The Role of Emotions in Online Community Maintenance

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Abstract

Social media is increasingly an essential part of community building and is used to educate and organize. Rather than focus on the variety of social media platforms and how they are used to aggregate audiences, this thesis seeks to understand how the online world mediates marginalized community identity from the perspective of an affective economy. Sara Ahmed's work on affective economies, particularly around shame and stickiness, and wilfulness will form the central theoretical analysis because of how her focus on movement becoming form mirrors the dynamics of marginalized online communities. The examples examined are the respective communities around the Twitter hashtag movements #NotYourAsianSidekick, #CancelColbert, and #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen. This will involve contrasting affective connectiosns with those that are established in reference to normative ideology and practice. A key focus is the maintenance and patrolling of community boundaries in online spaces, often times through the presumption of a pre-existing affective connection. However, this carries its own dangers, such as when community members are included but behave in ways that cause the community to unravel or when community members are excluded because they do not fit a community's ideals. By comparing and contrasting the events surrounding the aforementioned hashtag movements, this thesis hopes to elucidate what coming together on "common ground" as a community in an online space entails. The focus on the role of affectivity in the analysis of online interactions is important because the rapid pace at which marginalized online communities form and dissolve provides fresh insight into community identity.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Introduction
Know Your Boundaries

This research project is a theoretical investigation on the role of emotions in the policing of community boundaries and identity on social media. The primary theorist I will be using is Sara Ahmed, a contemporary scholar in cultural studies and philosophy. Ahmed's (2004b, 5) theory of affective economies, as outlined in her most cited work *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, is a phenomenological approach to race, gender, and marginalization that moves away from the legal definitions that underpin Critical Race Theory. By analyzing the affective economies of emotions to draw observations on today's sociopolitical issues and climate, her work is a significant and novel contribution to the field. Ahmed's theories do not focus on social media. However, her articulation of affective economies is appropriate for thinking through interactions on social media as her work is concerned with how emotional processes lead to community structures. Kitsy Dixon (2014, 36) notes that social media communities such as feminist ones are underpinned by dynamic processes in the economy of emotions that change over relatively short durations. My aim is to continue in this tradition and address questions of authenticity, belonging, and marginalization that arise with the identity politics of online communities. In using Ahmed's theories to articulate how communities and their identities are maintained, I hope to contribute towards our understandings of human social bonds in online spaces. In thinking about how the medium affects the message and community identity, Ahmed's philosophy will be supplemented by the work of other theorists. This thesis will focus on communities in text-based social media platforms, namely Twitter, and their participation in hashtag movements such as #NotYourAsianSidekick and #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen.

The aim of this thesis is to understand how marginalized, politicized online communities patrol and secure their boundaries. Part of maintaining a community is the decision-making process of determining who belongs and who does not occurs. In disperse systems such as social media networks, this process is complex and can be analyzed in many different ways. My research can be better understood by being broken into the following questions. How can Ahmed's theory of the formation of community boundaries through orientation explain community organization on

social media? How does her theory of affective surfaces explain how community identities are shaped by the space they occupy? And how does her theory of willfulness, disorientation, and transgression articulate the tensions of group identity and solidarity in online spaces? To answer these questions, throughout this thesis I will explore several principles underlying the interactions of marginalized communities online and how the construction of identities and social relationships are influenced by the technology. Firstly, I will look at what it means to "post into being" and to continue posting as a way of maintaining identity. Zizi Papacharissi (2012, 1991) outlines the basic mechanics of online interactions: users generate posts as a way of interacting with others who may comment on them or repost the original post. There is not a presumed presence, identity, or affectual connection as there is with offline life, as the presence of an individual or a group, and their corresponding identity, is established through posting. The second principle I will be exploring is how differences in belief shape interactions in online spaces and reflect on group identity. At times these differences are acknowledged and do not play a role in determining the community's identity, but at other times differences can change a community's identity or cause a split. Underlying both principles is the idea of critical mass, which is crucial because without it online communities lose momentum and will fade away (Dixon 2014, 35-36). With this as the foundation, I will demonstrate how emotions and affect work in terms of the maintenance of marginalized communities and their identities. The final principle I will be investigating is how the boundaries of a community are actively maintained online: why certain individuals are ostracized from a community, or why a community splits into multiple fragments. As such, I will be relying upon methods most commonly found in philosophy and cultural studies where a preliminary theoretical framework is applied to different examples to test the validity of the theoretical framework and further elucidate these principles.

In the next chapter, I will analyze Sara Ahmed's framework of affective economies and willfulness. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Ahmed (2004b, 132) outlines how emotions and affect work to shape individual and collective bodies. This is important as there is a lack of long-term familial, institutional, and kinship bonds in these communities. They are more reliant on transitory posts, which are vectors of affect and corporeal experience. According to Ahmed (2004b, 6), bodies do not have defined boundaries and surfaces. Instead, they take the shape of the

contact that they have with objects and others (Ahmed 2004b, 6). Corporeal experience is linked directly to emotions because emotions are not individual psychological states that are experienced privately (Ahmed 2004b, 10). Rather, they are objects that bodies can come into contact with, and this contact leaves an impression on their surfaces (Ahmed 2004b, 10). Emotions retain their specificity because of how they are rooted in individual psychological practices. When affect circulates, it calls upon the specificities of emotions already present in individual bodies. Another way of approaching Ahmed's ideas regarding ideas is to see emotions in terms of vectors, like those found in a magnetic field or disease. From this perspective, emotions are understood in terms of their direction, where and how they are orientated, and their relation to other vectors. The focus is on the impact of emotions on visible and notable qualities of vectors and the work of emotions. I will be analyzing these principles in relation to online communities in the second chapter before applying them in the third chapter to the Suey Park controversy. When thinking about how communities and their identities are maintained in online spaces, I analyze how difference and marginalization are constructed in these spaces. Social media comes with many potential issues as users must perform a constructed identity without the contextual clues provided by everyday life, the performance of emotions and experiences can be heightened. Certain ideas and emotions, like anger and disgust, travel much quicker through social media. This is a phenomenon that marginalized communities are not exempt from, as this seems to be an effect of the technology itself on human interactions. The second chapter will delve into analyzing Ahmed's framework using affective economies to define difference and marginalization by analyzing Suey Park's inclusion and eventual ostracization by the Asian American online community. Suey Park was one of the creators of #NotYourAsianSidekick and #CancelColbert, which were popular hashtags within the Asian American online community that helped define the feel of the community. However, the tactics she used also caused the community to unravel, in particular the act of shaming. Shame comes to shape marginalized communities online and highlights the tension between the active creation of the self and the idea of "safe spaces" for marginalized peoples. For these groups, many of the issues presented by social media arise from this tension. This thesis is primarily concerned with Twitter, a text-based platform, because the affective economies surrounding images differs from text, which changes the construction and performance of identities.

The willful figure becomes a focal point of analysis in the fourth chapter because of what happens when affective flows in marginalized online communities are disrupted, pitted against one another, and changed. In *Willful Subjects*, Ahmed continues with the same analysis techniques and themes as *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* but applies them to the subject of the will. Willfulness exists within affective economies. Ahmed is not interested in what the will is as much as what the image of the will and willfulness do, like her analysis of emotions. Many theorists have written on the nature of the will and what constitutes willfulness, but Ahmed's focal point is what it means to be willful and the work willfulness does in today's cultural economy. She analyzes figures such as migrants and refugees to understand how emotions such as fear are key to willfulness and willfulness can circulate emotions (Ahmed 2014, 30). Within digital spaces and communities, willful figures exist and this thesis works to understand how marginalized digital communities deal with willful figures who may drastically alter the feel of the communities. The example of Mikki Kendall and the history of #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen will be examined as she was a willful figure whose perspective became integrated into the mainstream digital feminist movement. Her transition from the margins of the digital feminist movement towards the center leads to questions around boundary maintenance and the incorporation of willful figures in online communities.

The concluding chapter will synthesize the results of the previous chapters to analyze why marginalized communities are so difficult to maintain in online spaces. It is important to study community formation on social media platforms such as Twitter because, as Larisa Kingston Mann (2014, 295) writes about large-scale fights and discussions within the digital feminist community, for marginalized communities "microblogging sites…can provide [space for] some black women and other women of color who may have been excluded from other types of conversations". For peoples and communities who have been historically excluded from institutions, governmental power, and policy-making positions, they now have a method by which to communicate and to share their ideas among themselves and with others outside of their immediate communities. Brittney Cooper (2014), a Black feminist scholar and cultural commentator to major publications, also points out how black media makers, particularly black women, hold more influence in social media spaces than in traditional ones, and these changes in who and what is heard are part of the importance of social media. This allows for greater study of interactions

within marginalized communities, such as how they maintain their boundaries and deal with members who identify with a community but transgress that community's boundaries.

While my work is mostly concerned with online social bodies, the issue of the offline to online shift is still present. Much like how affect is an extension beyond the body, online life is an extension of offline life (Nakamura and Chow-White 2011, 1). The frameworks of offline life impact online life. For example, race can be thought of as a "system of tools, of mediation, or of 'enframing' that builds history and identity" (Chun 2011, 38). Online participants replicate these systems, and online communities and technologies create unique systems that have race encoded within them. As Lisa Nakamura and Peter Chow-White note, "no matter how 'digital' we become, the continuing problem of social inequlity along racial lines persists" (2011, 1), and Eszter Hargittai writes that "significant variation in social network site usage by race and ethnicity" exists from platform to platform (2011, 242). Different platforms have attracted different communities, such as the white flight from MySpace to Facebook (boyd 2013, 203; Brock 2012, 530). Because the focus of this thesis is on the dynamics within marginalized communities, my research focuses on Twitter, a platform that is noted for how it has shaped discourses on race and gender (Brock 2012, 529). As interactions on social media increasingly influence offline life and the etiquette of social media has merged with offline etiquette, understanding the basis of these interactions holds importance to generations that have been shaped by online spaces. This thesis will explore in depth the affective economies of marginalized online communities, how disruptive figures are incorporated or forced out of these communities, and what we can learn from specific online events as social media's influence on offline life grows.

Chapter 1
On Common Ground

The problem that this thesis explores is how boundary patrolling of the identities of politically marginalized, short-duration communities on social media occurs and how it feeds into the formation and dissolution of these communities. Who gets to be on common ground? I will be using the theory of affective economies articulated by Sara Ahmed as the theoretical backbone of this project to explore boundary patrolling in these communities. My focus is on social boundaries that have been formed by affective boundaries: how they have been formed, how they may change, how they are patrolled, and how they create and are the result of an "us" and "them". Sara Ahmed's theory of affective economies examines communities being shaped by dynamic discourses and affect, often over a short duration. Tracing affective economies through rapidly-changing online communities that have emerged throughout the mid-2010s can describe some of their dynamics. Sara Ahmed is also a fitting theorist for my project because her work on affective economies is a method of rethinking community and solidarity in political communities. Solidarity is an understanding that we live on common ground, but how we come to be on common ground differs depending on which line of thought is used. This thesis follows a similar trajectory; I will be applying Ahmed's ideas of affective economies and willfulness to examples of boundary policing in political communities. Community formation and the formation of community identity is a dominant theme in Ahmed's (2004b, 103) work, but it is discussed in terms of physical bodies: communities are one body until there is a disturbance in feeling that causes part of the body to surface. While this is a useful conceptualization, there are problems as the physical body and community body differ. In this chapter, I will first work through Ahmed's affective economies and theory of emotions, then move onto a discussion of boundary policing, followed by an examination of the concept of willfulness. I will end the chapter on how these concepts influence community formation and dissolution.

On Affective Economies

Sara Ahmed is a Pakistani-British academic who was raised in Australia and is based in the U.K. Her ideas span phenomenology, gender, race, and cultural studies, and her most cited work is *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Ahmed's (2004b, 130) concern lies primarily with migrants, especially in countries such as the U.K. and Australia. She analyzes contemporary discourses around socially marginalized groups, from refugees to women to queer people, by socially dominant groups, such as white nationalist groups and mainstream politicians, in her published work. Ahmed is concerned with the work emotions do at a societal level and she connects this back to political issues at a national level: refugees, immigrants, and white power groups. Her earlier works, from *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* to *The Promise of Happiness*, focused on the work the discourses around emotions performed in society; more recent works such as *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* have focused on the work the discourses around certain concepts, such as diversity, accomplish to maintain the status quo. She is most noted for her use of affect theory to analyze marginalization; in this thesis, I will be employing her ideas from *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* and *Willful Subjects,* where she uses the same techniques as the ones in her first major work to analyze will and willfulness.

Ahmed's articulation of affective economies references works by feminists and critical race theorists, and their ideas inform how Ahmed's affective economies work. For example, identity politics are often construed as a "'false' identity" meant to drive workers within a class apart (Alcoff 2006, 337), but Ahmed uses Marxist ideas in her affective economies to explain how identities and communities based on identity are formed. This can be traced to Linda Alcoff's work on identity, where identities are "open" to possible meaning instead of closed boundaries (2006, 102). In doing so, Ahmed has transformed the structural rigidity found in schools of thought such as critical race theory into a more dynamic process. The issue of race and its intersection with digital technology is an emerging one (Nakamura and Chow-White 2011, 1; boyd 2013, 203; Brock 2012, 529; Hargittai 2013, 240). The application of critical race theory to the digital sphere has ranged from understanding how race itself is a form of technology that is then layered onto the affordances of digital technology (Chun 2011, 38) to the emergence of racialized spaces in digital

space (boyd 2013, 203; Brock 2012, 530) to the conversations about race that spread on online platforms (Nakamura and Chow-White 2011, 3). At the basis of these analyses is the understanding that race and racism is "a systematic way of doing things that operates by mediating between users and techniques to create specific forms of oppression and discrimination" (Nakamura and Chow-White 2011, 3). However, this systematic analysis of race runs into many issues with the rise of modern technologies. Because of society's "biotechnical turn" that "privileges the technological and specifically the digital over other forms of knowledge" (Nakamura and Chow-White 2011, 4), prominent critical race scholar Paul Gilroy asserted that race is no longer a descriptive category (2000, 72). However, race as a descriptive category plays a crucial role on digital media as communities form around racial lines (boyd 2013, 203; Brock 2012, 529).

I have specifically chosen Sara Ahmed's articulation of affective economies to analyze the social interactions of marginalized communities on social media because the fluidity of her affective economies parallels the rapidly changing boundaries and identities of online communities. As Lisa Nakamura and Peter Chow-White write, "Digital media are both long lived and ephemeral, fragmented, and contingent. Digital media technology creates and hosts…social networks" (2011, 17). While the work of critical race scholars are useful in analyzing the discourses that shape race on the internet, they are less useful in analyzing the work those discourses perform and how the energy of that work spreads through the new structure of society, being that of a "network society" (van Dijk 2006, 1). Marginalized communities on social media are structured in networks (Faraj and Johnson 2011) that are built upon connections and relationships among individuals. Ahmed uses the understanding of race as a systematic issue—a crucial part of affective economies is the tracing of the "history of impressions" left by contact with objects (2004b, 7)—and envisions it in more flexible terms. In focusing on emotions and affect, Ahmed is emphasizing the "relational" as opposed to the exact "history of impressions" (2004b, 7). Ahmed's emphasis on the spread of affect and how affective relationships lead to cohesive discourses allows for the work behind the spread of discourses and systems of thought to be traced. This is one of the themes of this thesis: how the affective relationships allow for certain patterns in thought and

behavior to emerge in marginalized online communities, with a focus on how those patterns change the boundaries of these communities.

By rethinking racial politics in the frame of affective economies, Ahmed provides a way of thinking through contemporary identity politics as interconnected networks. Her ideas analyze processes that are influenced by structures but are not themselves structural, and this is where online identity politics lie. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* Ahmed demonstrates how affective movement reveals how boundaries arise, and when boundaries are solidified the movement becomes a form. Ahmed (2004b, 132) focuses on how emotions work to shape the surfaces of individual and collective bodies, such as how "anxiety and fear create the very effect of borders". In *Willful Subjects*, she continues with this line of analysis. She starts with the figure of the willful child and how the child is corrected before moving onto politically charged figures of willfulness in today's society, such as migrants and refugees (Ahmed 2014, 21). Willfulness hinges on emotions such as fear and can circulate emotions because objects that do not circulate emotions in a predictable manner will have willfulness attributed to them (Ahmed 20014, 17). Ahmed's work on willfulness exists within affective economies as evocation. The use of certain emotions like fear in modern political discourse becomes a method of casting certain figures, such as refugees and migrants, as willful "others". Doing so is an exercise of power to dictate life as we know it, which bodies or institutions determine affective flow, and who is willful and whose will becomes society's will. In connecting willfulness to matters of social justice and society, Ahmed returns to how institutions are reproduced and life as we know it is propagated. Affective economies is a way of reframing on-going political debates; as Ahmed's key theory, it provides the foundation for her analyses of social events.

Ahmed's work on identity politics and willfulness draw most heavily upon the works of Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and Louis Althusser with some references to Benedict Anderson's ideas of imagined communities. Moreover, her work is a continuation of affect theory. According to Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie (2010, 140) there are three prongs to affect theory, all of which Ahmed utilizes. The first is what Brian Massumi (2002, 128) describes as the "limit-expression of *what the human shares with everything it is not*: a bringing out of its *inclusion* in matter" or the movement of forces between objects and subjects. The

second is "affect as more personal, literally more familiar. The terms vary but this is affect as emotion or feeling, the folding of broader affective intensities into the nervous system" (Bertelsen and Murphie 2010, 140). The third is a middle ground between the first two, being the Spinozan (1952, 395) idea of "power to affect and be affected…by which the power of acting of the body itself is increased, diminished, helped, or hinged together with the ideas of these affections". Ahmed blends these together for her theory of affective economies, where the circulation of affect such as fear is what binds social bodies together. For Ahmed, affect as "emotion or feeling" defines the relationship we have with not only our physical bodies but with social bodies of which we are a part. As we come into contact with emotions and feelings they shape our boundaries (Ahmed 2004b, 6). There are other interpretations of affect, such as Teresa Brennan's (2004, 3) work, in which "affects come via an interaction with other people and an environment" with a physiological impact, and transmission of affect is what Caron Lipman (2006, 618) describes as "social in origin but is responsible for bodily changes". While Sara Ahmed does not use affect in the sense of Félix Guattari's (1995, 9) "'pre-personal' forces" that we are a part of (Bertelsen and Murphie 2010, 140), Ahmed's interpretation of affect theory uses affect and affective flow as forces beyond individual control that connect us with others. As we come into contact with objects, feelings take the "shape" of the contact we have with objects or memory. The affective economies that Ahmed analyses is the result of the fact that feelings are produced as effects of circulation after feelings stick and slide over objects (Ahmed 2004b, 7). In this thesis, I will be drawing upon her interpretation of affect theory while placing more emphasis on the power of affect to shape social bodies and patrol community boundaries.

Her expansion of Butler's ideas surrounding identity will be discussed at length in the following chapter, and I will tailor those ideas to suit online communities. Butler's work on speech acts and injurious speech is relevant to online communities because they rely on individuals posting into being to maintain their presence and boundaries. Ahmed folds speech acts into affective economies and draws heavily from Michel Foucault's ideas of "counter-conduct" in her work on willfulness. Foucault (2007, 201) chose the term "counter-conducts" to describe the "struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others". According to Louiza Odysseos, Carl Death, and Helle Malmvig (2016, 152), Foucault's counter-conduct was about issues surrounding governance and people's struggles against the

ways in which they are governed by the state and its agents. Ahmed connects her affective economies with societal ideals that are encouraged by the state, but are not specific to the state of state apparatuses. She analyses the affective economies circulated by the state that are taken up by social bodies, such as families, academic institutions, and the media. Like Ahmed, I will apply these concepts to spaces where there is little to no government regulation, but the effects of government are still present. Online communities often reproduce actions and discourses favored by the nation and the governing state apparatus. Eliza Chandler and Carla Rice (2013, 232) note that some of the processes that exist for controlling the conduct of others include subjectification and self-discipline, which are not only the transmission of knowledge but an active shaping of the subject. An example of this is the fatphobia in society today, as praise and blame are used in tandem with expert knowledge to justify a norm or to frame fatness as a fault of the body and mind (Chandler & Rice 2013, 231). Reinterpreting these ideas in the language of affective economies, the boundaries of bodies, physical and metaphysical, are orientated and shaped by their experiences. Those that disorient are deemed the source of emotions, willfulness, and problems whereas those that are oriented with other bodies recede into the background.

Throughout this introduction, my analysis will shift between levels. From the individual to the community to wider society and the nation, they can all be thought of as a body situated within a larger body, made up of many nodal points where orientation points to the formation of boundaries and surfaces. Ahmed (2014) ties this into willfulness, writing that:

> The part/whole distinction becomes a willing distinction: not simply a distinction between the part and whole, but between parts, between those who are willing and those who are not. This is why we cannot have a general logic of the part. Willfulness as a diagnosis could be a historical record of moments in which some parts fail in their duty to carry and support the whole body. (105)

An example Ahmed (2014, 1) uses is a Grimm story where a dead child in the process of being buried continually raises its arm out of the grave, and the mother is forced to strike the arm with a rod to subjugate both the arm and the child. The arm and the child are both deemed willful because the arm failed its duty to be buried, like the rest of the child. The whole is defined by its changing boundaries and

borders which were created from repetition, and new lines of repetitions can be created and maintained. The distinction between a body and a larger body in which it is situated is one of will: is the smaller body willing or willful? If the former, then it recedes into the background; if the latter, then it disorients and the larger body will have to contend with a body that it deems a threat to its existence. This is a thesis about how communities respond to individuals that are deemed threats to those communities.

