Engaged by the Spectacle of Protest: How Bystanders Became Invested in Occupy Wall Street

Claudia Strauss

Imagine the participants in a political demonstration. They are animated not just by beliefs about the righteousness of their cause but also strong emotions such as indignation or attachment to their fellow protestors. Now imagine someone else who is not at this scene but is reading about it online or watching a brief news story about it on television. What is that bystander thinking or feeling, if anything? Do they care?

I define a bystander as an uninvolved witness to contentious politics. Their attitudes about the events could be positive, negative, mixed, neutral, or absent.[1] Little research has been conducted to understand the thoughts and even less on the feelings of bystanders to contentious politics despite the views of many political organizers and scholars that bystanders' opinions and engagement or apathy matter (McCright and Dunlap 2008) and despite a turn to studying emotions in politics (Goodwin et al. 2001; see Eliasoph 1998 and Gamson 1992 for important exceptions). Regarding social movements, Turner and Killian (1987) posited, "How the movement is publicly understood and defined

C. Strauss (✉)
Pitzer College, Claremont, CA, USA

will have more effect than the views and tactics of typical adherents" on its recruitment, sources of financial support, opposition tactics, and state tolerance (Turner and Killian 1987, p. 256). Public support for a social movement gives the movement credibility in its political battles, whereas public apathy or antipathy toward a movement hurts it. Even if bystanders do no more than to talk about contentious politics (face-to-face or on social media), they contribute to the climate of opinion about it. Yet, the thoughts and feelings of bystanders to contentious politics are too often simply assumed (if the political actions were successful, then their message must have resonated with the public) or public opinion is assessed with brief surveys that do not help us understand if respondents cared, and if so, why. The very term "bystander" may suggest someone who should be involved but remains on the sidelines out of apathy or fear.

Theories that expect bystanders to be psychologically unengaged would not explain why Carl Mathews, an unemployed security guard I interviewed in southern California in 2011, said about the Occupy Movement, "I *love* it" and was particularly excited by images of protestors clashing with police, or why Terrance West, an unemployed logistics clerk who was active in local electoral politics, was "upset because they destroyed the lawn at [Los Angeles] City Hall" and found images of protestors clashing with police "depressing." Terrance and Carl are both working-class, middle-aged, African American men. There is nothing obvious about their social identities that would explain their contrasting reactions to Occupy. Instead, we need to know more about their affectively imbued cultural schemas and personal semantic networks to understand why both were psychologically engaged, but with different outcomes.

The Occupy Movement and My Participants

Carl Mathews and Terrance West were two out of 64 ethnically and socioeconomically diverse unemployed southern Californians whom a research assistant and I interviewed in the fall of 2011 and spring of 2012, when there were persistent high unemployment levels in the region following the Great Recession.[2] My goal was to learn how they coped with and interpreted being out of work, including their ideas about politics and the economy. I did not expect them to be politically active and most were not, with fewer than a quarter involved in any political activity beyond voting. Most did not even sign online petitions.

In the summer of 2011, when I planned my project, I could not find any local or national groups organizing the unemployed. My grant applications quoted a commentator who asked, "Where, if anywhere, is the outrage?" (Rampell 2011).

We did not know that the Occupy Wall Street protest was being planned that summer. From a small demonstration on September 17, 2011, the movement grew, and Occupy tent encampments sprang up across North America and elsewhere. Eventually, there were 950 cities with Occupy encampments or demonstrations in more than 80 countries and over 3200 protesters were arrested (Chappell 2011; Mother Jones News Team 2011). Between mid-November and early December 2011, cities forced the closure of the encampments. Although some Occupy groups continued after they were evicted from public lands, the movement became much less visible. Still, their unusual tactics of occupying public spaces captured public attention and demonstrated discontent. Occupy's slogan, "We are the 99%," "became a household slogan seen everywhere from sidewalk graffiti to Facebook memes" (Gaby and Caren 2016, p. 413).

Despite its short life, the Occupy movement had lasting effects, politicizing participants with little previous experience in activism, inspiring organizing in the years that followed, popularizing discourse about economic inequality, and energizing support for populist political candidates like Bernie Sanders, while depressing support for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 US presidential campaign (Gaby and Caren 2016; Krieg 2016; Leonhardt 2016; Levitin 2015; Milkman et al. 2013). But what were the views of the Occupy movement among members of the general public like my research participants, only two of whom participated at all in Occupy demonstrations? I found no scholarly research on that topic; only public opinion surveys, the most interesting of which was a November 2011 Gallup poll showing greater approval than opposition for the goals of the movement, but the reverse for the way the movement was conducted (Saad 2011). What might be the basis of those attitudes?

SHOULD WE EXPECT BYSTANDERS TO CARE ABOUT CONTENTIOUS POLITICS?

Rejecting early views of protesters as irrational mobs as well as later views of protesters as hyperrational cost-benefit calculators, some social movement researchers now seek a more nuanced understanding of emotions in political activism. There have been interesting studies of the emotions

that motivate participation, activists' emotional pedagogy (e.g., learning to replace fear with anger), affective bonds with leaders and other participants, and the "adrenaline rush" that can come from participating in protests (Goodwin et al. 2004; Gould 2004).

That research gives a much fuller, richer understanding of motivations for the participants in political protests, but does not go very far in helping us to understand the reactions of those who do not participate. Couldry (2013) posits two conceptual approaches to social movement bystanders: "For those interested in expanded political agency, bystander publics are the standing reserve of political action, available for recruitment to parties and movements" while "For those concerned with apathy, bystander publics signal entropy in political systems: the temporarily mobilized lose interest and revert to the 'bystander frame' which simply wants an end to conflict" (Couldry 2013, p. 163).

