CHAPTER 4

Public and Collective Intimacy

INTIMACY BEYOND THE PRIVATE SPHERE

Building on the preceding theorization of national solidarity as an offshoot of sociability practices, this chapter introduces a research strategy for studying how social club sociability turns individual strangers into collective friends through the mechanisms of public intimacy and emergent feelings of collective intimacy. As noted by Gary Alan Fine and Brooke Harrington (2004), despite the long list of scholars who have addressed the role played by secondary groups in promoting civic engagement, theorists have typically lacked a micro-level social psychology with which to analyze their claims, such as interactionist group dynamics. To give one example, while Putnam's (2000) influential work on civic associations might be empirically driven, it does not offer any concrete mechanisms to explain how group-level interactions affect macro-level solidarity.

And yet, micro-level interactionist analysis alone is similarly insufficient for explaining the predominance of certain macro-level cultural phenomena, such as the sentiments of national solidarity. A case in point is Paul Lichterman and Nina Eliasoph's (2014) recent ethnographic approach for studying the civic outcomes of micro-level group interactions. They have provided a rich and systematic analysis of the distinct "scene styles" that shape activists' civic engagement, such as distinct speech norms and shared perceptions about the group's boundaries and practices of sociability. However, in attempting to pluralize the

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political outcomes of civic action and underscoring how distinct styles of action engender "different kinds of solidarity" (852), this approach does not solve the basic paradox of collective solidarity in modern societies, namely how despite the growing differentiation and fragmentation of social life compatriots may experience a deep comradeship premised on a monolithic order of unity and singularity (Handelman 1990) rather than on heterogeneity and multiple solidarities.

The current study undertakes a more narrowly tailored interactionist approach designed to explain how social club sociability mediates between interpersonal and collective life. To this end, it considers three dimensions of sociability: (1) interpersonal ties between particular social club members; (2) public intimacy, which is the public staging of interpersonal ties in front of other members or nonmembers; and (3) collective intimacy, which refers to emotions of solidarity shared simultaneously by members of the institution or community as a whole.

I make a crucial distinction here between the "public" dimension, namely the ways in which interactions of sociability are disclosed *in* public and the "collective" dimension, which designates a form of sociability shared collectively *by* the public.[1] Since interpersonal interactions taking place in institutions are inevitably performed in a public or semi-public setting, public intimacy is effectively a dramaturgical mechanism for managing personal bonds and establishing their exclusivity under the gaze of different kinds of spectators. But it is also a mechanism of inclusion, as certain spectators are invited to become participants. Recurrent instances of spectators-turned-participants may, ultimately, extend feelings of closeness to wider circles and give rise to emotions of collective intimacy, which can materialize in ritualized performances of solidarity, such as the public events studied extensively by neo-Durkheimian scholars. I spell out these sets of issues in the following pages. By way of introduction, I first present a brief overview of the ways in which cultural sociologists have addressed intimacy beyond the private sphere.

The application of the term "intimacy"—a term mostly associated with emotions or interactions in the private sphere—to describe sociability at the institutional and national level merits some clarification. Even theorists who make a point of addressing friendship as a political bond often do so by attempting to decouple friendship from intimacy, such as Hannah Arendt (1968) who argued that "it is hard for us to understand the political relevance of friendship" because we see friendship "solely as a phenomenon of intimacy, in which the friends open their hearts to each other unmolested by the world and its demands" (24). The automatic association of intimacy with expressive interactions in the private sphere is shaped by the public–private divide in sociological thought and builds on the aforementioned classic liberal distinction between premodern and modern patterns of friendships (Silver 1990). Anthony Giddens (1991) famously contrasted the kinds of instrumental ties that characterized social life in premodern Europe with the growing propensity in democratic Western societies for practicing the more expressive forms of intimate, "pure relationships" associated with individual choice and heightened emotionality.

