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Mask(ing) Emotion: Social Symbolic Objects as Catalysts of Emotion Work in Social Movement Organizations

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Abstract

Social symbolic objects, such as masks, can powerfully shape and transform emotions within and about organizations. In this article, we examine how social movement organizations (SMOs) use artifacts to trigger emotion work by members and audiences. Using Twitter engagement data referencing the Guy Fawkes mask as adopted by Anonymous and Occupy during their peak years, we identified three outcomes of artifact use: new member recruitment, heightened public alienation, and creation/consolidation of a collective member identity. Our findings extend theories of emotion cycles of resistance in social movements (Sandlin & Callahan, 2009) and sensemaking of organizational artifacts (Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004) by demonstrating how social symbolic objects operationalize these theories. A key value of the integrative framework we offer lies in providing clarity on how emotion work practices using artifacts influence both internal and external actors in SMOs.

Keywords

Social movement organizations (SMOs), Guy Fawkes mask (GFM), social symbolic object, artifacts, emotion work, sensemaking.

Introduction

The use of artifacts, such as masks, has become an important component of social movements' repertoire of collective action and public protests (Tilly, 1978; Goodwin & Jasper, 2015;). For example, the widespread adoption of the Guy Fawkes mask (GFM)[4] by social movement and

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[4] The Guy Fawkes mask is a symmetrical face of a white man with a handlebar moustache and a thin vertical line beard on the chin. There is a brown eyeliner around each eye, which extends towards ears in three different

protest groups has captured global attention. Originally utilized by the Anonymous Group (founded in 2004), other protest groups also embraced the mask, including those in the 2019 Hong Kong protests, as well as in the 2013 protests in Turkey and Brazil, the 2012 protests in India and Poland, and notably, the Occupy Wall Street and associated protests that began in 2011.

The Anonymous Group used the mask primarily as a concealment tool, whereas the Occupy movement members elevated its meaning, turning it into a symbol for the movement. Wearing the mask transformed the individual into someone "against the status quo", advocating for the horizontal, decentralized form of social movement organization (SMO). This emphasized the egalitarian logic of the Occupy movement (Kaulingfreks & Kaulingfreks, 2013; Shrivastava & Ivanova, 2015).

It is important to examine the ways the social movements' actors use artifacts to produce, orchestrate, and strategically deploy emotions as a vital social movement resource in the pursuit of their collective goals (Benford, 1997). It is difficult to explain how movements emerge, recruit, and endure without considering the dynamics of emotions in their social symbolic life cycle (Kemper, 2001; Polletta & Amenta, 2001). The emotional process of movement formation, in the evolution of SMOs, brings the demarcation framing of "we" and "them", which divides the public sphere from the perspective of members of SMOs and bystanders (Eyerman, 2005; King, 2005). The SMOs' use of artifacts has social symbolic significance in the organization of the emotions of both groups (Bitner, 1992; Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004Meyer *et al.*, 2013). Thus, the use of artifacts by SMOs has not only relevance for their members who have adopted them, but their use also influences the audiences that experience the performance of the SMO members.

Whilst emotion is a critical dimension of sensemaking of artifacts in social movements, it remains an open question as to how one can impact emotions of the two stakeholder groups, i.e., insiders and outsiders, in social movement organizations such as Anonymous and Occupy movements when using artifacts like the Guy Fawkes mask as emotionally-laden mechanisms. We address this question in this article. In pursuing this question, we had two aims. First, we used social media engagement on Twitter[5] to investigate how SMOs' prevalent use of emotionally--laden objects (e.g., artifacts) engages and influences the emotions of their members and audiences. Second, we explored the outcome produced on Twitter through the actors' presentation of their emotion work evoked by the artifacts (e.g., the emergent emotions towards the mask and toward the social movement organization). We contend that expanding our understanding of emotion-influencing mechanisms (such as masks) is timely, as the emotional dimensions of artifacts in social movements remain relatively neglected (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015).

In our research, we adopted a social symbolic view of life in and around social movement organizations. Drawing on Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz's (2004) formulation of *sensemaking of organizational artifacts* and the *emotion cycle of resistance* in social movements (Sandlin & Callahan, 2009), we investigated how emotion work in both participants and bystanders in SMOs can be triggered through the use of artifacts. This theoretical integration allowed for an inquiry informed by a social symbolic theory of organization, in which investigating organizational actors and their actions is prioritized over examining organizational structures and processes

lines. The eyebrow's position and the smile illustrate a mirthless grin but, at the same time, a mysterious concentration and focus.

[5] Our data was collected from Twitter. We acknowledge the platform has now been rebranded as 'X' but have chosen to retain the label from the original platform as the data collection and original analysis were associated with the time when the platform was known as Twitter.

(Lawrence & Phillips, 2019). In this approach, social reality, structures, and objects are not a priori, nor do they have an essence; rather, it is "the efforts of interested actors working to affect the social and symbolic world around them" (ibid., p. 5) that shapes, transforms, or maintains social realities, structures, and objects, including the organizational ones. Thus, this perspective involves a shift from focusing on the role of social structures, processes, and objects, "to examining the actors and actions that shape those" (ibid., p. 5). Adopting this view, we prioritized an investigation of actions attempted by actors in and around SMOs. To understand the emotional responses to which the artifacts give rise in social movement organizations, we focused on understanding the actors' efforts in sensemaking and managing their emotions, i.e., their emotion work.

This investigation helps enrich our understanding of the social symbolic life of social movement organizations in two ways. First, we offer a conceptual framework for the examination of the prevalent use of artifacts by social movement organizations. Our second contribution is based on the empirical study. We revealed how the materially evoked emotional responses in and around social movement organizations may determine SMO growth, sustainability, and demise. Such contributions are important due to the recently increasing emergence of social movement organizations, and their use of artifacts, e.g., the emergence of international movements such as Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion, the continuous sustainability of the Gilets Jaunes movement in France, the truck drivers' movement in Canada, as well as the far-right riots such as the one in the US on Capitol Hill. The theoretical and empirical insights provided in this article potentially extend our understanding of the social symbolic world of these contemporary movements.