Couldry's two categories are a good starting point, but there are theoretical differences within each of these camps. Those concerned with public apathy attribute it to different sources. Some scholars imagine most people as ignorant about current events, barely caring about any politics, conventional or contentious, and only expressing opinions if forced to by a pollster, at which point they resort to cognitive shortcuts like repeating the majority opinion among others in their primary identity group (e.g., Achen and Bartels 2016) or what comes to the top of their mind due to its predominance in the media at the time (Zaller 1992). For them, the most notable feature of bystanders' political emotions is their absence. Others imagine the general public as apathetic not out of insufficient interest but from a passive spectatorship inculcated by mass media and the powers that be in current capitalist societies (Debord 1995). A different portrait of the public is posited by Turner and Killian (1987), who describe bystanders not as apathetic but as worried about the harm they may suffer from contentious politics. They propose, "As a general principle, all publics tend to become bystander publics when oppositions remain active over a long period of time" (Turner and Killian 1987, p. 217). The predominant emotions in this bystander perspective are annoyance and fear.[3] Unlike Turner and Killian's universal principle, Eliasoph (1998) and Gould (2004, 2013) describe specific political cultures and social norms that inhibit political action. The bystanders in their vivid ethnographic and historical portrayals in the United States of the 1980s and 1990s are suffused with emotions like shame, anxiety, and a self-protective shell of cynicism.

These portrayals of uninterested or annoyed or anxious or cynically detached members of the public partly applied to some of my research participants. Eleven of my participants did not know about the Occupy Movement and some of those were not very interested. For example, Jake Taylor, a young military veteran, likened involvement in a political movement to being in a religious cult and said, "I have never had any interest in what other people think." However, those eleven were not apathetic in general; each became animated at some point when our discussion turned to politics and the economy. The particular scholars in this first group (e.g., Achen and Bartels 2016) who focus on the public's ignorance of specific facts or standard political ideologies overlook the ways ordinary people can find politics meaningful in the absence of detailed political knowledge.

Those who see bystander publics as the standing reserve of political action, potentially mobilizable for action, generally imagine ordinary citizens as an audience that can be aroused with the right message, one that is culturally and experientially resonant (e.g., Gamson 1992, 2004; Snow and Benford 1988, 1992).[4] Within this general approach, some theorists focus attention on the framing of messages, assuming a fairly passive, culturally homogeneous public (Snow and Benford 1988). As Benford himself later admitted, the image of a movement's frame "resonating" or not with the public assumes that "participant mobilization [was] simply a matter of movement activists pushing the appropriate rhetorical button" (Benford 1997, p. 421), and there remains a need "to focus on the interplay between elite and non-elite framings of contentious events or issues" (p. 422). As critics such as Steinberg (1998) pointed out, and as various mass communication researchers have emphasized (e.g., Sandvoss 2011), this one-way model of communication overlooks what different audiences bring to an engagement with messages. By bringing together working people for focus group discussions of current issues, Gamson (1992) showed that ordinary people become engaged by drawing upon a mix of cognitive resources, including but not limited to media frames. This general approach is the one I extend here. Bystanders psychologically engage by amplifying the images and words they encounter, imbuing them with thoughts and feelings from their learned schemas and personal semantic networks. My approach draws upon cultural schema ("cultural models") analysis in cognitive anthropology (Holland and Quinn 1987; D'Andrade and Strauss 1992; Strauss and Quinn 1997).

Schemas and Personal Semantic Networks

Schemas are simple interpretive frameworks that people hold, their assumptions about typical sequences of events or features of things. As the name suggests, they are schematic, simplified mental models, not specific facts or detailed ideologies or particular memories. These simplified models are automatically inferred and constantly updated from first-hand experience (e.g., learning from infancy how to behave around different categories of persons), from media representations (how different social groups are typically portrayed), and may also be conveyed in talk (Strauss and Quinn 1997; Strauss 2012). Schemas provide generic plot lines and stereotypes. They are not filters that prevent learning new information, but they have an expectation-preserving bias because they direct attention to some aspects of a situation rather than others, fill in ambiguous or missing information, and recast fuzzy memories. Experience shapes schemas, but as schemas become well-learned, they shape the meanings people attribute to their subsequent experiences (Strauss and Quinn 1997). The result is active interpretation without active effort; this information processing happens prior to and sometimes in contradiction to conscious thought, as studies of implicit bias have shown (Bohner and Dickel 2011).

The way schemas automatically fill in missing details explains why people do not need much specific information to care about current events. This is particularly important for reactions to political protests, which bystanders generally encounter only through sketchy media reports (Gamson 2004; Gitlin 1980).[5] Bystanders react not just to the minimal information they are given, but to everything that is evoked in them by that information, including the emotions learned with those schemas (Strauss and Quinn 1997). Political schemas are often learned as affectively charged dramas. For example, in the widely shared American populist schema that Reich (1988) called The Rot at the Top, the system is rigged in favor of the rich and powerful. No one in charge of politics or the economy can be trusted. The Rot at the Top schema is typically learned along with anger or cynicism.

Giving a schema a name like Rot at the Top reifies it; no two people's versions of that schema are exactly alike because each person learns it from different sources. However, common experiences, media representations, and peer commentary create a cultural overlap in people's schemas. Of course, schemas need not be shared by everyone in a society to be cultural or be the only interpretive framework available in that

society, and divergent cultural schemas create differing interpretations of the same political events.

Thus, one way in which bystanders can become engaged by the spectacle of political protests is to interpret the protests using emotion-imbued schemas, in addition to any pertinent facts or ideologies they may happen to know. However, there is more to the story, because each person's schemas are in turn connected to other schemas as well as to specific personal memories, and ideas about who they are and what they want in life. This whole associative network I call a personal semantic network (Strauss 1992). Thus, the actions or message of a political demonstration would arouse not only directly relevant cultural schemas, but also other emotion-laden schemas and specific beliefs linked to those. All of those schemas and beliefs are also mentally associated with a person's self-identities, relevant personal memories, and desires. This provides a richer web of personal associations by which individuals can find additional meanings and become engaged in political events like protests, or indeed, any message, personality, or event.