In recent decades, however, the term intimacy has been increasingly employed in popular and cultural discourse in connection with the public sphere. Interestingly, the meanings of intimacy in this discourse straddle, often inadvertently, two analytically distinct dimensions: intimacy as a confiding style of *communication*, associated with the authentic disclosure of self, and intimacy as a preferential and particularist style of *relationship* connecting two or more individuals in various exclusive bonds. These dimensions echo a distinction made by Jeff Weintraub (1997) between two different logics governing the public–private dichotomy: one associated with "visibility" and the other with "collectivity" (5).[2]

In private life, denotations of intimacy as a form of communication and intimacy as a form of relationship often overlap. Intimacy is employed interchangeably to denote self-disclosure, privileged knowledge, and familiarity as well as close association, strong positive emotions toward significant others, and high levels of trust (Jamieson 2005). In contrast, recent attempts to theorize the growing use of intimacy in the public sphere have focused mainly on intimacy-as-communication, locating it within an "identitarian" framework and neglecting its second meaning as a form of social tie.

Central to this line of work is the critical engagement with what has come to be known as the rise of "therapeutic discourse" in post-industrial societies. As described by Eva Illouz (2007), this dominant cultural structure challenges individuals to become more self-reflective and to create an authentic narrative of personal transformation from suffering to salvation by adopting a confiding style of communication along the lines of therapy conversations. The therapeutic discourse is rooted in the science of psychology, processes of individualization, and the ideals of liberalism (see also Furedi 2004). Robert Bellah et al. (1985) lamented how this form of "expressive individualism" has permeated public culture, and Richard Sennett (1977) criticized the overinvestment in intimate life for causing a falling away from public involvement and undermining the impersonal practices of sociability and civility through which strangers can interact qua strangers. Echoing these earlier observations, a growing body of sociological and media studies has started to examine the ways that this preferred style of intimate communication and heightened self-disclosure has come to dominate the public sphere and to govern the appearances of both celebrities and ordinary people on traditional and social media, encouraging individual actors to publicly "share" their inner feelings and true self (Illouz 2007; John 2013; Livingstone and Lunt 1993).

A similar understanding of intimacy-as-communication is employed in several discussions of nationalism and authenticity. Scholars noted how Romanticist notions of authentic selfhood appear in formulations of national identity (Greenfeld 1992) as a realization of the "true collective 'self'" and "inner voice" of the purified community (Smith 1991, 77). Calhoun (1997) noted that the ideological shifts associated with nationalism made the association of people and state "seem more intimate" (77). Ringmar's (1998) thesis, introduced in Chapter 3, presented a brilliant discussion of this cultural transformation in terms of political identification. Ringmar suggested that the modern, democratic public sphere became associated with nationalism once public interactions were linked with the authentic expression of the self and were expected to become "as intimate and true as the interaction taking place in a company of friends" (542).[3] The growing importance attached to the identity and character of politicians and not just to their interests and policies led to the expectation that rulers and the ruled could share a similar collective identity.

Michael Herzfeld (2005) developed another innovative perspective on the ways that "cultural intimacy" emerges in the national context. He examined how certain collective customs, considered as authentically national, are a source of both pride and embarrassment to be negotiated inside but not outside. Herzfeld focused on the complex interrelations between localized communities and national-level political forces that cause a "strain between the creative presentation of the individual self and formal image of the national or collective self" (x). Here too, intimacy is extended to the public sphere as a form of communication analyzed through the prism of disclosure and discretion. Similar to other reappraisals of national identity discourse, Herzfeld's approach serves to destabilize collective representations of the national as a fixed identity but does not address intimacy as a form of relationship and hence does not directly address questions of national solidarity. Where his work centers on the meanings that various actors in the national community assign to their shared customs, the framework of public and collective intimacy shifts attention to the social interactions taking place between actors and the meanings that they assign to these interactions.

Introducing Public Intimacy

My strategy for studying public intimacy in institutional contexts draws on the understudied dimension of intimacy as a relationship rather than as a form of communication. Simmel (1950) noted that exclusivity is a basic factor in defining and shaping the boundaries of intimate relationships and friendships in that it privileges access to private information (369–370). However, it is the public staging of relationships that are usually kept private that actually defines them as intimate and differentiates them from more casual interactions (Schwarz 2011). In this sense, the concept of public intimacy emphasizes that bonds acquire a sense of exclusivity and, consequently, a sense of intimacy only as the end result of the publicly staged performance.