I will depart from Sara Ahmed's theories in one key way. Ahmed writes about individual bodies and larger bodies in society, but the relationship between the two tiers is not clearly articulated in her work. The connection between individual physical bodies and larger social ones is implied through the assertion that the processes and rules that govern individual bodies are similar to the ones that govern communities and identities. In this thesis, I will interpret Ahmed's theories of affect in ways that mediate this gap. Expanding on the idea of affect as relational, I envision the interaction of bodies as a stacking of multiple levels of bodies. There is an individual body, a smaller communal body, and a larger community. Ahmed's language and analysis still applies: the relationship smaller communal bodies have with a larger community is parallel to what individual bodies have with smaller communal bodies. The relationship an individual body has with a larger community is mediated by a smaller communal body and impacts the identity of the larger community. How a community's identity takes shape and falls apart is where the questions of this thesis are located. While I will refer to specific affects and Ahmed's analysis of the work certain objects do in society, a significant part of my focus is on how these processes of affective flow come to shape identities of communities in online spaces. While I will be analyzing how affect is relational, interpretations of affect such as Brennan's relating to psychological mechanisms of identity and the impact environments have on how individuals views themselves is outside the scope of this thesis. My interest is in how individuals view themselves in terms of community and how communities come to decide who can and cannot be a part of them.

On Boundaries

When asking how communities and their identities form, I am interested in the construction of difference and marginalization. Ahmed notes that what separates

us from others is also what connects us, which is a provocative observation about how ideas of the self and the other develop. She has three main concepts by which she discusses boundaries in her work: relationality, the surface of bodies, and movement in space. These underlie my thesis as the affective economies forming a community's boundaries and the surfaces of its participants are a result of the actions of the community and its participants. We can only know and interpret what we perceive after conferment with a previous body of knowledge accrued by experience. In terms of relationality, Ahmed uses the description of psychological states to explain community formation through orientation. Emotions are relational as it involves "(re)actions or relations of 'towardness' or 'awayness' in relation to such objects" (Ahmed 2004b, 24), and contact with an object results in an orientation. Boundaries surface as objects orient themselves. Important to note here that emotions and sensations are not necessarily the same thing, but there is a "slide" from one to the next depending on the intensity (Ahmed 2004b, 24). In Ahmed's interpretation of affect theory, emotions are a corporeal process that gain meaning through experience and associations for, according to Steven Brown and Ian Tucker (2010, 234), "[t]he body is also viewed as a surface upon which discourse is inscribed rather than as something that is known 'from within'". This is apparent in Ahmed's language about feeling being shaped by contact with memory and feelings taking the "shape" of the contact we have with objects (Ahmed 2004b, 6). Emotions as a corporeal process rather than a cognitive one allows for plasticity in Ahmed's (2004b, 11) affective economies because emotions are not rooted in the psychological processing of individuals but as the movement between individuals. Because affect is evidence of the persistence of connection between objects, the modulation of affect also modulates connections between objects and individuals. Ahmed's affective economies relies upon these premises and places a greater emphasis on relationality, hence her focus on surfaces and the ways in which boundaries surface.

Ahmed describes emotions in terms of how they appear on the surfaces of bodies. What is meant by a surface is a level of visibility. Her line of argumentation has been developed through the influence of philosophers such as Félix Guattari (1996, 158) who states that "[a]ffects are *transitions* between states". Brian Massumi (2002, 35, 207) expands on this idea, writing that "[a]s transitions between other transitions, passages in a field of relays, affects....are *actual* for example in

sensations or emotions as a kind of coming into being that is nevertheless always in transition". The surfacing of bodies involves the over-determination of sense perception, emotion, and judgment, all of which relate back to experience (Ahmed 2004b, 24). She uses pain to analyze how various figures in contemporary culture become visible, and this is an underlying theme in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion:* our physical embodiments and how we respond with our physical bodies informs how we respond to cultural events. Our social responses to social bodies mirror the responses we have to our physical selves; however, the mechanisms may differ. With physical pain, there is no means for one person to pass their pain onto another. Pain is what allows us to take notice of boundaries and surfaces. The work that pain does in society and how it is used by communities and nations to justify certain practices requires a social element in bodily surfaces in that the edges of a body only "surface" in relation to others (Ahmed 2004b, 27). The example Ahmed uses is how we become aware of our physical bodies when there is great discomfort and pain or pleasure. Otherwise, our physical bodies fade from our sensory perception as we focus on other things (Ahmed 2004b, 27). It is pain and pleasure that brings us back to our physical bodies and embodiments. The intensity of emotions is what allows the surfaces of bodies to be felt as "against" an other (Ahmed 2004b, 28). When there is no external object causing our pain, we construct an image. The example Ahmed (2004b, 27) uses here is how we say "I feel like I have been stabbed by a knife" or other metaphors to describe pain. These metaphors are constructed to describe how the surfaces of our body have been impacted. Ahmed's descriptions are an expansion of Elaine Scarry's (1985, 3) work on pain, for whom "physical pain has no voice" and is an experience that is held within a body. It is only through language that pain becomes visible (Scarry 1985, 27) because our bodies feel pain and are "a surface upon which discourse is inscribed" (Brown and Tucker 2010, 234). Pain "unmak[es] the body" so we create language that obliterates the body (Brown and Tucker 2010, 28). In ordinary life there is the absence of pain but not the absence of the body. This is visible in Ahmed's (2004b) descriptions of pain as she writes that:

> It is this perceived intrusion of something other within the body that creates the desire to re-establish the border, to push out the pain, or the (imagined, material) object we feel is the 'cause' of the pain. Pain involves the violation or transgression of the border between inside and outside, and it is through this transgression that I feel the border in the first place. (26)

In articulating pain the body is reduced to inside, outside, and the border between the two because pain is first and foremost an intrusion of boundaries. Think, for example, of a knife stabbing through skin and into a body. It is through the intrusion upon the boundary of the skin that pain first registers. The barrier provided by skin between outside and inside is violated, which is when we feel the pain of being stabbed. Upon this breach of the boundary, the instinct is to remove that which has broken the border. As a child, I remember being repeatedly warned that if I were ever impaled by an object to resist the instinct to remove it. That instinct—to remove the intruding object and attempt to reestablish the border—was warned against because of its consequences, but it is instinct that drives the desire to push out the pain. Physical pain is internal to the physical body, though our awareness of it allows us to perceive the boundaries of our body. Social pain is something that seems to be readily transmitted: multiculturalism involves pain because cultural boundaries are constantly being pushed, questioned, and transgressed (Ahmed 2004b, 133). This raises the question of whether or not the word pain can be transferred from the individual to the collective. According to Abraham Olivier (2008, 11), pain at its crux is "a disturbed mode of bodily perception bound to hurt, affliction or agony". An individual can experience pain in response to social situations, for "[a]s long as we divide physical and mental pain, we set up a fake problem: correlating phenomena falsely separated" (Olivier 2008, 9). Can suffering, particularly emotional suffering, be called pain? Scarry (1985, 27) notes how torture is the "demonstration and magnification of the felt-experience of pain". By making physical pain not only something within the body but a visible process with power over the subject, torture allows the subject to be wounded in ways beyond the physical as the subject's sense of self and the world collapses (Scarry 1985, 46-47). Pain does not need to be in response to an immediate bodily transgression to be felt. Psychological pain stems from "the hatred of, alienation from, and betrayal of all that is contained in the self" (Scarry 1985, 47). What is less clear is how representations of pain, such as the word itself, might be transferred from the individual to a community. How is it that a word used to describe a specific physical sensation comes to describe a social phenomenon? Ahmed's explanation is that the work of pain at a social level mirrors the work that pain does at a physiological and psychological level. When this perceived intrusion happens, such as when refugees settle in land that is "not theirs" or when white hate groups protest for their rights to

a monocultural society, the nation responds by attempting to reestablish the border and eject that which is the "cause" of the pain—much like how our physical bodies respond to pain and how we cope with psychological pain.

The language of pain aligns one body to others, and the surface of a community is shaped and lived differently because of this history of pain (Ahmed 2004b, 20). In the same way that one may never use a limb and move in the same way after injury, a community and how it lives is shaped by this pain. Pain is therefore crucial to the formation of boundaries, as "[i]t is through sensual experiences such as pain that we come to have a sense of our skin as bodily surface, as something that keeps us apart from others, and as something that 'mediates' the relationship between internal or external, or inside and outside" (Ahmed 2004b, 24). Because of "the intensification of pain sensations…bodies and worlds materialize and take shape, or that the effect of boundary, surface and fixity is produced" (Ahmed 2004b, 24), pain as a biological mechanism can be applied to a social one. Pain at a biological, physiological, and psychological level performs the same work that pain at a social level performs. In both cases, pain allows for boundaries and the "common ground" within boundaries to form while directing bodies away from the perceived cause of pain because of the desire to push out this feeling. This metaphor, while useful for thinking about how identity politics work, has its limits. Social bodies also use past experiences to interpret new experiences. For example, activists root the current relationship between Black American communities and the police in the historical origins of policing in America, which grew out of highway patrols that caught runaway Black slaves (David, 2015). Pain is crucial to the formation of social bodies: many of the political movements in the last decade and the communities behind those movement, from Occupy to the Arab Spring to #BlackLivesMatter, have been a response to pain at a societal level. However, pain with regards to a physical body is within a body and is not readily transmitted to another body. The structures that sense pain are within the body. Despite this, social bodies can spread pain to other social bodies as the circulation of pain causes the surfacing of boundaries.

Examining the issue of how boundaries surface through the application of affective states allows Ahmed to create a link between the formation of communities and specific emotions, such as hate. Hate is an important emotion in short-duration online communities as it is often hatred or antagonism towards a specific object that

precipitates the formation of communities. Hate moves you away from that which is causing you injury and pain, and the circulation of hate binds subjects together with certain ideals (Ahmed 2004b, 43). Certain people embody the threat of loss—in contemporary culture, this is the loss of jobs, the loss of money, the loss of land, the loss of social and physical space—and this threat of violation and invasion drives hate. It requires a spatial element because you move away from those who are the "cause" of your hate (Ahmed 2004b, 43). Bodies are reorganized in this movement. Hate is an intense emotion that requires a sense of "against": I hate you, therefore I am against you, therefore I move away from you. Because of this, hate ties an individual with a group:

> Hate may respond to the particular, but it tends to do so by aligning the particular with the general; 'I hate you because you are this or that', where 'this' or 'that' evokes a group that the individual comes to *stand for* or *stand in for*. Hatred may also work as a form of investment; it endows a particular other with meaning or power by locating them as a member of a group, which is then imagined as a form of positive residence (that is, as residing positively in the body of the individual). (Ahmed 2004b, 49)

Hate requires invoking alignment to a group. I may hate a particular thing, but in explaining my hatred for a specific object I will call upon a quality of this object that is then extracted beyond that specific object. It works as a social discourse by evoking a history of experiences and a body of knowledge that is not contained in one object. In doing so, hate calls upon other objects. Hate involves the surfacing of bodies through how we encounter others in space and aligns the object of hate with a larger group. The object of hate comes to represent that larger group (Ahmed 2004b, 46).

Over time, as it accumulates and repetition of movement occurs, hate forms the basis of the relationship between a subject and an imagined other. Ahmed (2004b) writes that:

> Hate is involved in the very negotiation of boundaries between selves and others, and between communities, where 'others' are brought into the sphere of my or our existence as a threat. This other, who may stand for or stand by other others, *presses* against me, threatening my existence. The proximity of the other's touch is felt as a negation. Hate involves a turning away from others that is lived as a turning towards the self. (51)

The boundaries of the self only surface upon contact with other objects. Thinking back to our physical bodies: we do not feel the boundaries of our bodies until we come into contact with another object, whether it is to stub one's toe against the door or to brush our hand against someone we admire. In a social space, an example may be talking to a friend from a different culture in order to crystalize the differences in one's familial spheres. In hate, "others" take the shape of a threat to our bodies, and this extends to the ideologies that hold the social body together (Ahmed 2004b, 50). When coming into contact with hated others, the impressions left by them on our surfaces are deemed threatening. We fear this influence on our sense of self, so we must expel that which is causing this fear. As a result, the circulation of hate binds subjects together with certain ideals. We become part of a group because we are all moving against a specific object. Hate's alignment of the subject with a community drives group identification (Ahmed 2004b, 51). In order to explain how individual affective states relate to community formation, Ahmed uses the metaphor of skin. How others make an impression upon us is analogous to the "skin" of the collective which forms through encountering others in space. Group identity is both the cause and the result of hate crimes in an affective economy (Ahmed 2004b, 51). Tracking the history of hate involves reading the surfaces of bodies and listening to those who have been shaped by this history (Ahmed 2004b, 50). In doing so, we can see how group identities surface and the "skins" of groups take shape in the economy. This is visible in short-duration online communities; there are communities of "anti-sjws" [anti-social justice warriors] whose primary identifying feature is their antagonism against "sjws" [social justice warriors], because the latter are largely from marginalized communities and use the space of social media to validate their existence in society ("SJW" 2014; cishits 2014). Those who belong in communities identified as "sjws" contend that "anti-sjws" typically belong to privileged groups. The concept of the "skins" of these groups is important because "skins come to be felt as a border through the violence of the impression of one surface upon another" (Ahmed 2004b, 54). Using Ahmed's reading of hate and its role in shaping the "skins" of groups in an affective economy, the hate displayed by "anti-sjws" is what allows that community to form and stay together.

Ahmed articulates boundaries through the movement of affect through space. Affect can be thought of as the transition between corporeal states due to its movement (Guattari 1996, 158) and is therefore not simply an internal state of being.

The relationship between the community and the individual, and the shaping of that relationship by sociopolitical and sociocultural forces is analyzed by Ahmed with emotions such as disgust, fear, and shame. Pleasure opens our body to experiences and to others; shame, disgust, fear, and pain closes bodies (Ahmed 2004b, 20). According to Ahmed, movement is inherent to the sensation and emotionality of an emotion such as disgust and contributes to affective economies. Movement occurs when affect is shared and communities are generated through this shared witnessing (Ahmed 2004b, 96). Attachment "takes place through movement" (Ahmed 2004b, 11), such as when disgust binds objects because "movement is the work of disgust…disgust brings the body perilously close to an object only then to pull away from the object" (Ahmed 2004b, 85). Disgust in particular can be thought of as social as it "is clearly dependent upon contact" (Ahmed 2004b, 85). Borders can become apparent and important through the work of emotions; with abjection and disgust, the border itself is turned into an object (Ahmed 2004b, 85). Border objects are read as disgusting because they cannot be quantified, which threatens the security of what is known, and their insecurity threatens the driving need for security and expelling weakness (Ahmed 2004b, 85). Because of this, disgust is crucial to power relations. Fear is too, and in Ahmed's analysis it is also an emotion with inherent movement. Fear involves shrinking the body, such as when the fight or flight response restricts mobility, and this happens through the movement of other bodies (Ahmed 2004b, 63). However, in order for fear to be maintained, it cannot be contained within associated objects. The economy of fear works because we fear that which we cannot contain, and the "passing by" an object of fear makes fear more fearsome because it is no longer contained within that object (Ahmed 2004b, 66). Fear mobilizes against a "them" that has transgressed boundaries and threatened "us", justifying the policing of borders and boundaries (Ahmed 2004b, 132). This is the basis of Ahmed's argument that fear goes beyond an individual to do work in shaping behaviors and communities. Through mirrored expansion and restriction, certain bodies are aligned together and against others. The individual subject comes into being through its alignment with the collective. Shame, which involves the bodily surface and the subject's relation to itself through that surface, also requires movement; not only the movement of individual bodies but the movement of the "nation" because "declarations of shame can bring 'the nation' into existence as a felt community" (Ahmed 2004b, 101). The nation is "moved by the injustices of the

past" (Ahmed 2004b, 102) because a "turning of bodies and alignment drives group identification (Ahmed 2004b, 54). Shame works like pain, except negative attributions are now directed inwards instead of outwards because it involves exposure to an "other" in order to experience the failure of not living up to a societal "ideal" (Ahmed 2004b, 10). When thinking about how being part of a community affects an individual's identity, how an individual's identity affects a community's identity, and how boundaries of identity come to be defined, these emotions play a crucial role because they emotions heighten our awareness of our boundaries and a community's awareness of its boundaries. For example, shame is a social deterrent that arises as the affective cost of not following the scripts of normative existence when one's body deviates from the "ideal". Ahmed's focus is on the work of individual emotions in alignment; my focus will be on the general principle of alignment and how it works to allow boundaries of communities to surface. While the principles behind how specific emotions work remain the same in smaller, shorter-duration, online communities, the process of how borders shift within these communities becomes more visible because it is possible to trace affective flow. When an individual is aligned to an online community because of the work of these emotions, the alignment becomes identification. If a subject is aligned with a community and its affect, over time and with continued alignment that subject will come to identify as part of that community (Ahmed 2004b, 54).

Ahmed argues in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* that identification with a group allows us to expand our social space beyond our individual body and into a larger space occupied by other bodies. If pain and hate move us away from other bodies, then love moves us towards them. Identification pulls us closer to others, but it involves a paradox. We get closer to others because we wish to become like them or because we see how we are alike, but we can never become the other we love because identification can only extend so far. Ahmed posits that in identifying with others, we aim to negate the differences that mark us as distinct bodies. At the heart of identification is moving into a space where one currently is not present. It is this movement of towardness that drives identification, which is:

> an active kind of loving, which moves or pulls the subject towards another. Identification involves the desire to get close to others by becoming like them. Becoming like them obviously requires not being them in the first place. So identification exercises a distinction between the subject and object

of love. At the same time, identification seeks to undo the very distinction
that it requires: in becoming more like you, I seek to take your place. But
taking the place of the one that is loved is futural: if one were already in their
place, then one would not be identifying with them, one would be them. So
identification is the desire to take a place where one is not yet. As such,
identification expands the space of the subject: it is a form of love that tells
the subject what it could become in the intensity of its direction towards
another (love as 'towardness'). (Ahmed 2004b, 126)

The principles behind loving a person, as Ahmed describes above, are applied to
loving an object. The object of love is ideal because it is loved, and those who love it
become aligned with others who love it because they come to identify with this
object (Ahmed 2004b, 124). Alignment occurs because not everyone has access to
the same object of love. Because of the circulation of emotions and how bodies are
but one nodal point in the economy, bodies are aligned and oriented in specific
directions. An example she uses is how the love that white nationalist groups have
for the nation elevates their status, as they are both for the nation and for love, but
they are not necessarily looking to replace the nation; they seek to return it to "life as
we know it" (Ahmed 2004b, 144). While replacement may be an underlying force in
love, other possible interpretations exist. In the case of love, individual bodies orient
towards an ideal object and they identify with others orienting towards a shared
object ideal. Ahmed's observations about the work done by shame, disgust, pain, and
hate, are ones I will touch upon in this thesis in relation to changing social
boundaries as affective boundaries change. While love may have a role in the
formation of communities, this thesis is first and foremost about the collapse of
communities and the role of certain affect, such as shame, in this. There is also the
issue that Sara Ahmed's work on love is limited. Love has many manifestations,
from the intimate to the familial to the political. Ahmed's work does not analyze love
in enough detail to be used in analyzing how digital communities form because her
focus on love is primarily in relation to similarity and moving towards an object
ideal (2004b, 52). In Ahmed's analysis, there is always one primary object of love.
However, as Hemmings notes, "love may have many objects" (2005, 551) because as
an affect it can be transferred to many objects and therefore connect them.
Hemmings also writes that love may "be its own reward" (2005, 552), which is in
direct contrast to Ahmed's assertions that love is "ambivalent" because to love is to

move closer to an object ideal while never being able to fulfil it (2004b, 125). There are aspects to love that Ahmed does not address in her writing. Because of this and the fact that the focus of this thesis is on the collapse of communities, love's role in the affective economies of marginalized online communities will not be analyzed.

The circulation of these emotions performs work to solidify the boundaries that have surfaced. Sara Ahmed links this to Louis Althusser's ideas of "interpellation" and the construction of subjects. For Althusser (1972, 105), "the existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing". Interpellation is the process by which cultural ideas are internalized; we are born into social roles created and naturalized by society. Ghassan Hage (2010, 121), another theorist whom Sara Ahmed references in her work, defines "racism as a racial process of 'interpellation,' that is, a process of constructing racialized subjects". Hage (2010, 121-122) outlines three forms of racial interpellation: non-interpellation, "a mode of racism linked with the experience of invisibility", an example of which is how serving staff is often ignored; negative interpellation, "the racialized is definitely noticed and made visible…the symbolic structure of society has a place for them, but it is a place defined by negative characteristics", such as when marginalized groups are described as "lazy, dirty, thief, social problem, etc"; and mis-interpellation, where "the first instance the racialized person is interpellated as belonging to a collectivity 'like everybody else'". In regards to the last one, when the racialized person is hailed, "no sooner do they answer the call and claim their spot than the symbolic order brutally reminds them that they are not part of everyone" (Hage 2010, 122). These three forms of interpellation can be found in Ahmed's work as she describes how objects of fear pass by, how shame creates "others", how affect orients bodies to and away from other bodies, and how bodies emerge. Subjects are constructed through affective economies. Depending on their orientation and the emotions being circulated, these subjects can fall into non-interpellation where emotions bypass them, negative interpellation, and mis-interpellation. The way subjects are interpellated is part of the work that emotions do and the effect of affective economies, which is Ahmed's focus. Interpellation in turn can also contribute to affective economies: through interpellation bodies and "others" surface because interpellation is a process of constructing racialized subjects. Each form of racial interpellation constructs racialized subjects who disorient from the background of non-racialized subjects.

