governments. Therefore, in order to have a shot at influencing policy, it needs to find a way to engage the citizenry and shift public opinion to favor its ideas.

From March 8, 2017 through February 16, 2018,[10] the organization sent 855 Twitter messages, including 539 original tweets and 316 retweets. Excluding the dates for which the data collection process had to be interrupted, EDRi sent an average of 2.09 original daily tweets and 1.33 retweets. Out of all these messages, 94 are part of the 7,000 coded sample for which a group of Mechanical Turk coders have reported how much enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety they believe the messages evoke.

Table 5.3 shows nine examples of messages reported as strongly evoking anger, anxiety, and enthusiasm (three examples per emotion). The messages evoking anger criticize the British, French, and Italian governments for promoting policies increasing censorship and violating people's privacy. The examples of tweets evoking anxiety are similar to those evoking anger, with the difference being that these seem to more clearly present a set of

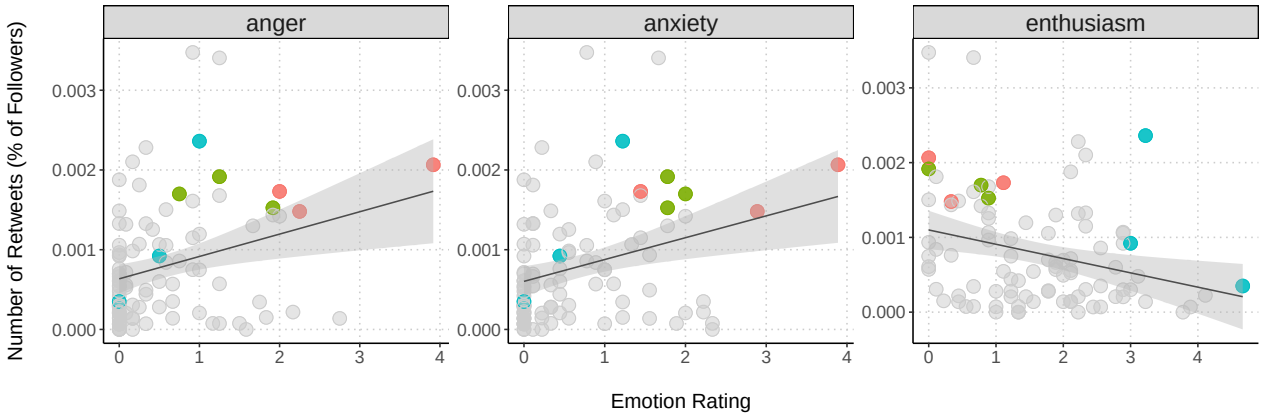
[9] As an example, this year the organizations has met with members of the European Parliament's Special Committee on Terrorism (TERR) to discuss how new potential counter terrorism legislation can effect the rights and liberties of online users and European citizens more broadly

[10] Excluding the periods during which the data collection process had to be interrupted

threats, such as the development of a new European legislative proposal intending to combat hate speech and terrorism by increasing online surveillance. Finally, the three examples of messages reported as evoking enthusiasm are mainly about encouraging people to take action. What engagement did these messages, and messages evoking these three emotions more generally, achieve?

Figure 5.8 shows a positive and statistically significant correlation between the anger and anxiety these 94 messages from EDRi generate to viewers and the number of retweets the message received (as a proportion of organization followers), as well as a negative correlation between enthusiasm and engagement. Each dot represents a message, the x-axis indicates the emotion score for the emotion in the panel title, and the y-axis represents the number of retweets. The orange dots are the three anger examples in Table 5.3, the green dots are the three anxiety examples, and the blue dots are the three enthusiasm tweets.

Figure 5.8: Enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety socres *versus* number of retweets for 94 messages sent by European Digital Rights.



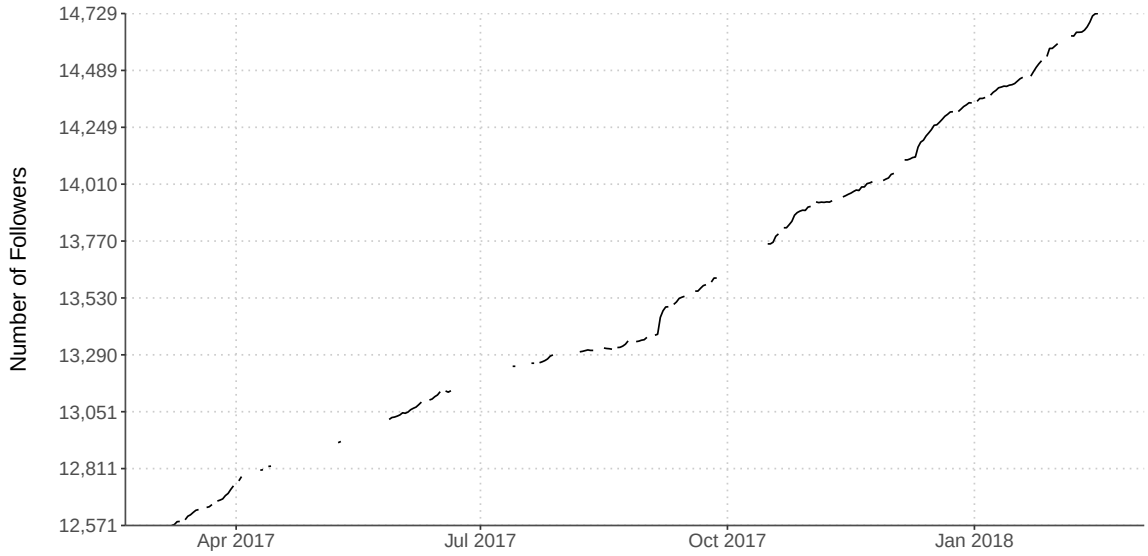
Apart form the general correlation, there are two other points about Figure 5.8 that are worth pointing out. First, as I mentioned earlier, we observe that messages that evoke anger are also likely to trigger anxiety. For example, the orange dot on the far right of the left panel (first anger example in Table 5.3) is also on the far right in the middle panel. And

