chapter explores the intersections between mainstream and social media, which have taken both contentious and collaborative positions.

The flows of information around political topics are examined further in **chapter 4**'s consideration of flashpoints of activity and interest: breaking news, scandals and crises. The importance of social media as a practical, and mobile, means for quickly communicating to a large population is explored here – as well as the potential pitfalls and issues accompanying such communication.

Chapter 5 studies social media within collective action, including the integration of social media into movements with strong physical components, such as Occupy, and the development of social media-driven (or -only) campaigns. Although the use of social media for collective action may go beyond the 'everyday politics' marker, these cases also tie in with more quotidian discussions and practices examined in the preceding chapters.

The focus turns in part to traditional actors and structures in **chapter 6**, exploring politicians, their parties, and how partisan politics plays out on social media. The analysis considers how politicians make use of online platforms, including their styles of use and their choice of social media. The chapter also examines the partisan side of political discussions, and the deliberate incitement of others in order to get a reaction as part of the everyday coverage of politics online.

Chapter 7 brings the main ideas and themes featured in the previous chapters together within an election context. Elections are treated as a microcosm of everyday practices around politics and social media, highlighting the different practices outlined in the rest of the book. These include election-day rituals carried out on social media, party and politician strategies and the interlinking of traditional and social media as results are made available.

Finally, the **Conclusion** collects the book's various threads in summarizing the evolving uses of social media around everyday politics. The conclusion outlines future directions for research in this field, and for how the mediasphere will continue to evolve with new technological, social and political developments.

1

Personal/Political

There is plenty of content on the internet that is objectionable, illicit, disgusting and just plain awful – often deliberately so. There are practices around the abuse of strangers and acquaintances alike, of attempting to ruin others' lives (and of this being achieved without that specific aim), of racism, sexism, homophobia and general intolerance, of being mean and antagonistic for the 'lulz' and of sharing material like child pornography where 'illegal' does not even begin to cover it.

And then there is content shared online that is not necessarily any of these things, except it is apparently offensive enough to register complaints about inappropriate material and for platforms to remove said content: such as, for example, images of women that also feature visible nipples (Esco, 2014), pubic hair (Hinde, 2015; Vagianos, 2015) or menstrual stains (Brodsky, 2015).

I will come back to the former type at points during this book, but it is the latter that I am initially focusing on here. A photograph posted to Facebook promoting public breastfeeding, an arty Instagram image of a woman who happens to visibly be on her period, or a selfie that features, among other physical attributes, the subject's nipples are perhaps not obviously political artefacts in themselves. They are highly personal but also mundane, depicting everyday scenes and experiences, not necessarily anything extraordinary.[2]

However, the personal becomes politicized in these examples. The political is seen in the response of other users to flag content as inappropriate, and the ways that platforms deal with such content, especially in comparison to posts or pages perpetuating rape culture or racism, or inciting violence against individuals or groups. It is also apparent in the riposte to these responses: countering the platforms and their users directly, more content is shared featuring or addressing breastfeeding (especially as outright lactivism – see Boon and Pentney, 2015), nipples and aspects of menstruation. Hashtags are established, helping to boost these movements' visibility, and to draw attention to related protests and approaches. From #freethenipple to #PadsAgainstSexism, the personal takes on political and social media dimensions as part of its wider context.

These examples are not restricted to social media, and certainly did not originate with Facebook or Twitter, Instagram or Tumblr. Part of the reason for the opposition to images of nipples or menstruation is long-established social norms that have consolidated stigmas, conservative attitudes and taboos. Of course, the responses and policing of this are not consistent or equal, for images of topless men cause less outcry than women in similar states of undress – #notallnipples, if you like (and the problematic part is not the rest of the breast beyond the areola). The question of inappropriate nipples and the period dramas incited by social media platforms reflect wider debates that play out around feminism, sexism, misogyny and gender (Tolentino, 2015; Williams, 2015).

Such cases illustrate the intersection of the personal and the political, which is the focus of this chapter. The politicizing of everyday experiences through platform policies about acceptable content and practices extends to representations of motherhood (Duvall, 2014; Jin et al., 2015), or acknowledging the mundaneness and normality of menstruation, or indeed the female body (Olszanowski, 2014; Tiidenberg and Gómez Cruz, 2015). Everyday life becomes politicized in other ways, too, in order to counter inconsistencies, conservatism and the apparent platform view that menstruation, pubic hair and nipples are far more problematic than, say, the perpetuation of rape culture. #PadsAgainst-Sexism was initially an art demonstration where menstrual pads with slogans written on them were posted in public places to highlight the hypocrisy and social taboos causing more uncomfortable objections around periods as opposed to rape (Bassily, 2015). The social media element to this campaign came first through the sharing of images of the pads on Tumblr and other platforms, and then in the adoption and participation in the project by other, unrelated people around the world. Similarly, #freethenipple is both a social media phenomenon, with hashtagged content posted on Instagram and other platforms, and a wider

movement that has included a film and topless marches (freethenipple.com).

In the following discussion, I examine the intersection of the personal and the political on social media from several perspectives, as politically themed activity is variously explicit, emergent, affective and tangential (see also Papacharissi, 2010a). This chapter covers practices that are not unproblematic, such as revenge porn and doxxing, as well as contexts that are perhaps not obviously political, such as the Eurovision Song Contest. Together, these examples serve to underline how everyday personal social media use is impacted upon by elements that can be seen as political, and how the political overlaps with mundane contexts.

Personal Politics and Politicizing the Personal

Social media, as with other preceding online platforms, provide individuals with the opportunity to post their thoughts and media content, without requiring extensive technical literacy or qualifications; with blogs and citizen journalism, much conjecture surrounded whether the ability for amateur voices to broadcast themselves to a large audience online would be a threat to – or even actively replace – traditional journalism (detailed by Wall, 2015). Yet even without any intent or desire to cause seismic change to the media industry, commentary on blogs, Facebook, Twitter and more has underlined the personalization of politics in the form of political talk that draws upon an individual's own perspective and experiences, particularly around issues of personal import.

The personal and the political are not mutually exclusive, and separating the two is both impossible and impractical: they are closely interlinked, encouraged by the conventions and norms of social media. This can be seen in the topics discussed, the framing and presentation of these topics and how messages are tailored to individuals. The influence of the personal and the everyday is also seen, at its most basic, in patterns of activity: politically oriented social media discussions, from political blogging to hashtagged discussions, occur less frequently on weekends than on weekdays. This may be partly in response to fewer overtly political stimuli on weekends, but is also perhaps reflective of personal lives, of having a weekend that does not necessarily revolve around posting about politics online (Highfield, 2011; Smyrnaios and Rieder, 2013).

The everyday and the personal also influence the framing of the political. For example, and as will be discussed further in chapter 3, the

concept of 'political blogs' is a descriptor that is both informative and rather vague: political blogging encompasses a vast range of approaches and topics, specializations and perspectives (Highfield and Bruns, 2012; Lehti, 2011). While some bloggers will comment on the major 'Political' topics of the day, others will focus on economics, polling data, particular parties and politicians, environmental issues or other foci. Communities of interest form, connected by shared views and an appreciation of different perspectives or analyses. Such groups then provide their own framing of particular issues, news and events, positioned around their interpretations and backgrounds; this extends to the everyday or more mundane, including identifying secondary political themes within these contexts.