When a body or group of bodies begin to disorient the affective flow, or the circulation of emotions, then pressure increases to restore the flow to what it once was or to modify the systemic affective flow in ways that re-establish the dominance of certain bodies over others (Ahmed 2004b, 144). This is a concept that is visible in the work of other theorists, such as Frances Piven and Richard Cloward (1977, xv): one example is in how political movements will always be co-opted because the inertia of the system is too great to surmount. Movements aimed at creating change, from welfare rights for the poor to the American Civil Rights Movement, cannot permanently disrupt established institutions and policies. The amount of energy needed to surmount the affective flows of the current system is too great, or the disorientation provided by a political movement is incorporated into systemic affective flow to restore "life as we know it" (Ahmed 2004b, 144). Affect is an important part of how life operates, as it "is taken to be one…object of forms of power that invest in the production and modulation of 'life itself'" (Anderson 2010, 165). Restoring affective flow is about "life as we know it" (Ahmed 2004b, 144).

On Willfulness

Ahmed expands on her ideas about the surfacing of boundaries by addressing how bodies surface in *Willful Subjects*, published in 2014. Willfulness is a modality within affective economies that is important to the surfacing of boundaries and by extension, the patrolling of boundaries. Returning to Ahmed's description of how bodily senses arise: body parts fade from our notice until pain or pleasure, a distinct sensation, causes them to surface in our thoughts. Ahmed reiterates the metaphor of the body in her analysis of willfulness. Ahmed (2014, 43) writes that "[w]hen something is agreeable to our will, we tend not to notice it, which is to say the impression created is not as distinct. When something resists will, an impression becomes more distinct". She writes about willfulness in the context of the visibility of refugees and migrants as threats to "life as we know it". An example she points to are migrants who are perceived as being willful for not learning to speak English once they are in the U.K.; the fact that English courses have overflowing waiting lists does not matter as it is the perception of migrants' lack of adherence to the process of citizenship that matters (Ahmed 2014, 129). In online communities, willful figures are individuals within communities who change the affective flow of a community. Willfulness is related to hate because it is characterized as the

perceived antagonism of another body that leads to the surfacing of that body. Willfulness exists within Ahmed's conception of affective economies and is subject to the same principles. Objects that follow our will disappear from view because there is no disorientation and no contact that leads to the surfacing of emotions that would turn our attention (Ahmed 2014, 43). Willful objects however create a distinct impression, forcing boundaries to surface, and that which had disappeared from view comes to our attention again (Ahmed 2014, 43). This is a way in which Ahmed's theories of willfulness are an extension of Foucault's ideas of counter-conduct, in which willful objects struggle against processes of conduct. However, Ahmed (2014, 16) also argues that "[t]he willful subject might be striking in her appearance not only because she disagrees with what has been willed by others, but because she disagrees with what has disappeared from view". A willful subject disorients from the "background" of social norms that have faded from view, such as English being the predominant language of the U.K.

Ahmed's inclusion of the will and willfulness in analyses of nation-state discourses deals explicitly with the question of how marginalized community's identity forms. Ahmed (2014, 15) writes that "[w]illfulness might be what we do when we are judged as being *not*, as not meeting the criteria for being human, for instance. Not to meet the criteria for human is often to be attached to other nots, not human as not being: not being white, not being male, not being straight, not being able-bodied". In this passage Ahmed names the orientation of social space: white, male, straight, and able-bodied. To orient to this space is to make one human; to disorient, whether through category or through behavior, is to be construed as willful and not human. This brings forth the question of how social spaces come to have orientation. Ahmed's answer is that the orientation of social space is set by repetitions that allow patterns to form, institutions to take shape, and form and shapes to occupy space. The will plays a part in this formation of a history of repetitions, as "[w]hen we think of the will sphere, we might think of how we inhabit the world willingly with others. Perhaps we can think of social willing not then simply as what we accomplish when we will together but how we become proximate to objects and others in being orientated toward ends that have been agreed" (Ahmed 2014, 48). In a space where bodies are oriented, self-selection has occurred. In a space devoid of willful subjects, it is not that bodies will together. They are not bound by the same process or means but by the same end goal or product. Each body

may have a will of its own that may or may not align with the social space, but the body aligns with the orientation of the space set by affective economies.

The leap between the somatic body and the social body is an issue that exists within Ahmed's work because the relationship between the two is metaphorical. Ahmed uses the language of the somatic body to discuss how social bodies respond, such as how "Those deemed the limbs of the social body might depend on being given agency by their own limbs" (Ahmed 2014, 176). Though she implies a relationship between the somatic and the social, the connection is never explicated. Despite this, the insights she provides in her work also go beyond the metaphorical because affect is something that goes between bodies and extends beyond the boundaries of the individual. Mona Lilja works through how "the repetition of signs" allows "others and objects to be imbued with meaning and emotional value" while adding "the subjects' reflections upon the emotions" (2017, 346). Affect is a conceptual model for the social body, and emotions are the individual psychological responses to affect (Hickey-Moody 2013, 80). This relates to the social body because the emotional responses of individuals enter the affective economy that forms the social body. For example, boyd notes that one of the ways in which MySpace became coded as "ghetto" by white teenagers was the "offense" they felt at the prevalence of hip-hop on the social networking site (2013, 218). The discourse of a user's relationship with hip-hop either being "a point of pride" or that the "genre and the perceived attitudes that go with it are viewed as offensive" translated into what boyd describes as "white flight" from MySpace (2013, 219). In this example, the emotions individuals felt, whether "offense" (disgust) or "pride", shaped the feel of MySpace and its demographics as users, based on these feelings, decided whether or not the platform suited their social needs. According to Lilja, "Just as emotions connect people, they also define who does not belong" (2017, 345), which is a concept that will be explored in this thesis. In doing so, they mediate the connections between the individual and the collective (Lilja 2017, 345). Thus the affects that Ahmed draws upon and the work that they do are "relational reactions, embedded in social contexts that create the possibility for us to communicate, share and circulate emotions, while still having an individual attachment to it" (Lilja 2017, 346). Affects are able to perform work between bodies because of individual attachments.

For Ahmed, these are the beginnings of how a marginalized community, such as a migrant community, forms. As in her explanation of hate and fear, the

penetration of boundaries that have been created by orientation within an affective economy makes boundaries between communities visible (Ahmed 2004b, 132). As I will explore in the next chapter, this is also true of short-duration online communities: because the medium of the technology demands that individuals post themselves into being, self-selection occurs in digital spaces and this thesis focuses on when this process of self-selection breaks down. Ahmed also notes that willing can also be seen as removing objects that are wrong and do not belong. Willfulness is therefore a form of boundary policing. Willing projects a horizon that assumes the thing to be willed is already present for someone to reach for it. If willing creates a horizon that brings certain things into reach, then there are some things that are not in reach by the act of willing (Ahmed 2014, 49). Those objects that are out of reach will be seen as willful and unable to act in accordance with what is being willed. An example of this is the organizing around Hillary Clinton's campaign and the divisions within the Women's March. The object being willed is a unified feminist movement. Women of color were perceived by white women as willful and discussed in terms of their "comeuppance" and "divisiveness" to a united women's movement due to their critiques of white women (Hess 2017). However, as women of color noted, white women broke faith first by voting Trump into power (Hess 2017). A united feminist movement remains out of reach because of these divisions.

Bodies entering into a space are not automatically marked as willful others transgressing boundaries. For Ahmed, they may be accepted into the community that lays claim to the space or they may be marked as willful subjects that threaten the national body. This too can be used in thinking about smaller communities situated within larger communities. Acceptance, or assimilation, into the larger community is conditional. Ahmed does not use assimilation to describe social policy, but the process by which bodies that were once disorienting come to orient with dominant affective flows and therefore recede from view. Ahmed (2014) writes that:

> [T]he key differentiation is not between us and them, but between them, between those differences that can be assimilated into the national body and those that cannot (Ahmed 2000, 106). Some differences become indigestible: what the nation cannot stomach. Willfulness is useful as a technique for making those who are assumed as inassimilable…responsible for not being assimilated. It is as if they do not enter a door (imagine as open, an open door

functions as a sign of national good will) because of what they have failed to give up. (128)

Not all differences lead to disorientation. What leads to community identity is not the lack of difference among the bodies comprising a community, but that all the bodies orient towards the same end point. The national community, the body of the nation, can tolerate certain differences so long as bodies do not disorient and those differences do not cause other bodies to disorient. Assimilation does not dictate that bodies need to be the same; it dictates that whatever differences may exist do not disorient and allow those bodies to experience the same events at the same time. Bodies that fail on this point are deemed willful. The nation, in securing its borders that have been created by orientation and repetition of orientations, casts these willful subjects as responsible for their lack of assimilation. The national body, which has held a specific circulation of emotions and certain ideals, is not at fault; the bodies that disorient are at fault.

Willfulness plays a role in the creation of "others" because "[w]illfulness is the word used to describe the perverse potential of will and to contain that perversity in a figure" and "[o]ur tendency to associate willfulness with human flaws and sin" (Ahmed 2014, 12). Willfulness is a perception, an external judgment by other bodies, and not an act of the will; it refers to how behaviors of others are perceived. Will and willfulness are politically charged concepts because they have been historically used to demarcate an "other", whether that be a willful child or a willful migrant who does not reproduce life and the values that we have known. Inherent to this is an anxiety about borders, border formation, and border maintenance. Anxiety about borders exists with nations and smaller communities. Willfulness is perceived as a threat to boundaries because it leaves impressions and the kind of impressions it leaves. In contrast, "we can think of willingness in terms of being open to being influenced or receiving the will of others. In becoming attuned to others, it is not that we lose our boundaries. Rather we refuse to secure those boundaries by closing ourselves off from the worlds we inhabit" (Ahmed 2014, 49). If we recall Ahmed's analysis of disgust and fear of border objects in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* the willing subject is open and therefore weak. We fear openness because of how it opens the body to attack from others. However, when other objects and subjects are open, they are perceived as willing. The willing subject does not disorient because it does not cause boundaries to surface and impressions to be left. The willful subject, an

"other", does. In Ahmed's (2014, 128) analysis, refugees and migrants are deemed willful because their failure to integrate into ideals of citizenship opens the body of the nation to attack.

Will and willingness inform our ideas of an "other" because "[t]o think of 'here' as an accomplishment is to restore an air of contingency. The distinction of 'here' and 'there' reminds us too of the orientated nature of space. A 'there' can also be the product of 'willed' human work'" (Ahmed 2014, 40). An object that is placed into this space may be deemed willing if it does not disorient and takes on the orientation of the space and fades into the background. Because the role space occupies in willfulness and the role of willfulness in understanding a space's orientation, willfulness carries implications for power. As Ahmed notes, space, power, and energy are all intrinsically connected, and emotions and willfulness play a role in each. The willful migrant who fails to assimilate is especially important in defining and securing national borders, as their "proximity is read as ill will, as not only compromising the health of that body but as aiming to compromise that health" (Ahmed 2014, 129). Proximity is "the distance between a subject and what is being aimed for" (Ahmed 2014, 38), and the willful migrant is close enough to the nation geographically and far away enough from the national ideal by lack of assimilation to be a threat. The marginalized bodies that have failed to assimilate are blamed for it. They have failed because of their ill will, and as a result they have been cast out or prevented from entering in the first place. These bodies are negatively interpellated: the ill will is portrayed as that which disorients, not the differences between bodies. To return to a point I wrote above, willing projects a certain horizon that assumes what is being willed can be attained. The migrant is breaking this projection, and their ill will is labeled as the reason why this projection failed. This is true beyond the national community; communities within a nation also practice this method of maintaining boundaries and identity.

We can use this theoretical base to address how a community identity, such as national identity, comes to be. This is a topic that will be discussed in the next chapter through applying Benedict Anderson and Ahmed's ideas to online communities. Ahmed (2014, 127) articulates that "National membership is often imagined as a 'community of strangers'….You can be part of a 'whole social body,' without ever meeting. Time is thus crucial to national membership: you can experience being in the same time without being in the same place". Space not only

locates but has a temporal element. Time is what binds bodies to certain experiences that shape both the borders of individual bodies and the community body. For example, all across Australia ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) Day is celebrated in order to reinforce a national perception about what it means to be Australian. Participants and witnesses span an entire country, but the shared experience over time dictates the orientation of the space—Australia and what it means to be Australian. Through repetition and a history of repetition, strangers align and orient together under the national will. This informs how bodies entering into the space can be willing or willful, as "migrants as would-be citizens are welcomed on condition they are willing to will in accordance with the national will" (Ahmed 2014, 127). If the national identity hinges on an event such as ANZAC Day, then those who do not celebrate such an event will be seen as an obstacle and those who will that notion into existence are willful. How does this operate in terms of solidarity, as solidarity is the coming together of individuals and communities under the banner of certain political causes?

This raises the question: can communities display willfulness? As a collective body, communities can display willfulness because of how they are perceived by others. What makes marginalized communities willful is their relationship to the mainstream; in Ahmed's work, the "nation" represents mainstream ideals and discourses. Marginalized communities disorient and in doing so, become an "other." In relation to nationhood, "[w]illfulness can be required in order to persist not only *as* an individual but *in* one's very loyalty to a culture whose existence is why [it was] deemed as a threat" (Ahmed 2014, 151). While the conditions that lead to marginalization are in place prior to affective engagement, affect creates marginalized identities. For example, Ahmed discusses how migrants are marginalized when they "fail" to love the nation as an object (2004b, 134). The conditions that created migrants pre-exist the society's affective engagement with them, but this affective failure, as perceived by society, by the migrants is what creates the migrants as an identity category. Those who identify as being a migrant identify with the failure to love the nation as an object. Migrants are thus deemed "willful" (Ahmed 2014, 127). From the perspective of the mainstream, what is notable about marginalized communities is their shared willfulness, but this willfulness is only perceived in relation to the mainstream. Within the marginalized community, this shared willfulness can be interpreted as a coming together through

willingness and shared alignment, which has been shaped by a repetition in experiences and affect. As Tobin Siebers notes in "Disability Studies and the Future of Identity Politics", a marginalized community such as one centered on disability does not congeal on social construction alone because the physical realities of disability do not "easily align with cultural norms and codes" (2006, 13). Disabled identities emerge through repeated experiences that disorient from cultural norms, and those who identify as disabled share in how they disorient. They are not only social constructions, but also political identities based on "common interests" (Siebers 2006, 16). The political identities of marginalized communities are willful in the eyes of society.

Ahmed questions the role of the willful subject in changing and shaping the environment and she maintains that willful disorientation is key to enacting change. If "life as we know it" is associated with emotions such as happiness, then those emotions eventually do the work of oppression. To counter narratives of happiness used to upheld life as we know it, willful subjects must kill joy—tying into Ahmed's (2014, 153) creation of the feminist killjoy, a concept she regularly returns to in her works. For Ahmed, feminist killjoys are necessary especially within political movements begun by marginalized groups. In *The Promise of Happiness,* Ahmed (2010, 67) writes about how "[t]he angry black woman can be described as a killjoy; she may even kill feminist joy…by pointing out forms of racism within feminist politics". This is a dynamic that played out in the case of Mikki Kendall, the second of the two examples that are examined in detail in this thesis. It is against this backdrop of the community's commonality and willingness, that has brought the community together, that willful figures can emerge within the community. The willful figure within marginalized communities complicates the dynamics within marginalized communities, especially in online spaces, as antagonism within a community can cause it to unravel.

Ahmed's work is particularly important in understanding social solidarity. Solidarity requires individual bodies—or perhaps we can think of them as "smaller" bodies, in comparison with a "larger" communal body—to come together in communities and, interpreted through the lens of Ahmed's affective economies, is mediated by affect. One way of understanding solidarity is through Paulo Freire's (2007, 174) observation that political solidarity is achieved when individuals come together in the face of a shared pressure; solidarity can be described as a newly-

formed community. In Freire's (2007, 49) line of argument, solidarity is not a matter of shared interests but a common struggle for political liberation. Bodies come to recognize one another as being a collective through shared experiences that shape bodies and orient them into alignment. Freire and Ahmed's conceptions of solidarity complement one another, but tensions exist because Ahmed envisions solidarity as a matter of common ground rather than commonality. Common ground is an "effect of the meetings we have with others" (Ahmed and Fortier 2003, 257) that allows for a remaking of surfaces, whereas ideas of commonality enforce ideas of "others" and "outsider" (Ahmed and Fortier 2003, 253). However, what if to come to common ground there must be commonality in terms of a common struggle and shared experience? This is evident in Freire's (2007, 60) contention that solidarity is not only between members of oppressed communities but can be extended between the oppressed and oppressors. I would argue that this is through shared affective flow and orientation. If affect is relational, the oppressed and oppressors are connected when oriented towards the same object of solidarity and struggle. Freire (2007, 60) describes oppressors as having "a fundamental role, and has been throughout the history of this struggle" but that "they almost always bring with them the marks of their origin: their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people's ability to think, to want, and to know". To frame this in the context of Ahmed's (2004b, 148) affective economies, structures and narratives form and solidify through repetition. The more a connection is repeated, the stronger it becomes. When oppressors join the oppressed, this is present. Through a repetition of similar action and experiences, oppressors have boundaries and an identity contingent on oppressing others. This surfaces as alignment to beliefs and affect that oppress, such as prejudices and a lack of confidence in the agency of others. According to Freire, in order for oppressors to engage fully in solidarity they must trust the oppressed.

For Ahmed (2004b, 160), we are one before we are many. A body is one with its parts working in harmonious union before pain or external stimuli causes a part to surface. However, this does not necessarily contradict Freire's observations about solidarity. In a collective that is well-established, where patterns, boundaries, and affective flows have not changed or been challenged, external stimuli can cause affective flows and boundaries to shift. External stimuli can reveal or instigate differences in alignment that were not previously visible. Both conceptions of

solidarity and their relation to affective economies are important for this thesis as both are observable in online communities and complement one another. Many online communities form in the face of adversity and then break apart when differences are revealed. *Pantsuit Nation*, a Facebook group dedicated to the election of Hillary Clinton, was created for Clinton and against the prospect of Donald Trump becoming elected (Hess 2017). Post-election, disputes arose in the group when the founder announced the publication of a coffee-table book inspired by the group and other members noted their disappointment in the failure to translate the group's numbers into energy for political advocacy (Hess 2017). The orientation of the group changed, and not all members of the group aligned with the new orientation. Marginalized communities online, as I will demonstrate, constantly ask for and attempt to demonstrate solidarity. As I go through examples of online communities, I will demonstrate how movement in affective economies is a process which becomes form, and why political solidarity as we know it is tenuous and unstable.

One of the key components of this thesis is setting up the theoretical basis of how movement, process, and form relate to one another. Repetition of movement, over time, becomes procedural and solidifies as a process (Ahmed 2004b, 148). A process, when repeated enough, sediments into a structure of its own and becomes an institution or an element of an institution. This is important to this thesis because the duration of community formation inherently changes the questions around community identity formation. In the next chapter, I will draw upon James Carey's theory of ritual communication and Henri Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis* to explore this topic. When thinking about community identity, the role of self-identity, and the existence of boundaries and interstitial spaces, the patrolling and transgression of boundaries come to mind as well. A community is a collection of individual bodies that have come to self-identify, but the boundaries of a community are not necessarily clearly demarcated. As such, the boundaries of a community are patrolled through who is considered a part of that community and are sometimes transgressed. Approaching the subject of community identity requires addressing the individuals who comprise the community and their participation in a community. However, the exact relationship between an individual body with that of the group—specifically, tracing the internal mechanisms of an individual body coming to self-identify with a community and mapping those internal mechanisms onto a larger body of

individuals—is a significant issue that goes beyond what this thesis aims to demonstrate.

This thesis investigates identity and boundary patrolling in short-duration communities on social media and its influence on the formation and dissolution of these communities. Underlying this topic are a number of issues: the construction of difference and marginalization; the relationship between the community and the individual and how this relationship is shaped by sociopolitical and sociocultural forces; disconnectivity and connectivity and how they play out from the individual to the community to society or the nation. In this chapter I have interrogated key aspects of Sara Ahmed's theory of affective economies that are relevant to this thesis, such as how certain emotions work, the role of affective economies in the formation of boundaries, and the importance of willfulness to the surfacing of boundaries. While Ahmed's focus is in the relational aspects of affective economies, the understanding I will be using focuses more on the surfacing of boundaries and how they are maintained. These principles can also be applied to short-duration online communities despite the change in context; Ahmed's concerns lie with the relationship between communities that disorient and the nation. My interests lie within the communities that disorient and how willfulness works in the affective economies of those communities' online spaces. In the next two chapters I explore what happens when bodies disorient within a community that is already disorienting from the norm. In the next chapter I will be analyzing what happened to Suey Park's place in the Asian American community and the enforcement of the boundaries of marginalized online communities using Ahmed's affective economies. Marginalized communities that have formed online through social media often form and disband quickly, which is both advantageous and limiting. The differences between online and offline life are crucial because the medium of the internet versus the medium of face-to-face, for example, means that different affective economies emerge. Another difference is that movement, process, and form take on far more ambiguous qualities online than they do offline, where pre-existing institutions and histories inform community identity formation in longer lasting and defined ways. Because affect can be thought of as transition between states, the emphasis Ahmed's affective economies has on processual movement parallels the rapid pace of online life; I will be mobilizing her ideas to examine an acrimonious split within a formerly robust online community.