I initially identified the mechanisms of public intimacy in a previous study of personal friendships among Israeli men (Kaplan 2005). I explored how male confidants maintained social ties that evolved in particular institutions (school, workplace, and military) and carried them over to other settings through the constant outward performance of their friendship (see Chapter 9 for examples pertaining to military friendships). The men staged their bonds in everyday life in front of peers, colleagues, and complete strangers by employing a humorous, ambiguous, and often unintelligible code language which involved nicknames, curses, nonsense talk, and affectionate-aggressive physical gestures. As studied by Fine (1984), the humorous interaction does not by itself create meanings; rather it plays off implicit meanings to present novel, situational ones (97). The ambivalence created by this provocative speech and gestures suspends a clear-cut emotional reaction by the respondents but, at the same time, practically forces them to respond and to engage deeper in the interaction. Thus, this homosocial (male-to-male) coded communication does not so much convey explicit meaning as it teases the participants and seduces those who qualify to be participants to get involved.

Marta Dynel (2008) noted the dichotomous nature of teasing and banter which, similar to other expressions of humor, function in an ambivalent manner (246–247). The humorous utterance can be interpreted as an expression of aggression against the hearer and an act of exclusion from the group but also as an act of inclusion and solidarity, inviting those who find the remark amusing into the group. Ridiculing and pulling pranks on other members of the group place them in a position of inferiority, yet it also works to create a sense of potential equality within the group in comparison with other groups. The principle of rotating roles in these symbolic acts of domination and submission assures that everyone gets to play both attacker and attacked, to be audience and performer. While this kind of staged joking relationship is especially pronounced in male homosocial enclaves (Lyman 1987; Benwell 2004), a similar dynamic can be found in almost any public or semi-public social setting—consider, for example, the historical accounts of sociability in nineteenth-century French cafés described in Chapter 3. Benet Davetian (2009; following Haine 1996) provided a discerning account of the ways in which café etiquette regulated these dynamics of teasing and seduction, exclusion, and inclusion:

> A small group could initiate a discussion and then bring in people from the periphery to participate; meanwhile, a person was expected to observe café etiquette and not interrupt a conversation already in progress (Haine 1996). Witty comments were the best admission ticket to an ongoing conversation. Jibes and remarks were not to be taken too seriously, nor was a person to press the point and request a fight to settle a point of honor. A sense of savoir faire required the wounded party to come back with his own verbal riposte (a fencing term describing the exchange of blows of the sword). Conversation remained a competition of wits, and this verbal competition went a long way in avoiding potential violence. (Davetian 2009, 133)

William Scott Haine (1996) concluded that the small-scale nature of most groups congregating in cafés and the informality and mutability of these groups "permitted individuals to have much more chance of joining in the interaction" and "to find friends and contacts in the café" (177).

On a more general level, these non-utilitarian, humorous interactions correspond to Simmel's (1950) discussion of informal sociability consisting of talk for the sake of talking that derives its significance from the "fascinating play of relations which they create among participants, joining and loosening, winning and succumbing, giving and taking" (52).

At the same time, whereas for Simmel this form of playful sociability temporarily suspends binding social roles and is therefore analytically separated from "real" life, I understand public intimacy as a central building block for wider social ties. Because the meaning conveyed in these playful interactions is open-ended and ambivalent, it encourages both participants and others to engage deeper with the interaction. The triads of public intimacy thus hold a generative quality and enable certain spectators to become participants. In contrast to the aforementioned studies of intimacy-as-communication that focused on intimate self-disclosure by the individual actor as prescribed by the therapeutic discourse, an emphasis on the public staging of intimate relationships between several actors opens up the possibility that spectators not only identify and empathize with the participants but also become involved in the social interaction themselves.

This understanding goes back to yet another aspect of Simmel's (1950, 135–169) work, namely his discussion of the qualitative difference between a dyad and a triad. Once a third party enters a dyad, the tie is no longer dependent solely on the individual will of each member and can continue to exist even if one member departs. Thus, for Simmel, a triad is the cornerstone of larger close-knit cliques. But the key to this, I argue, lies in a dynamic of seduction which, by establishing a sense of exclusivity under the gaze of spectators, teases and invites them to become participants who can, in turn, stage the same performance of exclusivity under the gaze of new actors. In this way, a triad of public intimacy can extend to wider circles and ultimately account for higher-level solidarity—not only because the interpersonal tie expands to a clique or to a large network but also because the underlying feelings of exclusivity, familiarity, and loyalty associated with close friendships are retained even as their reach expands to a larger collectivity.