Artifacts, emotions, and sensemaking in social movements

In what follows, we first provide background on the artifact informing the present study, the Guy Fawkes Mask (GFM), and situate it within the social movement context. We begin with the origin of the Guy Fawkes mask and continue with the story of its transformation into the principal symbolic artifact used by Anonymous and the Occupy movements. We then draw on the research on emotions and emotion work in social movements and sensemaking of organizational artifacts to develop the outline of our conceptual framework for investigating the emotion work involved in sensemaking of artifacts, such as masks in SMOs by their members and their audiences.

The Guy Fawkes mask in social movements

Guy Fawkes was part of a group of radical Catholic rebels who attempted to assassinate James Stuart, the Scottish king who had ascended to the English throne after Elizabeth I's death in 1605. However, the authorities learned about the plot and executed Guy Fawkes, who wanted to effectively decapitate the nascent British state by detonating a large quantity of gunpowder beneath the Palace of Westminster (Call, 2008). A mask depicting Guy Fawkes first appeared in Alan Moore and David Lloyd's comic book, *V for Vendetta,* to launch a forceful anarchist critique of fascism (ibid). In 2006, the film adaptation of *V for Vendetta* was released, featuring the mask and articulating a full-fledged postmodern anarchism (Call, 2008).

The Guy Fawkes mask was popularized by Anonymous, an activist against internet censorship and government surveillance group (Koch, 2014). We may trace the origins of Anonymous to their opposition to the Church of Scientology's efforts to suppress online content. In reaction to this act of censorship, the collective known as Anonymous, or "Anons", declared their intention to remove the Church's presence from the internet and to actively work toward the deconstruction of the Church of Scientology in its existing form (Vamosi, 2008). Wearing the Guy Fawkes Mask, around 200 Anons gathered outside London's Church of Scientology on 10th February 2008 in protest against the organization's "inherent flaws" and "fight for freedom of knowledge and information" (BBC, 2008). Although there was no clear explanation of why Anonymous used the GFM, one could argue that the fundamental reason for choosing the GFM is that the character "V", always donning the GFM in the book and the movie *V for Vendetta,* was successful in his mission to hack the centralized computer network of the fascist government (Lamont, 2011).

Although Anonymous started the GFM adaptation, the mask traction in social movements resulted from its use by the Occupy Wall Street and Occupy London movements, where the Occupy movement's slogan "We are the 99%" resonated with a line in the movie *V for Vendetta, Vox Populi* – Voice of the People (Moore & Lloyd, 2005, p. 189). Therefore, Anonymous and the Occupy movement positioned the GFM as a global symbol of theatrical protest and an emblem of modern activism. Subsequently, several other movements used the mask, from the Million Masks March to the Hong Kong protests.

Emotion in social movements

Early research on emotion and social movements was limited to the portrayal of protestors as emotional, to demonstrate their irrationality and impulsiveness. On the other hand, studies on the new wave of social movements from the 1960s emphasize the rationality of their actions by focusing on their organization and resource management, while at the same time denying the significance of emotional dimensions of the life cycles of these movements (Goodwin & Jasper, 2006).

However, later studies commenced a more nuanced exploration of emotions in social movements by picking up on Durkheim's attention to the "moral force" that brings solidarity and emotional energy at individual and group levels in social movements (Collins, 1990). Benford (1997) argues that emotion plays an important role in detecting and attending to anomalies, unexpected events, and crucial cues in social movements. Lofland (1982) investigated "pleasures of protest" and "joy of crowds" as affective bonds, whereas Kemper (Kemper, 1981) focused on the anger expressed by social movement members toward the state. Bell (1992) reported on the sense of dignity and pride that movements' members may experience, which may have nothing to do with its success. For instance, black civil rights protestors used their defiance to elicit personal dignity and pride, although they had little hope in toppling the white supremacists' well-entrenched power. Other research on emotions in social movements has focused on differentiating between types of emergent emotions. Goodwin *et al.* (2001) identified longer-lasting emotions such as love or hate, compassion, sympathy, enthusiasm, loyalty, pride, shame, trust, and respect, and shorter-term emotions such as surprise, shock, anger, grief, joy, euphoria, and anxiety.

Scholars have developed different theories to explain how emotions emerge in social movements, how they can be framed, and how they shape those movements. Highlighting the centrality of

emotions in both individual and collective human behaviour, Eyerman (2005) contends that social movements function as evolving cultural forms. They not only express and reshape societal values but also generate new and alternative emotional frameworks. Adopting a social symbolic view of emotion, Whittier (2001) draws on Hochschild (1979) to demonstrate how activists employ "emotion work" through practices of deep acting and surface acting. She extends this concept to the collective domain, suggesting that participants in social movements engage in the authentic production of emotion (deep acting) through shared decisions about which emotions to express or validate, aiming to elicit specific reactions from external audiences (surface acting). "In surface acting, actors focus on creating the character's outward demeanor, while in deep acting, they try to internalize the feelings and features of the character and change themselves to *become* the character. In contrast, in surface acting, the actor pretends to have the emotions claimed by the character while they do not, in reality, experience them. In this method, the actor is consciously putting on a show of what is expected of someone who has that experience (Hochschild, 1979, pp. 557–558). In other words, surface acting involves the deliberate fabrication of emotional expressions, whereas deep acting entails the internal adjustment of genuine feelings to align with externally displayed emotions. (Grandey, 2003, p. 86).

Considering the repertoire of protest, Juris (2015) argues that cultural performance brings together the production of alternative meanings and identities with image and emotion. Within these tactical repertoires, there are several forms of performances, from carnivalesque modes to sit-ins and other performances to achieve visibility and "emotional bond" by employing means such as singing, shouting slogans, and the use of artifacts, for example, wearing masks (Juris, 2015). Pagan and Zaeemdar (2024) explored the use of theatrical forms in feminist social movements and the emotional power inherent in such modes of public protests aimed at the achievement of radical change. Whiteman and Cooper (2011) argue that "material objects shape human interpretation and action, and this is a reciprocal process" (p. 905). This is because physical artifacts serve as cues within both the social and physical environments where individuals function, thereby likely initiating a process of sensemaking (Gioia *et al.*, 1994; Weick, 1995 Garreau *et al.*, 2015). Such sensemaking has been demonstrated to evoke emotional responses towards not only the artifact, but also towards the organization that has employed it (Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004), a concept that we explore in more depth in the next section.