Chapter 2
Know Your Boundaries

In this chapter I analyze the Asian American activist Suey Park's role on Twitter as one of the founders of #NotYourAsianSidekick and #CancelColbert, and the fallout from the hashtag trends she created. This example provides the basis for analyzing how communities connect through technology and how conflict and boundaries are managed. In the case of Suey Park, the overemphasis on oppositional tactics backfired and caused a unified community to fracture, and thus serves as an example of the limitations of community maintenance. Two principles of interactions in online communities—what it means to post into being and how a communal identity congeals when interactions only highlight differences—will form the foundation of analysis in this chapter. As individuals do not automatically exist in online spaces, digital bodies must be created through posting. However, in a community, it is unlikely that the individuals within it will agree on all articulations of their identity even as they accrue, in this case through hashtags. Mirroring Sara Ahmed's ideas around affective economies, the concern of this chapter, and thesis as a whole, is not to define what certain communities are or are not, but to describe processes of community formation and dissolution as found on social media and to articulate the work that is done to achieve community formation and dissolution. How do individuals signal their orientation in a way that allows them to be part of a community? What happens when disorientation occurs? Making a definitive judgment on whether or not Juliet Shen (2014), Suey Park's collaborator on #NotYourAsianSidekick, represented "mainstream Asian America", which was Suey Park's contention, or Suey Park's actions constituted "gaslighting", which was Juliet Shen's contention, is not the primary concern. The focus is on what work those performance utterances and labels did and how they can be articulated through Ahmed's affective economies. This chapter will examine the role of affective posturing in maintaining and patrolling these communities.

Suey Park was embraced and befriended by figureheads of the young Asian American feminist community, such as Juliet Shen and Vanessa Teck, and viewed as a representative figure of the Asian American community online (Kim 2014; Shen 2014; Teck 2014). Shen and Teck were both established young Asian American

activists with significant followings and prominent roles within the community while Park was relatively unknown. On 15 December 2013, #NotYourAsianSidekick was started by Juliet Shen and Suey Park, and Park's rise as an online figurehead began (Hirst 2013). #NotYourAsianSidekick, which was inspired by the success of Mikki Kendall's #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, quickly gained widespread attention and participation by the online Asian American feminist community as a way to articulate frustrations surrounding the marginalization of Asian American women from feminist and Asian American spaces. #NotYourAsianSidekick was the fastest growing feminist hashtag of that month (Conley 2013) and trended globally for 24 hours (Risam 2015). The topics in #NotYourAsianSidekick included, but were not limited to, "patriarchy in Asian American cultures, white supremacy, stigma against mental illness in Asian immigrant cultures, the lack of representation of Asian Americans in media, and stereotypes" (Risam 2015). In March 2014, Park started another hashtag, one that would gain her widespread notoriety on the internet, #CancelColbert (Kim 2014; Bruenig 2015). Park's creation of the hashtag was in response to *The Colbert Report*'s tweet that read "I am willing to show #Asian community I care by introducing the Ching-Chong Ding-Dong Foundation for Sensitivity to Orientals or Whatever" (Bruenig 2015). Park's response was "The Ching-Chong Ding-Dong Foundation for Sensitivity to Orientals has decided to call for #CancelColbert. Trend it" (Bruenig 2015). As a result of these two hashtags, Park gained the reputation as a "brawler" and "social justice warrior" (Bruenig 2015), though some saw her as giving necessary critique to "problematize Colbert's failed satire and racism" (Kim 2014). While Asian American feminists saw Park's work as important, the response to Park within the wider Asian American community was mixed.

Young Asian American women such as Daisy Kim, Juliet Shen, and Vanessa Teck embraced Park, but the reception among Asian American men was not as warm. Kim noted in a blog post in April 2015 that Park was met with resistance from some of the most popular Asian American men on social media including Steven Yeun, one of the most well-known Asian American actors of his generation; Daniel Chun, a noted Hollywood writer and producer; Phil Yu, the founder of the blog Angry Asian Man who has been described as the grandfather of the Asian American blogsphere; and novelist and sports-writer Jay Caspian Park who questioned Park's activist identity (Chun 2014; Kim 2014; Park, 2014; Yu 2014; Yuen 2014). Arthur

Chu, another prominent Asian American writer, described Park as "the Asian American villain we need (but love to hate)" in a piece for *The Daily Beast* (2014), whereas Jeff Yang, a writer for the *Wall Street Journal*, described the #CancelColbert campaign as "absurd, and damages the credibility of APA [Asian Pacific American] activism" while issuing a call to "fight real enemies" (2014b). Many of the Asian American male figureheads of the community were not supportive of her growing influence, but they had to contend with her power in the community, as evidenced by the fact that so many of them responded to her creation of #CancelColbert. Arthur Chu went as far as writing "I'm glad she's out there. Because Asians need more villains" (2014). This was the beginning of the backlash to Suey Park within the Asian American online community.

In April of 2014, Park was fully ostracized from the Asian American community on social media over her community organizing tactics. Shen (2014) was "dumped on Twitter" by Park in February 2014, though Shen did not reveal their falling out until a couple of months later. Park criticized, via public online platforms, Shen's other offline community organizing activities as being "mainstream Asian America" (Shen 2014). Both Juliet Shen and Vanessa Teck published public pieces about the dissolution of their relationships, personal and professional, with Park. They portrayed their decisions to cease interactions with Park as one they reached hesitantly and with great consideration. They feared that expelling a member from the online Asian American community would undermine it, as the question would arise: for whom does the community exist? Park identified as Asian American, and her exclusion from the online Asian American community would set a precedent as to who could engage with the community, who was a part of the community, and who had their racial self-identification validated by community interaction. However, continual engagement was already fracturing the community, which led to their decision and the decisions of other prominent Asian American digital activists to cease all communication with Park (Kim 2014; Shen 2014; Teck 2014).

Vanessa Teck and Juliet Shen remain public figures, but they have largely retreated from their online activity. The Asian American online community in recent years has not had many new figureheads, as online personalities such as *Love Life of an Asian Guy* remain highly controversial. Suey Park's new Twitter account as of the time of writing contains a banner photo referencing Asian American community

organizing. All of her prior tweets have been deleted, and thirteen new ones, which were tweeted on the 17th of July 2015, provide a clear narrative:

> You have worth regardless of if you can give or not give. I will not participate in the fundamentalism of the left…I really hate and don't recognize the person I became when I talk about social issues. I can't seem to reconcile who I am with my politics…The loudest voices aren't always the most correct, ethical, or important voices. They are almost always the most self-important voices…There's room for two types of [Asian Americans] in mainstream culture: 1) the radical [and] 2) the reasonable voice. These two are in public contest. (Park 2015)

Park's tweets, written as a general commentary, demonstrate a clear disconnection from the Asian American community online. She alludes to the fact that the type of Asian American she is, "the radical", is not compatible with the other predominant type of Asian American, "the reasonable voice", in mainstream culture (Park 2015). They also demonstrate a disconnection from self as she writes about not recognizing "the person" she becomes when discussing issues of social justice (Park 2015). Those following her and those she follows are largely unconnected to the online Asian American community, which means that she is no longer contributing to the community and no longer has a hand in shaping its development. Her remaining Twitter posts indicate that despite identifying as Asian American, she does not feel that the space of the online Asian American community includes her.

Why was Suey Park ostracized by the online Asian American community? The main issue relates to how online communities surveil their members, patrol their boundaries, and are shaped through the circulation of emotions. This is a key aspect and focal point for this chapter: marginalized communities demand the performance of shame as a way to flag who is a part of the community. To analyze this contention, I will be drawing heavily upon James Carey's (2008, 15) ritual communication model to articulate how community is maintained through communication, as well as danah boyd and José van Dijck, two of the most prominent researchers on social media, to discuss the role of the medium of technology on the patrolling of community boundaries as seen on social media. José van Dijck (2012, 162) has written about Facebook and how human interconnectivity works in today's digital media by looking at case studies in which there is communication breakdown, such as catfishing. This is important because in this

chapter, I will be analyzing caused the online Asian American community to implode and what caused Suey Park to be ostracized. danah boyd's (2007, 13) work has explored how social media prompts users to post personal information and how life online and life offline are connected, as well as ethnographic studies into how online spaces become racialized (2011, 203). She utilizes the idea of writing into being to describe how users create an idea of who they are with the posts they write, all encapsulated within their internet identity. I will be drawing upon boyd's contributions because Suey Park was eventually kicked out of the Asian American community because of her online persona. Judith Butler (2011, 2) has written on the nature of speech acts and is an important theorist to use to think about individual social media postings as speech acts, in particular how speech acts coalesce and influence individuals and communities. However, her ideas cannot be used to describe how a collection of individuals come together to maintain a structure such as racialized digital spaces. For that, I turn to Henri Lefebvre's (2004, 9) *Rythmanalysis* to analyze the processual movement that is observed in digital spaces. These theorists will be used to show the history of, to interrogate, and to fill in some of the gaps in Sara Ahmed's ideas as applied to short-duration online communities and boundary policing.

Affective Economies Online

To think about how communities enforce boundaries through communicative acts, I turn to James Carey's ritual model of communication that focuses on how communities are maintained through ritualized activity. For Carey (2008, 15), what matters is not what is said and how it is said, but the fact that it is said and the patterns in human behavior that surround communication. Communication is not only the transmission of messages and information but a means of maintaining the relationship between the individual and the group identity; it is also a representation of shared space that maintains social bonds over time. With Carey's (2008, 25) ritual model of communication, communication is a process of "sharing, participation, association, and fellowship". It is the ritual that allows groups to be maintained and kept together. The ritual model of communication is contrasted from the transmission model, which states that communication is the process of transferring information (Carey 2008, 15). An example of this is how sharing news establishes a shared knowledge base among a group of people, which leads to shared cultural

values, practices, and habits (Carey 2008, 20). According to Carey (2008, 20), "[n]ews reading, and writing, is a ritual act and moreover a dramatic one. What is arrayed before the reader is not pure information but a portrayal of the contending forces in the world". With social media, individuals can share news articles with their social network and discuss the news at a previously unprecedented pace. News is no longer an occasional occurrence but a common aspect of modern life, and this shapes how people interact with it (Poindexter 2012, 16). Most of the content on social media is not original information but reposts and liking of other popular posts as a way of engaging with a community. The hashtags Suey Park created are an example of this; while people were able to contribute original content through the use of the hashtag, much of the communication that occurred with the hashtag validated a certain set of experiences that define the Asian American feminist community. Many of the tweets using the hashtag, tweeted within a day of each other, centered around stereotypes of Asian women as submissive and sexism within the Asian American community (Jussi 2013; Pineda 2013; Shen 2013b). Another example is when Shen (2014) expressed solidarity with others who had experienced the same toxic dynamics as she did with Suey Park, writing that "I stand here hand in hand with too many others who feel the same way". Her post was not about original content, but about affirming others as a way of maintaining her connections within the community.

Shen's expression of solidarity with certain factions of the online Asian American community brings forth another point within Carey and Ahmed's ideas that is crucial to understanding the affective economies of politicized online spaces and communities. For Ahmed (2004b, 189), solidarity is also a recognition of shared space and shared processes that strengthen bonds, but not necessarily shared traits. To dovetail Ahmed's understanding of solidarity and Carey's articulation of ritual communication, communication creates this shared space through repeating communicative acts that also affirm an aligned affective flow. This understanding of how affective economies operate underpins this chapter in answering how communities online gain and maintain their "feel". Social media platforms have, from their inception, hinged on the idea of connecting people, whether through established relationships in offline life or novel connections only known through the medium of the internet. Suey Park and Juliet Shen first established their friendship in offline life, but much of the relationship was maintained through online

communication. Most of the online Asian American community, from those who criticized Suey Park to her supporters, did not know her in offline life. Previous research has demonstrated that "[o]nline communities bring together individuals with mutual interests using electronic mediation to overcome the same-place, same-time limitation inherent in face-to-face settings" (Faraj and Johnson 2011). This means that individuals with niche interests, identities, and life experiences are able to find others who share in these interests, identities, and life experiences, regardless of physical barriers. Creating and maintaining these relationships requires ritual communication, a process of sharing and participation, which demonstrate an aligned affective flow. Juliet Shen and Suey Park strengthened their friendship—and broke off their friendship—through the use of social and digital technologies. #NotYourAsianSidekick trended internationally as people from around the world contributed to the hashtag about their experiences as Asians, thus creating a community beyond physical boundaries. They were connected to her through the medium of the technology.

Maintaining a community that is connected through technology with possible interchange between online and offline life presents a set of challenges. How does a community maintain a certain "feel" through aligned affective flow if members do not know each other and never meet in offline life? Large online communities use "direct reciprocity and indirect reciprocity" as common structural tendencies to maintain networks (Faraj and Johnson 2011). Online interactions, direct or indirect, perform work that accrues as part of a community's affective flow and "feel". What determines if the performance of a constructed identity on social media is "Asian enough" is a complex judgment. Throughout this thesis, there is a tension in how affect theory is used. Affect is a distinct "feel": online communities will maintain specific affect for their spaces that demarcate these online spaces as "Asian" or "Black" and so forth (boyd 2013, 203; Brock 2012, 530). There is however the "feel" of the individual and whether or not that "feel" aligns with the Asian American community online. Affect can also be used to describe the emotions circulated in online spaces. As Zizi Pappacharissi (2012, 2002) notes, "a recurring theme in the performances rendered through tweets involved the presence of affect, that is, emotion subjectively experienced….The practice of making an affective statement in front of an actual and imagined audience is potentially empowering". These emotions that are subjectively experienced also go into shaping the "feel" of online

spaces. If a large number of Asian American identified individuals perform anger online regarding a specific event, the given "feel" of an Asian American dominated online space is associated with that anger. Anger is an emotion that is most closely associated with establishing boundaries. Affect circulates as an economy, and that circulation determines the "feel" of a community, where the boundaries of a community are, and how individuals within the community are identified and treated based on their alignment with or disorientation from the circulation of affect.

In the case of Suey Park, offline ties preceded online connections and online life served to strengthen those offline connections, but the offline ties were crucial for Suey Park to be read as orienting with the community's "feel". Online and offline life meshed together as Suey Park and Juliet Shen first met at a conference in 2013 (Shen 2014). Their friendship strengthened as Park supported Shen and Teck, who were fired from an internship at an Asian American organization after openly criticizing a sponsor, which led to their collaborative work on #NotYourAsianSidekick (Shen 2014). This interchange between online and offline life is a feature of social media platforms, as van Dijck (2013) notes that:

> [S]ocial media are often narrowly defined as tools for community formation: online communities strengthen offline ties established in real life, and Web 2.0 platforms are thus seen as facilitators of both offline and virtual communities. What is casually called community formation, then, is often a product not exclusively of human collectivity but also of technical connectivity. (142)

Offline and online life are not mutually exclusive; the two spheres serve to strengthen and complement each other or hasten the decline of decaying relationships (van Dijck 2013, 147). Social ties in offline life are often the basis of online social networks. Social media platforms help to maintain communal ties, and the formation of communities is visible in real time because of the technology. Analyzing the affective economies of social media platforms such as Twitter is therefore not only about how people connect but how they connect through the technology. The setup of Twitter, where a person can join hashtag trends and communicate with individual followers in their network in 120-character bursts, is "where rituals and transmissions are imbricated" (Shaw et al. 2013, 150). This includes affective rituals; the affective flow of an individual is judged through the

accumulation of their tweets and their participation in hashtag trends, and they become a part of an online community when their alignment is clear.

A basic unit of social media interaction is the individual user's profile, where users are encouraged to post a representative picture of themselves, personal details, and personal tastes (Liu 2008, 254). Other users may comment on individual aspects of it. As face-to-face engagements are not the norm on social media, each user creates a profile to reflect which aspects of themselves, genuine or fabricated, that they wish to present to others. This is one of the contact points at which individuals decide, often times based on the judgement of shared social identity and tastes, whether or not other users are worth engaging (Liu 2008, 255). danah boyd (2007, 13) writes that the profile "can been seen as a form of *digital body* where individuals must write themselves into being. Through profiles, teens can express salient aspects of their identity for others to see and interpret. They construct these profiles for their friends and peers to view". The profile is a performance for others to see and as boyd (2007, 13) notes, requires "conceptualizing an *imagined audience*". This posting into being is crucial because it is inherent to the medium—in offline life, we do not create a profile of ourselves for those we know to find us, or for others to peruse and use as a judgment for whether or not to initiate interaction—and it changes how social media platform users interact with one another. Posting for an imagined audience is influenced by and goes beyond the profile in online spaces; #NotYourAsianSidekick was a means by which Asian American Twitter users could post to an imagined audience about what it meant to be Asian American. However, who constitute this imagined audience is not easily defined because of Twitter's public nature. The hashtag is simultaneously for members within the community and users outside of the community, which is apparent in Suey Park's (2014) piece for *xoJane* that "[t]he viral success of #NotYourAsianSidekick…wasn't about me, but all of us". A community is coming together under a hashtag that is a reinforcement of the community's identity while it is visible to others. While the concept of self-presentation and the desire to control other people's impression of oneself is not new (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, 61-62), online users must make decisions through the medium of the technology (Ho et al. 2017, 21). van Dijck (2013, 145) notes that "users may shape their profiles and behavior so as to anticipate the effects of certain acts and steer things into a direction they deem more desirable". The profile page requires an imagined audience and performing to that imagined audience. The profile

is a curated expression of the individual and their identity, and individuals connect to one another through these curated expressions of self.

The work of social media accounts does not begin or end with the profile, nor is the profile the basis of community. Communities become visible through the repetition of posts, though the profile is the first step to posting into being and is a reference point for users. The profile is a synopsis of how a user wishes to be perceived by others. In the case of the teenagers boyd surveyed, the emphasis was on being received as "cool" by their peers (2007, 138). boyd notes that the actions teenagers took on MySpace in terms of managing their profiles were to fall within the category of "cool" in the "cool or lame" social dichotomy that existed (2007, 138). The profile is thus one way in which individuals manage their relationship with a community. Individuals achieve this through aligning themselves with certain markers of status that are circulated within their communities. boyd recounts how one teenager explained to her father that to seem cool to her peers, the drug she identified with in a MySpace quiz was cocaine because marijuana was associated with "lame" kids (2007, 139). To the daughter, the quiz was not meant to be indicative of her attitudes towards or her use of drugs, though to her father it was. These issues that arise out of social media profiles is the latest iteration of what boyd deems the tensions that exist in "mediated publics" (2007, 138) where the affect that is circulated within these spaces may not be an accurate or whole representation of offline life. The profile is an anchor point for the circulation of affect in online spaces because it makes visible the context of a user's posting.

As previously mentioned, posting, which is one aspect of the posting into being that has been mentioned, is when users create posts for a public with which the public may engage. Frequent methods of engagement are commenting on the original post, reposting the original post, and liking posts (Papacharissi 2012, 1990). The sum of posting, liking, commenting, and/or reposting is the point where the creation of social formations is visible (boyd et al. 2010, 1). The imagined audience the profile appeals to is now actively engaging with the profile creator and vice versa, which establishes a digital trail (boyd et al. 2010, 1). Users are able to see what other users have liked and comments indicating how others are responding (boyd et al. 2010, 7). Posting can reveal personal information such as a user's current mood and their thoughts regarding issues they find pertinent. Because of direct one-on-one contact, more personal forms of engagement, include tagging other users and

direct messaging, typically occur between users with a strong social connection. These behaviors serve to reinforce social bonds. Adding, friending, unfriending, or blocking users is an extension of that—those who are deemed friends or users of interest are added, and those who are deemed to be antagonists are blocked from seeing the profile and interacting with a user's posts (Madden et al. 2013, 37). As Park (2014) writes, her early following on Twitter came about because "[a]ll I did was to share my heartbreaks, my wins, and my frustration in a real and open way" as public posts and that "I found that my vulnerability drew in more followers, or friends as I call them". These various aspects of social media interactions serve to strengthen connections or weaken them. Because these mechanisms are used to communicate and interact with others, they are also mechanisms through which communities are maintained and boundaries patrolled.

The mechanism that is the most important to this chapter is hashtag trends. Suey Park's prominence within the Asian American community was tied to her creation of hashtags such as #NotYourAsianSidekick and #CancelColbert. As users generate posts, they are able to hashtag the post. Social media platforms then accrue posts with the same hashtags, and users are able to browse various hashtags to see what other users are posting. With hashtags, "practices of sense-making, unfolding in the first place through the direct narration of personal experiences" emerge (Shaw et al. 2013, 35). Castells (2012, 11) expands on this idea, arguing that hashtags create community because of how they create a public space for debate. Using Castells' idea on the role of hashtags in creating community, Olson (2016, 774) contends that "community formation is a large part of digital interaction" and that "hashtag activism's particular strength is its potential to move an issue from the margins and to the mainstream agenda". Part of the appeal of hashtags as community is the temporal and spatial qualities of hashtag movements in the digital sphere. Twitter hashtags are both synchronous and asynchronous communication. Users can participate in a hashtag and respond to other participants of a hashtag instantly, or they can return to it. Synchronous communication can be defined as real-time interaction, such as chat, and asynchronous communication as lapsed interaction, such as email (Ijsselsteijn et al. 2003, e928). In Park's case, her posting with the hashtags #NotYourAsianSidekick and #CancelColbert was picked up by other Asian American social media users until they became worldwide trending hashtags over the space of a few days. People are able to respond as though they are in dialogue, or

respond by adding comments, or repost. This can happen at any time though it most often happens quickly because of the appeal of participating in a hashtag with a community. The content of the hashtags became a point of discussion in non-Asian American communities (Hirst 2013; Kim 2014; Loza 2014; Bruenig 2015). Hashtag trends are an important feature of posting into being as they allow trends and forming boundaries to become visible. In Suey Park's (2014) words, "it takes a community to create a trending hashtag". Wider social formations take shape as various ideas and affects spread within and among communities, and they are tracked with the use of hashtags.