Sociability as Social Performance

In order to understand how sociability and ties of friendship affect collective-level solidarity, we need to consider acts of public intimacy within a broader theoretical context of social performances and cultural meanings. By this, I am referring to Alexander's (2004) dramaturgical theory of "cultural pragmatics" which theorizes the intersection between performance, ritual, and social action. According to this approach, performers[4] and audiences are embedded in a shared cultural understanding—a symbolic realm that enjoys a level of autonomy and provides a limited context for making sense of the social performance. This approach focuses mainly on collectively shared social drama such as the outbreak of a national crisis or scandal. As noted by Eliasoph and Lichterman (2003), in these sacred events in which performers perform in a style of "high seriousness," the underlying cultural codes may appear relatively evident. But in the variable settings of ordinary life high seriousness is not usually the mode and social interactions allow for diverse group styles that can give different meanings to the same codes (744–745).

Similar to Eliasoph's approach, my interest in interactions of sociability in everyday institutional life may, ostensibly, suggest a much more open-ended interpretation than is implicated in the cultural codes of ritualized social performances. However, in line with Alexander's (2004) cultural pragmatics, the crux of the framework of public intimacy is to consider how the meanings given to everyday interactions rely on underlying cultural codes and beliefs that inform collective sentiments of solidarity. The question to ask, therefore, is how public intimacy—the staged performance of everyday interpersonal sociability—figures in the framework of social performance.

Alexander (2004) defined cultural performance as "the social processes through which actors, individually or in concert, display for others the meaning of their social situation" (529). Social performances are not confined to macro-level phenomena. Alexander (2006) mentioned in passing that just as fused performance is more readily attainable in small (premodern) societies with simplified social organization, fusion in complex societies is also possible in some micro-level relations in which elements of performances can be controlled carefully, such as "between the faithful and their priest," or "between patients and their doctors and therapists" (96).

Regardless of how the performers themselves interpret their situation, what they display is the meaning that they consciously or unconsciously wish to have others believe in. On this point, Alexander (2004) brought up Hans Gerth and Charles Wright Mills (1964) who noted that: "Our gestures do not necessarily 'express' our prior feelings," but rather "they make available to others a sign" (55). In this regard, public intimacy is a particular kind of social performance in which two or more performers display their social situation to others, the meaning of which lies, however, not in any explicit content that this communication signifies to them or to the spectators but rather in the message of exclusivity that is conveyed.

Public intimacy thus follows the metacommunicative logic of secrecy. Secrecy binds together those who share exclusive knowledge by publicly declaring "this is a secret" (Bellman 1981). It binds the confidants not only because they have privileged access to particular content but also because the public declaration signifies and establishes this shared knowledge as an intimate bond. In this sense, secrecy is effectively the opposite of privacy: it is a dramaturgical mechanism for affording personal bonds with public significance.[5] While effective social performance lies "in the ability to convince others that one's performance is true" (Alexander 2004, 529), an effective performance of public intimacy lies not in providing a reasonable, authentic account of some external truth but in signaling that the social performance on display is a close relationship. Whether or not the performers express explicit feelings about their relationship, they need to convince others of their exclusivity, mutual familiarity, and potential loyalty; in other words, to demonstrate that they are confidants and friends.

Going back to the question of how public intimacy figures in the framework of social performance, it might be helpful to think of the relation between everyday sociability and collective performances of solidarity in terms of the basic distinction between "occurrences" and "events" (Mast 2006, 117). Occurrences exist in a social actor's awareness only temporarily and discretely; they do not transcend their original contexts, and they fail to reach public attention. Events, by contrast, are a set of narratively interconnected occurrences that have achieved generalization. Orchestrated and reactively mediated by purposeful performers, they draw public attention as unusually significant meaning constellations, removed from the specificity of everyday life and eventually ingrained in collective memory (Mast 2006; following Alexander 1988).

Underlying this analytic observation is, in fact, a dual shift from a single occurrence to the plurality of narratively interconnected occurrences and from mundane personal life to the sacredness of collective life. A corresponding dual shift from single to plural and from personal to collective experience can be seen in the move from sociability to friendship and from friendship to solidarity. Friendship ties developing in social institutions can be regarded as a series of discrete, fleeting interactions or "occurrences" of sociability between strangers which have achieved generalization and are retrospectively interpreted by the participants as mutually meaningful personal "events" on which their friendship was built. It is, among other things, the dramaturgical mechanism of public intimacy that singles out certain occurrences as exclusive interactions and differentiates them from more casual interactions in the participants' lives.