Table 5.3: EDRi tweets reported as strongly evoking anger, anxiety, and enthusiasm

Anger
Theresa May threatens UK citizens with automatic, unaccountable #censorship-by-#algorithm https://t.co/4tQawfl4xo #PrivatisedLawEnforcement
In #France, the government wants to extend #surveillance via "black boxes" for telecom operators & online platforms https://t.co/OZOCcGOZhN
@HermesCenter :"#Italy plans to extend telecoms data retention and increase #censorship powers" https://t.co/7BfnoQ2Ijt
Anxiety
Leaked document: Does the EU Commission really plan to tackle illegal content online? https://t.co/msl0c1gXVW ... #terrorism #hatespeech
@ep_justice MEPs have clear choice on #ePrivacy tomorrow. Monopolies & stagnation or privacy & growth. Background: https://t.co/KRKER89raz
Watch .@doctorow on why the fight for the fight for a free, fair and open internet matters: https://t.co/HOhj1v1NfM - and help us continue this fight in 2018: https://edri.org/donate/
Enthusiasm
The #Dutch continue to fight new mass #surveillance law https://t.co/oXlTdOECDr #EDRigram @chickpurchase @bitsoffreedom
#BoostYourShield against violations of digital rights - Join the #DigitalDefenders and support our work! https://edri.org/donate/
A big, big thank you to our 40 new #DigitalDefenders!! So happy to have you on board! Help us reach the 100 % and https://edri.org/donate/ #BoostYourShield

second, as one would expect, we observe enthusiasm to be negatively correlated with anger and anxiety. In this case, this negative correlation means that the strong anger and anxiety effect are pulling down the enthusiasm engaging effect.

Figure 5.9: Evolution of the Number of Followers of European Digital Rights

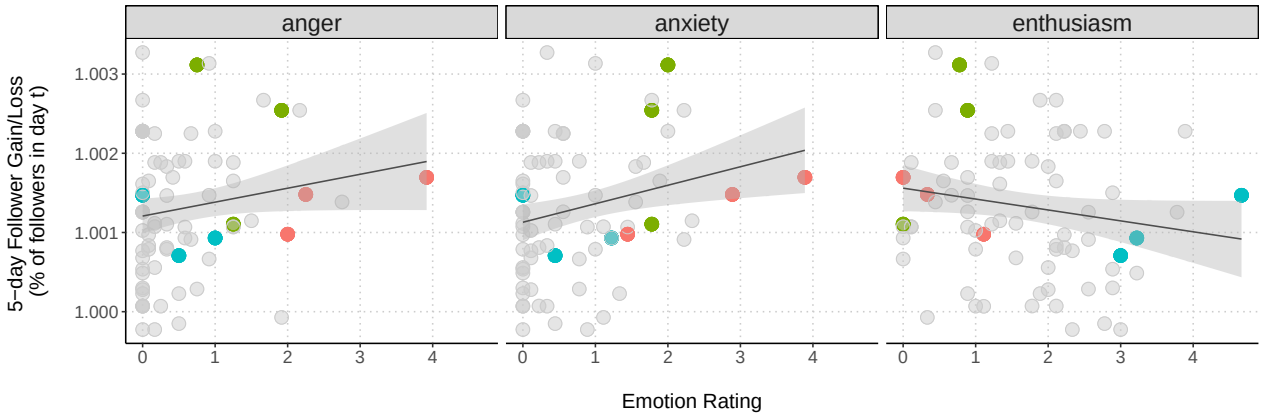


Message-sharing, however, only captures some of the engagement dimensions organizations are interested in. Another relevant reason why civil society groups turn to social media is to increase their support base, which is the number of people who are more regularly connected to the organization. The number of followers an organizations has on social media provides a good sense of how well the group is doing in growing this online support network.