Sensemaking of artifacts and emotions

Scholars frequently conceptualize organizational sensemaking in a mono-modal manner, primarily emphasizing its linguistic dimensions. However, viewing sensemaking solely through a linguistic lens may offer an incomplete representation of the process (Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012). In essence, collective sensemaking arises not only through discursive practices but also through engagement with material symbols, signs, and, more broadly, artifacts (ibid). This perspective aligns with the role of material signs in the social construction of reality and highlights the multimodal nature of meaning-making within organizational contexts. The effect of artifacts in organisational life is important to explore because they "impact people's interpretation of what is happening and shape their subsequent response" (Siebert, 2023, p. 283). We may view artifacts, and the sensemaking process they evoke, as material elements embedded in the social symbolic work in which the actors get involved, in and around organisations (Lawrence & Phillips,

2019). Such social symbolic work has been seen to be conducive to creating, shaping, and maintaining emotions (Bitner, 1992; Meyer *et al.*, 2013; Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004).

Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz (2004) assert that "emotion is integral to stakeholders' sense making of key organizational artifacts" (p. 671). Such arguments build on earlier research on organizational artifacts, for example, Bitner's (1992) work, which similarly argues that artifacts arouse emotions and, consequently, impact people's perceptions, and thus their behavior, in and around organizations. Meyer *et al.* (2013) likewise note that scholars have long overlooked the emotional dimensions of organizational artifacts, even though such artifacts have "repeatedly been found to transport and elicit strong emotional responses" (p. 524). Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz (2004) further propose that what artifacts create for organizations is, in essence, emotion, and it is emotion that helps link sensemaking of artifacts and attitudes toward organizations. Therefore, to investigate how people engage emotionally with an artifact, i.e., the Guy Fawkes mask (GFM), and how this emotional process (i.e., emotion work) impacts the way they feel about the SMOs that deploy the mask, it is useful to closely examine their sensemaking of the GFM and the emotion management processes such sensemaking triggers.

In this article, we draw on Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz's (2004) formulation of sensemaking to inform our analysis of the way stakeholder groups, i.e., members and audiences of Anonymous and Occupy, emotionally engaged with these movements, through exploring their sensemaking of the Guy Fawkes mask. Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz (2004) argue that sensemaking of an artifact elicits emotions in interpretations of three dimensions of the artifact, i.e., instrumentality, aesthetics, and symbolism. Instrumentality is the dimension of artifact sensemaking that relates to their functionality, use, and their "effects on related tasks and goals" (Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004, p.673). This dimension reflects the emotions elicited due to what the artifact achieves in relation to organisational goals and objectives (for example, in the case of our empirical study and the GFM, instrumentality reflects the emotions linked to the use of the mask to conceal the mask-wearers' identity, therefore securing the anonymity of SMO members in their public protests). Aesthetics refers to the sensory reactions the artifact, such as the GFM, evokes, the way it looks, or the sensation it arouses upon being touched. Symbolism relates to the semiotic response that the artifact causes in the audience and the way people associate its meaning with other sets of organizational messages and the "invisible set of values and assumptions comprising organizational cultures" (ibid). In the case of our study, symbolism reveals the cultural and value-based associations that are called upon by the GFM in connection with Occupy and Anonymous, the SMOs that deployed it.

In summary, "[i]nstrumentality relates to the tasks the artifact helps accomplish, aesthetics is the sensory reaction to the artifact, and symbolism regards associations the artifact elicits" (Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004, p. 671). These authors use the three interpretive dimensions to examine how emotion acts upon people's sensemaking of an organizational artifact and if such emotional processes impact the way people feel about the organization as "[t]he emotion embedded in the interpretations of these three dimensions connects sensemaking of the artifact to attitudes toward the organization" (p. 682).

Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz's (2004) model is powerful in providing a way to understand the sensemaking of organizational artifacts in their emotional dimensions. However, this formulation does not focus on the deployment of artifacts in SMOs, nor does it explain the emotion work involved by those who engage in making sense of the artifacts used by the SMOs. On the

other hand, Sandlin and Callahan's (2009) work addresses both these missing aspects, which we discuss in the next section.

Emotions in social movements

Sandlin and Callahan (2009) draw on Hochschild's (1979; 1983) notion of "emotion management" to demonstrate how anti-consumption social movements provoke and use emotions to challenge and subvert contemporary consumer culture. In this framework, emotions are often seen to be "managed", as individuals work on "inducing or inhibiting feelings to render them 'appropriate' to a situation" (Hochschild, 1979, p. 551). The "feeling rules" set the criteria for this appropriateness. They determine the dominant definitions of social situations. Feeling rules, also referred to as emotion regimes (Lewis, 2008), guide the emotional aspects of everyday interactions to maintain the dominant social order and a harmonious status quo. Individuals accordingly engage in deliberate and active "emotion work" to manage their feelings in social situations (Hochschild, 1979, 1983). This process involves "the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling" (Hochschild, 1979, p. 561).

Drawing on this perspective on emotion management, Sandlin and Callahan (2009) proposed a "cycle of emotion" through which anti-consumption activists interact externally with the general public, and internally, within the movement. These external and internal practices of emotion management provide a respective portrayal of how social movement organizations may engage external audiences and evoke their emotions for new member recruitment, as well as internal construction and maintenance of a sense of collective purpose and internal solidarity among their members.

Focused on the way social movements interact with external stakeholders, the external dimension reflects how, through *deviant actions* (i.e., those in breach of dominant feeling rules), social movement activists evoke a sense of shock, fear, anger, or shame in their audience. In respect to some audience members, this may lead to what Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) note as *emotional dissonance*, where the individual's expressed emotions comply with the normative rules on how one must feel, but their experienced emotions contrast with their expressed feelings and the feeling rules. This experience may trigger emotion management in two opposite directions, leading to the creation/maintenance of distinctive emotions toward the anti-consumerist SMOs. Sandlin and Callahan (2009) argue that within the external emotion cycle of anti-consumption social movements, this state of dissonance generates either "positive" or "negative emotional energy." An emotional state conveys "a positive or a negative evaluative position with respect to some definite object (whether imagined or real)" (Parkinson, 2006, p. 9). According to Sandlin and Callahan (2009), a "positive emotional energy" transforms bystanders' emotion to anger at consumerism and eventually to deviant action disruptive of the status quo. Thus, the audience becomes part of the social movement, working for social change against the dominant consumerist culture. On the other hand, the audience's dissonance may turn into a "negative emotional energy" which occurs when the bystanders find acting against the dominant feeling rules too costly. In such a case, they experience a sense of "powerlessness" in dealing with the situation, which may instead turn their anger, fear, or shock *against* the social movement.