Interviewing for Cultural Schema and Personal Semantic Network Analysis

Cultural schemas can be recognized in popular culture, social media and other public discussions, focus groups, as well as interviews. Personal semantic network analysis, on the other hand, requires lengthy semistructured or unstructured interviews. There should be plentiful opportunities for interviewees to free associate and elaborate on what matters to them (Strauss 2005). Multiple meetings with each person are preferable.

This analysis is based on this sort of rich, in-depth interviewing. In the first wave of my research, I met with participants for two lengthy recorded interviews. In our first meeting, I gathered a life history and learned about their present circumstances. In the second interview, I asked them how things are going in the country, the cause of problems in the economy, how they see society and their place in it, their vision of a good life, and a number of other questions about politics and the economy, including in what ways, if any, they have been politically active. About two months into my research, I realized that I should be asking my participants for their thoughts about the Occupy movement, which I raised by asking, "Lately there have been these different movements that have been in the news, the Tea Party, Occupy Wall Street. Do you have any opinions about those?"[6] Because this question was a late addition, not everyone

was asked. Some of my participants discussed Occupy before I asked about it, but only two had been involved in any way with it. Two years later, I was able to meet with most of my participants for a follow-up interview. I was also in touch with many through email or social media (Facebook and LinkedIn), and in a few cases, phone calls or informal meetings.

TWO VIEWS OF THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT

One might think that people who were unemployed would be more sympathetic to the Occupy movement than the public at large, but I did not find that to be the case among my interviewees.[7] Out of the 46 people whose views my assistant and I solicited or who brought up the topic on their own, 24% had a favorable view, 46% had a mixed or negative view, and 30% had no opinion.[8] That spread is similar to the median attitudes about Occupy in several surveys of national adult samples in November and December 2011 (29% in support; 42% opposed; 29% uncertain or no opinion or decline to state).[9] However, like the respondents to the Gallup survey cited earlier, my participants tended to support Occupy's message but not its tactics. Why was the movement's message more popular than its tactics?

To answer this question and explore bystanders' engagement in the issue, consider the comments of Carl Mathews and Terrance West, whom I briefly quoted at the beginning. When I asked Carl Mathews, a former security guard for the city of Los Angeles, what he thought about Occupy, he responded enthusiastically[10]:

Claudia S: What do you think about the Occupy Movement?
Carl Mathews: *Won*derful. About time. How long can you beat somebody down? How long can you take advantage of people? I like what they did with the banks on November 22nd, everybody was going to credit unions. Credit unions were getting people by the hundreds of thousands. You know what? I *loved* it. Get out of them banks, show them that they can't do what they want to do. Let them know we're going to take all our money out and go into a credit union, yes sir. You know, the corporations now got to understand: you've got to help us. You got helped by Bush but you still don't want to help us. Get rid of them. I *love* it. They gonna keep on doing it and pretty soon the people *will* prevail.

Claudia S: You think so?

Carl M: It's just going to take a while. You know why? It's peaceful now, […] it's peaceful now but it won't be so for long. And this is something, it's not a racially motivated thing, it ain't black, it ain't Mexican, it ain't Jews, ain't homosexuals, it's *everybody*, holding hands, fighting for the *same* thing, the 99%. That's what's going on. And pretty soon—you can only tear gas and mace people so long but let's face it, we got more people out here with guns than police officers. You know, police got it good because people like me and you choose to not hurt no one. When the people change their heart, then they need to watch out.

Claudia S: So you think people might actually, you know, start demanding their rights with guns?

Carl M: If it don't get better it always gets worse. If you notice something: things always get worse before they get better because you know why? […] Most things don't dissolve easy. It takes struggle on both ends until something pops and breaks and then you have to restructure everything. Then after that it calms down. Just like with the Watts riots. [ ] the Watts riots. Blacks didn't hardly have jobs, when after the Watts riots they were hiring people that couldn't even hardly speak (laughs) or even had education because they was black. […] What it was, black people got tired of being broke. And a lot of things *happened* after that. But it shouldn't take civil unrest before the government do something.

Claudia S: Yeah, yeah.

Terrance West, a logistics clerk, also had strong opinions but they were much less favorable. He volunteered his thoughts about the Occupy protests in answering my question about whether he had ever been attracted to a cause or movement. Terrance is gay and he supported the protests of California's Proposition 8, passed by voters in 2008 but later overturned by the courts, which made same-sex marriage illegal: "I remember watching the coverage of the protests that were taking place in Los Angeles and West Hollywood, Beverly Hills and that type of thing. Unfortunately I wasn't able to get down there to participate in any of that." Then, although it was the summer of 2012 when we spoke, long after the Occupy movement had disappeared from mainstream news

coverage, and without any prompting from me, he added his thoughts about that movement:

Terrance West:	I also felt really strongly about the Occupy movement that was taking place.
Claudia S:	Oh, yeah? What did you think about that?
Terrance W:	I felt like I was on both sides of that. The reason why I'm saying that is because I understand the *ang*er and the hostility towards the bad economy and some of the folks that we believe may have had a part to play in that, but then again, there was a lot of property damage that cost millions of dollars. There was a lot of illegal activity that was taking place that I think some people were just using it as an excuse to get out and do things that they wouldn't normally do.
Claudia S:	You mean do drugs or –
Terrance W:	I was actually afraid to go into Los Angeles during the time when the movement was at City Hall.
Claudia S:	Oh, really?
Terrance W:	Because of the reports of violence that was taking place, different things that were going on, and then also I liked the way the police department handled it because they were being understanding but being firm at the same time. On a personal level, I was upset because they destroyed the lawn at City Hall and L.A. City Hall is one of the most spectacular landmarks in L.A. and I hate that they messed up a part of what makes L.A., L.A. I hated seeing people getting beat in the other cities like in New York and in Oakland and in Boston because we're all Americans. We're all suffering through the same bad economy and the cop that might've been out there beating that protester is probably only a paycheck or two away from being out there *with* that protester, so that's why. It was kind of depressing. It was disheartening to see that.