Figure 5.9 shows the evolution of the number of Twitter followers of EDRi during the period of analysis. In March 2017 the organization had about 12,500 followers, and about a year after, the organization was close to 15,000 followers, for an 18% followership increase. Overall, the organization did a really good job at gradually engaging a larger number of followers. To what extent are emotion-evoking frames a cause for this followership increase?

Figure 5.10 shows the correlation between the anger, anxiety, and enthusiasm the 94

Figure 5.10: Correlation between Evoked Emotions and Follower Increase



EDRi coded messages generated, and the number of followers recruited (or lost) five days after the message was sent (as a proportion of the followers the group had at the time the message was sent). We observe very similar patterns as those we saw in Figure 5.8. Anger and anxiety are positively associated with engagement and followership increase, whereas enthusiasm is related to fewer followers. This negative correlation for enthusiasm, however, is not statistically significant in this case.

Overall, this more detailed analysis of EDRi's communications illustrates the main points we learned from the multivariate results (Figure 5.7). Emotion-evoking frames have the potential to help organizations connect with and engage online publics in multiple ways, such as by increasing message-sharing and diffusion, and by increasing the organization's support base. For EDRi's particular case, messages triggering anger and anxiety perform better and enthusiasm-evoking frames. By promoting overwhelmingly unfair and threatening situations in which governments and private companies take advantage of new digital and Internet regulation to jeopardize individual rights to privacy, EDRi has been able to increase the number of people sharing its message and following the group on a daily basis.

In a situation in which EDRi is constantly discussing with policymakers the impact that new legislative proposals can have on people's individual rights (such as the upcoming

proposals of the European Parliament's Special Committee on Terrorism), having a stronger support base offline, but also online, can send a clear signal to others that the policy ideas and views of the organizations are gradually finding a stronger public support, thus providing more leverage to the organization. Moreover, the group is building a wider and stronger network from which to organize specific actions when necessary.

Chapter 6

SO WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Networked technologies have shaped advocacy dynamics in Europe and across the World. They have changed not only the costs of public engagement and campaigning (Lupia and Sin, 2003; Bimber et al.), but also its logic (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013). Social media reduces communication costs for advocacy organizations and participation costs for members and supporters; but more importantly, digital media allows civil society groups to solve engagement problems by adopting new structures and strategies that better connect with the participation preferences of the currently individualized public.

A large literature clearly shows that traditional political participation forms are in decline (Putnam, 2000; Skocpol, 2003; Stolle and Micheletti, 2013). A Tocquevillian civil society system is no longer in place. People are not as willing to be formal paying members of political organizations, attend regular face-to-face meeting, or tolerate highly hierarchical structures (Giddens, 1991; Inglehart, 1997). They are tired of political structures they associate with political failures of the past, and they want to participate in politics with their own voice (Karpf, 2012; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013; Castells, 2015).

In this context, there are two main ways in which digital media can help civil society groups reconnect with the public. The first one is by allowing them to adopt more horizontal structures. Network technologies can facilitate the implementation of two-way communication flows as well as a more bottom-up decision-making process. Groups such as MoveOn.org have taken advantage of these strengths to develop a new type of malleable and horizontal organization (Karpf, 2012; Bimber et al., 2012).

However, a large proportion of organizations advocating for and representing groups of individuals still have a more formal and traditional organizational structure (Beyers et al.,

2016). Moreover, more formal organizations are often in a better position to defend individuals' interests (Wilson, 1981), as they are better equipped to recruit resources, coordinate actions, and influence policymakers. The extent to which networked technologies can help these formal civil society organizations solve engagement and collective action problems is widely unknown.

In this project I advanced and tested a theory aiming to understand the conditions under which formal civil society organization are willing to use social media for engagement purposes, as well as which types of frames and communications strategies are more successful at doing so. In this chapter I conclude by highlighting the reasons why we should care about online engagement (Section 6.1), summarizing the argument and the findings (Section 6.2 and 6.3), and by discussing the limitations (Section 6.4) and the implications of the findings.

6.1 Why does social media engagement matter?

Why is online engagement important? Why should we care about whether civil society organizations are able to engage online users?

I argue that we should care principally because online engagement helps organizations achieve both their immediate and longer-term goals by increasing the ability of citizen groups to solve engagement problems and potentially helping to offset existing representation biases that favor narrower private interests. In particular, social media technologies can serve the intermediate and longer-term goals of a civil society group in several ways: a) signaling that a (potentially large) group of individuals support the organization's policy ideas, b) increasing the group's ability to shape public opinion and frame issues, and c) strengthening its mobilizing capacity.

Part of the reason why civil society organizations often use *outsider* strategies, such as demonstrations and public campaigning, is to signal to policymakers that a substantive number of citizens support their policy ideas (Dur and Mateo, 2016). This stronger public support can help these groups have more leverage when pressuring and negotiating with

policymakers (who are also highly concerned about public support and reelection), as well as to convince potential donors (such as foundations) that the public is interested in their ideas.