In the course of their lives, individuals accumulate numerous such friendships—in effect, personal narratives of strangers-turned-friends—across a variety of institutional settings. This may prompt an underlying, collectively shared meta-narrative of strangers-turned-friends operating at the symbolic cultural level and associated with national solidarity discourse, as I describe in Chapter 5. However, for this second move from friendship to solidarity to take shape requires a performative act that captures public attention and could translate the idiosyncratic, personal "events" of individual friendships into the ritualized collective events that make up the bread and butter of mass solidarity; in other words, it requires the staging of a full-blown social performance in the public sphere which could set off and reaffirm the culturally shared meta-narrative. As I discuss below, while the existing literature has addressed solidarity in public events mostly in terms of shared focused attention, it could also be explained in terms of social ties played out in front of the largest public available. To recap, the first move from institutional sociability to friendship entails an accumulation of mundane occurrences of friend-making at the individual level, whereas the second move from friendship to solidarity involves a public event set apart from everyday life in which a collectivity of individuals interact with one another simultaneously and reaffirm the experiences of sociability and friend-making learnt by each of them independently.

Collective Intimacy in Public Events: Bringing Sociability Back In

> Emotion turns the person inside-out, so that totalizing feeling states are evident on persons' exteriors, yet felt as their interiors, such that it is their interiors that are totalized together, rather than their exteriors. Therefore collective effervescence is felt as intimate. This trajectory of emotion… indexes the intimate sharing of solidarity. (Handelman 2007, 123)

In interactional terms, the move from sociability and friendship to solidarity is a move from accumulated acts of public intimacy to simultaneous feelings of collective intimacy. Given the preceding discussion, it would seem only reasonable to examine how interactions of sociability figure in the ritualized public events studied in neo-Durkheimian scholarship and consider the role that past experiences of friendship play in the resultant sense of solidarity. Surprisingly, these issues have, thus far, been ignored in Durkheimian theory.

The Durkheimian tradition highlights how sacred ritualized events reaffirm collective identity and shared values by creating a surge in feelings of solidarity. The basic mechanisms were discussed by Durkheim (2003) in terms of collective "effervescence"—a social energy that strengthens social emotions by bringing "all those who share them into more intimate and more dynamic relationship" (140). The successful performance depends on simultaneous participation and sense of unisonance: "by shouting the same cry, saying the same words, and performing the same action in regard to the same object" (118). This passionate energy produces exaltation, transporting persons outside themselves: "it is no longer a simple individual who speaks; it is a group incarnate and personified" (Durkheim 2008, 210). The common theme in these accounts is that the ritualized event focuses widespread attention such that each participant is assured that others are paying attention to the same object and feeling the same emotions.

Collins' (2004) framework of interaction ritual chains has followed suit and offers the only systematic model of collective effervescence to date that is formulated in interactional terms. Building closely on Goffman's (1967) concept of "interaction ritual," Collins developed a general and highly abstract analysis of group solidarity based on the physical co-presence of the participants who share a contagion of emotion, a common focus of attention and mutual awareness. The ritual invokes the symbolic object to which members of the group become attached. According to Collins, much of social life consists of strings of such group interactions, and groups may cycle between periods of high-intensity rituals that revive the meaning of membership and periods of dispersed existence with little reminder of their commonality. However, due to its radically micro-level focus with no allusion to questions of phenomenology, Collins' framework fails to problematize and address the basic dichotomies and paradoxes underlying the problem of solidarity in society in the first place, namely the public–private divide and the distinctions between strangers and friends. Moreover, according to this mechanistic and context-free model of human interaction, moral sentiments and collective emotions become merely an emergent property of individual-level behavior rather than part of a cultural realm that could give meaning and regulate micro-level interactions (Smith and Alexander 2005, 8).