Standard scales of political ideology would place Terrance's political views to the left of Carl's, making the contrast between Carl's fervent support and Terrance's criticisms of Occupy surprising. A deeper understanding of their schemas and personal semantic is needed to understand their sentiments.

What Was Occupy's Message?

On the surface, Carl and Terrance do not seem to differ much in their views of Occupy's message. Like two-thirds of those of my participants who were familiar with Occupy, both approve of it. However, Carl was enthusiastic ("*Won*derful. About time") and continued for several lines, while Terrance's discussion of his agreement with Occupy's message was short and emotionally ambiguous ("I understand the *ang*er and the hostility towards the bad economy and some of the folks that we believe may have had a part to play in that…"). Was Terrance angry? Or does he "understand" the protestors' anger, sharing their views but not their passion? There are subtle differences between Carl and Terrance's interpretation of Occupy's message that partly explain the difference in their enthusiasm.

While the Occupy movement's slogan, "We are the 99%," was memorable and repeated, the interpretation of that slogan varied a great deal. Pickerill and Krinsky (2012) propose that the message was so powerful because it was ambiguous, an ambiguity compounded by the movement's grassroots, decentralized structure. There was no one in charge to coordinate messaging, which varied by location and depending on whether one consulted statements issued by a particular General Assembly or principles enunciated at websites like occupywallst.org. This created openings for bystanders to impose their own interpretations, a process I believe always happens, but that was particularly apparent in this instance.

Among my participants, there were four common schemas for interpreting Occupy's message. The first was a Rot at the Top populist schema according to which the average people of society are pitted against not only big money but also establishment politicians from both major parties. As Tom Dunn, a former corporate recruiter (later turned medical marijuana courier) put it, "My biggest problem with the Democrats and the Republicans is not the philosophies; it's the corrupt system. And I think that's really, on its face, what the Occupy Movements are all about." The second was a standard US liberal political schema critical of excessive corporate power and an unfair distribution of wealth skewed toward the very rich. For those who held this schema, key actors in the US political and economic system are large corporations and the rich aligned with the Republican party, who are opposed to the economic interests of ordinary people. For example, when I asked Krystal Murphy, a former bank administrative assistant, why she had said she could support the Occupy movement, she replied that it was

because "our economy is being very manipulated… I think it started under Georgie first [*her belittling term for President George H.W. Bush*]. When they took–a lot of the government regulations were just done away with. That's why they were able to write all these bad notes because there was nobody there saying, 'You can't do that. That's against the law.'" She may have been thinking of the repeal of the Glass–Steagall Act intended to separate commercial banking from investment banking. The legislation repealing the Glass–Steagall Act was signed not by the Republican George H.W. Bush, but by a Democrat, Bill Clinton, demonstrating the way fuzzy memories can be shaped by schemas. Like The Rot at the Top, this US liberal cultural schema has a clear drama of conflict between opposing forces, which was emotionally arousing for some of the people I talked to.

By contrast, political conservatives interpreted Occupy's message as a wild-eyed demand to eliminate banks and corporations, which they saw as totally unrealistic as well as hypocritical. Caroline James, who has held management positions in the entertainment industry, had a low opinion of Occupy protesters: "It seemed to be people that were my age demographic and younger who were very well off, had iPhones and had all the different things that the corporations they're railing against made and they use them every day but yet they're railing against the corporations." Those who interpreted Occupy's message in this way felt scorn for it.

Finally, a number of participants saw Occupy's message as targeting immoral, greedy Wall Street bankers. They could be angry at those individuals but there were so many of them and most were unknown to the general public. Furthermore, as some of my participants articulated, greed is not limited to Wall Street. One Republican participant, Robert Milner, had a hard time making up his mind what he thought about Occupy. The first time I talked to him, he brought up Occupy on his own and commented, "It's just greed. It's those few that are up top." The next time we met, he said he wanted to modify his previous comments because he believed that greed was a widespread human failing: "People have to be willing to not be so greedy, even the regular people, even the regular people like me." Among my participants, those who interpreted Occupy's message as being about immoral individuals tended, like Terrance, to voice short, concessionary nods to the message, or like Robert, had mixed views of the message.

Carl understood Occupy's message to be directed toward banks and other corporations: "You know, the corporations now got to understand: you've

got to help us. You got helped by Bush but you still don't want to help us. Get rid of them." This is an example of the US liberal schema: Corporations are aligned with Republican politicians against the people. I argue below that Carl's full personal semantic network shows a distrust of Democrats as well as Republicans; his views combined the US liberal schema with a more thoroughgoing antiestablishment schema. Terrance had earlier criticized relaxed regulations that had allowed "creative financing," but when he summarized Occupy's message he focused on individual bad actors: "the bad economy and some of the folks that we believe may have had a part to play in that." His interpretation of Occupy's message thus drew primarily on the less arousing bad actors schema.