Furthermore, a large literature indicates that a shift in political attention and a new way of framing a given problem is often a necessary condition preceding policy change (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Baumgartner et al., 2008). In the past, citizen groups aiming to shape public opinion and attention had to rely on traditional media coverage (Gitlin, 1980; Baumgartner et al., 2008) or personal off-line networks (Raiford, 2007) to spread their campaigns. A larger online support network means that organizations are better equipped to spread their views, issue priorities of the public, and shape public opinion.

Finally, by engaging a larger number of online users, organizations are increasing the number of people to which they can communicate their views and mobilize. For example, they can increase the number of people who sign petitions and legislative proposals, write letters to policymakers, and attend off-line demonstrations. As mentioned previously, these actions can signal stronger support for a given organization's ideas, which can then be used to pressure policymakers to give them more serious consideration (Dur and Mateo, 2016).

However, despite the relevance that social media engagement can have for formal civil society organizations and for democratic pluralism, we still know little about what type of organizations are more likely to use social media technologies to communicate their message or about what type of frames and strategies better engage the currently individualized public.

6.2 What have I argued?

In this project I focused on the mobilizing role of emotions to argue that organizational messages evoking three emotions (enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety) are more likely to engage online publics. Two main reasons motivate this claim. First, political psychology research shows that people are more likely to process, reflect, and act on emotion-evoking messages than on non-emotional information (Marcus et al., 2000). But more importantly, emotion-

evoking frames facilitate organizations to connect with citizens in a more personalized way. As mentioned above, people today are more interested in personalized participation forms than in engaging with traditional formal groups (Stolle and Micheletti, 2013; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013); emotion-evoking frames present content and political views in a more personalized manner that is more likely to engage the current public (Papacharissi, 2015; Casas and Webb Williams, 2018).

I advanced a theory of Affective Action in Organizations aimied at providing a better understanding of: a) which civil society organizations are more likely to use social media technologies, b) which type of messages from civic organizations are more likely to contain emotion-evoking frames, and c) whether emotion-evoking frames are actually more likely to engage online users with citizen groups. I focus on the following explanatory features. First, I argued that social media usage is a function of resources and public dependence. The more resources groups have, the more able they are to dedicate them to their online communications and remain active on social media. Then, among resource-scarce groups, I expected those organizations that highly depended on the support of individuals to advance their goals to be much more active social media users. Second, I took into consideration the fact that organizations not only use social media for public engagement but also for reporting about the day-to-day (routine) of the organization. I theorized that groups are somewhat aware of the engaging role emotions can play, and I expected messages aiming to engage the public would be more likely to contain emotion-evoking frames. Finally, I theorized that messages evoking three emotions known for their mobilizing potential, enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety (Marcus et al., 2000; Brader, 2005; Valentino et al., 2011), would be likely to achieve higher engagement levels (e.g., be shared more often and recruit new organization followers) than messages not evoking these three particular emotions.

6.3 What have I found?

I tested the validity of the Affective Action in Organization model by studying, for a one-year period, the Twitter communications and engagement of 142 civil society organizations advocating in the European Union—a polity known for some concerning representation biases (Rasmussen and Carroll, 2014).

I found significant and substantive support for the three main theoretical claims of the model, as well as for the theory as a whole. First, organizations with more resources tend to be more active social media users. For example, civil society groups with fewer than ten employees send less than one original message per day, whereas organizations with fifty employees tend to send more than two. Moreover, I find that significant differences exists among resource-scarce organizations. A lack of resources means that these groups need to establish more clear priorities. I find that resource-scarce groups that do not receive any funding from individuals, and so arguably depend little on the support of individuals to carry out their mission, send close to no original messages per day, whereas resource-scarce groups that receive most of their funding from individuals send as many original messages as richer organizations.

Second, I found that messages communicating the political views of an organization, as well those calling people into action (political and action messages), were more likely to contain emotion-evoking frames–in particular anger and anxiety. Messages communicating about a group's routine were much less likely to evoke anger and anxiety, but contrary to what I initially suspected, they were more likely to evoke enthusiasm. A more detailed exploration of the data revealed that some of the more routine-type messages also intended to encourage engagement, particularly among organization members.