For example, feminist bloggers in Australia and New Zealand formed an interconnected community, enhanced by a monthly 'carnival' wherein a different blogger would curate submissions from other members of the community (Down Under Feminists' Carnival, n.d.). While a part of the Australian political blogosphere, the bloggers here did not solely cover 'Politics' in its traditional form, but discussed domestic and everyday issues, long-running social debates that might especially have personal relevance and decidedly non-political topics. This separation from bloggers dedicated to 'Politics' at times led to them being overlooked; Frances Shaw (2012b) notes a case when a prominent (male) Australian political blogger asked 'where are the female political bloggers?', to which the feminist blogging community, and connected bloggers, responded that they were present and active, but they were not just talking about 'Politics'.

The formation of communities of like-minded individuals, around shared interests and beliefs, is a recurring element online, from the blogosphere to social networking sites and social media. This is not new or surprising: the difference is in the ability for these individuals to be geographically distributed, connected through digital technologies both synchronously and asynchronously. As I set out in the introduction, this does not mean that these are online-only communities, or that they are not shaped by their physical and local contexts. What is of interest here is that social media offer opportunities for the further construction and articulation of identity, of individuals and of groups.

The presentation of identity on social media, and the documentation of experiences, is a contested process, though: at the time of writing, the prominence of hashtags like #GamerGate, #BlackLivesMatter and #WomensLivesMatter demonstrates debate (or a certain value of 'debate') around issues challenging (and being challenged by) dominant social attitudes around sexism, racism, feminism, class and privilege. While the

catalysts and contexts for these specific tags are contemporary, the wider issues they pertain to are not new. Instead, they take new dimensions and directions in a socially mediated form, shaped by the wealth of platforms and voices (supportive and antagonistic) able to participate. The political and the personal are in concert on social media, as platforms are used to document experiences which are everyday for some – whether this is desired or not – and to present users' identities, lifestyles and interests. The articulation of gender, race, sexual orientation, religion and other aspects of individuals' lives and their communities can make for a politicized life, by design or necessity.[3]

Voicing (in)difference and (in)tolerance

So, let's talk about sexism.

Social media are, variously, platforms for revealing experiences of sexism, including assault and abuse (Bates, 2014), and platforms that enable further attacks perpetuating sexist attitudes and/or promote misogynistic practices (Manivannan, 2013). The former features in chapter 5; the latter is at the crux of contexts like Gamergate, and symptomatic of toxic gamer culture in general (Chess and Shaw, 2015; Consalvo, 2012). These settings, which are typically (but not necessarily accurately) seen as predominately male environments, have been criticized for the sexist and misogynistic tropes and attitudes that pervade. Projects like Anita Sarkeesian's *Feminist Frequency* (which provides feminist critiques of various media, including films and books as well as video games) analyse the treatment of women within popular culture: Sarkeesian's 2012 series of YouTube videos on 'Tropes vs. Women in Video Games', for example, identified and critiqued recurring gendered elements of video games.

The response to this series included support and critiques, but also harassment, abuse, stylized and explicit violence through games and personal threats directed at Sarkeesian (Consalvo, 2012; Higgin, 2013) – and, as Chess and Shaw (2015) note, this was not the first example of attacks on women with some connection to gaming or on individuals trying to challenge dominant (white male) attitudes (see also Salter and Blodgett, 2012; Tomkinson and Harper, 2015). This abusive style of response escalated in 2014 with Gamergate. Initially a campaign directed at game developer Zoe Quinn (who had been accused of trading sex for reviews), 'gamergaters' justified their socially mediated abuse, claiming they were trying to protect the ethics of video game journalism, and confronted attempts by feminists to challenge the industry. This led vitriolic and threatening attacks made through platforms like Twitter (and

beyond social media) to also target Quinn's supporters and defenders, and, by extension, basically anyone trying to argue for diversity and attitudes that did not conform to the dominant masculine and heteronormative gamer culture. These included Sarkeesian and, indeed, academics, as noted by Chess and Shaw (2015).

While extreme and highly problematic, the sexism apparent on social media in Gamergate comments is not the sole example of such attitudes. They might not take such threatening forms (or actually realize threats through hacking and doxxing, more on which soon), but responses to, and harassment of, women sharing opinions, perspectives and experiences on social media (and in general) can still demonstrate ingrained sexist and misogynistic norms (Sarkeesian, 2015; see also the feminist strategies of online resistance, outlined by F. Shaw, 2013a).

Language is a key element of these social media phenomena – partly because of the geographic dislocation between the parties involved, and also because on Twitter, for example, the character limit for tweets has obvious impact on what can be said. Loaded terms and swearing accompany threats and obscenities through tweets, comments on statuses and news articles, emails, forum posts and other online outlets – what Emma A. Jane (2014) describes as 'e-bile'. Jane notes that abuse, attacks and threats of sexual violence in this form are not just directed at women. However, the hostile messages sent to women are of a kind where 'Such discourse has become normalized to the extent that threatening rape has become the *modus operandi* for those wishing to critique female commentators' (p. 535; see also Rentschler, 2014).

The political significance of language can be perfectly apparent to the people employing it. Whitney Phillips (2015), highlighting the everyday racism of online trolling, examines the use of particular terms with loaded racial meanings. Including these words in messages is a deliberate act:

> trolls are fully aware that this word [n–] is the furthest thing from a floating, meaningless signifier. In fact they depend on its political significance, just as they depend on the political significance of all the epithets they employ. (p. 96)

As with sexism, racism plays out on social media in everyday contexts – an issue or topic like Gamergate is not necessary for intolerant speech online, although such examples amplify the visibility of these actions. Social media can also be used to counteract this (successfully or not), and to provide the individuals and communities that are subject to such attitudes platforms to develop their own political and cultural identities.

Race and Black Twitter

Various online technologies have been adopted for the articulation of identity, and for the creation of communities of users with common interests and experiences. From early websites to blogs, social networking sites and contemporary social media, the opportunities and affordances provided by individual platforms have encouraged particular practices and user bases, from the collegiate roots of Facebook and photo-sharing focus of Flickr to the international origins of Orkut and Chinese microblogs like Sina Weibo. Diverse patterns have been apparent, around gender and sexuality, class and race. For example, as MySpace and Facebook attracted attention from young Americans in 2006, different experiences around these social networking sites – and which sites were likely to be adopted, or abandoned – had links to race and class, via friendships and personal tastes (boyd, 2012a).