Is This What Democracy Looks Like?
Cultural Schemas About Occupy's Tactics

My participants also differed in the schemas that shaped their reactions to Occupy's tactics. Interestingly, more than half of those who discussed both Occupy's message and its tactics liked one of those but disliked the other. Thus, it is not enough to investigate thoughts and feelings about the movement's message; we also need to study how bystanders interpret the spectacle of protest tactics.[11]

The Occupy Wall Street movement was planned with the hopes of sparking revolutionary change. As one of the organizers, Kalle Lasn, put it in an October 4, 2011, interview with *Salon*, "We felt that there was a real potential for a Tahrir moment in America," referring to the Arab Spring demonstrators' occupation of Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt earlier in 2011, which led to the resignation of the long time Egyptian president. The Occupy movement did not have similar revolutionary effects, but the movement's spread and their colorful encampments in urban centers, convenient to reporters, meant that many people were exposed to images of Occupy encampments and protests, sometimes in person but more often through the media.

None of my participants sought out an Occupy encampment, but three had a chance encounter with one and two joined one-time protests on related issues. All the rest learned about Occupy through media reports. What did they think about the movement's tactics? The majority thought about political protests by drawing upon dominant cultural schemas about political involvement; revolutionary change was far from

their minds. I found three primary schemas among my participants: Protests are a way of expressing and acting on one's ideals, which is a democratic right; protests should be nonviolent and orderly; protests should be solution-oriented and a productive use of time.

Those who saw political protesters as making a stand for their ideals had a positive, sometimes even joyful, reaction to the sight of the Occupy protests. For example, Phoenix Rises had a proud generational identity as a protester. When I initially explained my project to her over the phone, she said she would be happy to voice her views. She added that when she was in school in the 1970s she was of the generation that "burned our bras" and "stood for something," turning the denigrating mythical trope of feminists as bra burners into a positive symbol of idealistic protest. In our third meeting, she talked about choosing to be a special education teacher in order to make a difference, which she saw as typical of the Baby Boomers. That made her think of the Occupy Movement. She said, "I'm very proud of the kids that were standing up and doing what they were doing downtown camping out in Oakland. It made me very proud to see young kids once again trying to do something for what they believed in." She added, "They're just trying to invoke their rights." When Phoenix Rises looked at the Occupy movement, she did not just see Occupy; she saw young idealists expressing their beliefs, just as she imagined her generation.[12] It is a schema of personal moral commitments as a basis for civic and political activism (Lichterman 1996).

This positive view of political protest as an expression of one's views and laudable political involvement ("do something") was not limited to Baby Boomers. Katarina Spelling, who was in her late twenties when we met, did not agree with Occupy's message because she thought that home buyers who took on mortgages they could not afford were as much to blame for their economic problems as "evil" bankers. Nonetheless, she admired the fact that the protesters cared enough to get involved. She had been the president of a local chapter of the Young Republicans and had found that it was a struggle to interest young people in politics: "I think it's great that people are involved. […] I feel like it's a little bit of a waste of time, but at the same time I admire their tenacity. Like good for you for caring, kind of how I feel about Obama getting people involved that are my age. I've always felt that way. I always wanted people my age to care more." For Katarina Spelling all forms of political activism, whether with the Young Republicans or going

to an Occupy protest, are laudable because they show "caring" and being "involved." Others, like Phoenix Rises, valued protest as distinct from electoral politics, but they all admired those who made the effort to act on their beliefs. Their admiration goes to the commitment shown by individual protesters, not to the sight of collective solidarity.

This cluster of participants encompasses almost all of those who liked Occupy's tactics. The only other schema that led to a positive view of Occupy's tactics was that held by Carl Mathews. Carl Mathews's militant protest schema was an outlier among my participants. Recall that he commented, "you can only teargas and mace people so long, but let's face it we got more people out here with guns than police officers. Police got it good because people like me and you choose to hurt no one. When the people change their heart, then they need to watch out." When I asked, "So you think people might actually start demanding their rights with guns?" Carl defended "civil unrest" as a last resort if the government does not act on people's legitimate concerns, the same view that led to the American Revolution and is held by some Americans today. No one else among my participants voiced it, but it made Carl excited by Occupy protesters' clashes with police.[13]

As I stated above, opposition to Occupy's tactics was more common than support. One schema that led to opposition was the view that protests should be peaceful and orderly. Those who held this schema often agreed with political protests in principle. However, they reacted negatively if protests were violent, infringed on opponents' equal rights to express themselves, damaged property, or even left trash behind. We saw that with Terrance West, who was upset that the result of Occupy LA was "a lot of property damage that cost millions of dollars." Maria Carrera was disgusted with the mess the encampment left: "I mean it's okay to have an idea and to fight for it, but […] there was so much trash behind there. Why didn't they clean it?" Theresa Allen, a former waitress, recounted telling the Occupiers she had met in her small town, "Good for you that you can stay out here in tents and you can believe in something." However, she drew the line on political protest if people and, especially, animals were hurt: "I'm all for peaceful demonstration. I don't wanna see people getting [into] riots, and burn things, and get hurt. I don't like it when the police are on horses and the horses are getting hurt. That really bothers me." Linda McDaniel, a former executive assistant in her early 50s, said, "I think the fact that people are engaging and talking is a good thing in general, as long as they don't go into

a meeting and heckle someone so that they can't speak." These participants share the first group's positive view of expressing one's beliefs ("it's okay to have an idea and to fight for it," "Good for you that you can stay out here in tents and you can believe in something," "the fact that people are engaging and talking is a good thing in general") but they had greater emotional energy linked to the concern that this expression should cause no harm to people or animals or property.

Another group of people with whom I spoke carried concern with disorder further, rejecting all political protest as too "angry," "crazy," "messy," or as prone to violence. They favored political involvement, but not street protests. Several were immigrants with bad memories of protest in their home countries. For example, Kham Sy Phouphan, who left Laos when the Communists took over in 1975, associated political marches and chanting with Communist demonstrations. Charlie Mike Romero, an immigrant from El Salvador, worried that "it always turns into a great disorder […] you know, they end up throwing stones." This skepticism about political demonstrations was not limited to immigrants. Robert Milner recoiled at the anger in the Occupy protests. As we saw above he was sympathetic to their message of excessive Wall Street greed, but believed, "We need to stop fighting and come together." Similarly, we saw that Terrance West "hated seeing people getting beat in the other cities like in New York and in Oakland and in Boston because we're all Americans." Terrance was not opposed to all political protests; as we saw, he wished he could have participated in the protests of Proposition 8 in California. However, he objected when the protests created opposition between the demonstrators and fellow Americans who had the job of policing those protests.