The aforementioned cultural pragmatics approach (Alexander 2004), on the other hand, underlines how in order for the ritualized performance to be successful and to enhance feelings of solidarity, it must be convincingly authentic and enjoy a widely shared understanding of intention and content. Ideally, the ritual "energizes the participants and attaches them to each other, increases their identification with the symbolic objects of communication, and intensifies the connection of the participants and the symbolic objects with the observing audience, the relevant 'community' at large" (527). However, modern, large-scale collectivities are segmented and differentiated in ways that prevent a social performance from fully resonating with the target audience. In order to attain ritual-like quality, performances need to "re-fuse" their various disentangled elements: performers, audiences, representations (background symbols and foreground scripts), means of symbolic production, social power, and mise-en-scène.

This re-fusion is vital for modern, complex societies, as "even the most democratic and individuated societies depend on the ability to sustain collective belief" and share sacred myths (Alexander 2004, 568). Although this approach does not regard social ties or sociability as a distinct category of analysis, by delineating the relations between performers and audiences it provides some leeway for studying the interactions between various social actors situated at different positions in the social performance but sharing a similar cultural belief system.

Durkheimian perspectives on the cohesive power of ritualized public events are particularly pertinent to national communities and national movements. For instance, Jonathan Wyrtzen (2013) studied a defining moment in the anti-colonial protest that birthed the Moroccan nation, when nationalist activists repurposed a Muslim prayer traditionally recited in local Mosques and linked it to current contentious events. Wyrtzen examined how through social performance selected "patches" of high culture and invented traditions resonated and struck a chord with the mass audience beyond local elites, fusing intense religious emotion with a nascent sense of national identity.

If the ideal of re-fusion is essentially to collapse distinctions between participants and audiences, a case in point can be found in Hizky Shoham's (2009) historical study of the annual Purim festivals celebrated in Tel Aviv prior to the establishment of the State of Israel. At its peak, this site of pilgrimage possibly attracted more than half of the entire Jewish population of Palestine. Shoham suggested that through this periodic gathering the masses could literally encounter the newly formed Jewish nation not as an abstract, discursive construction but physically and visibly as an independent social entity, presented by and to the people. Thus, in a typical Durkheimian circular fashion, the nation became both the subject and object of collective worship.

This Durkheimian tradition continues to have great explanatory power for collective events in late modernity when solidarity (whether affirmed or contested) is enacted mainly through the media sphere (Cottle 2006). The paradigmatic concept of "media events" introduced by Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992) captured many of these Durkheimian ideas. It provided a systematic theoretical and empirical model for studying live televised coverage of exceptional events as heroic spectacles of contest, conquest, or coronation that draw millions of people together and enable them to take part simultaneously in the event despite their physical dispersion. As noted by Jeffrey Alexander and Ronald Jacobs (1998), media events "erase the divide between private and public" by providing common rituals and symbols which "citizens can experience contemporaneously with everyone and interpersonally with those around them" (27–28). In Chapter 8, I explore the role of media events in generating public and collective intimacy based on a study of the reality TV show *Big Brother*.

Ultimately, despite the role of face-to-face or mediated interactions in mass public events, the analytic focus in Durkheimian scholarship is directed mainly at processes of collective identity formation and pays little heed to interpersonal ties and sociability. Although Durkheim emphasized that emotional life is transpersonal and grounded in interpersonal interactions (Emirbayer 1996), he did not study social ties systematically and, for the most part, considered interpersonal relationships, such as friendship, as capable of joining individuals to one another without being linked to society (Mallory and Carlson 2014). In the same vein, the diverse neo-Durkheimian approaches reviewed above—whether formulating solidarity as interactional chains, as a fusion of differentiated elements in a social performance, or as engagement in media events—did not tackle the actual social ties between participants in the performance and the meanings assigned to these social ties.

Public events are social spaces where participants not only gather together but also interact with one another, engaging in preexisting social ties with friends and acquaintances encountered at the event and forming new interactions with unacquainted participants. Most significantly, these ties are staged and performed in front of all other fellow participants. This is where the concept of collective intimacy differs from related terms such as collective effervescence or fusion. It is not simply an instance of shared focused attention generating involuntary emotional contagion that is at stake but a more complex emotional engagement with fellow participants. By building on past experiences of public intimacy, collective intimacy reflects a dual transition—both interactional and relational—from spectators into participants and from strangers into confidants and friends.