Research into race and the internet, especially in the US, has been led by scholars including André Brock (Brock, 2009, 2012; Brock et al., 2010), Jessie Daniels (Daniels, 2009, 2012; Hughey and Daniels, 2013), Lisa Nakamura (Nakamura, 2008, 2012, 2014; Nakamura and Chow-White, 2012) and their colleagues. Their work notes not just the historical use and non-use of digital technologies by particular communities, and online forms of racism, but also the other elements that contribute to these behaviours and practices beyond a simple distinction of 'race'. As outlined in the introduction, there are a multitude of interconnected factors influencing what a person does online, how they engage with political themes and present themselves, and how social media are used in general: external personal, cultural, social, political and economic aspects, among others, all contribute. At the same time, though, it is also the case that some perspectives, factors and experiences are overlooked or under-represented in social media research.

Jessie Daniels's (2012) examination of how Internet Studies treats race and racism highlighted three primary themes represented within the literature: around the internet as infrastructure (including discussions of the digital divide), online practices and identity and legal perspectives. In reviewing the state of the field, Daniels argued for 'a strong theoretical framework that acknowledges the persistence of racism online while simultaneously recognizing the deep roots of racial inequality in existing social structures that shape technoculture' (p. 711). Events in the US in late 2014 and early 2015 provide a clear backdrop to current uses of social media in response to racism and in the formation of identity: in Ferguson, Missouri, Staten Island, New York and Baltimore, Maryland, protests and demonstrations showcased public ire

and discontent following the controversial deaths (in separate incidents) of several Black Americans at the hands of police, the judicial responses to this, and the wider issues of racial, economic and social inequality. Hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter accompanied these protests, documenting what was happening on the streets and facilitating a wider discourse around race and inequality in the US[4] (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015; Kang, 2015).

The use of social media by Black Americans has attracted attention for its specific practices and topics of interest which have been treated as different from the 'usual' activity on Twitter or Facebook. Central to the articulation of racial identity in the context of Black American uses of Twitter is language, and especially its application and adaptation in response to the affordances of social media platforms. The use of hashtags and their promotion to trending status enable particular performances of identity, and reveal 'alternate Twitter discourses to the mainstream' (Brock, 2012, p. 530; see also Sharma, 2013). Within tweets, too, the practice of signifyin' – conceptualizing Black Americans' inclusion of several levels of meaning within a single comment – is well-suited for Twitter: the limit of 140 characters per tweet makes an approach that deftly and concisely constructs multiple meanings invaluable structurally and in the performance of identity (Florini, 2014).

The umbrella term of 'Black Twitter' describes 'a temporally linked group of connectors that share culture, language and interest in specific issues and talking about specific topics with a black frame of reference', (Clark, in Ramsey, 2015). Yet this term is also highly problematic, since it can be interpreted as assuming – and imposing – a homogeneity that, as with social media at large, is not present. Instead, 'Black Twitter' features diverse users, practices and interests, rather than a single, unified or 'monolithic' group (Brock, 2012; Florini, 2014). Indeed, both Brock (2012) and McElroy (2015) argue that treatment of 'Black Twitter' as singular and a generalization of 'Black America' 'speaks to the power of American racial ideology's framing of Black identity as monoculture' (Brock, 2012, p. 546).

LGBTQ stories

In their examination of the mainstream media's treatment of 'Black Twitter', McElroy (2015) argues that 'the construction of media content in the digital age shapes and distorts racial and gendered narratives in the twenty-first century'. The construction and challenging of narratives are also apparent in the social mediation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*

and queer (LGBTQ)[5] experiences and identities. Digital media have been adopted for the presentation (and self-representation) of identity: Vivienne and Burgess (2012) examine the 'everyday activism' apparent in the digital curation of mundane experiences by queer storytellers, politicized in the face of heteronormative attitudes. Such practices are not platform-dependent; however, LGBTQ experiences have varied over popular social media in response to the platforms themselves and the wider user bases present.

Stefanie Duguay (2014) raises issues of context collapse (see also Marwick and boyd, 2011a) on Facebook for LGBTQ students. Here, the performance of identity is affected by the different audiences represented on Facebook. With multiple social and professional contexts colliding, gender and sexuality diverse identities are accompanied by careful selection of audiences. Facebook here is reflective of social media platforms where users are encouraged to employ their real names and reaffirm their interpersonal connections, bringing together an individual's different social contexts that might not otherwise intersect.[6]

Various social media platforms have become openly adopted by LGBTQ users due to their affordances for different types of community and expression (see, for example, the study of drag communities and social media by Lingel and Golub, 2015). Tumblr especially has witnessed popular communities around different gender and sexual identities, including asexuality and polyamory as well as trans* users (Cho, 2015; Fink and Miller, 2014; Renninger, 2015). Here, groups may share characteristics with the networked publics described by boyd (2011), although Renninger's (2015) study of an asexuality community on Tumblr is framed instead as a networked *counterpublic* differently experienced in comparison to publics that might be considered more dominant. As with other communities and conversations, though, the autonomy and support fostered through personal and shared expressions of identity and experiences can also be subject to antagonistic disruption from others outside the community.

Where the articulation of identity within 'Black Twitter' makes notable use of hashtags and wordplay through signifyin', LGBTQ communities showcase the importance of visual social media as a means of identity formation and expression.[7] A platform like Tumblr, where the visual is a significant communication device, fosters the sharing and adaptation of selfies, memes, GIFs and other curated and constructed visual media by LGBTQ users. This includes the documentation of personal and everyday experiences, including sexual and not-safe-for-work (NSFW) content (Tiidenberg, 2015), as well as appropriated and shared media from other sources, cross-posted or embedded from platforms such as Vine and Instagram. The popularity of Tumblr (especially pre-Yahoo!'s

acquisition of the platform) is particularly noteworthy; Marty Fink suggests that:

> To appreciate the impact of queer trans tumblr production, it is important to consider the acute need for new media spaces for trans cultural production, given the long history of obstacles to self-representation that transgender, gender nonconforming, and gender variant people have faced. (in Fink and Miller, 2014, p. 615)

The visual here can enable new and alternative expressions of identity and sexuality, utilizing the affordances of different platforms for creative and interactive practices. As with other personal and political contexts online, LGBTQ activity on Tumblr, Vine or Instagram is not restricted to these platforms. Nor are these practices online-only: different media are employed as is deemed appropriate, available or sympathetic by individuals and their own purposes and intents (Cassidy, 2015; M. L. Gray, 2009; Mowlabocus, 2010; Renninger, 2015). Support and community are also encouraged through common social media cultural forms and logics. The 'It Gets Better' campaign on YouTube, launched in 2010 in response to gay teen suicide and bullying, started with a video sharing the personal experiences of two gay men and how their lives did 'get better' from their teens to adulthood (Yep et al., 2012). This message sparked responses from other LGBTQ individuals, uploading their own videos and in turn provoking 'a negotiation over LGBTQ collective identity' (Gal et al., 2015). The campaign expanded through memetic practices (see chapter 2), adopting the tone and format of the original video in the creation of new contributions, although not all content cohered to the original sentiments, instead offering subversion and defiance in documenting further personal LGBTQ stories.