Unfortunately, despite "nothing on the internet ever gets deleted" (KaleBrecht 2017), the rapid pace of Twitter combined with changing terms of service has made tracking and archiving activity difficult for researchers (Zimmer and Proferes 2014, 257). Suey Park deleted her Twitter account, and the tweets of hers that have been saved and referenced are ones of her participation in #NotYourAsianSidekick and #CancelColbert and not those referenced by Juliet Shen, Vanessa Teck, and others in relation to her contribution to intra-community discord. Juliet Shen and Vanessa Teck documented their response to Suey Park's tweets through blog posts. Because of these factors, I will be analyzing the affective economies of #NotYourAsianSidekick and #CancelColbert and relying upon accounts from Juliet Shen and Vanessa Teck to trace Suey Park's rise and fall.

Coming into Being

Although participants are not necessarily born into an online community and communal identity, they are nonetheless a crucial part of creating and maintaining this identity (Shaw et al. 2013, 24). Communities form and take shape on social media through the repeated posting into being of many individuals with a shared identity. Even though a community may pre-exist an individual user's postings on social media, the community identity is an aggregation of posts by them and others (Brock 2012, 545; Dixon 2014, 34-35). As Dixon (2014, 37) writes, feelings of connection with a leading "hashtag activist" and with the language being used to articulate lived experiences "forms the community which also forms the concept of identity". An example of this is the popularity of #NotYourAsianSidekick and how it congealed the Asian American identity in online spaces in opposition to stereotypes

of Asian Americans. The hashtag provided an outlet for the resentment a large number of people felt towards the ways in which they had been stereotyped, allowing the feeling of resentment to flow through the community and make the community visible. Self-identification occurs through posting and participation in Twitter hashtags.

The communicative context of social media is a relatively young one, dependent on individual posting, compared to traditional media (Kingston Mann 2014, 294). Posts are forms of performative utterances in which "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" (Ahmed 2004b, 114). Because of the short history of Twitter hashtags, this mechanism is vulnerable to quick changes. In a data set of 580 million tweets, most hashtags started, peaked, and decayed within eighty hours (Yang and Leskovec 2011, 178). #NotYourAsianSidekick is still being used sporadically four years later (Shen 2017), a testament to the impression it left on the Asian American community. Each individual plays an outsized role in shaping the community and determining its trajectory. Offline life, with its longer history, different norms, and variety of sensory inputs informing individual judgment, is not as readily shaped by individual communications and posting into being. The repetition of posting into being across many individuals with a shared identity also means that social identity and community in online spaces is transitory.

People turn to these politicized digital communities as a way of engaging in political conversations and new forms of activism (Olson 2016, 780). Ijsselsteijn et al. (2003, e928) theorized the affective benefits of the use of social media, noting that they enriched face-to-face communication by "strengthening existing social bonds and enabling new kinds of interactions" and that users could have "a stronger group attraction, a feeling of staying in touch…and a sense of sharing, belonging, and intimacy". As Shen (2014) articulated, she and Suey Park bonded over "what it was like to blog as Asian American feminists" and that she and Park "thought that we had found a kindred spirit in each other". There is a heightened affective economy in digital spaces because of this increased sense of belonging as demonstrated by Shen and Park. The intensified affective economies of digital spaces changes how emotions are perceived and circulated within digital communities. The perception of others' behaviors changes in online spaces because of this increased connectedness and this shapes the affective economies of online communities. Regardless of the richness of the media, social media is appealing

because of the sense of connectedness people feel when using the technology (Ijsselsteijn et al, 2003, e928).

Posting into being affects the community formation that occurs because of "the disclosure of personal information in exchange for participation" (van Dijk 2006, 11). In order to interact with others, one must reveal—or at least perform revealing—personal information, and this becomes the currency of social interactions on social media such as Twitter. Users accrue followers through this performance (Park 2014). As mentioned before, the profile is a site where this revealing of personal information and social identity occurs (Liu 2008, 255) and its construction is a form of digital labor (Dowling et al. 2007, 96). For social connections to be formed and maintained, participants agree upon an equal exchange of this currency and what constitutes an equal exchange of digital labor. The exact details of exchange may vary from group to group—for example, some groups may privilege the sharing of personal details, others may prefer the sharing of academic ideas—but the act of exchange is necessary for social connections to form and maintain the community (Iriberri and Leroy 2009, 18). In digital spaces the act of exchange performs work that necessitates the formation of community. This phenomenon is noted by both van Dijck and boyd in their data and case studies, from van Dijck's (2013, 142) discussion of the premise to the movie *Catfish* as an example of Facebook's cultivation of weak ties and the fabrication of strong ones to Marwick and boyd's study (2010, 5) of how Twitter users post about themselves as a means of connecting with others.

Posting into being is a speech act that reflects upon the poster's identity. One way of understanding speech acts, according to Judith Butler, is in terms of a repetitive performance that constructs identity. There is no sense of a self-preceding or standing outside speech. Speech acts tie into Butler's ideas of identification (Butler 2011, 5) because "[l]anguage sustains the body not by bringing it into being or feeding it in a literal way; rather, it is by being interpellated within the terms of language that a certain social existence of the body first becomes possible". According to Butler (1997, 30), it is through speech acts and power that the "matter" of bodies forms; power is what demarcates bodies for what they are, what they are not, and what counts as a body. The hashtags created by Suey Park are examples of interpellation. With the creation of the hashtags, the Asian American online community became more visible. The oppositional tone of the hashtags, with the

starting words of "not" and "cancel", lent to the oppositional position of the Asian American online community in mainstream society. The posts accrued by #NotYourAsianSidekick were about the racism faced by Asian Americans and the sexism faced by Asian American women, while #CancelColbert concerned Stephen Colbert's culpability in using the "Ching Chong" racial slur. The hashtags were popular and gained traction within days, if not hours because their antagonism gave a voice and "social existence" to Asian Americans in online spaces that had not been an option before. #NotYourAsianSideKick and #CancelColbert allowed Asian Americans to respond to perceived injurious speech as a community.

#CancelColbert made Stephen Colbert's injurious speech and racialized actions visible. Ghassan Hage (2010, 122) defines racism as a process of negative interpellation in which the object is noticed, made visible, and defined by negative traits. Colbert's use of "Ching Chong" made the Asian American community visible by drawing upon negative stereotypes embedded within the term. The subject who utters injurious words calls upon the history of injury behind an utterance and temporarily becomes the origin of injury (Butler 1996, 204). The injurious speech act "accumulates the force of authority" (Butler 1996, 206) and names the injury that has already formed as a social possibility. The affective potential of injurious speech as described by Butler is activated through the performative utterance. For Ahmed (2004b, 34), pain becomes political through speech. She argues that if we feel an other has hurt us, "it hurts" becomes "you hurt me", which in turn becomes "you are hurtful" or "you are bad" (Ahmed 2004b, 34). With the pain of injurious speech, the subject who utters injurious words that hurt becomes the source of pain. Ahmed (2004b, 28) writes that "[t]hese affective responses are readings that not only create the borders between selves and others, but also 'give' others meaning and value in the very act of apparent separation, a giving that temporarily fixes an other". For example, Colbert's use of Asian stereotypes were deemed hurtful and Colbert became a "bad" figure. This extended to his show as *The Colbert Report* became fixed as a "bad" figure antagonizing the Asian American community, and #CancelColbert was started in response. Colbert's use of the racial slur had a significant impact upon the salience of the Asian American online community. However, not all Asian Americans agreed on the tactics of the "weaponized hashtag" (Yang 2014) for "targeted political intent" (Risam 2015). Several prominent Asian American men resisted the hashtag because of the "Ching Chong" comment was

intended as a satirical joke to highlight racism (Kim 2014). Actor Steve Yuen (2014) noted "it's saying something different", the founder of *Angry Asian Man* (2014) wrote "Can't say I agree with #CancelColbert", and writer Daniel Chun (2014) went as far as to write "Asians, this is your leader speaking. Stand down". For these men, the speech acts that led to the hashtags did not cause injury and to them "#CancelColbert campaign is absurd, and damages the credibility of APA activism. Let's please fight real enemies" (Yang 2014b). Without injury, there was no pain or a "bad" figure who was the source of injury and pain. #CancelColbert became not only a call to target a "bad" figure, but a site of disagreement within the Asian American community because it made visible an injury that was not injurious to some.

To understand why some in a community may recognize an injury while others do not, it is important to turn to Ahmed's concept of stickiness. Stickiness is the particular quality inherent in an object that is tied to its history of affective transference, in which objects become sticky after encountering other sticky objects (Ahmed 2004, 91). Signs with historical significance become sticky and stick to other signs, thus giving "the impression of coherence" through how they "stay" together (Ahmed 2004, 130). A history of what sticks shapes the border between the self, or "us", and others through invoking affect (Ahmed 2004, 128). For example, Ahmed relates this to marginalization and racism in how stickiness causes boundaries to surface through fear and disgust. Fear "opens up past histories that stick in the present" (Ahmed 2004, 126) in the form of signs, such as white and black bodies. The movement of emotions between signs "is what allows others to be attributed with emotional value" (Ahmed 2004, 127), such as the black body with fearsomeness. Stickiness arises when borders are affected, and it becomes disgusting when that which is sticky threatens to stick to us (Ahmed 2004b, 89). To name a thing as disgusting is to distance oneself from it, but it is in that moment the thing becomes visible (Ahmed 2004b, 94). In doing so, disgust binds subjects into a community because of a shared witnessing as disgust is "always spoken to others" (Ahmed 2004b, 94-95). An example of a sticky sign is Colbert's use of "Ching Chong", which became a flashpoint because of its history as a racial slur (Kim 2014) that evokes shame and anger. In recent years, the use of "Ching Chong" to mock East Asians has garnered more attention and media coverage, and targets of the slur commonly describe feeling "mortified" (Chow 2014; KoreAm 2013; Lee, 2014).

Colbert's use of "Ching Chong" called upon the history of the racial slur and Colbert became the origin of the injury. However, "Ching Chong" was not a sticky sign to all members of the community because of who Colbert was and how he used it. Similarly, Colbert activated shame that was felt by many—but not all—individuals in the Asian American online community. For those who felt shame because of the stickiness of "Ching Chong", Suey Park was able to capitalize on the emotion with #CancelColbert.

Ahmed discusses stickiness in terms of race, with particular emphasis on the feelings of disgust and fear. The stickiness of disgust and fear describes the mainstream recoiling from the marginal, but with Park's hashtags, the marginal recoils from the mainstream. #NotYourAsianSidekick was created in opposition to the mainstream in its very name. Stickiness can be expanded to include shame and is useful in analyzing Suey Park's hashtags. In Ahmed's affective economies, shame foregrounds the bodily surface and the subject's relation to itself. Shame works like pain, except negative attributions are now directed inwards instead of outwards (Ahmed 2004b, 104). While the subject will push against pain, with shame the "subject's movement back into itself is simultaneously a turning away from itself" and in doing so, intensifies the subject's relation to itself and sense of self (Ahmed 2004b, 104). For Ahmed (2004b, 107), emotions such as shame heighten our awareness of our corporeal boundaries and a community's awareness of its boundaries and binds us as a community when we fail to "live up to" an ideal. It arises as the affective cost of not following the scripts of normative existence, when one's body deviates from the "ideal". Ahmed (2004b, 106-107) uses the example of queer desires and family where shame around queer desires "secures the form of the family" by working "as a deterrent: in order to avoid shame, subjects must enter the 'contract' of the social bond". We are tied and aligned to the by attempting to avoid the feeling of shame and its "affective cost" (Ahmed 2004b, 107). In these theories, groups solidify their existence through their response to shame. In keeping with Butler's analysis of injurious speech, queer desires, because of their injurious nature, are identified as "the origin of bad feeling" (Ahmed 2004b, 107) and subjects that take on the queer identity are automatically read as shameful because of how queer desires fail to live up to social ideals of "the loving nuclear family" (Ahmed 2004b, 107). Shame is about "the relation of self to itself" (Ahmed 2004b, 105) and, after

exposure to an other, experiencing the failure of not living up to an "ideal" that has been shaped by exposure to society.

As seen with the example of queer desires and the securing of the form of family, shame involves the relationship between a marginalized community and normative values. The normative value present is that of the reproduction of the nuclear family. However, the use of shame in the example of Suey Park diverges from Ahmed's analysis where groups congeal through the negation of shame. The use of shame with #CancelColbert was an attempt at dismantling a normative practice around using anti-Asian slurs in popular media for any reason. The Asian American online community congealed positively in response to their marginalization through negating the negative interpellation of shame. #NotYourAsianSidekick attempted to name the shame that Asian and Asian Americans felt as a way of demonstrating shared experience and identity. This difference in affective economies is predicated upon orientation, which Ahmed uses to explain group attachment: we are aligned, we bond, we share an affect until fear, disgust, pain, and shame work to move bodies into new alignments. In Ahmed's affective economies, orientations affect what it is that bodies can do, and norms surface as the surfaces of bodies which are shaped by the history of activity and injuries. Certain actions are repeated and a lasting impression is left as a norm. Ahmed's concept of the surface and impressions on the surface of bodies is important because it allows for a conceptualization of the boundaries of online communities and how members of a community can act in unison. Individuals comprising the Asian American online community had a shared surface that had the lasting impression of being stereotyped for being Asian American (Loza 2014). This is explained by Steffi Lau (2015) who conducted interviews with twenty-three Asian American men about the effects of stereotypes in the media on their self-esteem. She argued that the men exhibited a group consciousness due to repeated exposure to stereotypes that conditioned shame (Lau 2015, 14). While some openly rejected society's view of them, others internalized the racist stereotypes; for example, one subject named Vincent expressed insecurity around what other people who might wonder about his penis size and attractiveness (Lau 2015, 14). These norms surface as the surfaces of bodies, whether individual or communal, and "[e]ach of us, in being shaped by others, carries with us 'impressions' of those others" (Ahmed 2004b, 160). For Lau's subjects (2015, 15), the impression that they carried was an

internalization of shame and around commonly demonstrated traits that "fail[ed] the Western conception of ideal masculinity", such as "meek, short, smart yet socially awkward, nerdy…and effeminate" whereby their "Asianness" became the joke. Lau (2015) notes that shame and a desire to "distance [themselves] from foreign-born Asians" were predominant emotions stemming from an inability by subjects to separate their perception of stereotyped characters from their peers' perceptions and the reflection of those characters onto them. This was partly due to a shared understanding among the men that "they are inextricably chained to the portrayals media present to society" (Lau 2015, 14). The stereotype of the Asian sidekick stuck to these Asian American men because the stereotype invoked specific affect. A history of shared injury and shame is what allowed #NotYourAsianSidekick to be so salient and resonant as many individuals used the hashtag to articulate their experiences. This norm of being perceived as an "Asian sidekick" and the pushback against it allowed the boundary of the community to become perceptible.

Shame in Ahmed's work focuses on the relationship between the mainstream and the marginal. However, the idea of shaming can actually operate within marginal communities. This raises different issues because marginal communities, in particular feminist communities often have an understanding of how shame has been used normatively. Shame began to underpin the discursive relationships between Suey Park and other prominent members within the Asian American community, such as Phil Yu and Juliet Shen, in order to continually re-establish the alignment and boundaries of the Asian American community. It became not only a way of relating between the mainstream and a marginalized community, but also a way to manage the internal dynamics of a marginalized community. However, when Park wrote that she "would not be caught dead" at an event organized by Juliet Shen, who Park deemed too "mainstream Asian America", her words and actions were deemed examples of "gaslighting". Gaslighting is a form of psychological abuse where the victim is manipulated into doubting their own memory, perception of reality, and sanity. The term derives its meaning from the 1938 play and 1944 film *Gaslight,* starring Ingrid Bergman as a woman whose husband manipulates her into thinking that she is going insane (Stern 2007, 14). The language her husband uses creates her insanity as he changes her perception of reality. Criticism against Park quickly gained traction when this description of her and her followers' tactics was adopted by prominent figureheads of the Asian American community (Shen 2014; Teck

2014). Teck (2014), on her participation in the community and her reservations regarding Park, writes that:

> I have continued to push for coalition building within the A/PIA community and have had the fortune of attending and speaking at multiple A/PIA student conferences but never had a chance to really share what activism meant to me as an Asian American womxn. You can imagine the excitement I felt when I was invited to speak on a panel about resistance in the A/PIA community at a university. Yet I soon realized I would be sharing the stage with Suey. After much reflection and debate, I withdrew. Now I worry that this may be misconstrued, but let me tell you why I did it: it's because I am scared. I have witness[ed] over and over again how she has gaslighted individuals and psychologically/emotionally/mentally tormented fellow A/PIA men/womxn/organizations/etc. for just simply asking her to take a breath and reflect. I share these stories because they are crucial in understanding the conflict and anxiety that I have had circulating around #NotYourAsianSidekick, #CancelColbert, and the co-opting of #BuildDontBurn. The invitation to speak on this panel coincided with the same timeline as the last two hashtag movements.

Shen's (2014) account echoes that of Teck's:

> Let's call this what it is: cyberbullying. I'm not saying it's Suey, but I am saying that it's her followers. There is a large group of people who have created an echo chamber that repeatedly enables and reinforces bad behavior. Harassment. Stalking. Name-calling. Character assassination. Misinformation. Emotional manipulation. Propaganda. This isn't calling people out for racist, sexist, homophobic behavior – it's using these terms so freely that we lose sight of the actual racists and sexists and bigots. It's hurling the term gaslighting so often at other people and inaccurately while actually gaslighting the same people. I think that there are a lot of people who follow Suey for her politics while not knowing her tactics. I'd probably do the same if I wasn't aware of the way she treated people.

Teck and Shen refer to Park's use of shame as gaslighting. This encouraged the development of factions within the community with the implication that Park's supporters were particularly aggressive in imposing their understanding of an Asian American identity onto other community members. Their attempts did not work

because of heightened awareness in marginalized communities of shame, which is often described as a normative tactic used against women (Stern 2007, 12) or a "common victim-blaming abuse tactic" (Nelson 2015). Within feminist communities, "gaslighting" has resonance and individuals in those communities readily identify situations in which it is occurring (Leve 2017). It is another example of injurious speech, and situations in which gaslighting is used calls upon the previous abuse women, individually and collectively, have experienced. Because of the historical weight of the term, "gaslighting" as a description of Park's behavior stuck. Park's use of shame against other Asian American women was a normative mode of behavior being imposed on a marginalized community as a way of reinforcing the community's boundaries. The "gaslighting" description of Suey Park is also an example of negative interpellation. In what happened with Suey Park, Park's differences from "mainstream Asian America" were highlighted through analysis of her "gaslighting" behavior. Because Teck and Shen articulated a certain discomfort with Park that many other Asian American community leaders had expressed, Park was negatively interpellated and the gaslighting description "stuck", Gaslighting as a tactic is one where borders and boundaries are blurred, so to community members vigilantly defending the boundaries of the community from such a tactic being named as someone who uses gaslighting is a reason to be expelled. Shen and Teck, in using the term to describe Park's actions, distanced themselves from her and aligned themselves with other community members who had expressed dissatisfaction with Park's tactics. The tension between Park's use of normative tactics while espousing ideas reaffirming the alignment of the Asian American online community was resolved by Park's removal. #CancelColbert, #NotYourAsianSidekick, and Suey Park's use of gaslighting demonstrate how certain affective meanings stick due to repetition and an existing affective potential.

By naming Suey Park's ethically questionable approaches to community organizing as "gaslighting", Juliet Shen drew upon a history of discourse within marginalized online communities that treated individuals who perpetrate gaslighting as members to be cut out from these communities (Fett 2015). When Vanessa Teck and Juliet Shen named the gaslighting that was occurring, they named into existence the ways in which the community was fracturing into factions. Teck (2014) writes:

Social media activism is great, but not when it transforms into entertainment. When we turn people into celebrities, we forget to be critical of them. And

> isn't it our responsibility to nurture one another by challenging each other to be better? The dialogue that has come from these hashtags are needed, but the issues we truly need to face have been overshadowed by their virality. It has become more and more common to attack each other via mentions and question each other's character. That's easy to do. What is difficult is looking beyond that and realizing that these issues affect all of us. I am tired of all this centering/decentering bullshit, because you cannot address one issue with realizing how it intersects with another (not to mention all the academic elitism that comes with using terminology like that). I want to build environments that allow for individuals like myself who want to be a part of the movement to feel SAFE to grow… to create relationships without having to worry about automatically labeled as us vs. them.

Teck questions the ethics of Park's social interactions as a community organizer, in particular the heightened negativity to Park's tweets as a way to entertain and engage others in the community. Park's social interaction is held in direct contrast to the social interaction that Teck (2014) names as safe—"nurturing one another by challenging each other to be better". The community that surrounds Park and buoys her is implied to be unsafe. Teck and Shen's posts marked a point at which Suey Park's influence on the Asian American online community began to weaken because of questions about her ethics. These performative utterances from Teck and Shen, which Shen (2014) notes were a reinforcement of others', were further reinforced by other community members. Although Park's Asian American identity was not called into question, her behavior that reflected upon her status as a leading Asian American online activist was. The construction of Suey Park as someone who engages in gaslighting was a process that required the repetition of speech acts, actions, the use of social media, and the rules surrounding how social media is used through time. Through these repetitions, the charges of gaslighting and the associated emotions stuck to Park's digital body, and her orientation relative to the affective flows of the online Asian American community changed.