Another prominent schema that led to negative views of Occupy's tactics was that protests should have a clear purpose and be a productive use of time. Those who interpreted protests with this lens were exasperated by the fact that it was not clear what the Occupy movement hoped to achieve. Elizabeth Montgomery, a former business-to-business salesperson, complained, "I didn't think Occupy Wall Street came with solutions. They just came as a protest. So I was kind of, 'Well, this is weak. You're [] on your feet but you're not like, Let's put groups together to try to come up with ideas.'" Miriam Ramos, a hair stylist, commented, "A lot of us were just kind of like, 'What are they doing? What is their purpose?' It just seems like a lot of people that were out of work that were just trying to jump on a bandwagon and have a reason to have something to do that day." Unlike those quoted above who had the schema that taking the

trouble to stand up for one's beliefs is valuable in itself, these Americans were more pragmatic. Those who held this schema could not see the point of voicing discontent without also proposing solutions, a concern that divided members of the Occupy movement as well (Juris 2012). Miriam Ramos's comment that the Occupy protestors were looking for "something to do that day" also hints at a productivist disdain for protesters who do not have anything better to do than to demonstrate and camp out for a vague cause. Miriam (whose political outlook I know very well because she later became my stylist, and I chat with her every month) is quite progressive in her politics, but is scornful of those she considers lazy, like some of her coworkers. A productivist view was explicit in Caroline James's sarcastic comment about Occupy, "'I can camp out in a tent for five days because Mommy and Daddy are paying for me right now.' Great. That's awesome. So that kind of made me angry." Possibly because my participants were unemployed, this productivist view was not commonly expressed by them; but, as I discuss in the next section, it may help explain why Terrance had a mostly negative view of the Occupy movement.

Personal Semantic Networks

Psychological engagement in a social movement draws in part on emotions connected to the cultural schemas aroused by the movement's message and tactics. However, it also draws upon the way those cultural schemas are embedded in a person's full personal semantic network, which includes other cultural schemas, sometimes detailed beliefs and belief systems such as religious views, personal experiences, identities, and motivating values. The combined charge of different emotion-imbued schemas and their links to what a person cares about in life can provide a way for people to become engaged by a social movement even when they do not participate in it. To see those links, we can trace connections from points in a person's commentary using clues such as shared topic, key terms, and discourse style, starting from topics that were particularly arousing (Strauss 1992, 2005). I will trace some of these connections, first for Carl Mathews, then for Terrance West.

Some elements of Carl Mathews's personal semantic network. Carl Mathews's comments on Occupy covered banks; the alignment of big corporations with Republican leaders (Bush); solidarity of "the 99%" across lines of race, ethnicity, and other differences; peaceful versus violent tactics; clashes with police; and the Watts uprising of 1965.

Carl's animus against big banks stemmed not only from anger at their role in the financial crisis but also from his personal experience, because his bank had not allowed him to modify his mortgage until it was too late to prevent foreclosure. Losing his home not only meant losing shelter but also the loss of Carl's deeply meaningful personal identity as middle-class, which was the only identity he mentioned when I asked what social groups he belonged to. His formal interviews and informal comments showed that the type of house he owned, along with his vehicle, and other forms of consumption, were central to his understanding of being middle-class. Before he lost his job, he had worked almost 70 hours a week to afford a home that was like "a palace." When we got together again two years later, he eagerly showed off his new SUV and clothes. The Occupy movement's targeting of big banks was personally meaningful for Carl, as it was for many Americans whose mortgages were foreclosed during and after the financial crisis of 2008.

Carl was a political independent, but he particularly disliked Republicans: "Republicans just don't give a shit about the unfortunate or the misfortunate. […] if you don't make a certain amount of money in a year, you're garbage." Before Carl lost his job, he was one of my wealthiest interviewees, with a household income that had sometimes exceeded $200,000 a year, most of which came from overtime hours in his city job. However, after he lost his job and his home and his wife left him, he was destitute, a situation that was imminent when we met for the first wave of interviews. Carl on two occasions told the Biblical story of the rich man who was tormented in hell for failing to care for a poor man, Lazarus. Not all devout Christians heed Biblical teachings about care for the poor, but for Carl that message was powerful. Like blacks in Watts in 1965, he was tired of being "broke," a term he used seven times to describe himself during that interview. He predicted the middle-class would soon disappear, racial differences would be insignificant, and it would just be the very rich against everyone else: "there's going to be rich and poor, which is going to be the new racism." He was excited by Occupy's message of the 99% banding together to improve their situation.

Still, racism remained a major concern for Carl. Using Black Power discourses, he spoke of the way criminal justice was biased against black and Latino men, and the racist history of the United States, which led him to be distrustful of Democrats as well as Republicans. Carl's lack of trust in the political establishment, so congenial to the Occupy movement, came not only from his understanding of US racial history but also from his

interpretation of Christian teachings: "I don't trust none of my government officials. I mean one law's right and that's God's law."

Black Power discourses spoke of the necessity of more militant approaches to redress racial inequality. Carl's service with the National Guard was another source of his view that violence is sometimes needed to serve a higher purpose: "[*In the National Guard*] We used to tell each other things all the time, 'Don't worry about dying, you already know you can die; worry about how many people you're going to kill.' […] Uncle Sam got a problem, we got to stop it, that's all there is to it."