Subversive practices

Visual social media are also a key form for practices that go against dominant societal and platform norms. Challenging attitudes towards identity and sexuality is carried out directly through the presentation of explicit and personal images, videos and mixed-media. On Tumblr, the sheer volume of erotic and pornographic material, in GIFs, videos, text and mixed formats, is not just a means for curating and consuming sexually explicit material (for the platform's attitudes to this, see Gillespie, 2013); trans* Tumblr users, for instance, maintain blogs around porn and x-rated content that flout:

> the limitations within rigidly gendered categories of 'female' and 'male.' ... Posts featuring self-shot porn are routinely accompanied by commentary that creates new discursive terrain for trans subjectivity, through kinky and gender queer reconfigurations of dominant discourses. (Fink, in Fink and Miller, 2014, p. 622)

The presentation of explicit and erotic material, whether personal or a priori, enables social media users to challenge ideas of sexuality and identity, of societal norms and attitudes. A framing like NSFW attempts to balance what is and is not 'accepted' in society and on platforms, acknowledging its inappropriateness for conservative environments but still sharing the content. This can be realized through particular media forms as well as by user communities: Paul Booth (2014) outlines the subversive potential (including articulating and confronting gender roles and norms) of slash fiction and porn parodies – media that are not specific to social media, but are shared through these platforms.

Katrin Tiidenberg's (2015) study of Tumblr users who create and repost NSFW content also examines how their blogs and images act both as 'embodied performances' and as demonstrations of social and cultural capital.[8] Crucially, the perception of the performative and capital-carrying aspects to NSFW content differs between users: Tiidenberg notes that users creating this content see their images primarily as performances, whereas those who curate and reblog others' content are motivated to do so for reasons of cachet and prominence. This leads to conflict within NSFW communities around practices and content, from photoshopping appearance (where the community sees itself as a 'unique, body-positive environment') to content-stealing, authorship and attribution. These conflicts – and general practices of sharing – can also result in the highly personal content, shared in ostensibly a safe space, circulating through different networks of users; this includes the appropriation of imagery on sites promoting identities and behaviours which are seen as controversial, subversive, unhealthy, or go against traditional norms – see, for instance, the pro-anorexia (pro-ana) blogging community (Yeshua-Katz and Martins, 2013).

The contestation and conflict apparent in these communities and their practices are reflected in platforms' treatment of their content, and in how other users also respond. The examples I noted at the start of this chapter, such as #freethenipple, are in part reactions to what platforms allow and do not allow, and the contradictions inherent in what the user base at large might flag as inappropriate or offensive (Crawford and Gillespie, 2014). The masking of problematic content by social media platforms is also demonstrated by policies like

Instagram's banned hashtag list: explicitly sexual, fascist, racist and obscene (including inciting violence) hashtags can be included in comments and captions, but searching for them will not return results. Also on the list are tags promoting self-harm pro-ana views, and this highlights an uneasy negotiation of subversion and resistance: social media users can employ platforms for their own ends, including for particular personal and politicized purposes, but how the platforms support this will vary. The filtering of search results based on content or apparent tone and intent by Tumblr and Instagram alike highlights this: the platforms will not necessarily take down pornographic material or block pro-ana users, but they will also make it harder for other users to find this content.

Users can subvert markers through hijacking and spamming. This is particularly apparent as movements and hashtags gain in popularity or promote specific, potentially controversial views: trending topics on Twitter are regularly subjected to an influx of spam comments. Campaigns like #freethenipple have also witnessed a proliferation of content that goes in perhaps unintended or unwanted directions. At the time of writing, much of the latest content tagged with the #freethenipple hashtag on Instagram contains pornographic imagery. The intent here may be not a direct response to questions of the female body and what is 'appropriate', instead, such content might be hooking into a popular (and semi-related) tag to automatically and deliberately circulate explicit material whether in opposition to the movement or to hijack a hashtag.

Callout culture and shaming

Social media and online platforms are employed for articulating identities, for challenging and subverting societal norms and for providing a voice (and safe spaces) for individuals and groups who might variously be marginalized, ignored or under-represented elsewhere. These are not uncontested, though: as noted above, racism, sexism, misogyny and various forms of discrimination and hatespeech are apparent on social media. Online prejudice can arise from everyday discussions without referring to anyone in particular, reflecting a general level of casual racism. These messages can also be directed explicitly at others, whether in response to other comments and behaviours, or completely unsolicited.

The experience of abusive and offensive messages on social media has led to users documenting this as part of a 'callout culture'. In the US in 2012, in the wake of a rape incident at Steubenville High School, Ohio

(which was itself socially mediated), 'social media sites become aggregators of online misogyny' through screenshots and archiving posts published by the assailants (Rentschler, 2014). Sexism in everyday life – not just online – is highlighted by projects like *Everyday Sexism* (Bates, 2014), including actively confronting sexist advertising and behaviours on social media. On Tumblr, among other platforms, 'people of color can draw awareness to and effectively critique daily practices of racism and cultural appropriation that often go unchecked' (Fink, in Fink and Miller, 2014, p. 616).

The scale of callout culture, and of online shaming, extends from the individually public (or semi-public), posting screenshots of abusive or offensive messages to a user's own profile and shared just with friends and followers, to the widely public. Identifying and confronting toxic activity on apps and social media are the rationales behind repository sites like *Douchebags of Grindr*, where

the rudest, most offensive, or downright hateful MSM-specific [men who have sex with men] social networking profiles are screen captured and posted to the web with the goal of highlighting issues such as ageism, femmephobia, racism, and 'arrogance' (among others). (Miller, 2015)

The political element here is perhaps minimal, yet the practices are consistent with more politics-explicit contexts, callout culture and shaming: the difference here may be in content, but not form.

The basic existence of shaming and callout culture, and its immediately defensive and antagonistic overtones, also makes these practices politicized, especially when they pass comment on or attempt to construct humour out of situations that are steeped in debates around class, race, gender and sexuality (among others). A website like *People of Walmart*, for instance, is predicated on differentiating between the observers and the subjects they are documenting: the appearance and behaviours of other shoppers at Walmart are used to discriminate with classist, gendered, racist and ableist overtones. The intent here may be humorous, but the content of such sites also reflects wider political and societal divisions. These practices are used to share outrage and disapproval, simultaneously shaming others and positioning the user as 'better'. During the Sydney siege in December 2014 (see chapter 4), reports of people taking selfies at the exclusion zone were accompanied by umbrage and images of the individuals and groups in question (White and Di Stefano, 2014): it is also important to note, though, the clickbait framing of such coverage, which may be used to fuel further outrage.

Of revenge porn and slut-shaming

Callout culture is, at times, intended to highlight behaviours without necessarily focusing on the individual concerned (although making them potentially identifiable), drawing attention to prevalent or emergent attitudes. At its most extreme, though, these practices lead to individuals being targeted, in response to their personal views and comments, for revenge or to publicly humiliate someone. The ability for internet users to spread information and content quickly and widely is discussed – in admittedly mostly optimistic framing – in chapter 4; the flipside, though, is that the same mechanisms can be used for sharing any kind of content, which can be copied infinitely.