The internal dimension of this emotion cycle is carried by the members of social movements performing deviant actions in collective rites and rituals. Such collective performances lead

to the creation of a collective experience, which Durkheim (1947) called a "collective effervescence", which "binds participants together into tight communities, and provides comfort, closeness, solidarity, and support for individuals as part of a group" (Sandlin & Callahan, 2009, p. 95). Such a process of emotion management is in constant negotiation among activists who work together, and sometimes even live together (Summers-Effler, 2005), creating an emotional bond as part of a collective identity that ties disparate individuals together in an emotional way (Eyerman, 2006).

The external and internal cycles of emotion in SMOs, as outlined by Sandlin and Callahan (2009), and the sensemaking of artifacts described by Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz (2004) provide the grounds for the development of a conceptual framework to support our study. Our framework depicts the addition of a social symbolic dimension to the dimensions of sensemaking of organizational artifacts, which allows for examining the emotion work in which members and audiences of SMOs engage in when they face the artifacts deployed by/in these organizations.

Conceptual framework

As noted earlier, we aim to investigate the emotion work involved in the sensemaking of artifacts such as masks in SMOs, by their internal stakeholders, i.e., their members, and their external stakeholders, i.e., their audiences. We draw on Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz's (2004) formulation of "sensemaking of organizational artifacts" and Sandlin and Callahan's (2009) notion of "the emotion cycle of resistance in social movements" to create a frame which enables an examination of the ways the emotions of both participants and bystanders in SMOs can be evoked through the use of artifacts, focusing, specifically, on the example of the Guy Fawkes mask adopted by Anonymous and the Occupy movements.

The proposed conceptual frame connects sensemaking of the artifacts to emotion work in/around social movements. We start our inquiry from the internal emotion cycle, that is, the members' emotion work evoked by the use of the artifacts. The focus of inquiry here is on their sensemaking of the collective deviant actions they participate in when they use the artifact. Such sensemaking reflects three emotional dimensions evoked by the artifact (Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004); these are instrumentality, symbolism, and aesthetics. Through the examination of these three aspects of the members' sensemaking of the artifact, we can establish if their collective action has created an emotional bond and a collective identity, which in turn may contribute to the sustainability of the social movement organizations. Our proposed framework also attends to the external stakeholders, i.e., the bystanders or the audience groups, who observe and make sense of the way SMOs deploy artifacts in their deviant acts as they protest to subvert the established feeling rules (Sandlin & Callahan, 2009). An examination of their perception of the instrumentality, aesthetics, and symbolism aspects of the artifacts, we argue, reveals whether they have engaged in positive or negative emotion work (Sandlin & Callahan, 2009), informing their feelings towards the artifacts as well as the social movement organization (drawing on Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004). Such an investigation demonstrates whether the bystanders are willing to resolve their sense of dissonance through supporting the social movements' cause or even through joining them.

The conceptual framework helps explain how SMOs use artifacts like masks to perform emotion work and how this, in turn, supports member recruitment and the movements' sustainability.

In applying the developed conceptual framework, we acknowledge that emotions of individuals are not directly accessible to others, and therefore when it comes to the examination of emotions and emotion work practices of the internal and external stakeholders of SMOs, the phenomenon we *can* study is merely a presentation of their emotions made accessible to us through their expressions, either in embodied form (e.g., their appearance, movements, or voice), or/and through discursive communication (e.g., their spoken or written words). In other words, we approach emotions not as individualized internal possessions, but as social phenomena (Parkinson, 1996). Therefore, we understand emotion work here as a "social practice" situated within power relations (Abu-Lughod & Lutz, 1990), never "a simple readout of an internal state, but a communication of emotion to some real or imagined audience" (Parkinson, 2006, p. 17). Moreover, this communication follows "a set of social conventions about how emotions are described or expressed" (Ibid), or in Hochschild's (1979) words, the dominant feeling rules. In sum, emotion is a socially constructed phenomenon that is "permeated with interpersonal and cultural processes" (Parkinson, 2006, p. 17) and therefore we should study it as such.

Methodology

This section recounts the context of our study and the methodology adopted in its conduct. We advocate for the usefulness and relevance of social media data to studies of emotions in and around SMOs, and outline our methods of data collection, data analysis, and the study's limitations.

Site

We may understand social media through the frameworks of "distributed discourse" and "accelerated pluralism" (Upchurch & Grassman, 2016). Social media democratizes discourse by decentralizing power (distributed discourse) and reducing barriers, enhancing access and interaction, which helps mobilize diverse grievances into separate or unified social movements (accelerated pluralism) (ibid). Importantly, due to the nature of social media, users are confronted with a wall of noise, necessitating considerable time and effort to sift through the information (Swann & Ghelfi, 2019). If strategically orchestrated by opposing parties, the overwhelming amount of information, or noise, can evoke profound emotional distress, such as moral disgust and fear (Pasquier *et al.*, 2024). According to Chew and Eysenbach (2010), social media, particularly Twitter, offers a valuable platform for examining individuals' thoughts, emotions, and perspectives across diverse aspects of life. In turn, this presents researchers with novel opportunities to investigate a wide array of subjects within organically occurring contexts (Ahmed *et al.*, 2017).