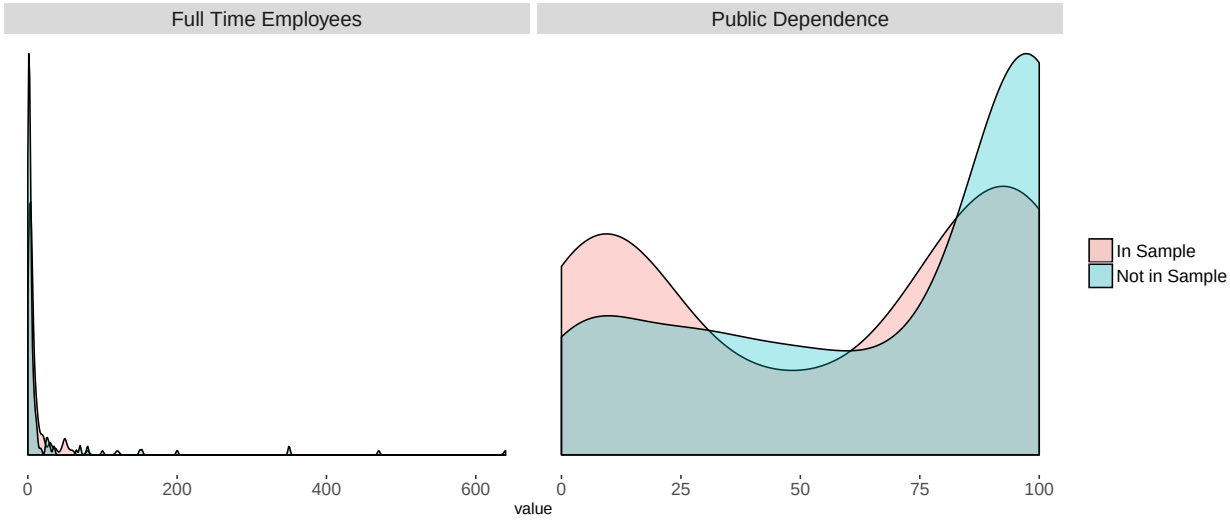
Finally, I found that messages evoking enthusiasm, anger, and anxiety were related to higher levels of engagement according to different engagement measures: number of retweets (by both followers and non-followers), quality of the rewteetwer (average number of retweeter followers), and increase in the number of followers. Anxiety, the emotion in charge of our

surveillance system (cognitive system tracking our environment for potential threats), turned out to be the most engaging emotion, as it was significantly related to all outcomes except follower increase. Enthusiasm, one of the emotions driving behavior on issues we deem relevant (related to our dispositional system), was the least mobilizing emotion in terms of message sharing. Nevertheless, I did find enthusiasm to play a crucial role in increasing organization followership.

6.4 What are the limitations of my findings?

The validity of these findings rest on the representativeness of my sample, my ability to control for other confounders, and the external validity of Twitter-based measures and behavior. Although I commend future work to address and build upon these limitations, I have strong reasons to believe that they do not invalidate the key findings of the study.

Figure 6.1: Resources and Public Dependence of the studied organizations *versus* organizations excluded from the study due to data limitations



I sampled the 142 organizations I study in this project from a comprehensive list of 738

civil society organizations actively advocating European Union institutions (Beyers et al. 2016). Although the selection of the 142 organizations was not done at random but as the result of data limitations, these groups are still a fair representation of the overall population of interest. For example, Figure 6.1 shows that the 596 organizations that were excluded from the analysis because they did not have a Twitter account or because they did but did not messages in English, have a similar number of full-time employees (resources) and similar public dependence levels.

Second, despite not using an experimental research design, I am confident about the effects reported in the previous section, particularly in relation to the main focus of this project—the engaging effects of emotion-evoking frames. In statistical models predicting engagement as a function of emotion-evoking frames, I control for a battery of potential message-level confounders, such as the number of followers the organization had at the time it sent the tweet, the intention of the message, how influential users sharing the messages are, and the time of day a given message was sent. Moreover, I allow the models to only make inferences from within organization comparisons, controlling for other potential organization-level explanations.

Finally, future research should explore the extent to which the findings of this project hold when evaluating engagement on another social media platform. Across-platform studies are extremely rare, making it very difficult to speculate about how findings based on Facebook or Instagram engagement would differ. To some extent, Twitter engagement can be a harder test for the theoretical model. Research shows that users tend to use Twitter not only for personal communications and enjoyment, but also for professional networking (Reinhardt 2009). Given that I find emotion-evoking frames to boost political engagement on a social media platform people use for entertainment as well as for professional purposes, I expect to find even stronger effects on social media platforms that people mainly use for personal enjoyment, such as Facebook and Instagram.

6.5 What have we learned?

There are five main lessons that we have learned throughout this project. First, we have learned that networked communication technologies can foster civic engagement with formal civil society organizations, strengthening the voice of those representing citizens' diffuse interests against the narrower private interests of much more powerful actors.

In the opening chapter I presented the case of the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH), a Spanish association fighting to stop eviction policies and defending more equal access to housing. Right after the President, Ada Colau, gave an angrily charged speech in front of the Spanish Parliament, videos of the moment went viral on Twitter. Many more people learned about the organization and its goals, signed an ongoing legislative proposal drafted by the group, started following and engaging with the organization on social media, and began supporting the group on the streets. Social media helped the organization gain momentum, reach out to new audiences, and strengthen its voice in front of more influential groups such as the Spanish Banking Association.

Second, we have learned that most civil society organizations active in Brussels and lobbying European Union institutions try to take advantage of the engaging opportunities that social media offer: most of them send daily messages aiming to explain the organization's work as well as to promote its views and actions.[1] Some are particularly active, sending tens of messages every day.