Personal uses of social media, and other online technologies such as instant messaging, become politicized further through the consideration of surveillance, privacy, consent and an individual's data. Practices like account hacking, surreptitious recording and uploading highly private and personal content as an act of revenge all take advantage of these channels of distribution. The mass hacking and leaking of nude photographs of (female) celebrities in September 2014 is purely the most visible example of this – and an extension of a tabloid media culture and readership that thrives on celebrity gossip, sexism, misogyny, the male gaze, scandal and sensationalism. Such trespasses are not limited to celebrities; whether famous or not, though, the victims of these actions are predominantly female (van der Nagel and Meese, 2015). The taking of creepshots, and the surreptitious recording of others in public, over video chat, by hacking webcams and taking screenshots are a violation of consent at the very least, an invasion of privacy and an abuse of trust (issues also raised in Milner, 2013; Tiidenberg, 2015).

Anne Burns's (2015) study of 'involuntary porn', where personal, sexually explicit images, videos and texts created privately with consent are later posted publicly without authorization or awareness, highlights the role played by social media in facilitating the instant sharing – and ongoing production, replication and circulation – of private content (p. 94). This is also, again, a highly gendered process: the majority of people humiliated by the public distribution of involuntary porn are female, and victims are further shamed by other social media users criticizing them for consenting to being recorded in the first place. Such attribution of blame is emblematic of 'slut-shaming', decrying female promiscuity and autonomy (Shah, 2015; Webb, 2015). The role of male participants here is essentially excused: female victims of revenge porn or the public sharing of private sexting are instead shamed and humiliated further (Oravec, 2012; Ringrose et al., 2013).[9]

The recording and sharing of personal activity and ostensibly private communication on social media underlines how users are subject to multiple levels of surveillance. These are both overt and covert, by governments, platforms, individuals, groups and more, and take place with and without consent. The monitoring of a user's location as they use Facebook, Uber or Tinder, for instance, is in principle done with consent, since it is an accepted term of use for the app (and mobile operating system, and service provider) to work – even if the terms and conditions are objectionable, a user still has to actively accept them (even if they do not read them).

Doxxing and cybervigilantism

The illicit distribution of involuntary porn, creepshots and sexts, and practices like slut-shaming make use of the same affordances and mechanisms of social media platforms that allow users to call out sexism and misogyny and document the pervasiveness of these attitudes. At their most extreme, these practices are realized through cybervigilantism, doxxing and swatting. These again arise in part from the visible and public calling-out of behaviours that others deem inappropriate (for whatever motivation, including an inherent delusion by some men that women should find them sexually irresistible). Cybervigilantes take advantage of the availability of information online – both what the individual provides themselves and the digital shadow following them, of information about them but not necessarily provided by them. These practices are, as Quodling (2015) puts it, 'born of a perfect storm in personal data insecurity and easily-abused systems for reporting crime'.

Doxxing – wherein personal and ostensibly private information about an individual is shared publicly, including their 'real-life name, phone number, address, and/or workplace' (W. Phillips, 2015, p. 78) – is a response to social media users actively pursuing an agenda that others feel very strongly about (and against), and so resort to making their personal details public. The recipients of doxxing cover a range of contexts and topical inspirations, from vocal feminists and their supporters, social justice activists, abusive trolls, individuals posting offensive content, journalists, police officers and Minnesotan dentists and other hunters of endangered animals (and those carrying out the doxxing also vary depending on the target). Harassment and abuse, including rape and death threats, are directed at the subject of the doxxing online, at home and at work. Within the Gamergate context, prominent feminists criticizing the toxicity and masculinity of gamer culture were doxxed (see

also Jenson et al., 2015), and this also morphed into 'swatting': where the personal information revealed by doxxing is used to target individuals by making false reports to police, with the aim of armed responses causing harm or even death (Quodling, 2015).

While platforms closely associated with trolling, like reddit and 4chan (Manivannan, 2013; W. Phillips, 2015), are visible proponents of doxxing, these behaviours are not limited to this space (and not everyone on reddit or 4chan is a troll or carries out doxxing). Activist and protest movements will also share extensive information about persons of interest, particularly those deemed responsible for injustice or opposition, and these can occur alongside the organizational, strategic and solidarity-oriented communication concerning the movement. In March 2012, activists within Occupy Oakland posted tweets highlighting personal information about a police officer alleged to have assaulted a pregnant protestor: building from the original information of badge number and name, the details shared publicly also included the officer's address, phone number, family members, online profiles and church (Croeser and Highfield, 2014).[10]

Cybervigilantism may arise in response to problematic behaviours, but can be offensive and abusive itself. The practice of scambaiting aims to entrap internet users responsible for scamming schemes, including attempts to extort money from susceptible individuals. Scambaiters 'identify themselves as protective vigilantes who help keep the internet safe, and have a "bit of fun" at the same time' (Nakamura, 2014: 261). In targeting scammers from Western Africa, for example, scambaiters obtain revealing and incriminating images (without the scammers necessarily realizing what they are being asked to do), using visual media practices and memetic logics in order to create and circulate this content. In doing so, Nakamura finds that scambaiters perpetuate racist and colonialist attitudes, revelling in the exotic by 'requiring Africans to perform primitivism' (p. 262). These underline continued issues – on social media and elsewhere – around power and privilege, of identity, race, class, gender and sexuality: exploitation on social media takes many forms within everyday experiences and practices.

Combating problematic behaviour on social media can also be unfortunately fruitless, as again people with opposing views can use the same devices that enable collective and connective action online. People who regularly post about social justice issues and attempts to change attitudes and behaviours already get labelled with the pejorative term 'Social Justice Warrior' (see, for example, Chess and Shaw, 2015; Deller, 2015). The contestation between 'Social Justice Warriors' and users antagonizing and deriding them plays out across, and responds to, activity on multiple platforms. Renninger (2015) identifies the highlighting of

oppressive and offensive reddit posts through the /r/ShitRedditSays subreddit; this practice is mocked by users on rival subreddit /r/TumblrInAction, which 'exists to rip apart political correctness they see as laughable on Tumblr'.

The politicized personal experiences of everyday life and social media, from the articulation of identity to the directed attacking and shaming of individuals, demonstrate some of the many ways that the personal and the political coincide. The intensity of feeling here – whether challenging social attitudes, developing safe spaces and communities for marginalized and alternative identities, or engaging in vitriolic abuse of others – underlines the importance of social media platforms in these contexts. The problematic elements should not be ignored or accepted, particularly systematic public harassment and humiliation of individuals. What I have attempted to outline here, though, is just how everyday social media and everyday politics are extensively intertwined, experienced and framed through the personal.