Data collection

Unlike other social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter makes data openly accessible and visible by default to the public, including nonregistered users (Kim *et al.*, 2013). Scholars have used Twitter as a site for data on research topics including collective identities in social movement organizations (Barker-Plummer & Barker-Plummer, 2017), resistance to authority (Dawson & Bencherki, 2021), and emotion-laden public responses to viral outbreaks (Chew & Eysenbach, 2010; Kouzy *et al.*, 2020; Shahi *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, to get emotional responses of

bystanders and members of the movements with respect to the Guy Fawkes mask, we scraped Tweets related to the GFM from Twitter

Once researchers decide on Twitter data as their main data set, they need to find ways to scrape the data securely and ethically from the platform. In the past, before the Cambridge Analytica scandal (Isaak & Hanna, 2018), researchers were allowed to use data from Twitter at either no cost via the Search Application Programming Interface (SAPI) or at a fee via the Firehose Application Programming Interface (FAPI). At the time of our data collection, Twitter required API developers to apply for a developer account to have "more visibility and control over how developers use [their] platform and public data from the people using [their] service, and are intended to help address spam and platform abuse and keep the Twitter service safe and secure for everyone" (Roth & Johnson, 2018). Alternatively, researchers could access Twitter data through "web scraping" which consists of parsing the website Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML) to obtain data by using tags (Dongo *et al.*, 2021). Although these two methods, i.e., Web scraping and APIs, are the most practical ways of data harvesting (Slamet *et al.*, 2018), they differ in usefulness with respect to historical data. This is because of the restriction that Twitter imposed on APIs. Twitter imposed an increasing fee structure that was premised on access to real-time and future tweets (not historical tweets) and the number of tweets requested within a designated time period (Dongo *et al.*, 2021). Consequently, the only way we could collect historical data was to do so manually by scraping tweets.

Using Twitter's Advanced Search tool was the best way to scrape historical data. Researchers can use the advanced search to look for words, exact phrases, and hashtags in any language while also eliminating certain words. It included the option to choose certain accounts as well as search for links in tweets that have been searched. Finally, it featured a function that allowed researchers to search between different dates, which can go all the way back to March 21, 2006, when Twitter was launched. To scrape data for our study, we used Twitter's Advanced Search Features to search for a variety of terms, including Guy Fawkes mask, Guy Fawkes, GFM, and GF. We found that only the phrase Guy Fawkes mask was consistently related to our research. Other phrases were frequently related to various other Twitter subjects (e.g., Guy Fawkes was used to refer to the person, not the mask, GF referred to Girlfriend, while GFM also returned results for Gaza Freedom March).

To get the bystanders' as well as the members' thoughts and feelings about these movements' use of the GFM, we scraped tweets that covered the peak moments of the activities of the two SMOs. For the Anonymous group, which has accumulated 5.2 million Twitter followers, we scraped tweets from 2006 until 2009 to cover highlights such as the Church of Scientology event. Because Twitter did not launch as an online social network site until 2006, our search did not cover the initiation of the Anonymous group between 2006 and 2009. For the Occupy movements, which currently have 46,600 followers on Twitter, we scraped tweets from July 2011 until March 2012 to cover Occupy timeline from initiation to their eviction from their occupied physical spaces (Occupy Wall Street was evicted on November 15, 2011, and Occupy London was evicted on February 28, 2012). Our search initiative scraped almost 8000 tweets within the above two timelines.

Data analysis

As Andreotta *et al.* (2019) argue, navigating large volumes of social media data is a complex and labor-intensive task that requires systematic methods for data reduction and meaningful interpretation. To address this challenge, we coded the 8,000 tweets based on Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz's (2004) tripartite framework of instrumentality, aesthetics, and symbolism. Specifically, we searched for evidence of emotion work expressed through words, tone, or images in the tweets. We interpreted the categorization of the coded tweets using Sandlin and Callahan's (2009) cycle of emotion management in social movement organizations. The interplay between these analytical perspectives provided a robust conceptual foundation for interpreting how users constructed meaning and expressed affective responses within the digital discourse surrounding the GFM. This integrated approach allowed us to uncover not only the emotional resonance of the mask but also the ideological and symbolic work it performed within the context of online activism.

Limitations

All studies have limitations, as does this one. A key limitation is the restrictions in interpretation based on the nature of the data used. Social media platforms such as Twitter provide a window to the performance of emotion, but cannot grant access to genuinely felt or perceived emotions. This limits the depth of interpretation we can offer with respect to the motive and purpose of Twitter's posts. We also acknowledge that a retrospective, netnographic approach limits our ability to collect additional data. For example, while we have robust data from external members showing both positive and negative emotional responses, our data from internal members is more limited, since no additional relevant posts from the internal perspective conveyed negative emotions at the time of collection. Online approaches inherently limit the ability to probe more deeply through follow-ups with participants whose true identities are often unknown.

Findings and discussion

We applied our theoretical frame, grounded in Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz's (2004) notion of sensemaking and Sandlin and Callahan's (2009) cycle of emotion management, to analyze the way two distinctive stakeholder groups, members of Anonymous and Occupy movements, and the general public, made sense of the Guy Fawkes mask. Through this analysis, we investigated the internal and external processes of emotion work evoked by, respectively, the members' and bystanders' sensemaking of the GFM as presented in their social media posts on Twitter. In exploring the presented emotion work stimulated by the sensemaking process, we considered these stakeholder groups' interpretations of the mask's instrumentality, aesthetics, and symbolism as presented in their tweets. To analyze our data, we did not have access to the dominant feeling rules or to the "experienced" emotions of the people who tweeted about GFM, but we had access to their eventual "expressed" emotion as presented in their social media posts. The tweets reveal the final stage of the emotion cycle, expressions of positive or negative emotions towards the GFM and the relevant SMOs, and we began our investigation from that point.

The internal cycle of emotion management

This section reports on our findings regarding Occupy and Anonymous *members'* sensemaking of the use of GFM as part of the repertoire of the collective actions they could adopt in protests. By examining members' perceptions of the mask's instrumental, aesthetic, and symbolic aspects, we explore whether using GFM fostered an emotional bond or collective identity that helped sustain Anonymous and the Occupy movements during their active years.