Then, we have also learned that on average, resourceful organizations are more active than resource-scarce groups. Initially, this could bring people to think that, despite being a very affordable communication tool, social media is simply replicating the representation biases that resource imbalances have always generated (Norris, 2001). However, a closer look at the data reveals that some resource-scarce organizations are as active as groups with many more resources. We learned that some of these resource-scarce groups are as active social media users as richer organization because they highly depended on the support of the public

[1]Most groups sent at least one original tweet or a retweet a day.

to advance their mission, and thus decide to prioritize their outreach activities. Social media allows these resource-scarce organizations to promote public campaigns at similar rates as richer groups.

As others have previously noted (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012; Obar et al., 2011; Guo and Saxton, 2014), we have as seen that organizations not only use social media for civic engagement, but they also use it for transparency and to report about the routine and day-to-day of the organization. We have learned that organizations do not personalize routine messages as much as they personalize messages tailored to engage the public. Messages promoting the political views of the organization and calling people into action are more likely to contain emotion-evoking frames that better connect with the current individualized public.

Finally, we have learned organizations can do a better job at taking advantage of what social media has to offer by making their messages feel more personal. Again, people today are not as interested in participating in formal political organizations as they were in the past (Giddens, 1991; Inglehart, 1997; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013), but they remain politically active (Stolle and Micheletti, 2013; Castells, 2015) and simply look for more unconventional and personalized forms of participating in politics (Beck and Jennings, 1979; Micheletti and McFarland, 2011; Li and Marsh, 2008). Emotion-evoking frames make organizational messages feel more personal to social media users. By engaging with these messages, users are promoting policy ideas they feel are right and with which they agree, probably without realizing that by doing so, they are helping to strengthen the voice of an organization working to make those policy ideas a reality. Emotion-evoking frames have the power to make users feel like they are part of the cause and to increase their likelihood of joining the group. In sum, this is not only a project about the mobilizing and engaging power of emotions; this is a project about personalized communications, in which we have learned that formal citizen groups can take full advantage of what networked technologies have to offer by promoting messages that invite people to make the organizational claims their own—messages that invite users to make the cause of the organization their own cause.

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Appendix A

MODEL PREDICTING TWEET-TO-RETWEET RATIO

	Retweet-to-Tweet Ratio
(Intercept)	0.177
	(0.59)
Public Dependence	0.014+
	(0.007)
Budget (100,000 - 500,000)	0.631
	(0.637)
Budget (500,000 - 1 million)	0.755
	(0.784)
Budget (1 million - 5 million)	0.557
	(0.702)
Budget (5 million - 10 million)	0.457
	(0.97)
Budget (Over 10 million)	0.943
	(1.09)
Public Dependence X Budget (100,000 - 500,000)	-0.013
	(0.008)
Public Dependence X Budget (500,000 - 1 million)	-0.014
	(0.01)
Public Dependence X Budget (1 million - 5 million)	-0.005
	(0.01)
Public Dependence X Budget (5 million - 10 million)	-0.003
	(0.013)
Public Dependence X Budget (Over 10 million)	-0.052
	(0.075)
N	84
R^2	0.11

Note: $+$ p.value < 0.1 | $*$ p.value < 0.05

Appendix B

QUALTRICS AND MECHANICAL TURK LABELING FORMS

In this Appendix you can see the two forms the workers who participated in the labeling process of the random sample of 7,000 messages used. Figure B.1 shows the survey workers had to answer once before participating in the labeling process. The survey was a list of straightforward socio-demographic questions. At the end of the survey they obtained a unique identifier they provided along with each of the messages they labeled, so each set of labels can be traced to a set of socio-demographic features. Figure ?? is the form Mechanical Turk workers used to label the messages. In this example we can see how messages that had both text and an images looked like in the platform.

Figure B.1: Qualtrics Survey Mechanical Turk Workers Filled Out Once Before Labeling any Image

Figure B.2: Mechanical Turk Form to Label Tweets from Civil Society Organizations

Labeling Tweets from Advocacy Organizations

We are conducting an academic study of how advocacy organizations, such as Non-Governmental Organizations and labor unions, diffuse online and engage the public in social media.

The task consists in observing a Twitter message from an advocacy organization and answer some questions about the message, such as what emotions does it make you feel and if certain elements are present in the tweet image if a picture is present.

Each task takes about 1 minute

INSTRUCTIONS:

- **(A) If this is the first time you perform this task**
  You need first to fill out a short form before completing any task, it only takes few seconds. You will receive a UNIQUE RESPONDENT IDENTIFIER you always need to provide when submitting each task. If you loose it you will need to fill out the form again. Then you are allowed to perform up to 100 HITs. We'll check the UNIQUE IDENTIFIERS provided here and will only compensate those HITs with a code generated by filling out the survey

  Click here to complete the initial form
- **(B) If you already have a Unique Respondent Identifier, proceed with the task**
  Read the message carefully and answer the questions below. Please complete the task to the best of your knowledge. **Submissions will be reviewed and incomplete tasks will not be compensated**

TASKS:

Please read the following message carefully and take a good look at the image if one is present. Then answer the questions below

@Greenpeace: The resistance against fossil fuels is winning. Here's the proof https://t.co/5eQtDGt3WC #BreakFree https://t.co/jHWJQrtVLG

[1/3] How does this message make you feel?