Affective Publics and Personalizing the Political

Everyday practices around identity and community invoke the use of personal elements to describe and engage with the political. The consideration of personal politics, in both framing and topic, has clear overlaps with the affective publics described by Papacharissi (2015). Examining the role of affect in social media discussions, Papacharissi focuses on Twitter, within Occupy, the Arab Spring and more mundane trending topics. Affective discussions of unrest in Cairo in 2011 combined the personal with the political: Twitter users reporting from protests and demonstrations incorporated their own experiences and stories in their updates. Individuals provided unique takes on the events of the Arab Spring, personalizing the political in creating an affective form of storytelling for those following developments online. The importance of affect and personal resonance is not limited to the political on social media. Nahon and Hemsley (2013) identified resonance as a key contributing factor in determining themes and content that might get traction and go viral by attracting extensive attention in a short period of time and spread beyond an initial audience to a mass public. Critical for provoking widespread awareness and recognition of the content is the salience of content for audiences, where media content has personal relevance or interest (pp. 65–7).

Everyday politics can be seen as 'everyday' in part because it has a direct, personal impact or connection that is not fleeting, even if the issue or topic at hand is not 'Political' in the sense of budget negotiations or

election debates. Debates around vaccination, refugees and asylum seekers, or climate change are demonstrative of topics that receive long-running coverage and campaigning, and where levels of engagement may be variable dependent on current events and catalysts for new discussions. Online platforms are used by those holding the various views represented in the debates. These contexts are often not single-issue discussions, either, but feature various overlapping topics (related or not to the main theme). Even when using a marker like a hashtag to denote an explicit overarching issue or setting for comments, a diversity of topics, interests and practices remains apparent. This includes the framing of commentary that reflects affective and personal contributions in addition to, and alongside, the explicitly political.

Political talk in non-political spaces

Politics on social media can be explicit and implicit, affective and personal, and reflect many practices, communities and issues. What is notable though is that these discussions are taking place on platforms which were not designed with such purposes in mind; Twitter and Facebook, like LiveJournal and MySpace before them, are not political social media, but are relatively generic channels enabling a wide range of topical coverage, of which politics is just one example.

This is in contrast to niche social networks, forums and websites set up around particular communities of interest. Yet even on these specialist sites everyday political talk emerges. Wright (2012) describes the evolution of 'Third Spaces', where communities on messageboards and discussion forums engage in conversations beyond the topical remit of the site. The hierarchical folder structure of messageboards can allow for 'off-topic' sections, where miscellaneous subjects outside the specific niche interest of the messageboard can be introduced. These are not the raison d'être for the boards, and not the factor inciting individuals to create accounts and participate in discussions, but they remain popular and recurring topics in these non-political spaces.

It can be argued that the most popular social media platforms reflect this kind of phenomenon, although their status as a 'Third Space' may be disputed. While politics is again not the reason behind the platforms' existence, there is also no one single topic that is the focus of Facebook or Twitter; rather than niche spaces from which political talk emerges, they are more generic and universal in scope. This also means that rather than having its own delineated space, such as its own section on a forum, political discussions appear more haphazardly on popular social media

– and to a more diluted extent than might be the case for messageboards. Political discussions are not visible to all registered users on Twitter or Facebook, purely because of the sheer volume of material as well as the follower/friendship networks shaping what can be seen. Politics is still an emergent topic, though, especially since it can hook into other discussions, appears alongside posts about unrelated subjects and may be a topic only occasionally mentioned by users. The likes of Facebook and Twitter then promote various elements of 'Third Spaces', demonstrating the emergence of political discussions on sites not initially set up for that purpose.

Emergent, Tangential and Overlapping Publics

This idea of emergent politics connects to the personalization of politics through the ways that individuals present and draw out political themes in their discussion of issues, events and subjects. Politics can be tangential, a sub-theme within more mundane and everyday subjects, yet not unimportant. The users discussing tangential politics may also be peripheral to the majority of the topical coverage, but they remain part of the surrounding context and perspectives on social media. Media events and spectacles have many aspects and dimensions to them that receive attention; a music contest is not just about the music, a sporting event is not just sports, and audiences engage with them for a variety of reasons, including as social and cultural phenomena.

The social media politics of Eurovision

The Eurovision Song Contest is an annual competition, held since 1956, broadcast across Europe and to which European nations send a musical act and song to represent them in the hopes of winning from a popular vote (combining the broadcast audience and national juries). As a production that has been running for sixty years, Eurovision is a media, cultural and social institution, occupying a particular part of multiple national and subcultural psyches; it is more than a cult phenomenon, though, for its fandom takes many forms across the continent (and beyond). Despite presenting itself as apolitical, however, emergent and tangential political talk is still apparent within the Eurovision context, on social media and beyond.

The perception of Eurovision by participants and audience alike varies across Europe (and beyond). In the UK, the contest is treated primarily as kitsch and a camp irrelevance, engaged with ironically or

indeed as active anti-fandom (S. Coleman, 2008). In other parts of Europe, though, Eurovision is a serious proposition: to win potentially means acceptance on the way to joining the European Union, or the added prestige of hosting a major European cultural event. The contest is also popular among LGBTQ audiences and performers (Lemish, 2004; Singleton et al., 2007); in 1998, Eurovision was won by Israel's Dana International, a transsexual performer, while second place in 2007 went to Verka Serduchka, the drag persona of Andriy Danylko, representing Ukraine.

Eurovision then takes place at the confluence of many different interests, including cultural and social issues, geopolitics and gender politics. This can lead to various tensions, since Eurovision does not occur in complete separation from its national and pan-European contexts; the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which runs the event, bans explicitly political songs.[11] However, political messages still make their way into the broadcast – and certainly appear within the social media coverage of the contest.

The 2012 Eurovision Song Contest was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, following the Azerbaijani victory in 2011. It was the country's first victory, in its fourth appearance at Eurovision, and the first of the Caucasus former Soviet republics to win the contest. Before the contest, Azerbaijan was criticized for its poor human rights record and the tensions between it and Armenia. Entrants in the 2012 contest were requested not to speak to activists and demonstrators; one performer, the eventual winner Loreen, representing Sweden, ignored this. Similarly, while political comments and partisan messages are not permitted in the broadcast, a thinly veiled reference to Azerbaijan's human rights record, political corruption and freedom of choice was made by the German presenter Anke Engelke when giving the results of the German vote (stating that 'It is good to be able to vote, and it is good to have a choice...Europe is watching you').

In the Twitter coverage of the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest, such themes did not account for the majority of tweets; rather, the #eurovision hashtag was a backchannel for providing live commentary, engaging genuinely, ironically and irreverently with the performances (for extended analysis of Eurovision as a case study for social media audiences and fandom, see Highfield et al., 2013). Yet this does not mean that the political was completely absent. Indeed, Eurovision commentary (both on television and on social media) often deals in political and cultural stereotypes (and casual racism) (Georgiou, 2008). Popular retweets during the 2012 contest, for example, discussed the Greek entry through the lens of Greece's dire financial situation and the German-led economic bailout it had received. The overall #eurovision activ-

ity also saw discussion of human rights issues as a secondary, tangential theme, symbolically connected to the spectacle-specific coverage by @ mentioning Loreen. By using the common #eurovision marker, the explicitly political tweets were still part of the wider, denoted discussion, just as the Azerbaijani political context was part of the Eurovision setting even if the majority of the audience did not obviously engage with it (or was unaware of it).