Instrumentality

Some members interpreted the mask as an instrument for *making the wearer anonymous and, therefore, considered wearing it as a protective measure*. However, for most, the mask functioned not as a tool for concealment of individuals' identity, but as *an instrument of identity transformation and construction of a collective identity* that brings pride towards the Occupy and anonymous movements and trust and solidarity among members: "Quote of the day… 'we don't wear the Guy Fawkes mask to hide our identity… we wear them to show our unity' #takewallstreet" or "With Guy Fawkes mask covering my face, stupid reporter asked me for my name. 'Have you never heard of #Anonymous?' #OWS #OTH #ExpectUs", or, "just brought a Guy Fawkes mask for #OWS on Sunday… I wonder how many other people will be rocking one; it'd be pretty cool if a lot did." Another commented "'Hiding behind' isn't how I would describe the Guy Fawkes masks. Rather, I'd say ppl are uniting behind the mask. #DontPanic."

For some, it evoked a sense of being in on a secret, belonging to a collective secret organization, and a sense of solidarity in anonymity: "Co-worker: 'Nice Guy Fawkes mask. Hey you ever hear of Anonymous? They wear a mask like that.' Me: 'Oh wow, tell me more about these Anons!,'" or "Nodded knowingly to a 40 something Cuban woman wearing a Guy Fawkes mask around her neck on the commute today. Sometimes I like the future".

Aesthetics

Some members commented positively about how *scary and threatening* the GFM *looks*, and how they could use this to disrupt order as part of their individual or collective deviant actions. For example, one commented "#MyCostume is a Guy Fawkes mask. I'm going to run around town and bitch people out for being too corporate. Scary, huh? #occupywallstreet" or "The Guy Fawkes mask does strike terror into the corrupt and greedy :)." Others talked about the power of the mask in making police frightened: "Armed Forces being scared of Guy Fawkes mask is taking 'Fail' to a whole new level." Some Occupy members invited others to wear the GFM as an act of collective defiance against the establishment: "Show your support for Occupy WS. Wear a Guy Fawkes mask button, shirt, or other. It is the mask they fear" and "Have always wanted V for Vendetta Guy Fawkes mask ever since the 2009 G20 demos in London. It really spooked the police, it was fascinating."

Some insiders felt empowered by wearing the mask: "I always make sure to wear my Guy Fawkes mask when I need to do serious hacking." Some referred to the GFM smile and how that is better than a fake smile of bankers: "We wear Guy Fawkes and they wear a suit, a fake smile and shoot a line of bullshit… I like our mask better." Others expressed defiance: "Origins of mask comes from idea of rising up vs government. Guy Fawkes mask represents: the people have real power."

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These tweets reflect a positive emotional response of the members' of Occupy and Anonymous towards the masks and the SMOs, as they comment on how the way the GFM *looks* bestows them a sense of *rebellion, resistance, and collective power*.

Symbolism

Members frequently referred to the mask as a *symbol of collective power and hope* representing a better future. For example, "Now, we are really taking over the world, one Guy Fawkes mask at a time" or "Over 5 years you will see me with a Guy Fawkes mask on protesting for freedom." These seemed to have encouraged an internal *emotional bond toward the Occupy* movement: "For me personally, when I c a Guy Fawkes mask at #occupywallstreet and #occupychicago, it gives me a feeling of hope and power."

Figure 1. Shepard Fairey – Left: Barack Obama Hope poster / Right: Hope Occupy poster

Note. Sourced from https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/shepard-fairey-poster-power-featured-article-jan-2015.

To illustrate the symbol of hope in their SMO, Occupiers widely tweeted Shepard Fairey edited version of his famous Barack Obama "Hope" poster, in which a Guy Fawkes mask replaces Obama's face (Figure 1). Fairley (2011) states that "this image represents my support for the Occupy movement, a grassroots movement spawned to stand up against corruption, imbalance of power, and failure of our democracy to represent and help average Americans."

Some members described their collective use of the GFM as *a symbol of a connection to a global movement*: "The outfit was a Guy Fawkes mask, suit and tie. perfect chance to create awareness in my tiny little town :)." The mask seems to have become the movements' trademark not only in Western countries but also in other parts of the world. We found many examples of tweets from people in Malaysia, Germany, Italy, Spain, Chile, Nigeria, Egypt, Tunisia, the Philippines, and Lebanon, looking for a GFM in *solidarity with Occupy and Anonymous*. For instance, some from the Philippines linked the GFM to their anticolonial icon: "I want to wear a Jose Rizal mask – just how they used Guy Fawkes masks at the Occupy Wall Street protests. It would be sweet to do that." Others tweeted non-Western alternative masks inspired by the GFM: "Occupy Bali mask instead of Guy Fawkes mask" (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Occupy Bali Mask

Some Members of Parliament in Poland and Bulgaria donned the mask in protest of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) in 2012. Several people retweeted the news with images and expressed their solidarity with the Polish and Bulgarian MPs (Figure 3).

Some saw the GFM as *a symbol of immortality and eternal power*: "The next world power will be a symbol not a human and it is the mask of Guy Fawkes, people will follow and it can not be killed." "'Behind this mask is more than flesh. Behind this mask is an idea, and ideas are bulletproof.' Happy Guy Fawkes Day! Remember remember…"

Figure 3. Members of Parliament in Poland

Note. Sourced from https://i.imgur.com/dk7VI.jpg.

Our analysis above (summarized in Table 1) demonstrates that the Occupy and Anonymous members' act of wearing the GFM in protests worked as deviant action, disrupting norms around how one should present oneself in public (or even at a public protest), and led them to actively engage in emotion work to make sense of the mask's instrumental, aesthetic, and symbolic aspects. We highlighted such emotion work practices through an examination of the positive emotional responses towards the GFM and the concerned SMOs as presented in the Twitter data. We argue that the members' positive emotion work may be conducive to the establishment of a collective identity and thus the consolidation of the SMOs.

Table 1. Framework of emotion work practices and their outcomes: Internal actors

Emotion Work Practices	Emotions towards the Mask	Emotions towards the SMO	Prospective Outcomes
Instrumentality	GFM as an instrument for concealment and anonymity	Feeling protected due to membership	Consolidation
	GFM as an instrument of identity transformation	Creation of a collective identity due to membership	Consolidation
Aesthetics	GFM as scary and threatening to the (capitalist) establishment	A sense of empowerment in rebellion due to membership in these movements	Consolidation
Symbolism	GFM as a symbol of collective power and hope	Experiencing an emotional bond with the movements and members	Consolidation
	GFM as a symbol of a connection to a global movement	Ubiquitous Solidarity	Consolidation
	GFM as a symbol of immortality	Eternal emotional bond and solidarity	Consolidation

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The external cycle of emotion management

Next, we explore how the GFM was reported to evoke a sense of dissonance in *bystanders* whose tweets reflect how they engaged in deliberate and active emotion work in relation to the mask's symbolism, aesthetics, or instrumentality, to manage their feelings regarding this experience. This emotion work led to the expression of negative or positive emotions toward the mask and by extension towards the SMOs (Occupy/ Anonymous).