Indicate how much of each emotions do you feel when reading and observing this message

[0 = Not at all, 5 = Extremely]

Scared ○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Enthusiastic ○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Hateful ○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Worried ○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Angry ○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Proud ○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Bitter ○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Resentful ○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

Afraid ○ 0 ○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5

[2/3] What do you think is the intention of the message? (Choose all that apply)

- **Mobilize:** the sender is trying to get you to do something.
- **Inform:** the sender is providing information about an issue, policy, and/or event.
- **Fundraise:** the sender is asking you to donate money for the organization or a cause.

[3/3] (Complete only if the message has an image)

Is there text on the image?

- Yes
- No
- Unclear

If so, if the text is short or there is a clear statement/motto, please type it in the following box (leave blank otherwise)

Provide UNIQUE WORKER IDENTIFIER (same for all tasks, see Instructions A)

Submit

Appendix C

STAGE 1: MODELS PREDICTING DAILY ORIGINAL TWEETS

	Linear	LogLinear
(Intercept)	-0.645	0.512*
	(1.767)	(0.213)
Public Dependence	0.049*	0.006*
	(0.023)	(0.003)
Budget (100,000 - 500,000)	2.363	0.466+
	(1.965)	(0.237)
Budget (500,000 - 1 million)	2.26	0.413
	(2.42)	(0.292)
Budget (1 million - 5 million)	3.16	0.722*
	(2.249)	(0.272)
Budget (5 million - 10 million)	4.464	0.862*
	(3.34)	(0.404)
Budget (Over 10 million)	2.79	0.646
	(3.808)	(0.46)
Public Dependence X Budget (100,000 - 500,000)	-0.052+	-0.007*
	(0.027)	(0.003)
Public Dependence X Budget (500,000 - 1 million)	-0.048	-0.005
	(0.033)	(0.004)
Public Dependence X Budget (1 million - 5 million)	-0.058+	-0.009*
	(0.032)	(0.004)
Public Dependence X Budget (5 million - 10 million)	-0.051	-0.004
	(0.047)	(0.006)
Public Dependence X Budget (Over 10 million)	-0.096	-0.024
	(0.276)	(0.033)
N	94	94
R^2	0.1	0.15