During the broadcast, additional political themes emerge, and these can be specific to individual contests and the contemporary context, and recurring tensions. The trend of bloc voting, or political voting, where nations give preferential treatment in their votes to their neighbours (a country's Eurovision euro-voisins), is an established trope of the contest; while seen as problematic for the 'authenticity' of the contest in some countries, it is established to the point of cliché (and a recurring feature of Eurovision drinking games/bingo) that Cyprus will give Greece 12 points, the Balkan and Scandinavian countries will share votes among themselves and the spectre of Russia continues to haunt many former Soviet republics (Fenn et al., 2006; Ginsburgh and Noury, 2008). Such ritualization, around social media practices and media and political phenomena alike, is discussed further in chapter 2; within the Eurovision context, the recurrence of bloc voting is frequently commented upon during the Twitter coverage of the broadcast.

The Eurovision audience – including but not limited to its social media coverage – encompasses numerous overlapping publics, representing different perspectives, national groups, fandoms, languages and topical interests. During Eurovision 2012, the human rights discussion was more peripheral to the live commentary on the contest itself, and to sub-topics such as the devoted fandom dedicated to hyperactive Irish twins Jedward (see also Deller, 2011) – especially since it was not an obvious feature of the broadcast itself. Other political themes can become dominant, particularly around LGBTQ cultures and gender and sexuality politics. This was apparent during the 2014 contest, won by Austria's Conchita Wurst. The drag persona of Thomas Neuwirth, Wurst was a different proposition to the outrageously camp Serduchka; in particular, Wurst sported a beard as part of her appearance. The combination of drag and the presence of a 'bearded lady' meant that the entry was not viewed positively in some participating countries, where alternative sexualities and gender roles are not established, tolerated or legally permitted (Miazhevich, 2015).

The topical centrality of Conchita Wurst to Eurovision 2014 – online and in the contest itself – encourages a strong interlinking and overlap of Eurovision publics. Those present include the casual Eurovision viewer, the dedicated fan, the anti-fan and ironic viewers (for more on

anti-fandom, ironic detachment and snark around popular content, see J. Gray, 2003; Haig, 2014; Harman and Jones, 2013), LGBTQ audiences, those opposed to alternative sexualities, transvestism, drag and so on (and these groups are obviously not mutually exclusive). On social media, this plays out through a combination of approaches. Live-tweeting may take different perspectives, depending on the individual and their own views and contexts, with pro-, anti-, neutral, amused, bemused and confused messages co-occurring in backchannels. Viewers also provide visual displays of their attitudes and beliefs: again, as an event with an extensive LGBTQ fanbase, Eurovision is regularly accompanied by associated imagery, such as rainbow flags (online and in the crowd at the event itself). Visual social media content on platforms such as Instagram also feature these aspects in users' depictions of their Eurovision experiences. The political, personal and social become further entwined here, as the social event of hosting Eurovision parties, for example, includes pro-tolerance signs and LGBTQ iconography. This is also reflected in the use of memes and image macros to provide supportive and irreverent commentary about Eurovision, LGBTQ issues and fandom.

The coverage of Eurovision on social media serves as an example of fan practices and audiencing online, where political elements feature as emergent topics. Eurovision then provides a clear example of topical diversity and tangential politics, where such topics are related to but not necessarily the primary focus of an event's discussion – see also the various political themes during the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, around LGBTQ rights and the feminist punk rock group Pussy Riot (Burchell, 2015). Politics also occurs concurrently in fan communities on social media, such as those for *The Sims* or Korean pop music, with emergent political discussions found alongside the subject of the fandom (Deller, 2015; Jung, 2012). Within these settings, tangential political topics are found within an individual's own interests, reflecting their personal views and issues which may be relevant to their particular fandom.

The diversity of personal experiences present within social media politics is further recognized through initiatives like rotation curation, where individuals temporarily take over the running of institutional or organizational social media accounts. Examples can be national, such as the @sweden Twitter account, curated by a different Swedish person each week and providing their own perspective on life, culture, politics and more (C. Christensen, 2013a). Rotation curation can also promote marginalized and under-represented voices, giving them individual and collective platforms for sharing their own views and experiences; the Australian @IndigenousX and its Canadian spin-off @IndigenousXca, for example, feature different indigenous voices each week. What is important and noteworthy about these accounts is the promotion of

voices – with free rein, content-wise and tonally – through a more widely followed outlet than they might have individually. By offering a social media dais around specific groups, identities, communities or issues, rotation curation accounts provide a banner under which individual perspectives can be centralized, and which a wider audience can follow to discover and read their stories.

Tangential and overlapping topics are also apparent within the content denoted by a common, overarching hashtag. Hashtags demonstrate linguistic flexibility, variously serving informational, emotive, commercial and structural purposes (Zappavigna, 2015). Burgess et al. (2015) describe the 'hybrid forum' of hashtagged content, wherein different issues, publics and voices (expert and everyday) coincide. They use the example of markers like #agchat or #agchatoz, which designate a specific focus – in this case, agriculture – and promote a central time and theme for conversation, but where the ensuing tweets still demonstrate a miscellany of less prominent but related topics. These include the elements of the mundane and the everyday, documented through personal imagery and affective framing: whether discussing politics in general or specific topics, social media commentary and participation are filtered through personal experiences of issues and platforms.

Politics and Platforms

Consideration of the personal and the political of social media – and the internet in general – should not ignore how the platforms used are themselves parts of political debate. The questions of privacy and surveillance raised earlier in this chapter are connected to issues around digital rights and digital liberties. The corporate ownership of the major social media platforms, their commercial interests, policies and the lack of transparency in how they use and present individuals' data also feed into recurring concerns for social media users (for more on platforms, see van Dijck, 2013). While attempts have been made to establish open and alternative platforms, browsers and other online technologies, these have had varying degrees of success and have generally not yet attained the critical mass or popular momentum to compete with the likes of Facebook and Twitter (explored further by Gehl, 2014).

Digital rights, digital liberties

How social media users employ their platforms of choice, including the content that they create, share, consume and appropriate in their everyday activities, is part of a long-running debate about participat-

cultures and digital technologies. The issue of digital rights, including policies and policing of copyright and piracy, has variously focused on the illegal sharing of music, film and television shows online, through peer-to-peer networking and streaming sites, on copyrighted material uploaded to sites like YouTube without permission and on the creation of new content from previous media and questions of 'fair use'. Related debates predate popular online communication, and these have clear links to everyday practices on social media. Postigo (2012) highlights how creative, participatory practices like remixing and mash-ups may be used for political critique, but are also 'a complicated array of potential copyright law violations' (p. 1178). Indeed, several of the ritualized practices that I discuss in chapter 2 make extensive, unauthorized use of copyrighted material, for political and non-political purposes alike. While I do not go into detail in this book about the policing of digital rights, the fight against online piracy and protecting copyright and how users subvert and hack platforms, media and devices, such topics are extensively featured elsewhere (Lobato and Thomas, 2015; Meese, 2015).