The negative emotion work

Instrumentality. The outsiders frequently *admonished* the use of GFM due to its *functionality* as a Time Warner's TM product, making money for the corporation every time it is purchased. Their tweets pointed to how ironic it is for an anti-capitalist movement such as Occupy/Anonymous to encourage such profit-making and deemed those wearing it stupid and ignorant: "Definition of irony. Every time someone from anon buys and wears a Guy Fawkes mask a portion of the money goes to Warner Bros…" or "Every time I see a protester in a Guy Fawkes mask I laugh. Time Warner makes profit for each mask sold. Also why not make your own icon?" The emotions evoked towards the SMOs seem to be *derision* and *inferiority*: "The 'Guy Fawkes mask manufacturer' sector of the economy must be booming these days with all the #Occupy protests," or "i really wish I'd gotten into the Guy Fawkes mask-business like 6 months ago."

Some found the mask as *an instrument of hiding the wearer's identity* and therefore expressed negative emotions toward the wearer (and Occupy/Anonymous), accusing them of *cowardice, shame, or dishonesty*: "Why would demonstrators feel the need to hide behind a Guy Fawkes mask? Aren't they proud?" or "All those times women rejected you, men laughed at you, you'll show THEM now you've got your Guy Fawkes mask to hide behind," or "#OWS Your stupid Guy Fawkes mask doesn't mean you're changing the world, it just means you're a frightened douchebag…."

Aesthetics. Some bystanders found *the appearance* of GFM *disgusting*: "Could they have found a more detestable mask to wear than this Guy Fawkes V thingy?" Others deemed it *creepy, scary* or *sinister*: "the gentleman in the guy fawkes mask walking around in daylight doesn't exactly make me feel safe" or "Random dude wearing Guy Fawkes mask at bus loop scared the shit out of me". Some found the mask *odd*: "Your weird and always wear a Guy Fawkes mask or 2. You put it on before every picture you post. Either way its odd :P" Some talked about the hatred that *seeing* the GFM provoked in them: "Fuck I hate Guy Fawkes masks. I really really do. New rule: Guy Fawkes mask in avatar = unfollow/block. They are ugly creepy clown masks!" or "Something about the Guy Fawkes mask screams out 'sadist' to me. Or 'pervert' Or, best case scenario, 'adolescent'". This process seems to have evoked *disgust* and *aggression*, not only *towards the mask/mask-wearer*, but *towards Occupy/Anonymous*: "If I see another #OWS protestor in a Guy Fawkes mask I;m going to vomit. This isn't a fucking movie."

Symbolism. Some tweets reflected *associations* made between the GFM and Guy Fawkes as a historical figure and therefore expressed their emotion towards the mask as *signifying the wearer's stupidity and ignorance*, e.g., "I wonder how many people wearing a Guy Fawkes mask actually know who the hell Guy Fawkes was." *Emotions evoked towards Occupy appear to be negative and derisive* as some considered the use of GFM for pursuing Occupy's democratic and secular purposes ironic: "I don't get #OWS love 4 the Guy Fawkes mask. He tried to blow up parliament to protest government. #OWS isn't protesting government," or in another, "To

the Guy Fawkes mask-wearing #occupy protesters, you're aware that Fawkes wanted to install a Catholic theocracy, right?" or, "Amused that the #ows crowd has adopted the mask of FAILED assassin Guy Fawkes to represent their cause! #occupydc #fail #ignoranceisbliss." Some outsiders who were advocates of the movement were *disappointed* to see that the GFM became the symbol of the Occupy movement: "Occupy using Guy Fawkes masks is disappointing to say the least."

For some the mask *represented the "extreme" or radical left* which evoked a sense of *derision and ridicule*: "If you leave the house wearing a Che tshirt and Guy Fawkes mask but forget your picture of Chairman Mao, tsk tsk" or another joked about the choice of Halloween costume by those who are from certain liberal backgrounds: "I've got a Guy Fawkes mask and a hoodie. I'm going as a recent liberal arts graduate." Some concluded that Occupy is part of a radical left plot as they referred to conspiracy theories about Obama who "has called his base to put on their marching shoes. OWS is the response" and a thread of tweets describing *the GFM as a symbol of radical fascism, tagging Occupy Wall Street* in the same light.

The positive emotion work

Instrumentality. Some bystanders commented on how the GFM *functioned* as an established brand icon for anti-capitalist movements: "The Guy Fawkes mask has now become a common brand and a convenient placard to use in protest against tyranny." The adoption of GFM as an icon had raised *admiration* in some *towards Occupy/Anonymous*: "fascinating article about popularity of V 4 Vendetta Guy Fawkes masks in 'Occupy' protests … Great symbolism mask & film" or "good afternoon :) the Guy Fawkes Mask is the symbol of Anonymous :) wanna know about them? check this article [link to article removed]."

Aesthetics. Some outsiders found the mask *aesthetically pleasing, "cool" or "sexy."* Their accounts reflect *positive emotion work toward Anonymous and Occupy.* For example, one demonstrated *identification* with Anonymous: "Julian Assange in Guy Fawkes mask = complete chick boner. #justsaying #anonymiss" and another finds the nuisances caused by the SMOs justifiable: "#SanFranciscoRiots? Subway stations shut down, but the dude in the Guy Fawkes mask looks freaking cool!" Many expressed *a sense of excitement* at the prospect of owning a GFM: "I want a Guy Fawkes mask, it looks so cool", or "cool design! i guess there's a reason the guy fawkes mask is so iconic…man, i really need to read the comic/watch the movie".