Some of these formative elements (devout evangelical Christianity faith, Black Power discourse to interpret his experience as a black man in the Los Angeles metropolitan area at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first, swings of personal economic fortune, military service) might seem to be unlikely bedfellows, but in combination they provided affective hooks to Carl Mathews' interpretation of the message and tactics of the Occupy movement.

Some elements of Terrance West's personal semantic network. Terrance's comments about Occupy covered a different set of topics than Carl's: The bad economy and the people who contributed to that; the unsightly presence of the Occupy encampment on the grounds around the Los Angeles City Hall and resulting property damage; and the depressing sight of cops set against protestors, when they are fellow workers and fellow Americans. The result was mixed attitudes: Support for Occupy's message but not for their tactics.

Before we talked about Occupy, Terrance had criticized Wall Street financiers and looser regulations, a result of which was that "the stockbrokers went ballistic. You have some of them running away with millions of dollars while other folks are being made bankrupt behind it. That wasn't fair." However, he did not make a personal connection between their behavior and the bad economy that had resulted in him being out of work for over two years and unable to pay rent, forcing him and his boyfriend to live with Terrance's cousin. Instead, he blamed the fact that California "has such a non-business friendly environment that I've worked with two companies that have fled the state."

Although Terrance agreed with Occupy's message, as we saw, the spectacle of the L.A. encampment and Occupy protesters' clashes with police aroused negative emotions in him ("I was upset," "I hate that they messed up a part of what makes L.A., L.A.," "I hated seeing people getting beat in the other cities," "It was kind of depressing,"

"It was disheartening to see that"). Why was that so upsetting for him? The contrast between his views about the police and Carl's are particularly interesting given that Terrance had an arrest record that was part of the reason he had trouble finding another job, and Carl did not. I think there is a mix of explanations at work.

Unlike Carl, for whom being a consumer was central to his class identity, for Terrance, it was being a worker. Throughout the interviews, he often spoke of his strong work ethic and that of his mother and sister, contrasting it with younger people whom he saw as lazy: "Look at you with your iPod and your $300.00 True Religion jeans and your mommy takes care of everything for you." His comments sound much like those of Caroline James, who commented sarcastically about Occupiers, "I can camp out in a tent for five days because Mommy and Daddy are paying for me right now. Great." Terrance's productivist views are like Caroline's and although they did not come up when he was talking about the Occupy protests, it is notable that he characterized the police as workers who, like him, are economically insecure ("only a paycheck or two away from being out there with that protester…").

Terrance also spoke of both protesters and police as "Americans" and approved of order over civil disorder. Terrance is ten years younger than Carl; he was a teenager in the 1980s. Black Power rhetoric was further in the past and his family was involved in electoral politics. One of his role models was Tom Bradley, who served five terms as mayor of Los Angeles when Terrance was growing up and was the first African American mayor of a large city with a majority white population. Mayor Tom Bradley, and more recently President Barack Obama, were symbols for Terrance that the system could work for all ethnic minorities and for working-class people. About Obama's election he commented, "it means to me is that anybody of any race could sit in that seat. It meant that we could have a President Gonzales. We could have a President Wong." Terrance is attached to the American political system. When we met in 2012, recent court decisions striking down Proposition 8 confirmed for Terrance the power of America's founding documents:

> Any time we segregate a segment of society and then tell them that you can't do what the rest of society does, that's unconstitutional. Thank God for Thomas Jefferson and those beautiful words he wrote. Thank God for all the other authors that contributed their words to it. It's a well-written document and 200 and some odd years old and it's still wonderful.

Terrance likes serving as a poll worker on election day: "it's just cool seeing people coming out and voting and partaking in the whole democratic system. I don't care who they vote for, just as long as they're voting, they're getting their voice heard, they're participating." For Terrance protests were not generally necessary because an American can get "their voice heard" by voting.

Why did Terrance say, "On a personal level, I was upset because they destroyed the lawn at City Hall…"? As we saw, he was not the only one who was upset by property damage or trash left behind; several interviewees with whom I spoke shared these views. For Terrance, there was an additional emotive charge partly because he loves Los Angeles and its symbols, but perhaps also because he identifies with City Hall. When he was only 16, Terrance called up the white mayor of his suburban town to volunteer after the mayor said he wanted more African Americans and Latinos involved in city government. The mayor gave him an after-school job working for the city, and when Terrance turned 18, the mayor appointed him to one of the city's commissions and proclaimed a day in his honor. Terrance's goal was to become a young mayor himself, and he even entered a sham marriage in his twenties to present a more acceptable public image. When he commented on local political issues, he often did so from the imagined perspective of a mayor or city council member. He identifies with politicians instead of seeing them as symbols of a corrupt establishment that cannot be trusted.

In the months before the 2016 election Terrance frequently reposted from the Occupy Democrats Facebook page. Their stated position is, "We support the Occupy Movement, President Obama, the Democratic Party, and we vote!" Occupy Democrats was the perfect group to express Terrance's politics. It supported working people's concerns and equal rights for all but did so within the current political party system.

The Personal, Cultural, and Social in Bystanders' Political Sentiments

I have argued that bystanders can become psychologically engaged in contentious politics. Affectively imbued cultural schemas give greater meaning to political messages and actions; personal semantic networks connect those cultural schemas to a person's identities, other beliefs, memories, and goals. These explain psychological engagement.

My analysis was illustrated by the examples of Carl Mathews and Terrance West. How typical were they? Carl and Terrance were better informed than average among my participants. However, even those who consume less news had cultural schemas for engaging with issues. For example, when I asked a struggling single mother, ReNé McKnight, if she knew about Occupy Wall Street and if so, what she thought about it, her response suggested she was reacting to "Wall Street" but not to "Occupy Wall Street":

> I don't know too much about it, but – I don't like it. I don't know how it benefits, and I don't know how it's an advantage or disadvantage for us. And I guess my thing is – I could be wrong, I don't know – but I'm assuming that the money's coming from the banks and all of the other higher capitalist areas – they're pulling our money and gambling it.