Postigo's (2012) examination of digital rights activists notes related issues pertinent to the movement, including 'privacy, net neutrality, bloggers [sic] rights and expanding access to digital content' (p. 1167). Also overlapping here is what Croeser (2012, 2014) refers to as the 'digital liberties movement'. Their research employs this label as distinct from – but connected to – digital rights and other civil liberties groups, as the term 'digital liberties'

> encapsulates both the grounds of battle (including hardware and software) and the general disposition of the movement (which highly values individual autonomy, and is often inclined towards liberal or libertarian principles). (2014, p. 78)

Sharing concerns with groups promoting free/libre and open-source software and net neutrality, the digital liberties movement is identified by Croeser (2014) through participants' 'understanding that citizens (or, often, "users") – rather than corporations or governments – should control digital technologies, with this control tied to democratic principles and ideals of personal freedom' (p. 77). Such freedom is contested by surveillance of online activity, by corporations and governments (pp. 87–9), and by the tracking and sharing of user data by the popular, everyday social media platforms and providers like Facebook and Google.

Questions of privacy and data retention are ongoing concerns, debated on social media and elsewhere at the personal and mass levels, including government policies (Moe, 2012) and the response to the leaking of

National Security Agency (NSA) data by Edward Snowden in 2013 (Lyon, 2014). The social media platforms discussed here are free to use, but with the caveat that the platforms are commercial undertakings – what they do with your data is essentially up to them. Users can control their personal privacy settings, in terms of who can see their posts, but at the same time Facebook has access to everything posted on it (and sometimes more, with linked accounts and access options). The move towards connected profiles and single-platform authentication – where apps like hook-up and dating service Tinder use Facebook accounts to create user profiles – has further implications for this data privacy, particularly when these apps make use of, and share, additional, personal information. Similarly, investigations into the 'quantified self', of apps and wearable devices tracking location, health and movement, and of immense amounts of personal data being shared, raise further questions about user privacy, surveillance and identity (Crawford et al., 2015; Jethani and Raydan, 2015; Walker Rettberg, 2014).

Because algorithms?

At the start of this chapter, I introduced projects that use imagery of the female body and its functions to counter societal attitudes and platform policies about what is and is not appropriate. The flagging of content as offensive by individual users, and the approaches of platforms like Facebook and Instagram (which is owned by Facebook) to removing content with visible nipples or menstrual stains, is a process that is rife with abuse and inconsistencies (Crawford and Gillespie, 2014) – giving the impression that platforms are more okay with racist hatespeech, abuse, harassment and trolling of individuals and rape jokes than with nude and semi-nude images of the female body (posted with consent). Similarly, how different platforms respond to reports of harassment and doxxing, and the transparency of their processes, is an ongoing and critical debate at the time of writing (see, for example, the report about abuse on Twitter by Matias et al., 2015). The question of what social media platforms deem to be political or appropriate is especially pertinent, for it leads into considerations of what activities platforms will allow and what might be censored.[12] Manipulation of platforms, their policies and user base is apparent within trolling, as users attack and abuse others for their own pleasure. Whitney Phillips's (2015) study of users trolling the memorial pages of deceased Facebook users described the process as one of amplification, in which trolls would get a reaction from others, which further inspired trolling. This amplification encouraged (or forced) a swifter response from Facebook itself, as the groundswell of attention

from multiple parties meant it could not remain silent or passive regarding what was or was not allowed on its platform. The inconsistencies here remain concerns, especially when content like revenge porn and personal and explicit material posted without consent are shared widely but not removed by the platforms in question (see Anne Burns, 2015; Citron, 2014).

In cases of civil unrest and protest, social media platforms have been suspected by activists of censoring messages; as will be seen in chapter 5, the research that Sky Croeser and I carried out on Occupy Oakland found that activists at demonstrations and on Twitter were wary of the surveillance and policing of their comments and online organization (Croeser and Highfield, 2014). There were also accusations that the algorithms determining trending topics were being manipulated so that Occupy-related hashtags and keywords were not showing up, reducing the visibility and downplaying the presence of the movement. Such concerns reflect an awareness of both the power of social media platforms' algorithms, and of their inscrutability. The logics behind algorithms influencing what users see within Twitter's trending topics or Facebook's news feed are not made public, and are changed in response to user experiences and behaviours (Bucher, 2012b; van Dijck and Poell, 2013).

There is also a gamification angle here, as social media users – reflecting different motivations, whether commercial, activist or humorous – attempt to get particular topics or issues to reach 'trending' status (explored in part in Sharma, 2013). Tarleton Gillespie (2014) has argued that, in addition to the various publics users form on social media, algorithms help to shape 'calculated publics' based on patterns around interests, connections, interactions, clicks and purchases. Such publics are constructed from a platform's user base and content, without their members knowing the specific processes and choices at play, for 'These algorithmically generated groups may overlap with, be an inexact approximation of, or have nothing whatsoever to do with the publics that the user sought out' (p. 189).

The policies and politics of platforms shape and are shaped by the personal: the results of algorithms are in part guided by past personal behaviours and choices. Platforms respond to informal practices, too. Social media behaviours created by users and gradually adopted en masse, despite not being part of a platform's initial architecture, may become supported by the platforms. The evolution of the hashtag on Twitter demonstrates an informal practice designed for information coordination eventually morphing into a key, defining feature of the platform with its own traits (Halavais, 2013). Facebook, Twitter and Google change their algorithms, terms of use, design and functionality at will and without transparency or consultation, as is their wont – and

this has raised concerns by communities that use the platforms, such as when ownership changes (for instance, the response by trans*, queer, asexual and other communities to Tumblr's acquisition by Yahoo! in 2013: Fink and Miller, 2014; Renninger, 2015). What happens on their platforms, though, is dependent on – and responds to – the personal and the mundane.

Conclusion

The overlap between the personal and the political is extensive, on social media and in general. This is seen in both how the political is framed, around individual interests and experiences, and how the personal becomes politicized. These are realized on social media through everyday practices. Politics emerges out of the presentation of the mundane, and the extraordinary is documented using the same approaches as a user might share media about their lunch, their cat or their pop culture tastes. These discussions also coexist and overlap with the coverage of emergent, explicit and non-political topics by social media users.

The personal and the everyday are critical lenses for examining social media overall, not just the political. By debanalizing platforms (Rogers, 2013a), we can treat the everyday and the mundane not as trivial but as the context for understanding the logics and practices of social media. The banal uses of the social then extend to, are appropriated by and encourage the political, among other topics. Crucially, the coverage of the political on social media makes use of the same practices as the mundane: the social mediation of both politics and everyday experiences employs the same mechanisms, vernaculars and logics.

In the following chapter, I explore the intersection of the political and the everyday on social media by analysing ritualized practices. These include political rituals responding to particular figures or events, and social media rituals that will at times have political relevance. These can variously take serious and silly forms, and in concert are examples of a social media culture that uses the affordances and vernaculars of platforms to engage with politics.