Symbolism. The use of GFM was considered by many outsiders as *associated* with *positive* and *sympathetic emotions* around *rebellion, resistance, and anarchy.* Some commented how those wearing the GFM "used the English tradition of Nov 5th demonstrations symbolized by the Guy Fawkes mask to overthrow a right-wing Tyranny". Others commented on the widespread use of the mask by those who rebel: "So do you think the V/Guy Fawkes mask has become the new Che Guevara T-shirt for hipster revolutionaries?" or "When I become a politician, I'm going to wear a guy Fawkes mask everyday and change the world #revolution". This symbolic dimension seems to have evoked for some *a sense of sympathy and solidarity towards Anonymous and Occupy.* For example, one person commented "Guy Fawkes mask: Chosen bcuz in V 4 Vendetta, thousands of ppl put it on to protect a guy standing up for their rights. #Anonluv" and "Just saw a guy with a Guy Fawkes mask on the back of his headrest… Had to smile and show him some love! :) #solidarity."

The analysis of positive and negative emotional responses of the external stakeholders, as presented in their tweets, demonstrates how these bystanders reported engagement in emotion

work to make sense of the instrumentality, aesthetics, and symbolic aspects of the GFM. The analyzed tweets expressed a range of positive and negative emotions, reflecting bystanders' sympathy for Occupy and Anonymous in some cases and their alienation from these SMOs in others (See table 2 for a summary).

Table 2. Framework of emotion work practices and their outcomes: External actors

Emotion Work Practices	Emotions towards the Mask	Emotions towards the SMO	Prospective Outcomes
Instrumentality	GFM as an instrument of profit-making for the Big Corporation	Derision Blame Irony	Alienation
	GFM as an instrument of identity concealment	Accusing Occupy/Anonymous of cowardice and dishonesty	Alienation
	GFM working as a brand icon, spreading the anti-capitalist cause	Admiration	Sympathy
Aesthetics	Seeing it as disgusting, creepy, perverse, scary, sinister	Disgust Aggression	Alienation
	Seeing it as cool and sexy	Admiration and excitement about their cause	Sympathy
Symbolism	It signifies stupidity and ignorance	Derision Anger Disappointment	Alienation
	A symbol of extreme or radical left	Framing Occupy/Anonymous as a symbol of leftist radical fascism	Alienation
	A symbol of rebellion, resistance, and anti-capitalist revolution	Solidarity	Sympathy

Contributions and conclusions

In this article, we investigated how the use of the Guy Fawkes mask by two social movement organizations, Anonymous and Occupy, stimulated emotion work by members and bystanders of these organizations. We aimed to investigate how these SMOs' prevalent use of emotionally--laden objects, e.g., artifacts, engages and influences the emotions of their members and audiences and to explore the outcomes that this emotion work can produce.

By conceptually linking Sandlin and Callahan's (2009) theory of cycles of emotion work in SMOs and Rafaeli and Vilnai-Yavetz's (2004) theory of sensemaking with organizational artifacts, we articulated *how* an artifact stimulates responses by both internal and external actors of a social movement. The resulting social symbolic theory of sensemaking of artifacts in SMOs enriches our understanding of the positive and negative emotion work evoked by the use of artifacts in SMOs.

Our work demonstrates how the use of artifacts by the SMOs creates, transforms, or maintains emotions from hatred, disgust, fear, anger and derision to joy, excitement, pride, sympathy, and solidarity not only towards the artifacts, but also towards the social movement which

deploys it and its cause. Refining Sandlin and Callahan's (2009) work, our study shows that such emotional responses may lead to three possible outcomes impacting the SMOs: recruitment of new adherents who sympathize with the SMO, further alienation of the public from the SMO, and creation or consolidation of a collective identity for members, ensuring the movement's sustainability. Further, our study also extends their work, and that of Rafaeli and Vilanai-Yavetz (2004), by incorporating the role of social symbolic work as a catalyst in operationalizing these theories in social movement organizations. Table 1 and Table 2 articulate the mechanisms of how an artifact catalyzes emotions for internal and external actors of SMOs and present the resultant outcomes of the emotional responses.

The value of our integrative framework lies in providing clarity on how emotion work practices using artifacts influence both internal and external actors. Our findings suggest that the response to artifacts by these actors exhibits important, nuanced differences. External actors exhibit varied positive and negative reactions to all three forms of emotion work practices, i.e., symbolism, aesthetics, and instrumentality. Each form elicits one positive reaction (sympathy) and at least one negative reaction (alienation). Without careful consideration, it is easier to evoke a negative audience reaction than a positive one. Therefore, we argue that attending to all three emotion work practices is essential to maximize the impact of using artifacts. This also leaves open further research on how different types of artifacts or SMOs might result in both positive and negative emotional energy.

On the other hand, internal actors demonstrate a much more consistent response to the use of artifacts. Across all types of emotion work practices, internal actors respond with the positive emotional energy of consolidation. The use of an artifact strengthens their commitment to the cause of the social movement organization (SMO). While we do not dismiss the possibility that the use of an artifact may elicit negative emotional energy among internal actors, we did not observe it in the present study. Future research can explore the neglected negative emotion cycle for internal members to allow an examination of how SMOs may fade due to losing member loyalty and eventually their members.

Moreover, our framework provides a mechanism to further study how emotions become institutionalized (Ashforth & Humphrey, 2022) in social movement organizations. Ashforth and Humphrey (2022) emphasize the importance of leadership in creating the "scaffolding" (p. 1495) for the affective culture and climate of an organization. However, social movements such as Anonymous and Occupy are arguably leaderless in any formal capacity (Keshtiban *et al.*, 2023). In such cases where the act or role of leading manifests in alternative ways, it is worth questioning if the structure for the affective culture and climate is altered. As identified in our framework, emotion work practices, the actors who engage in them, and the symbols they use may shed light on the construction of such affective scaffolding.

In sum, this work contributes to refining and extending the theory associated with emotion work and social movements. It also offers avenues for future research. As social movements seek to engage audiences and inspire people to join their cause, understanding how not-yet-committed individuals can be mobilized (Heaphy, 2017) becomes increasingly relevant to the study of organizing. Our work shows that artifacts such as masks can contribute to this goal through social symbolic emotional influence.

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