The emotional term that perhaps best captures this transformation is "complicity." Complicity can be applied equally to both individuals and collectives and incorporates the same feelings of exclusivity, familiarity, and loyalty that are characteristic of close friendships, with the added elements of shared secret knowledge and active participation (as well as the negative connotation of conspiracy). It therefore signifies both the interactional position of involvement and the relational role of being a confidant. In the context of audience studies, complicity is sometimes invoked to address the moment when the spectator becomes intimately engaged with the performer, the script, or other elements in the performance (Iser 1993; Barre 2014; Weizman 2013) and may bear moral responsibility (Silverstone 2002; Peters 2009). More specifically, Isaac Reed (2006) highlighted that certain types of social performance are characterized by complicity in that all performers and audiences work from within the same deeply felt set of collective representations, even when offering conflicting views and narratives in the social drama.

Ari Adut (2012) noted that central to ritualized events is, among other things, a sense of mutual awareness, the fact that the group of strangers who assemble realize that they are all spectators or participants in the same event, in other words, "the situation where everyone knows that everyone knows that everyone knows" (245). But what exactly does everyone know? What is the widely shared understanding enacted and revealed by the ritualized performance?

Several options come to mind. The straightforward answer is that the common understanding that redefines the participants as accomplices is the specific news event or public scandal being addressed by the social performance and, more broadly, the underlying cultural belief system shared by all the participants (Alexander 2004; Reed 2006). Herzfeld's (2005) formulation of cultural intimacy poignantly reveals how complicity operates within a national belief system. Shared customs that are considered disreputable constitute a "discretely maintained secret" (60) that local actors are expected to manage internally while, at the same time, presenting a picture of collective unity to outsiders. This shows how a sense of common understanding is accomplished through acts of complicity.[6]

But from the perspective of collective intimacy (as opposed to cultural intimacy) feelings of complicity may also point to a more fundamental grasp on common understanding—a revelation that pertains to the performance itself and not to some independent, predetermined knowledge base (similar to how the meaning of public intimacy lies not in any explicit content or predetermined feelings held by the actors but in the message of exclusivity conveyed to the spectators). Thus, two additional options can be suggested here. One is that the ritualized performance reveals and reaffirms the collective body of the community itself. Through the mass public gathering, anonymous individuals become momentarily tangible to the participants as a distinct, collective group of people. The other possibility, however, is that what becomes tangible for participants is not the public news and common belief system nor the existence of a collectivity of individuals but the existence of cohesive social ties between these individuals, an imagining of the community as a network of friends.

Although, in practice, these three forms of collective revelation and understanding are bound to overlap, it is analytically important to distinguish between them. While the first two may account for the way in which a national community is formed around shared knowledge, values, customs, and group boundaries—in other words, around a collective identity—it is only through the third aspect of social ties experienced as collective intimacy that we can begin to explain people's sense of national solidarity.

Let me illustrate this point with a final Durkheimian account of a ritualized social performance. Anderson's (1991, 35–36) renowned analysis of the newspaper reading ritual is a brilliant example of a mediated public event, foreshadowing Dayan and Katz's (1992) paradigm of televised media events. The appearance of modern newspapers in mass circulation ("one-day best-sellers") occasioned daily mediated encounters between fellow citizens who share the same news stories. Although the stories are read in silent privacy, each reader gathers visible reassurance about the existence of like-minded readers in public spaces and is, ultimately, confident about the existence of millions of others "of whose identity he has not the slightest notion" (Anderson 1991, 35). These insights can serve to explain the emergence of national solidarity in terms of the first two forms of common understanding noted above. First, newspapers formed the basis for common public knowledge, linking unrelated yet concurrent events and assigning them new cultural meanings rooted in the readers' lives and collective beliefs. Second, thanks to mass circulation, readers could imagine themselves living their lives in parallel with millions of anonymous fellow readers with whom they shared a common history and destiny. In other words, through the act of reading, the ontological existence of the national community is dramatized and reaffirmed.