Coming Together

Posting into being performs different work in different groups and has the capacity to establish a commonality among bodies. They aid each community in maintaining a specific affective flow that gives each communal space a specific "feel" and "'having' the right emotion…allows one to pass into the community" (Ahmed 2004b, 135). Examples of this quality of networked online spaces are the "white flight" of white teenagers from MySpace to Facebook in 2006 because MySpace was perceived to be a "*ghetto*" and the development of "Black Twitter" (boyd 2013, 203; Brock 2012, 530). Meredith Clark (2014, 65) demonstrated that Black Twitter is an online community that uses shared language to "communicate and collaborate to create a phenomenon that values positive Black self-identity". The connections maintained by these communities transcend geographic and physical boundaries. These, like the events surrounding Suey Park, are examples of how communities maintain a racialized space. The posts by community members contribute to the "feel" of the group but can also isolate an individual poster and the "feel" of the space of the community. If a user disorients from the "feel" of the space of the community, then questions of belonging may arise and, in the case of Suey Park, lead to an individual being pushed out from a community. When posts and posters disorient, it threatens the existence of the community and its identity because marginalized communities on social media dependent on critical mass.

Where the existence of the group is an affirmation of a marginalized identity, posting into being is necessary to maintain critical mass and each post is a reflection upon the community and a contentious identity (Dixon 2014, 35-36). As online communities on social media require posting in order to continue their existence, communities must reach critical mass in order to maintain momentum, or else the group dies out; critical mass is important for a mature online community to maintain existence (Iriberri and Leroy 2009, 17). To maintain their size or to keep growing, online communities must interact with newcomers, who are more likely to stay in an online community if they receive responses to their initial post regardless of the quality or tone of the replies (Joyce and Kraut 2006). What matters is the interaction and the work the interaction is performing. On the other hand, newcomers are more likely to receive responses if their posts are on-topic and reveal some personal information (Arguello et al. 2006). If a newcomer demonstrates their alignment to a community's established affect and "feel", then the community's boundaries will more readily be moved to include them. For those wishing to gain entrance into a

community, they must align with the community's affective flows. Iriberri and Leroy (2009, 18) note that "communities of interest and support are interested in knowing the identity…of each member, since knowing the history of each member increases her or his credibility and her or his contribution's perceived value to the community". A history of affective alignment increases perceived credibility because it demonstrates shared values and having been shaped by the ritual communication of the community. Without enough members of a community participating in ritual communication, the shared space falls apart as what represents it disappears from view (Carey 2008, 15).

The sum of social interactions that comes from participation by divulging personal information and posting into being drives community formation and community identities online. On social media where there is an absence of traditional structures that influence the identity development of marginalized communities—for example, laws that allow for skilled migration, or institutions such as law enforcement that target particular communities—new processes take place to fill the void. With the example of Suey Park, communication as ritual explains the relativity between individual and group identity. Though an individual's participation can shape transmissions and patterns of transmission, ritual communication is an act that pre-exists and outlasts any individual. In the case of Suey Park, the online Asian American community preceded her participation. Though her postings had a significant impact, when communications ceased between her and other figureheads of the Asian American community her influence waned as well. Online rituals of retweeting, commenting, and participating in hashtag movements are crucial to maintaining and participating in a community (Dixon 2014, 34). An individual's influence on group identity lasts only as long as the ritualized communication associated with the individual is repeated in the shared space To turn back to Ahmed's affective economies, if ritualized communications influence affect, then they shape the orientation of individuals and communities. If there is not enough communication to create and maintain a shared space for a community, then that community will disappear.

Feeling Together

The patrolling of boundaries that led to Suey Park's exclusion from the Asian American online community has not necessarily made her less Asian American. The diversity in what it means to be Asian American is what led to conflict, and conflict can lead to the emergence of different identities. Yet what does it mean to keep a group going when the more you speak, the more you show how you diverge from others, which leads to dissipation? This is apparent in the situation surrounding Suey Park. Both Vanessa Teck and Juliet Shen, once close collaborators with Park, note that as time passed and social interactions accrued, differences appeared. To put in in Ahmed's terms, differences in affect accrued, and while some differences are manageable, these were not. Manageable differences are those that cause disorientations deemed superficial to a community's overall affective flow and therefore do not threaten the community's existence. Unmanageable differences stem from core values and result in disorientations deep in a community's affective flow, such as the ethical concerns raised by Teck, and hence cause communities to divide. To understand why, we must analyze speech acts, ritual communication, and the work they perform through the idea of affective labor in digital spaces, Henri Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis*, and a further tweaking of Sara Ahmed's affective economies.

Due to a lack of traditional structures, the movement of identity in online social media spaces can be found in processual lines. Henri Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis* analyzes rhythms present in urban spaces and the effects of those rhythms on the inhabitants of urban spaces, and it is an extension of his work on space as a product of social practices (Fen 2012, 49). Lefebvre's focus on the corporeal links well with Ahmed's analysis of bodies, and her articulation of how corporeal experiences become the basis of understanding social interactions and affective economies. Whereas Butler focuses on the social meaning of speech acts, Lefebvre provides the bridge to understanding how speech acts can take part in an affective economy. Lefebvre (2004, 9) describes how, on a Paris street, people come to move in structured ways through the city for "[r]hythm appears as regulated time, governed by rational laws, but in contact with what is least rational in human being: the lived, the carnal, the body". The physical form of the body influences and shapes the interactions it has with the world. Though each individual embodiment may be unique for various reasons, the ways in which they react with the world is not. It is through this habitual, patterned interaction between bodies that rhythms emerge. One

person follows the person in front; when there is water dripping from above, everyone systematically moves around the water. Lefebvre (2004) directly comments on the rhythms of groups, writing that:

> These last rhythms (schoolchildren, shoppers, tourists) would be more cyclical, of large and simple intervals, at the heart of livelier, alternating rhythms, at brief intervals, cars, regulars, employees, bistro clients. The interaction of diverse, repetitive and different rhythms animates, as one says, the street and the neighbourhood. The linear, which is to say, in short, succession consists of journeys to and from: it combines with the cyclical, the movements of long intervals. The cyclical is social organization manifesting itself. The linear is the daily grind, the routine, therefore the perpetual, made up of chance and encounters. (30)

The rhythms of individual bodies are linear; for example, individual speech acts and performative utterances, when repeated, give rise to individual linear rhythms. When the rhythms of individuals interact and form group rhythms, the group rhythms become cyclical. This leads to the group rhythms "animating" a space, or giving that space a "feel". It is inevitable, from the rules governing rhythms as outlined by Lefebvre, that group rhythms are cyclical. A group's identity can be thought of as a form of rhythm, and it is through the interaction of many individual linear rhythms that a group rhythm and group identity emerges.

This can be applied to how each act of posting into being comes to shape a community identity. As posts are generated from individuals, lines of movement and repetition come into focus. Twitter hashtag movements are an example of this, as individuals' and a community's participation in an event can easily be followed through tracking a hashtag's usage (Dixon 2014, 35). This processual movement into structure over time, of which the "feel" of spaces is an example, can be traced and analyzed (Dixon 2014, 36). Individuals are judged in relation to the "feel" of online spaces, both in terms of the individual judging whether or not the space is for them and others judging whether or not the individual belongs. This is a judgment of orientation and whether or not an individual's orientation is aligned with a community's or whether that individual is disorienting. #NotYourAsianSidekick, a joint project by Park and Shen, can be thought of as a group rhythm that emerged through the interaction of many individual linear rhythms. Many individuals used the hashtag to discuss their experiences as Asians, often converging on themes about

stereotypes of submissiveness, expectations of Asian American masculinity, and the legacy of colonialism (Kondabolu 2013; Luna 2013; Moon 2013; Park 2013; Power 2013; Shen 2013). The hashtag also had its own rhythm. It became a widely circulated hashtag within the Asian American community, then beyond, before it fell out of use. #CancelColbert followed a few months later: again it was a widely circulated hashtag but over time its use faded. With #CancelColbert, the issues surrounding Suey Park's actions as an activist came to light and shortly after Park and Shen parted ways. Suey Park's involvement with the Asian American community and her influence came and went. Juliet Shen and Vanessa Teck, though still prominent figures, have shifted their level of involvement with the online Asian American community after what happened with Park. In the wake of Suey Park, new Asian American online activists such as *Love Life of an Asian Guy*, who use some of the same tactics and language as Suey Park, have emerged and defined the next generation of Asian American online communities (Maningding 2017).

The distinct rhythms are expected to perform specific affects and modulation of emotions in digital space. The manner in which Shen and Teck, among many others, modulated their tone and affect through speech acts was very different to how Park chose to modulate hers. This modulation of speech, emotions, and affect is known as affective labor, a concept first coined by Tiziana Terranova (2000, 33) in regard to individuals whose activity and communications shaped the internet and the way social networks communicate on the internet but who were never paid for their work. Nicholas Carah (2014, 253) wrote that "[l]aborers are directed or prompted to produce specific affects and social relations, which are then captured, contained and measured". Affective labor, which has been argued to be increasingly important in information-driven societies, can also entail modulation of emotions and affect (Carah 2014, 253). A crucial part of the affective labor performed online is "community policing", or the patrolling of community boundaries. The affordances of online social media platforms, such as retweeting and liking, allow for affective labor to be performed and to allow these communities to congeal (Stark and Crawford 2015, 1-2). The modulation of emotion and affect in digital communities by community leaders informs the affective flow of the community because the accumulation of power and prestige in online spaces is quite centralized (Jarrett 2014, 24).

The affective labor present in digital spaces has a "disciplining capacity" in that it shapes the behaviors of users, such as the normalization of "liking" posts (Jarrett 2014, 23). Affective labor is not only a positive force, but a negative one where individuals are disciplined for not modulating their tone and affect correctly. The accumulation of esteem in online spaces is linked to this, as it is through the normalization and the conditioning of others' practices that "the legitimacy of various authority forms and figures…ensures a relatively static and centralized distribution of power" (Jarrett 2014, 24). This can be seen with #NotYourAsianSidekick, #CancelColbert, and what happened to Suey Park. The two hashtags were created as a means of conditioning the practices of white feminists for the former and the Colbert Report for the latter. #CancelColbert gained traction because of Park's high profile as an Asian American activist due to her prior success with #NotYourAsianSidekick. Though Suey Park may have started the hashtags, she was not the only voice, and this diffusion of power was one of the strengths of these hashtags. However, when she applied these same principles within the community, such as when she critiqued Shen's involvement in "mainstream Asian America", it caused the "feel" of the community to unravel. Her disorientation from the affective flow and "feel" of the community was too great, and for the community to congeal she had to be removed. The same techniques that she had used to great effect were now used to condition her practices, and when her behavior was not modified the term "gaslighting" stuck to her. Speech acts perform work, and in the case of Suey Park they performed the work of ejecting her from the Asian American online community.

Suey Park's posts were initially popular because they set a "feel" for Asian American spaces that was oppositional to normative culture. What she posted and how she posted was initially a point of clear articulation for Asian Americans' identity online, and her hashtag movements became important moments for the Asian American community during the digital era. However, as time passed, her tactics disoriented from the affective flow of Asian American spaces on social media. The disorientation prompted questions about what it meant to be Asian American and how to organize as an Asian American community on social media, which were resolved by her exclusion from the community. To relate this to identification, identities are always changing as the acts that create them change. When tactics of opposition were applied towards other figures within the

community, it caused an unraveling of the "feel" of Asian American spaces. Suey Park dominated the online Asian American space when that space was disorienting from that of the dominant culture. The changes in affective flow that started with her speech acts and ended with her exclusion changed the Asian American identity and who identified with whom and what.

The medium impacts on how people communicate and changes how we view ourselves, how we identify with communities, and how communities are identified. The role of social media in marginalized community formation and disintegration is rooted in speech acts, posting into being and what it means to continue posting as a means of being. Marginalized communities online are dependent on maintaining a critical mass: the hashtags #NotYourAsianSideKick and #CancelColbert both lost momentum as people stopped contributing to them, but other hashtag movements such as #BlackLivesMatter have not only maintained momentum but continue to grow as more and more people use them, share them, and connect them with their daily lives. Each post is an opportunity to diverge from the group's identity markers and the "feel" of the community space. The ways in which social media facilitates speech acts that come to define community identities can be analyzed through affective economies: the accruing of speech acts such as those through hashtags creates affective flows. A history of a community's affective flows shapes the "feel" of the space of the community. Because marginalized communities on social media are not born into a community identity but are instead partaking in an identity of critical mass where the group needs to form to allow the identity to flourish, the disorientation of members through divergent posts threatens the existence of the community and its identity. The divergence of posters who are community members from the "feel" of the community leads to dissipation. Is it possible to diverge from the "feel" of the community without experiencing the same ostracization as Suey Park? To discuss this, in the next chapter I will analyze community dynamics in more detail applying Sara Ahmed's theories on willfulness to the example of #SolidarityIsNotForWhiteWomen.

Chapter 3
Willful Bodies

The dual focus for this chapter is the relationship between willful figures and their communities, and how marginalized communities on social media police their boundaries. The contrast between how a willing and a willful figure are positioned in relation to a community exemplifies the links between willfulness, marginalization, and affective orientation, and provides an appropriate context for using Sara Ahmed's philosophy for analysis. I aim to understand how a community circumvents and ejects a willful figure or how a community allows the disorientation to create a new affective flow and therefore "feel" to the community, and what goes into this group decision-making process. The events surrounding #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen are ideal because they compare one willing figure, Hugo Schwyzer, against one willful figure, Mikki Kendall. Hugo Schwyzer's acceptance by the mainstream digital feminist community was because of his whiteness and his ability to repeat, reinforce, and validate the perspectives of other mainstream white digital feminists (Magarik 2012). On the other hand, Mikki Kendall's marginalization by the mainstream digital feminist community was due to her position as a Black feminist. The goal of this chapter is to better understand how community boundaries are policed, and who gets banished, and for what reasons. The chapter includes an examination of how "others" are marked as being willful; how willful figures are further marginalized through their disruption of a community's affective flow; and what communities decide to do with these marginalized willful figures.

To understand what led to #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, we need to go back in time and understand the events in chronological order. Feminists of color have long been sidelined by the mainstream digital feminist movement as seen by what Loretta Loza (2014) describes as the "erasure [of] women of color from the future and past of feminism" from the 2012 #FemFuture report spearheaded by prominent white feminist Jessica Valenti. During this time Hugo Schwyzer, a professor of history and gender studies at Pasadena City College, rose to prominence on the internet in late 2005 for his blogging and essays on masculinity (Gable 2014). His profile grew within the digital feminist movement, participating and writing for some

of the largest online feminist platforms such as *Feministe* and *Jezebel,* until late 2011 when he was banned from *Feministe* by his own admissions of having sex with students and the attempted murder-suicide of an ex-girlfriend. However, his profile remained high as he continued to write for major publications on feminism and provide interviews with various outlets. Other prominent white feminists such as Jessica Valenti and Jill Filipovic either defended him or stayed silent on these issues. In early August of 2013, he wrote a series of tweets on Twitter directed at other feminist about how he had "manipulated and cheated so many of you" (Vingiano and Testa 2013). His tweets included: "I talked my way into teaching women's studies on the basis of 2 undergrad courses only", and "I then built career as a well-known online male feminist on fraudulent pretenses". He also wrote about his pattern of behavior, which ranged from copying the ideas of feminists of color to discrediting feminists of color. This had been noted by Mikki Kendall, a prominent feminist of color, but had been ignored by white feminists: "[t]o the women of color I trashed in 2008, I am so sorry" (Vingiano and Testa 2013). In addition, he tweeted "[a]nd WOC [Women of Color], yes you @amaditalks and @Blackamazon, you were right. I was awful to you because you were in the way" (Vingiano and Testa 2013). He also weighed in on how white feminists had enabled him, specifically the roles Valenti and Filipovic had played, writing that "I am sorry for my former colleagues like @jessicavalenti and @JillFilipovic who couldn't work with me or bring themselves to denounce me" (Vingiano and Testa 2013).

After Schwyzer's Twitter admissions, many prominent white digital feminists disavowed him or expressed their sympathy for him. Few however wrote about the negative impacst he had had on digital feminists of color. This included taking up opportunities that could have gone to feminists of color; stalking feminists of color; privately pressuring the work colleagues of feminists of color; and publicly attacking feminists of color who criticized his writing (Shepard 2013; Tolentino 2013). Mikki Kendall (2013) noted that:

> [T]hese feminists were, once again, dismissing women of color (WOC) in favor of a brand of solidarity that centers on the safety and comfort of white women…Admittedly, this isn't a new problem: white feminism has argued that gender should trump race since its inception. That rhetoric not only erases the experiences of women of color, but also alienated many from a movement that claims to want equality for all. This is especially clear when

posts and articles about racism in feminism from five years ago involve some of the very same players.

Mikki Kendall (2013) created #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen on Twitter in August 2013 "in a moment of frustration" stemming from her interactions with prominent white feminists on Twitter such as Valenti and Filipovic. The hashtag was a response to what had happened with Schwyzer and an opportunity for "discussion between people impacted by the latest bout of problematic behavior from mainstream white feminists" (Kendall 2013). Feminists of color used the hashtag to discuss topics that they felt had long been overlooked in the digital feminist movement, such as Hugo Schwyzer's rapid rise within the feminist community, the pay gap between white women and different groups of women of color, the hypersexualization of black women, and the racism present in the digital feminist movement.

#SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen had a sizeable impact; at one point in mid-August of 2013 it was the most popular hashtag on Twitter in the United States and the third most popular in the world (Ross 2014). In December of that year, *The Atlantic* noted that the hashtag was still being widely used (John 2013). It has also had lasting impact on the feminist movement in the digital sphere and on social media. In 2014, influential feminist academics Rebecca Traister, Judith Shulevitz, Michelle Goldberg, and Brittney Cooper publicly debated the future of the feminist movement and the influence of #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen in a series of articles for various online publications. Goldberg's (2014) piece in *The Nation* titled "Feminism's Toxic Twitter Wars" was a critique of the heightened negative emotionality behind online movements, in particular #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen. Traiter and Shulevitz (2014) cite Goldberg's piece as the reason why they did not find the digital feminist movement compelling. Brittney Cooper, in "Feminism's ugly internal clash: why its future is not up to white women", responded to both previous pieces, noting the racial myopia of Traister, Shulevitz, and Goldberg and how their rendering of feminism put them at odds with online feminism where the voices of Black women hold more power, as evidenced by #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen (Cooper 2014). Since then, as reported by *Vice,* Mikki Kendall has subsequently received more writing and media opportunities that she had prior to the creation of the hastag (Ross 2014). Popular online publications such as *The Guardian, Huffington Post,* and *Mic* have published pieces on the limitations of white feminism (Kendall 2013; Noehren 2017; Noman 2016).

What happened to the online feminist community following their support for Hugo Schwyzer and why did #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen explode overnight? In the example of Mikki Kendall, Hugo Schwyzer, and #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, Mikki Kendall as a Black feminist was further marginalized not only because of how she disrupted the economy of emotions in the digital feminist community, but because she had the potential to successfully change and orient the community's affective economies. Hugo Schwyzer, on the other hand, was accepted because he affirmed the digital feminist community's affective economies (Magarik 2012). Divisions in the feminist movement pre-date the internet and social media, but with the rise of Twitter and hashtag movements, entire communities are able to participate in discussions and fights on a scale that has been facilitated by technology (Loza 2014). Due to the pace of and evolving structures present on social media, online communities become a prime example of envisioning Sara Ahmed's theories. Sara Ahmed's ideas can help to analyze the flexibility with which communities and community identities work online and to explain what happened with Hugo Schwyzer, Mikki Kendall, and #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen. To do so, I will first analyze how the will is formed in online communities using Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities and Patrick Riley's historical account of the will. I will then demonstrate the work performed by willfulness and willingness in the example, and finally I will discuss how a willful figure is subjugated by combining ideas from Sara Ahmed and Paolo Freire, a Brazilian educator who has written extensively on solidarity.

The Will in Imagined Communities

Understanding how online communities form is the first step to understanding how their boundaries are policed. When the internet was first emerging, scholars such as Derek Foster (1997, 31) note that "[p]eculiar forms of community exist even in these electronic villages". The technology of communication plays an important role in these communities and how they are imagined (Feenberg and Bakardjieva 2004, 37). The affordances of the technology produce and replicate certain practices, ranging from hashtags to a specific "feel" for a given community. Samuel Wilson and Leighton Peterson (2002, 453) wrote, as online spaces and practices were emerging in the early 2000s, that "new participants are socialized into online practices" and that "gendered and racialized identities are

negotiated, reproduced, and indexed in online interactions". One example of this socialization is the creation of internet-specific language among certain communities, which forms "internet-based speech communities" (Wilson and Peterson 2002, 459). Steven Brint (2001, 10) has also defined virtual communities according to three main criteria: having choice as the existential basis of relationships, common activity as the primary reason for interaction, and the dispersal in geographic space that does not require face-to-face engagement. Hashtags fulfill these criteria: users choose to use hashtags, the use of a hashtag is a common activity, and hashtags are a global phenomenon. #SolidarityForWhiteWomen was a shared discussion and confirmed an identity among those who had been marginalized by the mainstream feminist movement (Arreola 2014).