Note: + p.value < 0.1 | $*$ p.value < 0.05

Appendix D

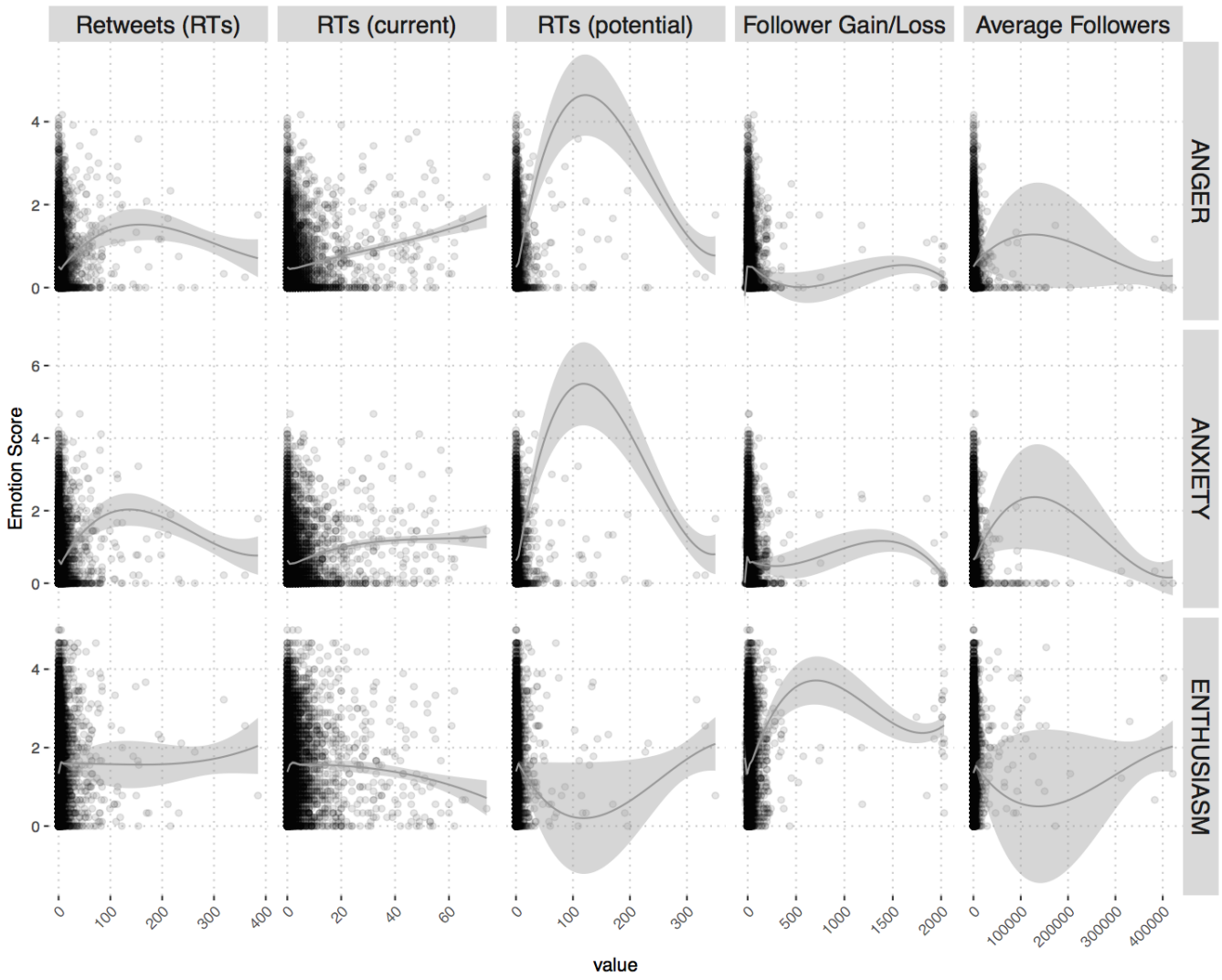
STAGE 2: THREE LINEAR MODELS PREDICTING EVOKED ANGER, ENTHUSIASM, AND ANXIETY

	Anger	Enthusiasm	Anxiety
(Intercept)	0.07	2.055*	0.081
	(0.162)	(0.256)	(0.186)
Routine Message	-0.072*	0.045+	-0.058*
	(0.016)	(0.025)	(0.018)
Political Message	0.131*	-0.32*	0.138*
	(0.018)	(0.028)	(0.021)
Action Message	0.187*	-0.056	0.175*
	(0.034)	(0.054)	(0.04)
Organization Fixed-Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	6,884	6,884	6,884
R_2	0.13	0.12	0.14

Note: $+$ p.value < 0.1 | $*$ p.value < 0.05

Appendix E

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EVOKED EMOTIONS AND ENGAGEMENT: LOESS REGRESSION



Appendix F

STAGE 3 MODELS PREDICTING ENGAGEMENT

	Retweets	RTs(current)	RTs(potential)	GainLoss	Agv. Followers
(Intercept)	0.7851	0.6827	0.2337	91.932	5.5445*
	(0.7626)	(0.6629)	(0.6337)	(103.6346)	(2.5287)
Enthusiasm	0.0225	0.0104	0.0082	4.1948*	0.148*
	(0.0142)	(0.0123)	(0.0118)	(1.9292)	(0.0471)
Anger	0.1069*	0.1043*	0.09*	2.3362	0.0557
	(0.0336)	(0.0292)	(0.0279)	(4.5675)	(0.1114)
Anxiety	0.1361*	0.1089*	0.0874*	2.1366	0.3121*
	(0.0299)	(0.026)	(0.0248)	(4.0628)	(0.0991)
Resources (FTEs)	0	0	0	0	0
	(0.1792)	(0.1557)	(0.1489)	(24.3475)	(0.5941)
Number of Followers	1e-04*	0	1e-04*	-0.024*	0
	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0.0038)	(1e-04)
Routine Message	0.007	-0.0165	0.0287	4.2228	0.0054
	(0.0288)	(0.025)	(0.0239)	(3.9082)	(0.0954)
Political Message	-0.053	-0.0691*	-0.0045	-0.6118	-0.0224
	(0.0341)	(0.0296)	(0.0283)	(4.6286)	(0.1129)
Action Message	0.018	0.012	0.0264	5.5386	-0.2092
	(0.0561)	(0.0488)	(0.0466)	(7.6229)	(0.186)
Avg. Retweeter Followers	0*	0*	0*	0	-
	(0)	(0)	(0)	(1e-04)	-
Time Frame (1)	-0.1497*	-0.103*	-0.1669*	-9.9305	-0.4369*
	(0.0589)	(0.0512)	(0.0489)	(8.0002)	(0.1952)
Time Frame (2)	-0.128*	-0.0807	-0.1634*	-5.2529	-0.3873+
	(0.0601)	(0.0522)	(0.0499)	(8.161)	(0.1991)
Time Frame (3)	0.0801	0.0846	0.0112	-4.6448	-0.1495
	(0.0695)	(0.0605)	(0.0578)	(9.4518)	(0.2306)
Time Frame (4)	0.5156*	0.4778*	0.3391*	4.08	0.5016
	(0.0977)	(0.0849)	(0.0812)	(13.2726)	(0.3239)
Org. Fixed-Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	6,884	6,884	6,884	6,884	6,884
R_2	0.32	0.33	0.25	0.17	0.22

VITA

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