But what is missing from Anderson's account is the third common understanding: the significance of familiarity and sociability for forging solidarity. For even though he presented this virtual communion as a "community in anonymity" (36), it actually illustrates the opposite, namely the shift from anonymity to familiarity. Newspaper readers become intimately familiar with the actions and motivations of fellow individuals—politicians and laypeople, successful heroes and failed antiheroes. The readers not only learn of individuals who have come to fame but also sympathize with the way that these strangers interact and perform socially. Along these lines, in her study of early American novels, Elizabeth Barnes (1997) noted how literary and political texts began to represent sociopolitical issues and concerns through the vocabulary of personal life staged as family dramas. Amit Rai (2002) went on to highlight how this increasingly intimate language enabled readers to sympathetically identify with public strangers shown to be like themselves. He noted that this combination of sympathy and familiarity became the definitive way of "practicing human relations" in American national culture (11) or, rather, in my words, of forming solidarity by observing how others perform these social relations. Thus, when readers share public stories, the common understanding that emerges pertains not only to shared knowledge, values, customs, and group boundaries but also to shared sociability.

To summarize, in public events, participants encounter a multitude of others who are all privy to the same social performance. As they become aware that they share practices of sociability—that they went or go to the same clubs—they may become a collective group of accomplices experiencing feelings of collective intimacy. Unlike the gradual transformation of strangers into friends in everyday life, such public gatherings occasion a unique and alchemic instant transformation of spectators into participants and strangers into confidants, a magical enactment of the meta-narrative of strangers-turned-friends. However, in order for this leap of confidence to take place, participants must have reassurance in the ability of others to form close-knit mutual ties—a reassurance that could only develop through successful past experiences of making friends as accumulated in everyday life in a variety of social institutions, in other words, through mundane staged performances of public intimacy. In this way, the public event becomes a proxy for successful past experiences of choosing one's friends in the life of each member. These interactional and relational dimensions of solidarity as contemporaneous complicity and its dependence on accumulated experience with public intimacy were not addressed by Durkheimian studies of collective effervescence and related terms.

The concepts of public and collective intimacy differ in how they relate to the separation between private and public life. Public intimacy is built on the separation between insiders and outsiders, celebrating both the exclusivity of interpersonal ties and the selectivity of admission. Pure instances of collective intimacy, on the other hand, imagine a unified whole and hence eliminate the very distinction between private and public life. Nevertheless, both constructs capture the particularist and preferential sentiments of familiarity, exclusivity, and loyalty that characterize both friendship and national attachment. If public intimacy underlines how at the micro level exclusive bonds are the end result of a publicly staged interaction, the end result of collective intimacy is similarly an exclusive bond but at the macro level.

NOTES

1. While these terms are often indistinguishable in their common usage in English, the equivalent Hebrew adjectives *pumbi* (in public) and *tziburi* (collective, by or of the public) readily differentiate between these two denotations. It is this blind spot in the English usage that motivated me to delve deeper into these analytic distinctions.
2. "Visibility" refers to what is hidden or withdrawn in contrast to what is revealed or accessible. "Collectivity" refers to what is individual or pertains only to an individual in contrast to what is collective or affects the interests of a collectivity of individuals (Weintraub 1997, 5).
3. This phrasing could have easily opened up an alternative reading of intimacy as a new form of relationship between citizens rather than a new form of communication as Ringmar intended, if only it were to read "interaction taking place *between* friends" rather than "in a company of friends." This is but one example of how a seemingly subtle slippage in the meaning of intimacy may conceal an important distinction between national attachment as an identity and as a social tie.

4. For the sake of analytic clarity, I have substituted Alexander's specific allusion to an "actor" in a social performance with the term "performer" in order to avoid confusion with the wider meaning of actor or social actor as any individual who exercises agency including members of the audience.
5. For additional discussion of the relation between secrecy and privacy see Herzfeld's (2009) analysis of the performances of secrecy in public spaces.
6. As an example, Herzfeld brings up the case of a collectivity as large as the European Union: when EU officials act in a defensive manner in the face of a political crisis and subscribe to a cultural intimacy in which old myths can be advantageously redeployed—for instance, that the Greeks are corrupt, whereas the British and the Scandinavians are corruption-free—then one could say that the EU has achieved a measure of cohesion and a sense of collective European identity (Herzfeld 2013). Here, too, what accomplices share is some form of tacit knowledge: "…that of winks and nudges, of 'what everyone knows'…[a] common ground shared by those countries that have been accused of corruption and those countries that sanctimoniously insist that they have largely succeeded in eliminating it" (495).

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