I surmised she was talking about Wall Street and ReNé agreed, showing that she had a schema for suspicion of financiers' activities:

Claudia S:	So what you don't like is Wall Street and what they're doing?
ReNé M:	I don't know too much about 'em, but yeah…
Claudia S:	And then the Occupy Wall Street movement has been protesting that. Yeah.
ReNé M:	Okay. How you can just gamble and throw somebody's money away in order for you to get richer? It doesn't make sense.

I counted ReNé among those who had no opinion of Occupy Wall Street, but as this excerpt illustrates, she had a cultural schema that gave her sentiments about the issues at stake. It is a topic with which she would become engaged if political organizers made the effort to reach out to her about it.

Cultural schemas can be complex, conflicting, and shifting (Strauss and Quinn 1997). Although I have emphasized the prior schemas my participants drew upon to interpret the Occupy movement, those schemas may have changed due to Occupy. I do not know what they thought before we met in the fall of 2011 or later. Similarly, personal semantic networks are never fixed, and a social movement's discourses can become an element in them. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to see political sentiments as entirely constructed on the fly. For example, Theresa Allen's concern about police horses being hurt in political demonstrations draws from decades of concern about animal welfare. The most

wrenching part of my first interview with her was her detailed description of how her husband's job loss meant being forced to move back in with her mother, who did not let Theresa bring her 18 pets, some of whom had to be euthanized. I have no doubt that she would become very upset if a political demonstration meant harm to animals, no matter how skillfully the movement's message was framed. Personal semantic networks help explain the attraction between people and particular cultural schemas out of a larger social repertoire (e.g., Lamont 2000).

Person-centered research of this sort does not assume isolated individuals. People's cultural schemas come from shared experiences, discussions with others, and various forms of media and popular culture. Miriam Ramos's comments about the Occupy protests referenced previous peer discussions ("A lot of us were just kind of like, 'What are they doing? What is their purpose?'"). Maria Carrera's concern with the trash left behind by the Los Angeles Occupy encampment echoed some mainstream media stories, such as a November 30, 2011, *Los Angeles Times* online story with the headline, "Occupy L.A.: 30 tons of debris left behind at City Hall tent city." Elsewhere I describe the conventional discourses, that is, the commonly repeated schemas, that Americans can learn from the media and discussion with others (Strauss 2012).

It is not enough, however, to study media representations of the issues. A person-centered anthropological approach provides not only a description but also an explanation for how people think about and why they care about politics.

NOTES

1. For Tarrow (2013) "contentious politics" is episodic and includes social movements, waves of strikes, political riots, wars, and revolutions. My definition of bystanders differs from that of McCarthy and Zald (1977), for whom bystanders are "nonadherents who are not opponents of the

SM [*social movement*] and its SMOs [*social movement organizations*] but who merely witness social movement activity" (McCarthy and Zald 1977, p. 1221). Gamson (2004) points out, "A term like 'bystanders' has an individualistic bias. Like the term 'audience', it conjures up an image of atomized individuals…" (p. 243). In my model bystanders are not isolated individuals, but I have retained the term because of its fit to those who do not actively participate in contentious politics.

2. I recruited 53 unemployed and underemployed men and women by attending career counseling sessions and networking groups or standing outside job fairs passing out flyers describing my project. I also asked everyone I knew for contacts and, in that way, found some people who were out of work but too discouraged to go to job fairs or career counseling sessions. I deliberately chose equal numbers of women and men from a variety of former occupations, socioeconomic levels, and ethnic groups. In addition, a Spanish-speaking research assistant interviewed eleven unemployed/underemployed immigrants from Latin America. Twenty-five self-identify as white (not Hispanic), twenty-two as Latino/a or mixed, twelve as black/African American, and five as Asian American. All interviewee names are pseudonyms.

3. Turner and Killian define "bystander" as someone who is neither an adherent nor opponent of a social movement (Turner 1970, discussed in McCarthy and Zald 1977, p. 1221). Thus, they would not say that the "bystanders' frame" applies to all bystanders in my broader definition.

4. See also Kemper's (2001) model of the way power and status relations induce guilt and shame among social movement bystanders.

5. Deluca et al. (2012) compare traditional media and social media reporting on the Occupy movement in its first 30 days.

6. My assistant asked her interviewees, "What do you think of that movement that was called 'We are the 99%' and all those movements?" or variants on that.

7. It is common for research on unemployed workers to find that being out of work is not by itself a radicalizing experience (e.g., Pappas 1989).

8. In addition to eleven who knew nothing about the movement, three more had heard about it but did not know enough to have an opinion.

9. All survey results reported here were obtained from searches of the iPOLL Databank and other resources provided by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research. These medians are based on all surveys ($N = 28$) with agree/disagree; support/opposition questions and national adult samples in the Roper Center's iPoll databank for October through December 2011.

10. Transcription conventions:
[ ] unintelligible
[…] deletion
Italics speaker's emphasis.

11. Interestingly, Occupy Wall Street was inspired in part by the Situationist political philosophy Guy Debord articulated in writings that preceded *The Society of the Spectacle* (Bureau of Public Secrets 2011).
12. Many of the politically uninvolved Americans Eliasoph (1998) talked to disdained protest as "a form of self-promotion" (p. 143). It is interesting to consider what factors may have led to our differing findings.
13. Although the Occupy movement, in general, was nonviolent and its public face was mostly white (Patton 2011), there were more Occupy protesters of color in Oakland, California, and some militant actions (e.g., smashing bank windows), which had been in the news about a month before this interview with Carl Mathews.

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