The concept of imagined communities is key to understanding the role the will plays in virtual communities. People become part of media communities due to ideals and imagined identities. Community is then an ideal of social relations that assumes solidarity between individuals within the community (Foster 1996, 25) and "emerg[es] from the mutual commitment, mutual involvement, mutual responsibility, and mutual respect between a society and its individual members" (Walls 1993, 156). In a recent paper, Anatoliy Gruzd, Barry Wellman, and Yuri Takheteyev (2010, 1298) tackle the question of defining community on Twitter. In particular, they note how Anderson's imagined community maps onto Twitter quite seamlessly. These online communities are set up by the ideas linked to nationhood. Benedict Anderson (2006, 6) wrote that "[a]ll communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity or genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined". Though Anderson was writing in the context of nationalism, these principles still apply in a day and age where human societies have grown, globalization has taken effect, and we now live in a network society (van Dijck 2012, 23). In Anderson's imagined communities, "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members…yet in the minds of each lives the image of the communion" (Anderson 2006, 6). This is parallel to what occurs on Twitter because "[u]sers could never know everyone on Twitter, but they are certainly aware of other users' presence, especially in their 'neighborhood' of sources" (Gruzd Wellman and Takheteyev 2010, 1298). Twitter users develop their own language, such as the use

of hashtags, and have a shared sense of homogeneous time (Gruzd Wellman and Takheteyev 2010, 1298) They also establish "high centers" within the Twitter digital space through the patterns created by who follows whom, which are all characteristics that follow Anderson's key elements of community formation (Gruzd Wellman and Takheteyev (2010, 1301-1303). Ahmed (2014, 127) follows closely in Benedict Anderson's tradition, stating that "[n]ational membership is often imagined as a 'community of strangers'….You can be part of a 'whole social body,' without ever meeting". However, Anderson's focus was the formation of the nation, and this differs from other types of interest because there is no choice.

   Ahmed's analysis of the relationship between the idea of the will and marginalization requires an understanding of the concept of a general will. According to Patrick Riley (1986, 9), the general will progressed from a religious concept to a social contract due to tension within the religious concept. Antoine Arnauld "first made visible…the notion of the general will" in the seventeenth century "to explain collective actions outside of God's will" by using the idea of a "general will" that is separate from God and what God wills (Riley 1986, 9). Human actions are now characterized in terms of choice and the ability to work towards salvation (Riley 1986, 15). Later philosophers such as Malebranche and Leibniz would argue that God was a "general cause" of the world (Riley 1986, 61), whereas humans are "occasional causes of their actions" (Riley 1986, 254). What is evident here is that the will is defined by what can be willed in a given context. The general will, for Malebranche and Leibniz, is one that is shaped by its physical environment, which is itself the result of a superior being's will. Rousseau rejected by arguing that the general will is a free will that is committed to moral objectives (Riley 1986, 245). The general will attains its autonomy through political education, transforming selfish wills into citizens (Riley 1986, 245). This is the basis of Rousseau's idea of the social contract where the general will, after political education, goes on to create a common will of the community that does not impede the individual will. However, despite Rousseau's rejection of physical determinism as the source of the general will the focus is not on an individual's behavior or acts, but how an individual is situated within a context (Riley 1986, 221). The context Mikki Kendall was situated in was the digital feminist movement on Twitter. Third-wave feminism, of which the digital feminist movement is a part, "embraces the principle of inclusivity in its attempts to develop an understanding of how a feminist practice or identity might be

defined" through "the specificity of individual experience" and "female empowerment" (Budgeon 2011, 282). However, this comes at the expense of erasing differences and lack of "critical understanding" on the appropriation of self-empowerment to reproduce "the status quo at the expense of understanding the classed and 'raced' divisions" (Budgeon 2011, 287). This is the "common will" of the community, upheld by prominent white feminists such as Rebecca Traister, Judith Shulevitz, and Michelle Goldberg. The relationship between the individual and the social contract in which they are situated plays out in Ahmed's work on willfulness.

The Work of Willfulness

Ahmed reinterprets the notion of the general will as a social contract in terms of willfulness. The will and willfulness are used to demarcate an other, whether that be a willful child or a willful migrant, who does not reproduce the values of life that we have known in a given social contract. Willfulness, a modality within affective economies, thus plays a role in a community's formation through the construction of difference and marginalization and the movement of boundaries. Ahmed's inclusion of the will and willfulness into community formation deals explicitly with the question of how a marginalized community's identity forms. According to Ahmed, the cohesion of bodies with shared orientation is the beginning of how community forms. A cohesive feel to a space emerges through alignment. Alignment, according to Ahmed (2004b, 52), is what drives group identification. The will plays a part in this formation through a history of repetitions:

> When we think of the will sphere, we might think of how we inhabit the world willingly with others. Perhaps we can think of social willing not then simply as what we accomplish when we will together but how we become proximate to objects and others in being orientated toward ends that have been agreed. (Ahmed 2014, 48)

That is, in a space where bodies are oriented, self-selection has occurred. In a space devoid of willful subjects, it is not that bodies will together, bound by the same process. Rather, they are bound by the same end goal or product: the means have not been agreed upon, but the ends have been. Each body may have a will of its own that may or may not align with the social space, but the body aligns with the orientation of the space. Ahmed (2014) writes that:

Willfulness might be what we do when we are judged as being *not*, as not meeting the criteria for being human, for instance. Not to meet the criteria for human is often to be attached to other nots, not human as not being: not being white, not being male, not being straight, not being able-bodied. (15)

In this passage the orientations of social space—white, male, straight, and able-bodied—are markers of the collective will. To orient to this space is to make one human; to disorient is to be construed as willful and not human. Space inherently has orientation, but there still lies the question of how social spaces come to have specific orientations. Ahmed's answer is that the orientation of social space is set by repetition. A history of repetitions is what allows patterns to form, institutions to take shape, and form and shapes to occupy space. In Kendall's situation it becomes apparent that the emotions in the affective economy do not only leave impressions on surfaces because of their transitory nature but also because they endure. The frustration Kendall felt that led to #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen is an enduring emotion, and not one only felt by her. As noted earlier in the chapter, nearly half a year after the start of #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen began, the hashtag was "still going strong" (John 2013). The endurance of emotions allows a history of emotions to be possible as repetitions occur and stable circulations arise. A history of feeling attacked, silenced, and frustrated is what led to Mikki Kendall creating #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen.

Bodies entering into a space are not automatically marked as willful others (Ahmed 2014, 164). For example, migrants may be accepted into the community that lays claim to the space, or they may be marked as willful subjects that threaten the national body. Through repetition and a history of repetition, strangers align and orient together under the national will. This informs how bodies entering into the space can be willing or willful, as "migrants as would-be citizens are welcomed on condition they are willing to will in accordance with the national will" (Ahmed 2014, 127). If a body orients with the orientation of a space, they are welcomed. They are willing in accordance with the "natural will" of the community. If a body disorients with the orientation of a space—in this example, if they were to critique mainstream digital feminists—then this body is marked as an "other", outside of the national community. The willfulness of Black feminists such as Kendall was held in contrast by Goldberg to Black feminists such as Cooper and Holmes, who did not demonstrate anger in their writings posted in digital spaces. Kendall violated the

terms of the social contract which Cooper and Holmes upheld. Cooper provided an intellectualizing of the dynamics of hashtag movements that was favorable towards the white feminists Kendall criticized, and Holmes's words indicated sadness and resignation (Goldberg 2014). By deploying the perspectives of different Black feminists side-by-side, Goldberg created a contrast between the willfulness of Kendall with the cool, reasoned words of Cooper and Holmes. Kendall is thus cast as an outsider, an "other", to the feminist movement, an anomaly because of the technology of social media, whereas her peers who share her identity markers are a part of the feminist movement. This is a result of the fact that Kendall violated the social contract in place in digital feminist spaces by repeatedly critiquing the mainstream digital feminist movement. By violating the social contract, she became a willful figure who disoriented from the "natural will" and general will of the community. Schwyzer, on the other hand, is an example of a willing body that orients with the orientation of a space. As Kendall notes in an interview with Flavia Dzodan and Jia Tolentino, she and other feminists of color wrote for years without acknowledgement, whereas Schwyzer had a rapid ascension, quickly writing for mainstream feminist publications such as *Jezebel* and was deemed an expert on feminist topics (Tolentino 2013). The "other" cannot align with the space, because they exist in a different time from the body of the community. If what is being willed is a coherent community identity, then what is gathered are notions of the community that enables the community to will into existence a coherent identity (Ahmed 2014, 127). Acceptance, or assimilation, into the larger community is conditional. Ahmed (2014) writes:

> [T]he key differentiation is not between us and them, but between them, between those differences that can be assimilated into the national body and those that cannot. Some differences become indigestible: what the nation cannot stomach. Willfulness is useful as a technique for making those who are assumed as inassimilable…responsible for not being assimilated. (128)

Not all differences lead to disorientation. What leads to a community identity is not the lack of difference among the bodies comprising a community, but that all the bodies orient towards the same end point. The national community, which can be thought of as a larger body made up of smaller bodies, can tolerate certain differences so long as individual bodies within the nation do not disorient, and those differences do not cause other bodies to disorient. The same principle can be applied

to any larger community dealing with an internal sub-set. One example is how Schwyzer was accepted into the mainstream digital feminist community because he did not disorient from the ideologies of the larger community, despite the fact that his identity as a man should have been disorienting. Prior to his downfall, Schwyzer demonstrated that he understood what it was to be socialized within the rules of the community, such as using terms like "rape culture", "slut shaming", "male privilege", and "reproductive justice" in his writing (Magarik 2012). During his Twitter confessions, Schwyzer (2013a) wrote "I appropriated the language of redemption, I knew which buttons to push". In line with this, Shulevitz points out how she finds the feminist politics of people such as Sheryl Sandberg distasteful, but still recognizes her as a feminist and as an ally. Assimilation does not dictate that bodies need to be the same, but that whatever differences may exist do not disorient and still allow those bodies to experience the same events at the same time. Bodies that fail on this point are deemed willful and are cast as failing to have assimilated because of an unwillingness to give up that which causes them to disorient. This is usually pinned to differences, to what those bodies are not: not male, not white, not straight, and not able-bodied (Ahmed 2014, 72). In the context of what happened around #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, this was pinned upon feminists of color who did not have any sympathetic feelings or words for their white counterparts and often times only had critiques for their white peers. This is how marginalized bodies, individual and communal, which do not assimilate into the body of a nation or a larger community, are marked as willful others. The nation, in securing borders that have been created by orientation and repetition of certain orientations, casts these willful subjects as responsible for not being assimilated. It is not the fault of the national body, which has held a specific circulation of emotions and certain ideals as part of its "natural will"; it is the fault of the bodies that disorient.

Ahmed provides more detail on how will and willingness inform our ideas of an "other" in relation to boundaries, which are demarcations within space: "[t]o think of 'here' as an accomplishment is to restore an air of contingency. The distinction of 'here' and 'there' reminds us too of the orientated nature of space. A 'there' can also be the product of 'willed' human work'" (Ahmed 2014, 40). The type of "there" Ahmed is referring to is the space of the willful "other". "Bad" figures acquire their characteristics because of how they disorient, and how they disorient is read as willfulness. Because of the role of space in willfulness and the role of willfulness in

understanding a space's orientation, willfulness then carries implications for power. As Ahmed notes, space, power, and energy are all intrinsically connected, and emotions and willfulness play a role in each. Figures that disorient within an affective economy are deemed willful and a threat to "life as we know it" (Ahmed 2014, 47). The use of "here" and "there" as demarcations of oriented space is present in feminist discourse. Traister and Shulevitz (2014) discuss that:

> One bedfellow I personally can't stand, but you can, because you realize, correctly, that we have to take our friends where we find them: the ever-present Sheryl Sandberg and her brand of Davos feminism. Even if the COO of Facebook sounds completely tone-deaf when she brags about improving parking for pregnant employees, even if the so-called Lean In movement is a sham dreamed up by her book publicist, if she highlights the problem of unequal pay for equal work, well then, OK. Would the exclusion of mostly minority home health care workers and others at the low end of the pay scale from paid-sick-leave legislation be grotesque, unjust? Absolutely. Should we take the legislation if we can get it? Absolutely. We build from there.

In this comment, the "where" is Sheryl Sandberg, a fellow white feminist who Shulevitz may not agree with but exists in a societal space that Shulevitz acknowledges is socially sanctioned. Sandberg is a controversial figure in feminism after she published *Lean In* and created movements such as *LeanIn* and *BanBossy* (Foster 2016; Garcia 2014; hooks 2013), which "[spoke] chiefly to elite women" (Potts 2015). Feminists such as Stephanie Troutman and David J. Leonard, editors of *The Feminist Wire,* deemed her a *"neoliberal feminis[t]"* selling "corporate feminism" (hooks 2013). Other feminists, such as the scholar bell hooks, wrote that she was a *"faux feminis[t]"* because of her conception of feminism as *"all about gender equality within the existing social system"* (hooks 2013). Yet Shulevitz deemed Sandberg a potential ally whereas Mikki Kendall was an antagonist to the digital feminist movement. Her "there" is an example of "here" in Ahmed's work, a space in the future where well-to-do white women lead the changes in policy to first benefit themselves. That provides the foundation on which the rights of other women can be fought for and achieved. However, Cooper's response is to note that in her community, her "here" in present time, the women who need the policy changes the most are those who have been excluded in Sandberg and Shulevitz's comments (Cooper 2014). Understanding the orientation of digital space in this example is

important because it reveals how a community defends their space and "feel". Space, by definition, has an orientation. An object that is placed into this space may be deemed willing if it does not disorient and takes on the orientation of a space, thereby fading into the background. If an object disorients and fails to fade into the background, then this object becomes a willful subject and an "other". Sandberg is a figure that Shulevitz notes as initially disorienting but ultimately deems "OK", and one that fades into the background as Shulevitz discusses possible structural changes in offline life for women. However, on the subject of figures such as Kendall, Traister and Shulevitz (2014) opine "[b]ad: ideological-purity-policing hashtag activism".

Ahmed's conceptualization of willfulness exists within affective economies, so to understand how willfulness emerges through affective economies I turn an affective analysis of what happened with Mikki Kendall and the digital feminist movement. The intensity of emotions is what allows the surfaces of bodies to be felt as "against" an other. For example, when there is no external object causing our pain, we construct an image. Ahmed (2004b, 24) references how we say "I feel like I have been stabbed by a knife" or other metaphors in order to describe pain. Similarly, multiculturalism involves pain when refugees are regarded by mainstream culture as intruding. When this perceived intrusion happens, such as when refugees settle in land that is "not theirs" or when white hate groups protest for their rights to a monocultural society, the nation responds by attempting to reestablish the border and eject that which is the "cause" of the pain (Ahmed 2004b, 133). The language of pain aligns bodies and shapes the surfaces of communities (Ahmed 2004b, 20). Pain is what made the separation between Black feminists such as Mikki Kendall and white digital feminists visible. Kendall, deemed a source of pain for the digital feminist movement, had been excluded from the solidarity offered by white digital feminists to black digital feminists. The language of pain aligns one body to others, and the surface of a community is shaped differently and lived differently because of this history of pain. Like how one may never be able to use or move a limb the same way after injury, a community and how it lives is shaped by this pain, which indicates persistence of a connection. For example, the metaphor of pain can be used to explain why many mainstream feminists reported "feeling hurt, attacked, wounded, or simply left out of the conversation" by #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen (Daniels 2016, 26). Kendall and her peers, for all the pain they experienced at the hands of

Schwyzer and white digital feminists, have not disavowed the feminist movement. Kendall's piece with *The Guardian* was instead an account of her frustration and what she believed needed to change about the feminist movement and the online feminist community. Pain also bound feminists of color to #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen when they used the hashtag to express their feelings of exclusion by the mainstream feminist movement (Arreola 2014). The social response using such metaphors is rooted in the fact that emotions and affect are not internal but forces that shape bodies. Online, the emotions that stick are the ones that are intensified through the medium. As discussed in the previous chapter, because of a lack of face-to-face interactions and bodily sensations, the intensification of emotions is needed for a cohesive feel to online spaces.

The endurance of the emotions means that #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen was not only a coming together of common ideas, but an affective flow made visible. The hashtag involved a history of feeling and disorienting from the dominant "feel" of the digital feminist community. Months later it was still being used as a method of critiquing the digital feminist movement and, through sharing experiences, a method of bonding for feminists of color. Four years later, in 2017, the hashtag is still being used. In the previous chapter, I discussed how online spaces come to have a "feel" as the rhythms of individuals in the space combine over time, and that the leaders in these spaces play an important role in shaping this "feel". Feminists of color in online spaces were united by this hashtag, that articulated a feeling of being marginalized within an already marginal group, into a community within the digital feminist community, and the repetition of the hashtag allowed more and more feminists of color to orient together through this visible affective flow. Processual movement into form in online spaces is visible in the form of hashtag movements as a flow in the affective economy.

So what happens when affective flows in communities are disrupted, when affective flows are pitted against one another, and when affective flows change? The answer to these questions is most visible in the language used to describe Mikki Kendall by those who she challenged. Theodore Ross (2014), in an article for *Vice*, wrote:

> Michelle Goldberg…came one note shy of portraying Kendall as the poster child for online bitchery.
>
> […]

In the *Nation* article, Anna Holmes, the founder of Jezebel, who is also black, noted the "Olympian attempts on the part of white feminists to underscore and display their ally-ship" with black feminists. But those allegiances do not extend to Kendall, whom Goldberg described as "obsessed" with old slights and eager to batter her Twitter adversaries senseless with her 140-character club. "Sometimes she has very legitimate criticisms about society and media and speaks out against things that are real", said one prominent feminist, who would not talk to me on the record. "But she's not a victim. She's incredibly self-aggrandizing and often engages in very troubling, bullying behavior and targets individuals for no discernible reason other than that doing so seems to make her feel powerful. It's sad".

What was it about Kendall's actions and words that prompted these responses, particularly from those who she had criticized? Another aspect to the history of feeling behind the hashtag is the intensity of the feelings which arose because of the disorienting nature and perceived ill will of #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen. In this example, groups within a larger imagined community emerged. While mainstream white feminists were aware of Black feminists and feminists of color, they largely ignored them until #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen (Loza 2014). After the creation of the hashtag, Black feminists and feminists of color were marked as willful because of their departure from the "natural will" of the imagined community of the mainstream feminists and those who were a part of it. The willful migrant who fails to assimilate is especially important in defining and securing national borders, for "those migrants whose proximity is read as ill will, as not only compromising the health of that body but as aiming to compromise that health" (Ahmed 2014, 129). The marginalized bodies that have failed to assimilate are once again blamed for their failure to assimilate: due to their ill will they have been cast out or prevented from entering the community in the first place. The ill will is portrayed as that which disorients. With the example of #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen and the conversations it launched, the "anger" of women of color is noted as being disorienting and therefore a sign of willfulness. Kendall was, and still is, described "by many" as a "bully" who is "mean", and that her hashtag movements are a part of online "psychodrama" that does not build towards meaningful changes (Goldberg 2014). According to well-established feminists such as Shulevitz and Goldberg, it is Kendall's ill will that causes a unified digital feminists movement to fail, not the

exclusion of feminists of color as pointed out by the participants of #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen. Things that impede the will or disrupt that which the community wills are excluded. If the community identity hinges on certain shared understandings of the "toxic" nature of social media, then those who do participate in the "toxicity" of social media will be seen as an obstacle. Those who will that notion into existence, such as Mikki Kendall, are willful. An example of this is how Michelle Goldberg (2014) described Mikki Kendall and #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen as "toxic" and asserted that they hold back the digital feminists movement. As discussed in the previous chapter, online life retains a heightened emotionality and circulation of affect, and this impacts the effects of willing and willfulness on the affective economies of digital communities.

The Work of Willingness

Willing can also be seen as removing objects that do not belong from the will sphere, or the space created by the will. Willing projects a horizon that assumes that the thing to be willed for is already present for someone to reach. If willing creates a horizon that brings certain things into reach, gathering these things around the willing subjects, then it follows that there are some things that are not in reach by the act of willing. That which is in reach is "here" with "us", and that which is out of reach is "there" with the "others". White feminists such as Goldberg and Shulevitz found more common ground with other white feminists such as Sheryl Sandberg, who had never explicitly participated in the digital feminist community, and Hugo Schwyzer than they did with feminist of color online. A subject is aligned with a community and its affect when the subject comes to identify as part of that community. This can explain how figures such as Hugo Schwyzer and Sheryl Sandberg were recognized as part of the feminist movement. Despite what many saw as their problematic aspects, their continued alignment to the movement through public proclamations of working for feminist causes became recognized.

One way of understanding Schwyzer's role is in relation to other key figures in the feminist movement, namely Mikki Kendall. He was accepted because he was able to balance the fear associated with her. Fear, along with disgust, shame, and hate, perform work that shape the relationship between the community and the individual, or between the community at large and a segment of the community. When thinking about how boundaries of identity come to be defined at a communal

level, these emotions play a crucial role. Fear works in this capacity to facilitate alignment: it involves shrinking the body, such as when one's mobility is restricted by the need to define one's movement in reference to others and requires a target so that we are fearful of something, usually an "other" (Ahmed 2004b, 63). Fear works to contain certain bodies so they take up less space and therefore disorient less; these bodies are restricted through the movement and expansion of others. For several years, Kendall, an object of fear, was kept in check with the presence of Schwyzer. His reinforcement of mainstream digital feminist values as a white man counterbalanced and shrank her critiques as a Black woman. Kendall and feminists of color were already established as an "other" in the digital feminist community, and Schwyzer, even in his swan song, was using the tactics that had previously established him as aligned with the community and therefore a willing figure who belonged. As soon as Schwyzer experienced his downfall, Kendall's star rose within the movement, and she was able to progress and expand her voice. After #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen and Schwyzer's downfall, Mikki Kendall received writing opportunities she had not been granted before (Ross 2014). However, the language of fear remained associated with Kendall because the online movements and tactics she started could not be contained. As Ana Yelsi Sanchez, the founder of #SecretLivesofFeministas, said, "It isn't just Black women pushing back. It's all women of color…We're not going away. We're not sitting down. We're not shutting up" (Arreola 2014). The use of fear to describe Kendall and her work was an attempt to contain. Through mirrored expansion and restriction, certain bodies are aligned together and against others. The individual subject comes into being through its alignment with the collective.

Another emotion central to Hugo Schwyzer's perceived willingness in contrast to Mikki Kendall's willfulness is hate. The emotionality of hate also requires a spatial movement in that we are repelled by that which we hate, moving away or expelling it from our bodies. In moving away from a specific object, a group moves together. Over time, as hate accumulates and repetition of movement occurs, it forms the basis of the relationship between a subject and an imagined other. Ahmed (2004b, 51) writes that "[h]ate involves a turning away from others that is lived as a turning towards the self" because the "proximity of the other's touch is felt as a negation". In naming Kendall's work as "bad", Goldberg and Shulevitz turned towards the feminist community that they represented and which represented them,

which was the very movement #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen critiqued (Traister and Shulevitz 2014). Goldberg and Shulevitz returned to positions that were critiqued by feminists of color as exclusionary. #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen crystalized how specific feminist practices were feminist in one sphere and not feminist in others (Daniels 2016, 26; Loza 2014; Risam 2015). Through hate, "others" take the shape of a threat to our bodies. When coming into contact with hated others, the impressions left by them on our surfaces are deemed threatening. As a result, the circulation of hate binds subjects together with certain ideals. It is a form of intimacy, one that is driven by the movement of these subjects against an "other". We become part of a group because we are all moving against a specific object. Hate drives group identification through aligning the subject with a community. How others impress upon us is how the "skin" of the collective forms because hate involves the surfacing of bodies through how we encounter others in space (Ahmed 2004b, 54-55). Group identity is both the cause and the result of hate crimes: hate works as an affective economy. Group identities surface and the "skins" of group take shape in this affective economy.

It is for these reasons why Hugo Schwyzer was accepted into the mainstream digital feminist community: despite the fact that he was a man, his whiteness and his writings oriented with the community. Schwyzer provided affirmation of the community's affective flow and was a willing figure. By partaking in the social contract of the digital feminist community through writing about popular feminist topics such as slut-shaming and tropes of women in the media (Shepard 2013), he upheld the "natural will" and demonstrated as sharing in the "natural will" of the community. As Raphel Magarik (2012) wrote for *The Atlantic*, Schwyzer used the correct feminist terminology in his writing, linked to other established feminists and feminist sites, and organized for feminist causes. On the day of his tweets regarding how he had under false pretenses become a major voice in the digital feminist movement, Schwyzer (2013b) tweeted that "[t]his whole #solidarityisforwhitewomen thing is an abusive cudgel to be used against a lot of people who are really working at inclusivity". Schwyzer's use of "cudgel" to describe the hashtag movement in which women of color expressed their "frustration", in Kendall's words, towards the mainstream feminist movement, was another way in which Schwyzer demonstrated his socialization to the dominant norms within the digital feminist movement. The use of "abusive cudgel" incites fear

of an other that is breaking the peace of "inclusivity" that the community is working towards. The metaphorical pain experienced by the digital feminist movement occurred because cultural boundaries were being pushed, questioned, and transgressed.

Subjugating Willfulness

What was being willed was a cohesive digital feminist community, but Kendall was perceived as blocking the way for this goal by prominent mainstream digital feminists such as Goldberg and Traister, representing the general will, as the ideas and tweets she gathered did not contribute to this end. Kendall's willfulness in particular challenges the inclusivity of mainstream digital feminism. The mainstream digital feminist movement allowed all women to post about their lived truths and be considered a part of the digital feminist movement, yet the relationship between Kendall, its leaders, and the wider third-wave feminist movement, which included Valenti, Goldberg, and Traister, was strained. To return to a point I made above, willing projects a certain horizon that assumes that what is being willed can be attained. The willful figure is breaking this projection, and their ill will is thus labeled as the cause of the failure of this projection to come to fruition. The digital feminist movement's failure to be cohesive in its inclusivity was pinned on Kendall's ill will. Goldberg (2014) describes Mikki Kendall as "unmoved by the repressive climate online" and "obsessed" with "slights made in the comments threads of blogs more than five years ago". The enduring anger of Kendall and of the women participating in the hashtag thus became the shorthand by which to describe #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen and digital feminist movements. Goldberg (2014) goes onto quote Anna Holmes, a Black woman who founded the popular feminist site *Jezebel,* about how the digital feminist space feels "like a much more insular, protective, brittle environment than it did before. It's really depressing. It makes me think I got out at the right time". Goldberg does this to show that it is not only white feminists who are reeling from the "toxicity" of digital feminism and social media, but black feminists too. The border anxiety demonstrated by white feminists such as Goldberg about Kendall's violation of the social contract is rooted in disorienting bodies such as Kendall changing the boundaries of digital feminism.

This raises the question of how is it that women such as Mikki Kendall, who identified with the digital feminist movement, could be excluded by the movement and the mainstream digital feminist community. As noted in the previous chapter, the

affective labor present in digital spaces is used to discipline users and shape their behavior (Jarrett 2014, 23). It allows communities to congeal (Stark and Crawford 2015, 1-2), and it was used punitively against Mikki Kendall and other feminists of color who were deemed willful. This is the basis of understanding how marginalization could occur within an already marginalized community: Kendall was not only marginalized by the mainstream feminist community, but her marginalization occurred within the specific communicative context of the digital sphere. To be a part of a digital community, such as the online feminist community, a user must post communications that reinforces the affective flow of the community to demonstrate how they are aligned. Posting is therefore a way for digital communities to surveil their members and potential incoming members. As Jarrett (2014, 24) notes, the accumulation of power and prestige in online spaces is quite centralized. Despite the digital feminist community being a large, dispersed network, there were still a few key figures. Kendall's tweets did not follow the social contract established among these key figures, and thus she was cast as an "other". As an "other", she was not protected, and the affective labor of the digital space was used if not to shape her behavior, then to shape her inclusion within the community.

When thinking about how marginalization occurs within a marginalized group, individuals no longer fall into a clear dichotomy of marginalized and not marginalized. In *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paolo Freire (2005, 45) writes about how the oppressed are not marginals of a society for they are a part of society and crucial to how society works. Because of this, the oppressed too can uphold narratives of oppression, such as freedom and humanity as objects (Freire 2005, 45). Often times, in seeking liberation the oppressed recreate structures of oppression and become "sub-oppressors" and define liberation as being able to oppress others. This is what Freire alludes to when writing about the "integration" of the oppressed into the structure (2005, 45); if oppression is not fully resolved, then the integration of the oppressed into the structure simply recreates structures of oppression. The work that sub-oppression does is that sub-oppressors are able to gain social status (Freire 2005, 45). In the case of Mikki Kendall, it was through affective labor and the affective economies of digital spaces, and by casting her as a willful figure, that she was "sub-oppressed". The sub-oppression of Mikki Kendall, a black feminist, by white feminists within the digital feminist community occurred because Kendall was a willful figure within the community. Hugo Schwyzer was able to gain social

currency within the digital feminist community by oppressing Mikki Kendall, to which he admitted. By deeming Kendall a willful figure, white feminists at the forefront of the mainstream digital feminist community were able to mitigate her influence on the movement and the community. This can be seen in how the #FemFuture report that was published in 2013 about the digital feminist community excluded Kendall and excluded issues important to feminists of color (Risam 2015). Even after #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, Kendall has repeatedly been described as "toxic" by mainstream feminists, in an attempt to mitigate her influence on the digital feminist community (Risam 2015).

To understand how willful subjects are subjugated, Ahmed turns back to the figure of the willful child to understand the roots of community and social interactions. The willful child is disciplined in order to break the will. However, Ahmed (2014) also draws upon childrearing guides that claim discipline that will produce a cheerfully obedient child:

> What is noteworthy here is the role of the positive affect: if the child's will is still a problem (consider how will and stubborn are placed alongside each other, creating a *sliding impression*), then the problem can be resolved with *calmness,* creating an obedience that is *cheerful*. The subjection of will takes place under the sign of happiness rather than fear. (73)

The emotion of fear is normally associated with subjugation, but in this passage Ahmed notes that happiness should also be associated with subjugation. A willful subject, in this case the willful child, is subjugated with happiness in circulation. This can be compared to projects of citizenship that are foisted upon unwilling and willful bodies to turn them into willing bodies. The way Ahmed (2014, 129) articulates this point is that "[c]itizenship comes to be presented as what must be forced upon an unwilling and thus willful migrant". To become a citizen and gain access to necessary rights for living, a willful subject must observe the time by which the body of a nation goes (Ahmed 2014, 129). In observing this time and gaining access and necessary rights, a willful subject may not be able to practice and observe the differences that once allowed it to disorient in space (Ahmed 2014, 129). The differences are still noted, but they no longer disorient from the common direction and goal. To be willful is to be marginalized; to no longer be marginalized is to become willing. However, becoming willing is not necessarily a change that is made by the willful subject. Willfulness is a perception of a subject by others, and the

willfulness of a subject can change because the community and social contract has changed. The willful subject, whether a willful child or willful migrant or Mikki Kendall, lacks the power to control the situation. An example of this is how Jezebel, a leading online feminist space, published an article of "[o]ur Favorite #SolidaryIsForWhiteWomen Tweets". The disorienting anger of the hashtag is subjugated by a show of understanding, an acknowledgement of events, and an attempt at inclusion from the larger feminist community. When a willful subject is incorporated into life as we know it, it is no longer willful because it no longer disorients. It now shares the same orientation and is therefore willing, which is more often than not associated with the emotion of happiness. Instead of making space for disorientation and disorienting bodies, happiness is associated with acts that remove willful subjects from the will sphere. Preserving happiness then becomes a project of removing or breaking willful subjects. It should be noted there that after #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, though Mikki Kendall became a leading voice of the digital feminist movement, no apologies were given by other leading digital feminists for failing to defend Kendall and other feminists of color from Hugo Schwyzer.

#SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen and the events leading up to it catalyzed a change in the digital feminist movement. Hugo Schwyzer, a willing figure who validated the digital feminist community, became excluded; Mikki Kendall, a willful figure who was once marginalized within a marginalized community, became a defining voice as the creator of the hashtag. Marginalized figures are deemed willful, and willful figures are further marginalized because they not only disrupt the economy of emotions in a community but may also change and reorient a community's affective economies. How does a willful figure reorient a community's affective economies to become a dominant figure within a community? Mikki Kendall is an example of a willful figure who became, albeit begrudgingly accepted by other leading figures, a dominant figure within a community. Her willfulness as a Black feminist was directly pointed to as a reason why she was marginalized by the mainstream digital feminist movement. She was only accepted when Schwyzer admitted how he used her marginalization to further the perception of his willingness and alignment with the community, and to further his acceptance into the mainstream digital feminist movement. This is specific to Mikki Kendall's situation and as articulated above, there were ways in which #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, a

subversive hashtag movement and community, became integrated into normative discourse and structures. As seen with the example of Suey Park, sometimes willful figures who transgress the boundaries of a community become fully excluded. The conclusion to this thesis will explore the insights, as well as complications, that Sara Ahmed's theories have brought out in these two examples of how online communities patrol their boundaries when transgressions occur and what the implications are for conceptions of community and solidarity in online spaces.

Conclusion
Keeping It Together

In the body of this thesis, I analyzed examples of Twitter communities using the theories of Sara Ahmed. Understanding the affective economies of online communities is an important way to study their dynamics. It provides insight into how community formation results from affective posturing, the policing of emotions and perceived willfulness. I chose #NotYourAsianSidekick, #CancelColbert, and #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen because they raise issues about marginalization and the formation of online communities. Many online communities form in response to adversity, then break apart when differences within these communities are revealed. Marginalized social media communities often form and disband quickly, which is both advantageous and limiting. Ahmed's theories have elucidated some points, such as how online communities have a distinct "feel" that they maintain. In the case of Suey Park, the "feel" that congealed the Asian American online community was shame, but this backfired when she attempted to use shame within the community. With Mikki Kendall, the willful figures who challenged the community's "feel" were excluded, while willing figures, such as Hugo Schwyzer, were accepted. From analyzing what happened to Suey Park and Mikki Kendall, two questions emerge: is it possible to disorient and not be ostracized and what does this mean for marginalized communities that are built upon ideas of inclusion and affirmation? To conclude this thesis, I turn my focus to these questions and, more broadly, to the transgression of online community boundaries due to willful figures. I will be using Sara Ahmed's definitions of community within affective economies to see what insights and complications might be uncovered.

This intensification of affect and the reliance on certain emotions is important in understanding how communities patrol their boundaries, in particular when willful figures surface. Because of the affordances of the technology, online communities and networks become aggregated around central figures (Petray 2013, 2). These central figures hold significant influence over a community's affective flow and "feel", and when a central figure begins disorienting from a common "feel", there is a real possibility that this may lead to the reorientation of the community as a whole. Marginalized figures, such as Mikki Kendall, are deemed willful because of how

they might disrupt the economy of emotions in a community. Her hashtag #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen began conversations that have had long-lasting effects on the mainstream digital feminist movement. How marginalized online communities deal with these willful figures, such as Suey Park and Mikki Kendall, make visible contradictions in what community and solidarity mean in these communities. Mikki Kendall was able to create a cohesive subset within a larger community that the larger community then attempted to reintegrate. On the other hand Suey Park, in creating a "feel" for the Asian American online community through opposition to mainstream society, caused the affective flow of the community to unravel when she used the same oppositional tactics within the community. Marginalized online communities demand solidarity when attempting to maintain a unified "feel" for the space in which they exist.

With the examples of Suey Park and Mikki Kendall, both were disorienting figures who transgressed the boundaries of their communities. However, their relationships with their communities took diverging paths. Suey Park, after catalyzing a split within the Asian American online community, ceased to be a leading voice within the community, whereas Mikki Kendall and her influence was begrudgingly accepted. Why the difference? There are common elements between what happened with Suey Park and Mikki Kendall. Both were cast as outsiders who were doing damage to other members of the community—Suey Park was "gaslighting" (Shen 2014; Teck 2014) and Mikki Kendall was a "cudgel" (Schwyzer 2013b). Both were deemed threats to members of the community and the safety of the community, in part because of their influence and how others adopted their words, ideas, and tactics. They were figures who transgressed the boundaries of their communities. In Ahmed's (2004, 153) affective economies: "[a]ssimilation and transgression are not choices that are available to individuals, but are effects of how subjects can and cannot inhabit social norms and ideals". Assimilation occurs when a figure orients with the space of the community and recedes from view; transgression occurs when a figure becomes visible (Ahmed 2014, 72). Being an assimilated figure or being a figure of transgression is not about the choices individual figures make, but how others judge them and how they are oriented within the community's affective flow. Suey Park was first a leading voice of the Asian American online community because of how she created social norms for the community by opposing stereotypes of Asians. As she created more hashtag movements and gained influence

over the "feel" of the Asian American online community, she was embraced by some members of this community and spurned by others, before eventually being rejected by many of the key figures with whom she once worked. What mattered was that enough of the central figures in the Asian American online community excluded her. Despite the fact that online networks can be quite dispersed, the accumulation of power and prestige in online spaces is quite centralized (Jarrett 2014, 24). A few central figures can determine the behavior and feel of a community. Park was eventually excluded from the Asian American online community because key figures within this community excluded her.

In contrast, the women who participated in #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen did not hate the digital feminist movement; if anything, they continue to identify with it. These women interrogated the boundaries of the digital feminist community, which they saw as too white, because they in some way identify with it. If they did not identify with the digital feminist community, then they would not have participated in a hashtag highlighting the work that the movement still needed to do. Ahmed posits that in identifying with others, we aim to negate the differences that mark us as distinct bodies. At the heart of identification is moving into new spaces. It is this movement of towardness that drives identification and love, and it is this movement that drives the formation of groups. As Ahmed (2004, 130) writes, "[g]roups are formed through their shared orientation towards an object. More specifically, groups are formed when '*individuals…have substituted one and the same object for their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego*'" (Ahmed 2004, 130). Identification with a group allows individuals to expand their social space into a larger space occupied by others. Groups form when bodies share alignment and orientation, sometimes towards or against specific objects. In the case of love, the alignment and orientation means that individual bodies orient towards an ideal object. In doing so, they identify with others orienting towards that object ideal. In the example of Mikki Kendall and #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, the object ideal is an inclusive digital feminist movement where the concerns of feminists of color are not subordinate to those of white feminists.

The role of the object ideal is important to why Suey Park and Mikki Kendall were treated differently. By turning oppositional tactics towards crucial members within the community, Park failed to "inhabit" a social norm and uphold the social contract within the community. Because she and her followers were deemed the

source of tension within the community, a previously safe space, she was excluded. There was no clear object ideal towards which they were reaching. In contrast, Mikki Kendall failed to "inhabit social norms" of the mainstream digital feminist movement from the beginning. As a Black feminist, Kendall brought a perspective that did not align with the mainstream digital feminist movement and as a result she was marginalized within the movement. Her presence and influence were deemed disorienting. Through #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, she highlighted how the space of the online feminist community excluded some women. The hashtag revealed how the social norms of the mainstream digital feminist community were broken, how many women agreed with this perspective, and how the digital feminist movement needed to change if the community was going to survive. By demonstrating the number of people who shared in her assessment, Kendall was able to create the momentum needed to reorient the space on which the community met. Through this she was also able to demonstrate her commitment to the stated object ideal of the digital feminist movement: inclusion.

An inherent contradiction within the affective economies of what happened to Suey Park and Mikki Kendall exists due to the medium. Users gather in given online social media communities for safety and privacy (boyd 2014, 46), and marginalized communities have created spaces in the digital sphere where they are able to "express their collective grievances" in a safe and open space (Petray 2013, 4). However, the affordances of the technology, namely how posting into being is a performance for an intended audience, are contradictory to ideas of safety. Social media communities require an active creation of an identity that is visible to others, many of whom are not known acquaintances. This tension underpins interactions on social media. To be a part of these communities one must continually post to be visible to these communities. It is through posts that marginalized communities are able to assess alignment and patrol their boundaries. This complicates how communities are maintained and how transgressions to community boundaries are handled given that communities maintain an intensified "feel" to their spaces. Not every post will align with a community's orientation; each post is another opportunity to demonstrate how a user is not aligned with a given community. These issues of safety and orientation are important ones to consider in future work because of how marginalized communities often work towards the goal of inclusivity.

This leads to another question: at what point does disorientation become too much and lead to the splitting, or death, of a community. The death of an online community has been referred to as *mitosis*, which is an interesting metaphor given the use of biological metaphors in Sara Ahmed's work (Young 2013, e119). Mitosis is the process of cell reproduction when a cell splits into two daughter cells (Young 2013, e119). It ceases to exist, yet it continues to exist in both daughter cells. The metaphor of mitosis also highlights issues surrounding posting into being. Colleen Young (2013, e119) writes that "[w]hen a community grows to a point where the majority of members feel it is too large and too active, they will start to think they can no longer influence the community and they disengage….the community will quickly die". Both Suey Park and the social media community she ejected from are Asian American. Park and her followers' split from the Asian American community does not make her or the larger online community less Asian American. However, mitosis is a process of reproduction. Can the split between Park and the Asian American community on social media be thought of as a reproduction? In some ways, it can as both parties are still Asian American though they may differ in their practices. The ejection of Suey Park from a primary Asian American community for disorienting from that community's affective flow has propagated multiple versions of what it means to be and to act as an Asian American in online spaces.

Identity politics perform specific work on social media such as Twitter, and they have had a significant impact on how marginalized online communities surveil their members, patrol their boundaries, and shape themselves through the circulation of emotions. Knowing how the affective economies of online marginalized communities operate and what some of the pitfalls may be will hopefully inform the development of organizing practices in these communities. Analyzing social media platforms such Twitter is not only about how people connect. The connection of individuals online, while retaining some similarities to offline connection, has its own qualities because of the medium of connection—the technology. One of the effects of the technology is the intensification of affect to establish a clear "feel" for the space of a community in an online sphere. As Park discovered, emotions such as shame that are useful in creating and shaping a distinct "feel" for certain online communities are not conducive to trust. Shame is a tricky emotion to use to establish the "feel" of a marginalized online community because users are already posting themselves into existence and therefore opening their boundaries up to attack.

Validation of a community cannot be the only or primary metric by which users are accepted; willful figures are important to the development of marginalized communities. This in turn makes the patrolling of the boundaries of a community difficult. Given the current political climate of the United States, Australia, and Western Europe, marginalized groups and their allies need more than ever clear community organizing in online spaces. My hope is that affective analysis of these online communities could provide a foundation for developing principles of conduct in online communities.

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